



Community  
of Democracies

# 2022 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies

February 2023



## **2022 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

### MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL THOMAS E. GARRETT

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

I would like to present the 2022 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies (CoD).

This was a year of momentum at the Community of Democracies, including the transfer of the CoD Presidency from Romania (2019 to 2022) to Canada. The CoD made strides through multilateral engagement on the margins of global democracy-related gatherings, youth and civil society activities, thematic events to examine rule of law and human rights issues, and new publications on matters ranging from youth participation in politics to the use of new technologies in democratic elections to the difficult situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

At all possible opportunities, I express deep appreciation to Romania, and specifically to Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, for supportive and visionary guidance of the Community of Democracies. The three years of Romania's Presidency provided a smooth continuation of leadership in the challenging times of the global pandemic and during the outbreak of war in Ukraine. I am also grateful to Romania for its strong emphasis on promoting youth engagement in public life, including the organization of three CoD Youth Forums, which allowed young voices to engage with government representatives and present their priorities for democracy.

In September 2022, the CoD welcomed its new Presidency of Canada. Canada plays a key leadership role in the global promotion and protection of human rights and democracy, and it is an honor to work together with Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and the Canadian Presidency in our mission to strengthen democracy worldwide.

In addition to the new Presidency, the CoD welcomed a new Chair of the International Steering Committee of the Civil Society Pillar, Mr. Enrique de Obarrio of the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy, known as REDLAD, who brings valuable expertise as both a civil society advocate and a private sector leader.

In 2022, the Community of Democracies remained actively engaged in multilateral dialogue on the global priorities for democracy. Through its work with the Governing Council Member States, the Civil Society Pillar and international partner organizations, the CoD participated in multi-stakeholder engagements on the margins of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the OSCE / ODIHR Human Dimension Conference in Warsaw, and the Ninth Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.

Thematic events organized by the CoD throughout 2022 contributed to facilitating a joint discussion among governments, civil society and youth representatives on the most pressing challenges and opportunities to democracy including countering authoritarianism and disinformation, advancing youth empowerment and women's participation in public life, or addressing country specific situations. Among these, Russia's war against Ukraine strongly influenced CoD activities during the whole year and Governing Council Members clearly expressed their solidarity and support to Ukraine's sovereignty.

The Governing Council of the Community of Democracies continued to serve as an important intergovernmental platform to share experiences of democracies from different world regions and facilitate a joint diplomatic action to defend democratic values enshrined in the Warsaw Declaration. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Governing Council Members expressed their unequivocal support to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Addressing protests in Iran, many Member States stood in solidarity with the courageous people of Iran, particularly women. Through many other activities, various Governing Council Members reiterated their commitment to democratic values and stood against the violation of human rights.

Multilateral human rights and rules-based architecture will remain essential to effectively counter multiple threats to democracy, stand against dictatorships undermining democratic values, and embrace new opportunities to strengthen democratic governance across the world's regions. The Community of Democracies will continue to participate in joint efforts to reinforce resilience of democracy through promoting and strengthening democratic values and principles.

# INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## Presidency

In 2022, Romania concluded its three-year Presidency of the Community of Democracies, during which it provided invaluable and distinguished leadership. The Romanian mandate extension from September 2021 to September 2022 was very generous, and allowed for a smooth continuation of the operations of the Community of Democracies in the challenging and fast-changing circumstances of the global pandemic and the onset of war in Ukraine.

In September 2022, the Community of Democracies welcomed Canada as its next Presidency. The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations kindly hosted the official Presidency Transfer ceremony, held in a hybrid format on 23 September 2022, with in-person participation of Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett, Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu representing the outgoing Presidency of Romania, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly representing the incoming Presidency of Canada, and joined by special guest Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu of the Republic of Moldova.

'It was an honor to join Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu of Romania and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly of Canada at the Presidency Transfer ceremony on the margins of the 77<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly. Words seem inadequate to express my deep appreciation to Foreign Minister Aurescu and Romania for the supportive and visionary leadership of the Community of Democracies over the past three years. On behalf of the Governing Council, I welcomed Canada as the next Presidency, noting its vital role in the global promotion and protection of human rights and democracy' – said SG Thomas E. Garrett.



