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**Madam Chair,**

I welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Community of Democracies.

It is an honor to follow our Community of Democracies Presidency, Romania, and Governing Council Member States Italy and India in this discussion on  **Equal access to justice for all.**

The Community of Democracies is a coalition comprised of States that support adherence to common democratic values and standards and seek to work together on these issues.

What makes the Community of Democracies different as an intergovernmental coalition of states, is that it was built not on geographical, linguistic, or economic criteria but on commitment in 2000 by 106 countries to the shared values enshrined in the **Warsaw Declaration,** 19 core principles for the establishment and consolidation of democracy.

The importance of rule of law as a basis for democracy is central to the Warsaw Declaration and can be seen highlighted in:

**Principle 3 *-*** ***The right of every person to equal protection under the law, without any discrimination as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.***

**Principle 11*- The right of every person to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention; to be free form torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; and to receive due process of law, including to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. (Principle 11)***

As well as

**Principle 12 - *That rights, which are essential to full and effective participation in a democratic society, be enforced by a competent, independent and impartial judiciary open to the public, established and protected by law. (Principle 12)***

We welcome the democracy initiative recently launched on June 21, 2021 at the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which creates a positive, unifying and rallying narrative around democracy and human rights.

The Community of Democracies notes the crucial importance of the inclusion of civil society in this initiative. Civil Society is a fundamental block of democracy and have an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, essential to the functioning and sustainability of democratic societies.

As the Community of Democracies, we hope to engage in the democracy initiative and cooperate closely with UN Human Rights Council on efforts related to democracy, rule of law, and human rights, seeking opportunities of synergies aimed at strengthening democracy globally.

We look forward to the fruitful dialogue and discussions in this Forum.