



Community
of Democracies

2021 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies

February 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Dear Member States of the Governing Council and Friends of the Community of Democracies,

I am pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies.

In 2021, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies began the year with a sincere attempt to return to normalcy after the global pandemic of 2020. The Delta and Omicron variants, however, impacted this course. In-person activities supporting human rights and the rule of law took place in varied locations as Geneva, Morocco, and through joint missions with civil society to Finland and Romania. Other planned for in-person events were eventually deemed safest only for virtual formats, as with the Community of Democracies' 10th Ministerial Conference and the Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy and Governing Council meetings.

The Community of Democracies welcomed the extension of the Romanian Presidency until September 2022. I am very grateful to Romania for its supportive and visionary leadership, which prioritized crucial issues for democracy, specifically the engagement of youth in public life and digitalization to support democratic governance. This generous offer of extension allowed a smooth continuation of the current leadership in ever-changing circumstances. Later in 2022, the Community of Democracies looks forward to its next Presidency.

The Community of Democracies implemented its 2021 work in an environment of democratic challenge. Longstanding threats to freedom, such as the struggle with corruption, continued as a new tragedy occurred in the loss of Afghanistan's transitioning democracy. There was increased need to speak to climate change, which combined with the pandemic last year to exert an impact on societies across the globe.

There was also an environment of resiliency. Across the world, civil society remained in the streets, pressing democracies and authoritarian governments alike for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Summit for Democracy took place in December 2021, with commitments made by attending states for a "Year of Action" in 2022. In addition to the promotion and encouragement of young people in democracy and dialogue on the use of new technologies to strengthen freedom and human rights, the Community of Democracies in 2021 was forward-looking on gender equality.

In 2021, an example of resiliency could be seen in the Ministerial Conference, the most significant gathering of the Community of Democracies. The 10th Ministerial Conference, held virtually on the margins of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, gathered foreign ministers and civil society to discuss the theme of Democracy and Resilience. The Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed the determination of the Community of Democracies to engage in global efforts supporting the principles of the Warsaw Declaration. Two decades since the foundation of this coalition of democratic states, the ministerial conferences remain a platform for established and young democracies from different parts of the world to share opinions, ideas, and experiences.

Despite logistical challenges from the pandemic, in 2021 the Community of Democracies partnered with NGOs from six countries to survey democracy in 55 countries, conducted in 45 languages and through interviews with more than 47,000 individuals. Among the many findings is that across the world, majorities select representative democracy as the best of political systems and that people aspire to more freedom, even in hybrid and authoritarian systems. Central to the work of the Community of Democracies in 2022 will be the survey finding that dissatisfaction is not against democracy as a political system but against poor performance by democracies ill-function around the world.

In 2022, the Community of Democracies will seek flexibility and new solutions to ongoing and emerging challenges. For sure, values-based multilateralism strongly allied with civil society will remain critical to efforts to protect human rights and support the resiliency of democracies. The Community of Democracies will continue to offer its assistance to governments worldwide and work with its Governing Council Member States, civil society, and other stakeholders to promote and protect shared human rights and democratic values.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Presidency

EXTENSION OF THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 2022

In May 2021, the Governing Council welcomed the extension of the Romanian Presidency until September 2022. Romania has provided visionary and supportive leadership to the Community of Democracies, and the mandate extension allowed for a smooth continuation of the Community of Democracies in the challenging and fast-changing circumstances of the global pandemic.

Within its extended mandate, Romania, under the leadership of H.E. Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, continued to actively promote its Presidency's objectives, including fostering and consolidating democratic values and democracy at the global level, youth empowerment and participation in decision-making, and the role of digitalization in democratic governance and processes.

The Presidency hosted several CoD events throughout the year, including the most significant gathering of the Community of Democracies - the Ministerial Conference and the Youth Forum. Representing the Presidency, Foreign Minister Aurescu participated in numerous CoD events, reiterating Romania's full support to protecting and promoting shared democratic values of the Warsaw Declaration.



Governing Council

In 2021, the meetings of the CoD Governing Council remained an essential platform to discuss geopolitical challenges and share knowledge and ideas reflecting diverse experiences of young and old democracies from all regions of the world as well as a civil society perspective.

33rd GOVERNING COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING

On April 20-21, 2021, a two-day virtual meeting of the Community of Democracies Governing Council took place. Chaired by the Romanian Presidency, the session gathered Governing Council Member States and the Civil Society Pillar representatives to discuss current democracy, the rule of law, and human rights issues. Addressing the Governing Council, the Foreign Minister of Romania, H.E. Bogdan Aurescu, provided an update on the 10th Ministerial Conference, which, delayed by the pandemic, took place in the virtual form on the margins of the 76th U.N. General Assembly in New York in September 2021.

