

**31<sup>st</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL  
OUTCOME STATEMENT**  
13 February 2020, Bucharest, Romania

The Warsaw Declaration affirms the right of every person to take part in the conduct of public affairs. This principle is particularly important in regard to youth participation. Young persons all over the world can be a catalyst for sustainable development and lasting peace if empowered with substantial opportunities and treated in a fair, just, and inclusive manner.

Meaningful youth participation in political leadership and decision-making<sup>1</sup> including participation of young women and girls, are key aspects of democratic societies that are inclusive, representative, and sustainable. Young persons can play an important role in building the resilience of our democracies and in responding to the challenges we face, many of which have been intensified by the digital environment.

In this age of unprecedented connectivity, when social media can shape global opinions and present both new challenges, as well as opportunities, identifying barriers to youth political participation and empowering young persons to participate meaningfully in civic and political life can strengthen democratic culture.

Across the globe, democratic systems of governance are under threat from authoritarian influences, disinformation and misinformation, and crises of confidence from the electorate. Young persons are under-represented in parliaments and national legislative bodies throughout the world. Confronted with institutions and systems that have under-delivered on promises of economic and social development, many young persons question whether their voices and votes truly matter.

Underpinning democracy is trust, or the common assumption that elected officials and institutions are working together for the best interest of the polity and that all voices are heard, including those of the younger generation. The Community of Democracies heeds to the call to promote democracy and to speak against trust-eroding factors.

Youth are an active part of democratic movements around the world, defending human rights and civic space. However, their participation as activists does not always permeate into formal political participation. We support efforts to encourage and facilitate young persons' political empowerment including active participation in the political arena, in civic activism, volunteerism, etc. This will help empower them with meaningful opportunities to be active members of in their communities and countries and renew their faith in the principles underlying democratic society.

Education is the foundation for creating inclusive, tolerant and resilient societies where the young both understand the value of democracy and are able to recognise and challenge democratic backsliding. For that purpose, education systems should build youth awareness of civic and societal issues and empower them to take responsibility, create ideas, and embody plans to address society's challenges. Youth engagement should be a priority for both transitional and established democracies, wherein dialogue can be opened and best practices shared.

Governing Council Members discussed specific challenges to broadening the political participation of youth and expressed support for the establishment of the youth network of the Community of Democracies.

We look forward to the Youth Forum to be held in Bucharest, in the margins of the 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies, and express our hope that its conclusions and recommendations will enable the Community of Democracies to provide a valuable contribution to work in this field, building upon previous events and initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> The need for inclusion youth in decision making process is emphasized in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that is well reflected in CoD's Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Namely, under SDG 16.7, which seeks to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels".