

Statement by the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett on International Youth Day

Today we celebrate International Youth Day, which provides an opportunity to speak to the importance of young people's meaningful participation in social, political, and economic life and highlight how youth-driven initiatives worldwide contribute to addressing global challenges and shaping a more inclusive world. I am delighted to see many of the CoD Youth Leads engaged in the global #ThisIsDemocracy campaign, adding their powerful voices as democracy champions to promote shared democratic values.

Young people play a crucial role in promoting democracy and driving democratic changes in their countries. August 2021 marks one year since 2020's fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus. Peaceful protests driven by courageous young women and men who stood up against the authoritarian regime were one of many examples in the world of youth's determination in fighting for freedom and democracy. Community of Democracies events organized in solidarity with Belarus included a virtual discussion with young Belarusian activists on the role of youth in the democracy movement in Belarus.

Through activities at the Community of Democracies (CoD), I am honored to work with inspiring young people from different countries, including the CoD Youth Leads, who are actively engaged in many projects, adding valuable voices to the dialogue on democracy. A recently held CoD Youth Leads event featured young activists and elected officials from different worldwide locations discussing common barriers and solutions to advancing youth's political participation. At another CoD youth training, held in July in Rabat, I spoke with young Moroccan democracy activists about their immense role in promoting democracy and countering violent extremism. And on today's International Youth Day, I have the pleasure of hosting student leaders from across the United States who are visiting Washington, D.C., in the American Committees for Foreign Relations' Young Leaders Initiative delegation.

In September 2021, the Community of Democracies is holding its X Ministerial Conference. A companion virtual CoD Youth Forum, will gather youth leaders from different world regions to discuss democracy-related issues with government stakeholders, enabling an authentic exchange of views on the challenges and opportunities faced by democracy worldwide. I am looking forward to these discussions and working with young leaders to prepare for this critical CoD gathering.