The Governing Council meeting also featured a guest speaker, Mr. Robert Oliphant (M.P.), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. He spoke on Canada's initiative, "Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations" endorsed by most Governing Council Member States. Arbitrary detention violates established human rights principles, including Principle 11 of the Warsaw Declaration.

The 33rd meeting of the Community of Democracies Governing Council successfully adopted a detailed Outcome Statement, in which the Member States emphasized that full, equal, and meaningful participation and representation of all women and girls is crucial for democracy.



EXTRAORDINARY GOVERNING COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN MALI

Held by CoD Presidency Romania on June 11, 2021, the Extraordinary Governing Council discussed the deteriorating situation in the Republic of Mali following the second military coup in May 2021. Following discussions at the Extraordinary Governing Council, the CoD suspended the Republic of Mali's membership in its Governing Council due to violations of the core democratic principles outlined in the Warsaw Declaration and subsequent Ministerial Declarations. The suspension is intended to remain in effect until the rule of law and constitutional order is restored.

The arbitrary detention of civilian authorities in May 2021, following the abrupt removal of Mali's elected government by the military in August 2020, stand in grave violation of the democratic principles stated in the CoD founding document, the Warsaw Declaration. "At this critical time for Mali's future, the Community of Democracies remains committed to support Mali in the restoration of the democratic order, including organization of free and fair elections, and to assist a future democratically elected government to fulfill the criteria to reinstate the country's membership in the Community's Governing Council" – commented Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett.

EXTRAORDINARY GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING ON THE 10th MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

As part of preparations for the 10th Ministerial Conference, on September 16, 2021, Member States met for a virtual session to agree on the final draft of the Ministerial Declaration.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

In 2021, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies worked with external consultants who prepared reports, the first of which focused on Identifying key areas in order to develop a series of recommendations for updating Community of Democracies by-laws, as well as procedures and processes, with a view to facilitating multilateral diplomatic cooperation. The second special report, titled "External Assessment of the Civil Society Pillar of the Community of Democracies" was offered for consideration of the Governing Council.

Executive Committee

In 2021, the Executive Committee continued to provide strategic recommendations to the Governing Council and held 12 meetings in the course of the year. In September 2021, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States agreed to extend their mandate on the Committee for another year.

Working Groups

Working Group on CoD Governance Effectiveness

In 2021, the International Steering Committee (ISC) representatives in the Working Group requested that the procedure on suspension and reinstatement of a Governing Council member be amended for the CoD to respond to democratic backsliding in a faster and more effective way. The ISC's suggestions, together with the findings of two external assessments conducted in 2021, shall be further discussed by the Working Group in 2022.

Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society

In 2021, the Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society met and exchanged information regarding the situation of civil society in over 10 countries.

The Working Group considered the use of "Calls for Action" and "Calls for Recognition" to illustrate support to CSOs and partners facing either negative or positive repercussions as a result of specific legislation or regulation. Working Group efforts continue to be important given the rising threats to civil society organizations around the world.

Working Group members shared tools, information on upcoming events, and analysis developed around the thematic of enabling and protecting civil society. The Working Group continues to explore creative ways to engage on this issue.

Working Group on Democracy and Technology

The Working Group on Democracy and Technology (WGD&T) provides a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration, exchange of best practices and lessons learned, development of common projects and ideas, and the creation of technical solutions that support democracy and help safeguard democratic institutions.

In 2021, the WGD&T held two meetings. On 28 January, the Working Group Chair – Georgia welcomed participants to its first meeting, an overview of the Work Plan was presented with the main goal and activities proposed for the Working Group. An open discussion followed providing an opportunity for WG members to share their ideas and priorities.

A second meeting of the WGD&T was held on 4 March. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss in detail proposed activities for implementation in 2021 for the WG members' consideration. Activities proposed included: 1) knowledge sharing in using technology to support democratic governance; 2) mitigating technologically enabled threats to democracy and human rights; and 3) engaging with other multilateral initiatives engaged on democracy and technology.

The Working Group on Democracy and Technology held a virtual side-event on "Developing safeguards to prevent the abuse of new technologies and growing influence of digital authoritarianism" in the margins of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly on 30 September 2021.

