

reaching recommendations, these are often founded upon rather unpenetrating and short-term observations, accompanied by limited attention to democratic institution-building.

From 1994 to 1997, the United Nations has had a significant impact in the areas of electoral technical assistance, voter education, domestic observation, and through its ability to coordinate and encourage donor activities. Unfortunately, much of this recent focus seems to have been on saving money and avoiding controversy as ends in themselves, with less attention given to the ultimate goals of capacity-building and local needs. Given the United Nations' positive capacity for reform, however, the chances are good that the organization will eventually move towards more context-relevant and client-oriented electoral support.

Several general observations emerged from this study, reflected across electoral activities of each of the five multilateral organizations.

- More emphasis needs to be placed on long-term electoral observation.
- Technical electoral assistance must be augmented by deeper and more sustainable democratic-institution building.
- The focus must be brought further down into grass-roots civil society.
- In more stable emerging democracies, more attention should be given to developing the organizational and knowledge capacity of domestic election observers.
- Multilateral organizations must make greater efforts to cooperate with each other and with international and domestic NGOs in the areas of information sharing, expertise exchange and division of responsibility.
- Missions need more context-sensitive selection and composition criteria.

Without a doubt, electoral observation and assistance has made great advances since the pre-1989 days of infrequent, ad hoc and weak missions. Today, second generation electoral support displays more systematic and consistent criteria, better geographic and chronological coverage, and a willingness to stand up to government abuse and fraud. Be it the Francophonie in sub-saharan Africa, the OAS in Central America, the OSCE in the Balkans, the UN in the Middle East, or the Commonwealth in East Africa, however, the inadequate impact of this support and the reality that many states are moving beyond their first multi-party transitional election, demonstrates the *need for multilateral institutions to progress to a third generation of electoral development*. Such development involves a deeper and more cooperative emphasis on grass-roots civil society, long-term capacity-building, and local needs.