

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

The Community of Democracies (CoD) recognizes youth engagement as one of the key elements of inclusive societies and strong sustainable democracies. Addressing global challenges of today's world—from climate change through conflict prevention and peace-building to democratic backsliding – cannot be done without the meaningful participation of young people.

Youth empowerment is one of the cross-cutting themes mainstreamed into all activities undertaken by the Community of Democracies in its work to promote, defend and strengthen democracy worldwide. As emphasized in the CoD's summary report on *The Role of the Youth in Democratic Resilience*, young people are a crucial asset in states' development planning and must be involved in policy making to improve accountability, transparency, and political inclusion.

To share best practice examples and further discuss the barriers and opportunities for youth inclusion, the 30th meeting of the CoD's Governing Council (June 14th, 2019) featured a panel discussion on *Youth Participation in Public Life*, which addressed civic and political engagement of young people both online and offline, highlighting the need to build constructive and sustained political engagement of young people across all levels of governance.

There is no single approach for youth engagement – understanding local context and country-specific opportunities and challenges is crucial to develop successful programs and policies that will make youth inclusion a reality. Working with Member States and civil society organizations from different parts of the world, the Community of Democracies will continue to promote the engagement of young people in public life as a key component of advancing democracy and furthering the implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Celebrating today's International Youth Day, let's remember that it is young people's right to shape the world they live in today and shape the world of their future.