Additionally, a study on digital platforms and public goods that support democratic governance, specifically election processes, was conducted by the Working Group. The study provides an overview on digital platforms and public goods, identifying technology advancements and good practices in digital platforms for elections, highlighting examples in GC member states. The outcome of the study will document good practices and distil principles on the responsible use of technology that can safeguard democratic institutions while expanding access to public services. Additionally, it will further allow for the exchange of experiences between members of the WGD&T as well as with GC Member States.

The study is expected to be shared with GC members in February 2022.

Working Group on Women and Democracy

In 2021, the following gender-equality related events were coordinated with the Working Group on Women and Democracy:

- Virtual event “Feminist Foreign Policy in 2021” – The event took place on March 9, 2021, and featured representatives of Governing Council Member States Canada, Lithuania, Mexico, and Sweden who presented the main objectives and priorities of the Feminist Foreign Policy of their countries and emphasized the value of applying a systematic gender equality perspective across the foreign policy agenda.
- Virtual event “Enhancing Peace Through Women’s and Girls’ Education” – This virtual side event was held on September 21, 2021, on the margins of the Tenth CoD Ministerial Conference discussed the critical value of education of women and girls for peacebuilding processes and conflict resolution. The event highlighted the disproportionate impact of war or conflict on women and girls, their education, and self-development.

Additionally, the Working Group continued to be active in social media through the twitter account @CoD_Women, highlighting the Community's work to advance gender equality.

10th Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies



On September 22, 2021, foreign ministers and high-level officials of democratic states from across the world, representatives of youth, and civil society convened for a virtual 10th CoD Ministerial Conference to discuss Democracy and Resilience: Shared Goals. Hosted by the CoD Presidency of Romania and chaired by Romanian Foreign Minister H.E. Bogdan Aurescu, the event was organized during the High-Level Week of the 76th UN General Assembly in New York City and offered in a virtual format due to ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions.

In keynote remarks, speakers highlighted that democratic solidarity and a strong multilateral system are vital for democratic resilience and addressing global challenges. The President of the 76th UN General Assembly, H.E. Abdullah Shahid, underscored the critical role

of efficient multilateralism in building strong, resilient democracies, based on respect for human rights. The UN Under-Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, H.E. Rosemary A. DiCarlo, outlined three ways for democracies to adapt to current challenges: build more inclusive societies, enhance international solidarity, and focus on crisis and conflict prevention. The US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, H.E. Uzra Zeya, underlined the importance of democratic renewal and highlighted the crucial role of civil society working with governments and international bodies.

As in each of the nine previous ministerial conferences, civil society participated alongside democratic governments. The Chair of the International Steering Committee of the Civil Society Pillar of the Community of Democracies, Ms. Paulina Ibarra, cautioned those assembled, saying, “The pandemic has aggravated threats, as authoritarian, and even democratic leaders take advantage of the crisis to consolidate power through emergency laws that impact human rights and other core democratic principles.” The President and CEO of the National Endowment for Democracy, Mr. Damon Wilson, emphasized that current challenges to democracy can also be seen as opportunities to strengthen cooperation of like-minded democratic partners.



In his welcome remarks, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett highlighted the importance of states' adherence to the rule of law and human rights both in their domestic and foreign policies. He stressed the need for creating an enabling environment for a robust civil society and independent media, embracing the enormous potential of digital technologies to support good democratic governance and combat corruption, and ensuring gender equality, youth empowerment, and full inclusion in public life.

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

The Bucharest Ministerial Declaration of the Community of Democracies was adopted as an outcome of the event. “The Ministerial Declaration underlines the CoD's determination to remain fully engaged in continuing to advance the common global efforts to consolidate resilient democracy all over the world, including by supporting the upcoming Summit for Democracy organized by the US Administration” – said Foreign Minister Aureescu.



Side events held on the margins of the 10th Ministerial Conference

CoD YOUTH FORUM 2021

A companion virtual event to the 10th Ministerial Conference, the CoD Youth Forum gathered young democracy leaders from Asia, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East, and Europe to share youth perspectives on democracy-related issues in their regions. The summary of the Forum can be found under the Youth Empowerment chapter of this report.

ENHANCING PEACE THROUGH WOMEN'S AND GIRLS EDUCATION

This virtual side event discussed the critical value of education of women and girls for peacebuilding processes and conflict resolution, and highlighted the disproportionate impact of war or conflict on women and girls, their education and self-development, and discussed potential solutions to support women during the conflict and post conflict realities to unleash their full potential. The event was organized in cooperation with the CoD Working Group on Women and Democracy.