## Governing Council

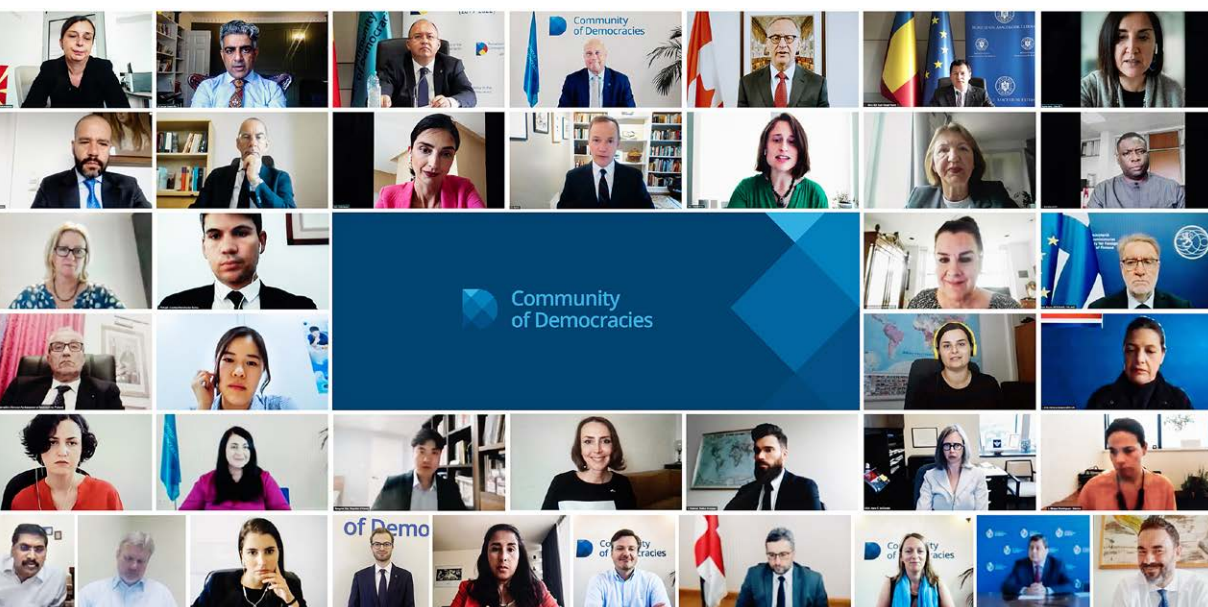
### 34<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL

On January 27–28, 2022, Member States of the CoD Governing Council and representatives of the Civil Society Pillar convened in a virtual format for the 34<sup>th</sup> Governing Council meeting, chaired by the Presidency of Romania.

In his opening remarks, **Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu** spoke of the challenges to democracy, including the threats posed by authoritarian regimes, and highlighted the crucial role of an efficient values-based multilateralism in addressing these challenges.

The critical role of values-based multilateral organizations in the protection of human rights and strengthening democratic resilience was also emphasized by **Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett** in his opening remarks.

An expert speaker, **Ms. Simona Granata – Menghini**, Director of the Venice Commission, provided an insightful presentation on “Constitutional Reforms – Complex and Challenging Processes for Ensuring Institutional Architecture of Democracy.”



## EMERGENCY GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING ON UKRAINE

Following Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, Governing Council Member States convened on March 2, 2022, for a virtual Emergency Meeting to emphasize solidarity in a time of war on democracy.

Many Member States declared their support for Ukraine, in line with an earlier [statement](#) released in February, in which they strongly condemned Russia's aggression and backed Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic aspirations of its people.

“It is now high time that the Community of Democracies States come together to provide concrete outcomes for defending and protecting the Ukrainian young democracy. We need to also support its democratically elected representatives” – said **Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu**.

“An independent and sovereign nation, Ukraine as a young democracy is fighting the brute force of now-two dictatorships seeking to extinguish democracy and the rule of law in the geographic center of Europe” – said **Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett**.

