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## Statement by the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett on the International Day of Democracy

A decade ago UN member states approved a resolution that recognized democracy, human rights and rule of law as universal core values and stressed that democracy is interwoven with human rights and development. Strong interdependence between peace, development, human rights and democracy is also highlighted in the Warsaw Declaration – the founding document of the Community of Democracies, signed seventeen years ago by 106 democratic states.

Today we are witnessing challenging times for democracies worldwide. In a period marked by violent extremism, some people question democracy. But I strongly believe that there is no other sustainable form of governance that can create the necessary conditions for development, respect of human rights, while ensuring peace and stability at the same time. And for this very reason, we – the international community, governments and civil society, must work together to identify adequate responses to address complex and evolving transnational challenges to democracy.

There have been many voices asking whether democracies can respond adequately to terrorism's threat and security-related challenges. Democracy is the cornerstone of security. Democracy, when able to consolidate and flourish, is the best option for achieving domestic and international peace and security. The Democracy and Security Dialogue initiative, launched by the Community of Democracies under the leadership of former Tunisian Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to help identify effective long-term security policies based on the rule of law and other core democratic principles, in its research findings suggest a country's best defense against terrorism is to improve its legitimacy through democratic practices at home and abroad.

I would also like to emphasize the invaluable role of civil society in all aspects of democratic governance and development. In many parts of the world we are witnessing shrinking civic space. We must stand united to defend civil society as an integral part of the global democratic architecture. And let me stress here that democracies with a vibrant civil society play a very important role in fostering security and preventing violent extremism.



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It is therefore crucial that we enhance our collaborative efforts to strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. Strong, inclusive and accountable institutions are the cornerstone of stable democracy. The Community of Democracies has been engaged in supporting the implementation of Goal 16 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which promotes peace, justice and strong institutions. As a Community, we shall continue working together with governments and civil society partners to promote discussion, exchange experiences, and identify best practices to strengthen democratic institutions and uphold the principles enshrined in the Warsaw Declaration.

It is through common action that we can address the complex challenges to democracy. As we recognize the International Day of Democracy, let us work to strengthen democratic values and institutions to promote peace, stability and sustainable development. We are stronger together and let us make our democracies stronger for our better future.