DEVELOPING SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT THE ABUSE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND GROWING INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

This online side event organized by the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology gathered representatives of private sector and civil society. Discussed were ways to protect democracies against misuse of new technologies as well as embrace the vast potential of digital tools to support good democratic governance.

Civil Society

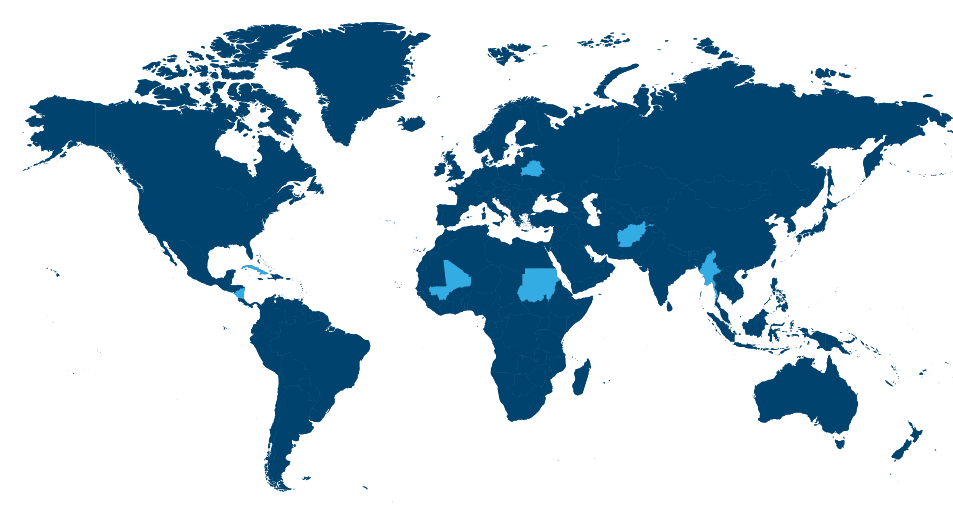
Non-governmental participation in CoD activities, through the Civil Society Pillar (CSP), retained its important role, in Governing Council meetings as well as in the 10th Ministerial Conference. The CSP's International Steering Committee hosted the virtual meeting of the Civil Society Pillar Assembly in September, which gathered member organizations from different parts of the world to discuss the main objectives for enhancing the Pillar's operation within and outside the CoD.

In addition to activities held by the Civil Society Pillar, representatives of civil organizations participated in the many CoD events held in the course of the year, sharing their knowledge and experience on various democracy-related thematic areas and providing assessments of countries from Armenia to Belarus to Cuba to Myanmar and Nicaragua.

With representations of the International Steering Committee, the Secretary General undertook information missions to Finland and Romania. Meetings with civil society were also a part of Secretary General's visits to specific countries, to gain a better perspective on local and regional challenges and opportunities to democracy.

The Bucharest Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 10th Ministerial highlighted a significant role of the civil society organizations in advocating for democracy and human rights and holding governments accountable. It also emphasized that an enabling environment for civil society is an essential component of a sustainable and resilient democracy.

Addressing Country-Specific Challenges



AFGHANISTAN

Following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, SG Thomas E. Garrett, in his statement on the situation in Afghanistan, joined the many Member States of the Governing Council in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan as they suffered a forcible removal of their elected government. [Read full statement by SG Thomas E. Garrett.](#)

BELARUS

To support aspirations for freedom and democracy of Belarusian people who have been peacefully protesting against the country's authoritarian regime following the 2020's highly fraudulent presidential elections, the Community of Democracies hosted a number of events to gain a better perspective on the situation and express solidarity with Belarusians.

In a discussion held on February 9, 2020: "Six Months of Protests: Update from Belarus", Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett spoke to the leader of democratic Belarus, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and her Senior Advisor, Franak Viacorka, on the current situation in Belarus and the way forward. [Read summary or watch the event.](#)

Additionally, in an interview for the CoD series "Women Leading in Crises", Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya spoke of the dramatic and ongoing struggle for democracy in Belarus. [Watch the interview.](#)

The protests in Belarus have been eagerly joined by the young generation. The CoD event "Youth for Democratic Change", held on February 4, 2021, discussed the role of youth in democratic change, with presentations by young Belarusian democracy activists and a joint discussion with CoD Youth Leads from Haiti, Portugal, Romania, and South Africa.