**Ms. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya** of Belarus spoke of the Lukashenka regime's support of Russia's aggression and said “Let me be clear: our nation is against the war. Belarusians do not want this war and protest against it.”

### 35<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING

On July 5–6, 2022, Member States and representatives of Civil Society Pillar gathered for the 35<sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting, held in a virtual format. The session discussed internal issues of the Community of Democracies and current challenges and opportunities to democracy worldwide. Member States expressed their deep appreciation for the Romanian Presidency's leadership and welcomed the incoming Presidency of Canada.



## GOVERNING COUNCIL STATEMENTS

The following statements were issued by the Governing Council Member States in 2022:

### Statement of the Governing Council Members on Ukraine (February 2022)

In this statement, Governing Council Member States *Canada, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania* (Community of Democracies Presidency 2019–2022), *Sweden, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, United States*, and *Uruguay* condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and expressed support for Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders.

### Statement of the Governing Council Members on Protest in Iran (November 2022)

Member States *Argentina, Canada, Chile, Estonia, Finland, Guatemala, Lithuania, Morocco, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States*, and *Uruguay* expressed solidarity with the courageous people of Iran, especially women, protesting against oppression.



## Executive Committee

As of September 2022, Members of the Executive Committee (EC) elected for 2022–2024 comprise Canada, Morocco, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania and the United States. Throughout the year, the Executive Committee continued to provide strategic recommendations and opinions to the Governing Council to inform decisions on the activities of the Community of Democracies.

During the face-to-face EC meeting held in Warsaw on December 6, 2022, Member States and representatives of the Civil Society Pillar discussed planned CoD activities for 2023. The meeting was chaired by the Presidency of Canada.





## Democracy Platform

In 2022, seeking to improve the Community of Democracies' coordination and effective cooperation with multilateral organizations and enhance its presence in the United Nations system, the PSCD sought to revitalize Democracy Platform meetings in the framework of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva.

A first online meeting was held in February 2022 with the Governing Council Member States serving as members of the UNHRC to discuss the democracy initiative and potential involvement of the CoD. The online meeting was followed by an in-person meeting held prior to the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the UNHRC on June 2, 2022, hosted by the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations in Geneva. The meeting provided a space for a first exchange of views and ideas regarding the Democracy Platform initiative, followed by a presentation of the global survey on democracy "Freedoms at risk – the Challenge of the Century" made by Mrs. Mathilde Tchounikine from Fondation pour l'innovation politique.



Considering the views expressed during the meeting held on June 2 regarding the importance and relevance of having a democracy platform in Geneva with regular meetings before each session of the UNHRC, in September 2022, the Community of Democracies hosted the first meeting of its Democracy Platform initiative in the framework of the UNHRC 51<sup>st</sup> session at the Permanent Mission of the United States in Geneva. The meeting gathered countries from within and outside the CoD who are members of the Human Rights Council and discussed the HRC 51 agenda items, other democracy related initiatives and possibilities for common engagement.

In October, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett and Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez held working level meetings in Geneva in support of the Democracy Platform initiative at the UNHRC. The meetings, which included civil society, the Permanent Mission of Romania, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, sought to further consolidate the Democracy Platform as an informal, voluntary structure for joint discussion and action within the UNHRC. The Secretary General also met with H.E. Federico Villegas, Ambassador of Argentina and 2022 President of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In 2023, 12 Member States of the CoD Governing Council will serve on the UNHRC. Democracy Platform meetings will continue to provide a space to support UN resolutions, facilitate an exchange of information on democracy-related initiatives, build alliances amongst the global democratic community in Geneva, and counter the narrative of authoritarian states.

## Civil Society

Civil society is an invaluable partner to the Community of Democracies. Throughout the year, engagement with civil society representatives from different parts of the world remained an important part of the CoD activities. This included the Secretary General's travels and participation in civil society roundtables; contributions by representatives of the CoD Civil Society Pillar to the Governing Council and Executive Committee meetings; participation of civil society representatives in CoD thematic events, which gave voice to civil society organizations from across the globe to present their perspectives on democracy and human-rights related challenges and opportunities.

