

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

At the Community of Democracies' founding Ministerial Conference in Warsaw in 2000, Kofi Annan stated: *“This meeting is not just a celebration. You are here because you know that the work of democracy is never done- that too many people are still denied their human rights, while too many democracies remain imperfect and vulnerable to subversion by ruthless leaders.”*

Eighteen years on, his words and legacy remain relevant. Even established democracies have been proven to be vulnerable to backsliding. But research shows us that democracies are, in fact, very resilient. This resilience gives democratic leaders a perfect momentum to consolidate their actions to “look for ways to invigorate democracy and seek answers to the systemic challenges it faces”, as emphasized by the theme of this year's International Day of Democracy.

In today's dynamic global environment, we have to accept that democracy will always face the need for ongoing adjustment. But while models of democracy might be diverse, core democratic principles based on rule of law and respect for human rights, remain universal. For the Community of Democracies these values are enshrined in the Warsaw Declaration, which outlines 19 core principles of democracy and emphasizes the interdependence between peace, development, human rights and democracy.

The Community's new strategic objectives for 2018–2023 aim to encourage adherence to the values of the Warsaw Declaration inside and outside the Community, support democratic consolidation in transitioning countries and deepen dialogue on challenges to democracy. These objectives reflect the commitment of the Community's Governing Council Member States to strengthen their cooperation to more effectively respond to complex challenges to democracy and embrace new opportunities to support democratic consolidation in the world.

Today, when the democratic spirit of many across the world seem challenged, we should recall the words of Poland's Foreign Minister, the late Professor Bronislaw Geremek who, speaking at the Community's first Ministerial Conference, said that *“democracy doesn't always move from triumph to triumph”*. In the Community of Democracies, Member States accept that democracy will always face complex challenges and agree to work together to resolve them.

On this #InternationalDayofDemocracy I call on democratic leaders to renew their commitment to core democratic principles and to prioritize working with civil society to take concerted efforts towards reinvigorating our democracies and promoting democratic values worldwide.