[Watch the event.](#)

In December 2021, following the illegitimate sentencing of political prisoners Siarhei Tsikhanouski, Dzimitry Popov, Artsiom Sakau, Ihar Losik, Uladzimir Tsyhanovich, and Mykalay Statkevich, the Secretary General issued a statement in which he called for their immediate release, together with the hundreds detained arbitrarily following the fraudulent 2020 election.

Also in December, the CoD YouthLeads called for the immediate release of 23-year-old Sofia Sapiega who, with the opposition blogger and democracy activist Raman Pratasevic, was unlawfully detained by Belarusian authorities after the forced landing of her flight in Minsk on May 23, 2021.

CUBA

In September 2021, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett issued a Statement on Cuban Civil and Political Rights, in which he highlighted violations of human rights following the July 11 peaceful citizen protests. [Full statement.](#)

To better understand the situation following the Cuban government's repressive response to citizen protests on July 11, 2021, the CoD also held a closed-door event with Cuban activists, civil society, and the CoD Member States to exchange information and knowledge. The accounts given by Cuban human rights defenders and their families as to the harsh steps taken by the government against the spontaneous and peaceful protests spoke eloquently to the lack of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the nation.

On November 12, 2021, Governing Council Members Estonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and the United States of America issued a joint statement, in which they expressed their unequivocal support to the right of all Cuban citizens to express their views peacefully. They called upon the Government of Cuba to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to engage with all the representatives of the civil society in a constructive dialogue. [Full statement.](#)

MALI

In 2021, the Community of Democracies took a number of steps to address the deteriorating situation in Mali.

In January 2021, in his statement on the situation in Mali, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett reaffirmed the Community of Democracies' commitment to supporting its path towards the restoration of constitutional order.

In March 2021, the CoD held a virtual discussion: "Update on the Transition in the Republic of Mali." The event featured Fatima Al Ansar of the Mali Center for Strategic Studies, who spoke to the importance of ensuring women's meaningful participation in the democratic transition, including peace-building processes and organization of elections. Moussa Kondo of civil society organization Accountability LAB provided an update on Mali's situation before and after the military coup, highlighting past and present challenges including countering corruption, addressing insecurity, and ensuring transparent and fair elections.

In May 2021, Secretary General Garrett issued another statement on the situation in Mali, in which he condemned the detention of the President, Prime Minister, and other civilian officials of the transitional government of Mali. He also joined the United Nations, African Union, and other international bodies in calling for their immediate, safe, and unconditional release.

As already mentioned in this report, in June 2021, following the Extraordinary Governing Council, the Community of Democracies suspended Mali from its Governing Council membership due to violations of the democratic norms enshrined in the Warsaw Declaration. At the same time, the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett reiterated the CoD commitment to support Mali in the restoration of the democratic order, including organization of free and fair elections, and assisting a future democratically elected government to fulfill the criteria to reinstate Mali as the CoD Governing Council Member.

MYANMAR

In his statement on February 2, 2021, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett called for the immediate release of unjustly detained Myanmar political leaders and urged the military to allow for the restoration of the democratic process. [Read full statement.](#)

On February 12, 2021, CoD Governing Council Members Canada, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America released a statement in which they called upon the Myanmar military to respect democratic institutions and processes and the rule of law, and to reinstate the elected government, release all those under arbitrary detention; respect freedom of expression, and refrain from violence against members of the public.

[Read full statement.](#)

The Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies (PSCD) also shared a statement by the Australia-Myanmar Constitutional Democracy Project (AMCDP). The Secretary General joined the AMCDP letter, which condemned the attack on democracy in Myanmar and outlined the AMCDP work which the PSCD had been part of in building constitutional democracy in Myanmar. [Read full statement.](#)

In March 2021, addressing the escalation of violence against peaceful protesters in Myanmar, SG Thomas E. Garrett called for the immediate stop of using such tactics by the military forces and supported the statement by the UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews outlining potential options for more action by the UN Member States. [Read full statement.](#)

In December 2021, following sham verdicts against President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Mayor Myo Aung, SG Garrett issued another statement calling the regime to release the detained along with all political prisoners in Myanmar. [Read full statement.](#)

NICARAGUA

Stating "The Ortega government rigged the country's electoral process through authoritarian actions that violated human rights principles" in response to Nicaragua's presidential elections in November 2021, which stood in violation of democratic principles and international law, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett expressed his support with Nicaraguan people and their right to choose their representatives in free and fair elections. [Full statement.](#)

SUDAN

“I urge Sudan’s military leaders to adhere to the constitution and the principles of the Juba Agreement and reinstate the democratic governance through a peaceful process with inclusion of civil society”

Following the October 25, 2021, military coup in Sudan that overthrew a civilian-led transitional government, SG Thomas E. Garrett issued a statement in which he joined the CoD Civil Society Pillar and many of the CoD Governing Council Members in condemning the coup.

