

Remarks by the Secretary-General, Community of Democracies
March 5, 2020

Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highness,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Dranga,

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests

It is my pleasure and an honor to welcome you here, to the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies.

Our keynote speaker is Her Majesty Margareta, Custodian of the Romanian Crown, and I would like to extend my gratitude to Her Majesty for accepting our invitation to speak on advancing women's representation and participation in decision-making.

The Romanian monarchy has been an integral part of the emergence of Romania as an independent state, to its unity and its modernization.

King Michael I was a stalwart defender of Romania's democratic constitution. His actions and the story of his heroic and tragic abdication, under fierce pressure, stand as an example of dignity and a source of inspiration.¹

¹ Under the military dictator [Ion Antonescu](#), Romania became aligned with [Nazi Germany](#). In 1944, Michael I [participated in a coup](#) against Antonescu and subsequently declared an alliance with the Allies. In March 1945, political pressures forced King Michael I to appoint a pro-Soviet government. From August 1945 to January 1946, King Michael I went on a "royal strike" and opposed [Communist-controlled](#) government by refusing to sign and endorse its decrees. In November, Michael attended [the](#)

After the fall of communism, in 1989, the Romanian Royal House has supported Romania's democratization process and fundamental foreign policy goals, such as joining NATO and integration in the EU.

Today, Her Majesty Margareta, eldest daughter of King Michael I and Queen Anne of Romania, designated Crown Princess in 1997 and Custodian of the Crown of Romania in 2007, is a very active public figure, promoting charitable causes, as well as respect for human rights and gender equality.

And so we are honored with her presence and share her dedication to these causes.

Since its inception in 2000, the Community of Democracies has undertaken numerous programs embracing a comprehensive approach to the promotion of democracy, including the advancement of gender equality.

In fact, the Community's Strategic Plan 2018-2023 sets gender equality and the advancement of women's participation in public life as a cross-cutting theme to be mainstreamed into all activities we undertake.

This engagement, in line with Goal 5 of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, has included

wedding of his cousins, the future Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, in London. Shortly thereafter, on the morning of 30 December 1947, King Michael I was compelled to abdicate under the threat of executing young political prisoners. Michael was forced into exile, his properties were confiscated, and his citizenship stripped. In 1948 he married Princess Anne of Bourbon-Parma (thenceforth known as Queen Anne of Romania), with whom he had five daughters, and the couple eventually settled in Switzerland.

initiatives aimed at advancing women's political participation and engaging women in sustaining peace.

In 2020, aiming to highlight the many achievements of women in building and sustaining peace as well as the challenges they face while participating in peace efforts, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies will be presenting stories of women leaders in the area of peacebuilding and peacekeeping. *Women for Peace: Stories* will be launched in New York in September prior to the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security.

Additionally, a project will be carried out in The Gambia beginning soon aimed at building the capacity of women leaders in the country in order to advance women's political participation.

With women and girls representing half of the world's population, advancing gender equality is critical to advancing in all areas of society, including economic growth, development and democracy. While some advancement in achieving Goal 5 has been made since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is clear that far more needs to be done to advance women's participation in public life - not merely to uphold international commitments but to tackle global inequality that hurts economic growth and hinders development.

Before giving the podium to our next distinguished speaker, the Ambassador of Romania to Poland, let me emphasize that advancing women's participation in public life is fundamental to a vibrant and

durable democracy and is one of the key tenets of the Warsaw Declaration.

As noted in our partner International IDEA's 2019 Report on the Global State of Democracy "democracies are far more likely to create the conditions necessary for sustainable development", and levels of gender equality and access to political power are overall higher in democracies.

So, let us constantly improve democracy through ensuring the full participation of women in public life.