On September 19, 2022, SG Thomas E. Garrett participated in the annual Assembly of the CoD Civil Society Pillar, held on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Speaking at the Civil Society Assembly, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett issued an appeal to the UN for a return to full NGO partnership and access to the headquarters in New York,



emphasizing the immense value of civil society expertise to the deliberation of diplomatic delegations.

Following the Civil Society Assembly, the Community of Democracies welcomed **Mr. Enrique de Obarrio from the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD)** as the **new Chairman of the International Steering Committee of the Civil Society Pillar**, elected by the Assembly. As a civil society advocate as well as a private sector leader, Mr. de Obarrio brings valuable expertise to the Civil Society Pillar.

On November 21, 2022, Mr. de Obarrio visited the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies to meet with Warsaw-based representatives of the CoD Governing Council Member States. Joined by the Vice Chair of the Pillar, Mr. Jacek Kucharczyk, he outlined how the Pillar intends to work with the Governing Council Member States in strengthening democracy.

He also joined Secretary General Garrett at the CoD side event in Geneva, "Civil Society: Key to Building Stronger Democracies Post-Pandemic," held on November 24, 2022 on the margins of the Fourth Session of the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. In his remarks, Mr. de Obarrio highlighted the importance of a constructive dialogue and civil society inclusion in all aspects of democratic governance.



## Working Groups

### 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 creation of technical solutions that support democracy and help safeguard democratic institutions.

In 2022, the WGD&T held two meetings. At the meeting on July 21, the main findings of the study “Technology in Elections – Best Practice of Using Digital Tools and Platforms in the Community of Democracies,” initiated by the WGD&T and conducted by expert consultant Mr. Septimius Parvu, were presented to the Working Group members. The study provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of digital tools and platforms used at the various stages of the election processes in 11 participating Member States of the Community of Democracies and highlights good practices. One of the main goals of the study was to contribute to experience sharing among the CoD members and beyond in the relevant field. An open discussion followed, allowing the WGD&T members to share their comments and ideas.

A second meeting of the WGD&T, held on December 20, provided an opportunity to discuss in detail proposed activities to be included in a 2023–2024 Work Plan. The Chair provided an overview of the proposed activities that the WG members could consider and asked for feedback.

Additional activities of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology included a side event on “Technology in Service of Democracy and Human Rights – Elections in the Digital Era,” held on the margins of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference on September 27. An official presentation of the Technology in Elections report took place at the event.

Furthermore in 2022, the WGD&T submitted its written input during the intergovernmental consultations in the United Nations (New York) on possible elements for a Declaration on Future Generations.

### Working Group on Women and Democracy

In 2022, the Working Group on Women and Democracy held virtual meetings on February 25 and May 31, and an in-person meeting on November 11, held in Vilnius, Lithuania. During the meetings, the Working Group members examined the impact of the war on women in Ukraine, hearing from women refugees from Ukraine and representatives of national and international organizations. Finland was installed as the co-chair of the Working Group and Costa Rica was welcomed as a new member. The Working Group meetings also provided guidance and support to relevant CoD documents and policies, among these the revision of the *CoD Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*.

On March 23, 2022, a side-event “Women Leading in Crisis” was organized on the margins of the 66<sup>th</sup> session on the Commission on the Status of Women. A CoD series of interviews

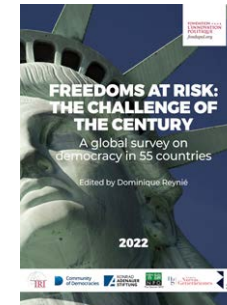


“Women Leading in Crises” highlighted global leadership experiences during military conflicts, natural disasters, political, health, and economic crises. The event was co-hosted by Lithuania on the premises of its Permanent Mission in New York City.

### Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society

In 2022, the Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society met and exchanged information regarding the status of civil society in 5 countries. The Working Group issued 3 “Calls for Action” regarding the situation in some of those countries to demonstrate support for CSOs and partners facing the effects of restrictive legislation and regulation. The Working Group also utilized different events to facilitate information-sharing between members, including a special session with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, Clément Voulé. During Canada’s presidency of the Community of Democracies, the United States will chair the WGEPCS. Under the chairship of the US, the WG will continue exploring new methods for engaging stakeholders on issues relating to the protection of civil society.