Full statement.

Youth empowerment

Throughout 2021, the CoD continued to work with youth from across the world to discuss country-specific as well as global democracy and human-rights related issues. The CoD Youth Leads expanded and remained actively engaged in a number of CoD activities, from thematic discussions to major CoD gatherings including its Ministerial Conference, Youth Forum, and Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracies.



EXAMPLES OF EVENTS:

CoD Youth Forum 2021

A companion virtual event to the CoD 10th Ministerial Conference, the CoD Youth Forum gathered young democracy leaders from Asia, the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Europe to share youth perspectives on democracy-related issues in their regions.

Day 1 of the Forum featured opening remarks by SG Thomas E. Garrett and Afghan activist Sarina Faizy; discussions on the Challenges to Democracy in Americas: Youth Perspectives; and Youth Leads Conversation with Rosarie Tucci, Director at USAID's Center for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance who outlined USAID youth programmes.

Day 2 discussed Youth Enabling the SDGs at the Local Level in Asia, and Youth Activists Driving Change in Europe. The session also featured Youth Leads conversation with Romanian Ambassador to UNESCO Simona-Mirela Miculescu who shared her experience to young people interested in a diplomatic career.



The Youth Forum's Day 3 focused on Youth as Key Contributors to Democracy and Peace in Africa and MENA, and featured Youth Leads conversation with the Secretary General of International IDEA, Kevin Casas-Zamora, who offered a range of practical advice for young leaders planning a career in politics.

Youth Participation in Political Processes: Voters, Candidates, Elected Officials

This virtual CoD Youth Leads-organized event featured young activists and elected officials from Andorra, Estonia, Lithuania and Morocco, to share their experiences and practices utilized in their countries aimed at increasing youth participation in electoral processes, including in pre- and post- electoral periods.

Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy

The Summit for Democracy, hosted by US President Joe Biden, brought together leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector to build a shared foundation for global democratic renewal. To these crucial sectors, the Community of Democracies recommended the specific engagement of youth.



Aiming to provide space for the next generation of leaders to contribute to the Summit's discussions and conclusions, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, together with CoD YouthLeads, and European Democracy Youth Network, convened a virtual Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy, held on the margins of the Summit.

The Youth Assembly brought together 18- to 35- years old representatives for an online conversation with high-level global representatives, including the Biden Administration and civil society. The Assembly provided democracy leaders an opportunity

to deliver their messages to youth and pose questions to young people about their views regarding democracy. A series of interactive discussions focused on the future of values-based multilateralism and presented an opportunity for youth to voice their broader set of democracy priorities and to welcome and inform the initial session of the U.S.-led Summit.

Gender Equality

In 2021, the CoD continued to promote the advancement of women's participation in public life through a number of activities. Additionally, the Outcome Statement of the 33rd Governing Council reiterated that mainstreaming gender equality across all areas of democratic governance is the way forward to build inclusive societies in a post-pandemic world.

STRENGTHENING CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE GAMBIA

In 2021, the CoD finalized the project on Strengthening Civic and Political Participation of Women in The Gambia, with workshops for the Gambian women leaders, organised in January 2021 together with the project implementing partner Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Presented in the hybrid form of both on-site and online participation, the workshop covered communications, message development, and advocacy strategy, led by international and local trainers. The overall aim of the project sought to advance the position of women in political parties, civil society organisations and their communities.



FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IN 2021

Gender equality should be mainstreamed across all governance, including foreign policy. The CoD event on "Feminist Foreign Policy in 2021" gathered high-level women speakers from Governing Council Members Canada, Lithuania, Mexico and Sweden, to explore strategies on promoting gender equality and defending human rights through a feminist foreign policy. [Watch the event here.](#)

ENHANCING PEACE THROUGH WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

This virtual side event on the margins of the 10th Ministerial Conference discussed the critical value of education of women and girls for peacebuilding processes and conflict resolution, and highlighted the disproportionate impact of war or conflict on women and girls, their education and self-development.

