

The Community of Democracies and Civil Society

The Community of Democracies (CoD) is a global intergovernmental coalition comprised of the Governing Council Member States that support adherence to common democratic values and standards outlined in the Warsaw Declaration.

Civil society – an essential element of the democratic landscape

The Community of Democracies recognizes the crucial role that civil society plays in the advancement of democracy worldwide. **An active, independent, diverse and vibrant civil society is a core element of a strong democracy, essential to its functioning and sustainability.** The Community of Democracies, since its inception in 2000, continues to work towards protecting and enabling civil society by supporting non-governmental actors and coordinating actions by its Governing Council Member States to protect and foster civil society.

The **Warsaw Declaration**, the Community's founding document, recognizes the universality of democratic values and commits to respect and uphold **19 core democratic principles**, including: *"the promotion and protection of all human rights- civil, cultural, economic and social, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights instruments"*.



The CoD's Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society

By combining the diplomatic influence of democratic states with the collective power of the global democratic community, the Working Group on Protecting and Enabling Civil Society fosters collaboration among states, civil society and international organizations to **counter the growing global trend of constraining civil society.**

Participation of civil society within the CoD

Civil society is represented in the Community's Governing Council through the International Steering Committee (ISC) – an independent, representative body composed of **global, regional and national level civil society organizations.** The ISC develops its own strategies and

The participation of civil society is a unique asset to the Community of Democracies and one of its key strengths.

activities to promote civic space, proposes areas for consideration, and expresses the view of civil society during the Governing Council deliberations.

Examples of recent activities



Civil Society Standards

The CoD's belief in the valuable role played by civil society in democratic consolidation was reaffirmed in the **Civil Society Standards**, adopted by the CoD's Governing Council in March 2016. The document lays out a road map to support and protect civil society and renews the commitment of the Governing Council Member States to protect and create an enabling environment for civil society. The document is available in **six language versions** - Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Project: Designing new guidelines by which citizens, civil society organizations and governments can work better together

The initiative, funded by the United Kingdom, aimed to promote the implementation of the CoD's Civil Society Standards by sharing best practices in supporting and enabling civic space and engaging with civil society as dialogue partners.

The publication on "**Best practice in Community of Democracies' member states engagement with and protection of civil society**", developed within the project, provides a best practice guide for governments to protect and engage civil society, and highlights specific examples from the CoD's Governing Council Member States.



In addition to specific activities supporting civil society, meetings with civil society are an essential part of the Secretary General's official visits to the countries within and outside the Community of Democracies.

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