WOMEN LEADING IN CRISES: CoD INTERVIEW SERIES

To shine a spotlight on women leaders, the CoD developed a series of articles about women tirelessly working at the frontlines of crises, including in the pandemic, natural disasters, political and economic crisis, and conflict. The series features a diverse set of voices of established and emerging women activists and politicians to discuss their experiences of leadership in each region of the world. The initiative was developed with the generous support from Governing Council Member the Republic of Korea. [Watch interviews.](#)



Other Thematic Events and Activities

21st ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES

The Community of Democracies celebrated its 21st Anniversary at a reception event hosted by the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw. The anniversary event organized by CoD Presidency of Romania gathered diplomats from Warsaw-based missions of CoD Governing Council Member States.



ENABLING AND PROTECTING CIVIL SOCIETY IN ARMENIA

Vibrant and pluralistic civil society is a crucial component of every democracy. A virtual discussion on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society in Armenia, held on March 25, 2021, gathered representatives of Armenian civil society, media, and a regional expert from the National Endowment for Democracy to discuss the country's evolving situation with particular focus on challenges to democracy civic space in the aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. [Watch the event here.](#)

FOCUS ON THE WESTERN BALKANS: SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE PRESPA FORUM DIALOGUE

Speaking in a High-Level Plenary Session at Prespa Forum Dialogue on July 2, 2021, SG Thomas E. Garrett highlighted that resetting the international community's synergy on the Western Balkans can be based upon nations that hold the same values and ideals, and on nations that want to build bridges towards the same goals and aspirations.

ASIA AFRICA DEMOCRACY FORUM

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remain an urgent call of action for all countries on critical issues such as gender equality, climate change, and reducing inequalities. Civil society organizations play an essential role as partners in implementing and monitoring the SDGs. On October 26-28, 2021, civil society organizations from Asia and Africa convened at the Community of Democracies' three-day virtual Asia Africa Democracy Forum to discuss defending and promoting democracy and civic space within the SDG context. Held every year by Asia Democracy Network and the Community of Democracies, the event created a platform for in-depth discussions on the state and challenges of democracy and civic space in Asia and the engagement of civil society organizations with the SDGs and human rights in the COVID-19 pandemic.

SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE UN FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

"Human rights, the rule of law and democracy are at the core of the CoD Mission to advance and protect democracy worldwide" – highlighted SG Thomas E. Garrett speaking at the 3rd session of the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law: Equal access to justice for all: a necessary element of democracy, rule of law and human rights protection, held in Geneva on November 16, 2021.



During his visit to Geneva to participate in the event, SG Garrett also met with the High Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. Topics discussed included potential areas for cooperation on democracy and human rights issues.

CLIMATE CHANGE: A CRITICAL TEST FOR DEMOCRACY

The Secretary General's visit in November to Geneva provided new opportunities for the work of the Community of Democracies. A hybrid event, hosted by the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations in Geneva, introduced the CoD's new focus on climate disruption and democracy. This event discussed how democracies can address climate change and its consequences. It also provided a space to follow-up on the discussions and key recommendations from the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON INCLUSIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION TO PREVENT AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Challenges and good practices in preventing and countering violent extremism were discussed at the Global Conference on Inclusive Democratic Participation, held in Rabat on November 24-25, 2021, by the Community of Democracies, Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Rabita Mohammadia of Ulemas and the National Human Rights Council of Morocco, under the High Patronage of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the Presidency of the Community of Democracies.

With opening remarks the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco, Foreign Minister of Romania, CoD Secretary General, the Secretary General of the Rabita Mohammadia of Ulemas, and the President of the National Human Rights Council, day 1 of the conference also featured a keynote speech by Ms. Clare Hutchinson, former NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, and a panel discussion on "Radicalization risks of social media".

Day 2 included two panel discussions: "Importance of women's participation in preventing and countering violent extremism" and "Promoting a dialogue of inclusivity and tolerance to counter extremist narratives."

"We need to tame the digital revolution to ensure that the media and social networks also play a key role in preventing violent extremism, especially for young people, and take effective measures, both online and offline" – Foreign Minister of Morocco, H.E. Nasser Bourita



SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY: HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON DEFENDING AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISM

On November 20, 2021, SG Garrett participated in the Forum for the Future of Democracy, held in Vilnius by CoD Member State Lithuania. This high-level forum on resisting authoritarianism was organized in support of the upcoming Summit For Democracy to contribute meaningfully to the preparation of the Summit.

SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE WARSAW DIALOGUE FOR DEMOCRACY

On December 10, 2021, SG Thomas E. Garrett participated in the 9th edition of the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy. This regular international conference is organized by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2012. The 2021 edition was dedicated to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on democratic societies.



CoD CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS PREPARATIONS OF THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

U.S. President Joe Biden pledged in his 2020 election campaign to rebuild global alliances, exemplified in a Summit for Democracy, which he said would “renew the spirit and shared purpose of the nations of the free world”. To discuss outcomes and activities of a gathering for democracy, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies in cooperation with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance – International IDEA, and the Open Government Partnership (OGP) came together to start the conversation and pave the way “Towards a Summit for Democracy”. This meeting, held in April 2021, brought together high-level representatives of the three convening organizations, who shared lessons learned from their ongoing work to support democracy worldwide.

As President Biden noted in his inaugural speech: “Democracy doesn’t happen by accident. And we have to renew it with each generation.” Working with the next generation of leaders, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, in partnership with CoD YouthLeads and the European Democracy Youth Network, convened a Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy. The event gathered young leaders from across the world for a conversation with high-level global representatives. Through a series of interactive discussions on the future of values-based multilateralism, the Assembly provided the opportunity for youth to welcome and inform the initial session of the Summit for Democracy. The key points from the discussions were also presented at the Young Democratic Leaders Discussion hosted by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. In addition, the Community of Democracies joined in a multi-stakeholder Global Democracy Coalition Forum convened to facilitate the conversation on democracy as inputs to the Summit for Democracy.

Secretary General's Travels

BUCHAREST

To discuss priorities for the extended Romanian Presidency and preparations for the CoD 10th Ministerial Conference, on May 24-26, 2021, SG Thomas E. Garrett traveled to Bucharest to meet with officials of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The agenda included meetings with Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, State Secretary Cornel Feruta, and representatives of the Legal Department and International Organizations Department at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of the visit, SG also met with representative of the CoD Civil Society Pillar as well as Romanian CoD Youth Lead.

On September 7-9, 2021, the Secretary General and Mr. Robert Herman, representing the Civil Society Pillar, conducted a joint mission to Bucharest as part of Romania's decision to renew its membership on the CoD Governing Council. The mission met with high-level representatives of Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the parliament, and civil society. In 2022, Romania and eight other nations will be considered for membership renewal.



TBLISI

On June 21-24, SG Thomas E. Garrett traveled to the capital of Georgia, where he met with high-level government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of youth and civil society. During his meeting with Foreign Minister of Georgia David Zalkaliani, SG discussed Georgia's chairmanship of the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology, and the fall 2021 10th Ministerial Conference. During the visit, the Secretary General also travelled to Odzisi, from where he observed Russian military positions in the area of Georgia under occupation.



SKOPJE

North Macedonia is the newest Member State of the CoD Governing Council and the only Member State from the West Balkans region. On June 29- July 3, 2021, SG Garrett made a visit to North Macedonia to meet with government officials and civil society, and to participate in the Prespa Forum Dialogue hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia. Enabling civil society in its watchdog role was a key focus of the roundtable discussion of the civil society roundtable attended by SG Garrett and civil society groups working on education, youth, and marginalized groups.



PARIS

On July 12-13, 2021, Secretary General visited France. During the visit, he met with representatives of the Senate, UNESCO, think tanks and the Fondation pour l'innovation politique (Fondapol). The discussions centered around democracy, multilateralism and education issues, and transatlantic relations between the U.S. and Europe.



RABAT

On 15 and 16 July 2021, SG Thomas E. Garrett traveled to Rabat to deliver a welcome address at the CoD-led youth training on democracy's role in countering violent extremism and meet with high-level government officials and partner organizations of the training program. "Discussions I had with Foreign Minister Bourita during my visit in 2019 led to the creation of this training program for young people, and this training is going to be followed by an international conference later this year" – highlighted SG Garrett in his welcome remarks. The training on Inclusive Democratic Participation to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism was organized by the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies together with the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Rabita Mohammedia of Ulemas, and the National Human Rights Council of Morocco.

As part of the visit, the SG held meetings with partner organizations of the training, including Ms. Amina Bouayach, President of the National Human Rights Council of Morocco, and Ahmed Abbadi, Secretary General of the Rabita Mohammedia of Ulemas, to discuss democratic values in the promotion of human rights and preventing violent extremism.



HELSINKI

On October 27-29, 2021, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett and Ms. Paulina Ibarra, Chair of the International Steering Committee, visited Governing Council Member State Finland as part of the CoD membership renewal process. The SG met with Foreign Minister H.E. Pekka Haavisto and with the ISC Chair spoke to parliamentarians and civil society to discuss Finland's continued engagement and other multilateral bodies promoting and protecting human rights and democratic values.



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