## New Publications



### FREEDOMS AT RISK: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CENTURY A GLOBAL SURVEY ON DEMOCRACY IN 55 COUNTRIES

The Community of Democracies partnered in the development of this global survey conducted by Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique (FONDAPOL), which gives important insights on the general state of democracy in the world by providing useful input on democratic progress, challenges and opportunities in the countries surveyed. The global survey was launched in January 2022.

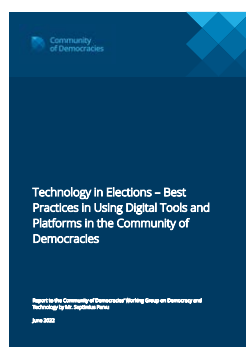
“To be sure, the challenges are there, identified through the survey findings. But look closer, and deeper, as the survey helps you to do: Around the world, people aspire to more freedoms, to the ability to protest, to take part in decision making, to have the right to say what you want to think. For policymakers, academics and activists, Freedoms at Risk is an important resource to start 2022” – said Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett.

[Read key findings or download full survey.](#)



### POLICY BRIEF ON AFGHANISTAN AND SDG5

August 2022 marked a year since the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan, which has affected the lives of millions of people, particularly women and girls. The CoD Policy Brief on Afghanistan and SDG 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the current and projected state of the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan and outlines relevant policy recommendations for the international community to support the protection of these rights. [Download publication.](#)



## TECHNOLOGY IN ELECTIONS – BEST PRACTICES IN USING DIGITAL TOOLS AND PLATFORMS IN THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES’ MEMBER STATES

The report examines best practices in using digital tools and platforms in elections and can serve as a valuable tool for policymakers, academics, and politicians in their task to design democratic elections using digital tools.

Funded by Georgia and the United States, the report was launched in Warsaw on September 27, 2022 at a CoD side event during the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, which featured the author's presentation of the report findings, and an expert discussion on **Technology in Service of Democracy and Human Rights – Elections in the Digital Era**. The event was organized by Georgia, Chair of the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology. [Download the report.](#)

## Youth Empowerment

Promoting the advancement of youth inclusion in public life remains an important theme for the Community of Democracies mission to strengthen democracy worldwide. Throughout 2022, under the Romanian Presidency and now continuing with the Canadian Presidency, the CoD focuses its work to involve youth in shaping the future of democracy, engaging CoD YouthLeads and other young democracy leaders in discussing global and country-specific democracy and human-rights related issues. Supporting the advancement of youth participation in public life will remain an essential theme for the current and future activities of the Community of Democracies.

### ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN 2022 INCLUDED:

#### [Twenty Policy Recommendations to Engage Young People in Public Life](#)

Developed by the CoD YouthLeads and other young leaders as a follow up to the U.S. Summit for Democracy, the report outlines twenty recommendations on how to increase youth inclusion in democracy. It provides concrete, innovative, and workable recommendations to all stakeholders interested in learning best practices and ideas from the unbiased and enthusiastic voice of today's youth. [Download the report.](#)



#### [CoD Youth Forum: Reversing the Democracy Disconnect](#)

The 2022 CoD Youth Forum, held in a virtual format as a side event at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2022, featured leaders from each region of the world speaking about youth inclusion. An inspiring keynote presentation by Congressman John Wright of El Salvador and a report by a representative of Civicus, an NGO Member of the Civil Society Pillar, were prominently featured. This was the third Youth Forum held under Romanian leadership, which prioritized youth empowerment as one of its critical areas of Presidency focus.



## UN Youth Roundtable

Program Officer Mateusz Mielczarek of the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies took ideas from the CoD Youth Forum and shared them in the UNGA Youth Forum Roundtable. He told the virtual event: “The Community of Democracies wants to support young people looking for change. Democracies must do more to involve young people and ensure they have a full voice – from digital democracy to ensuring that positions of power are not reserved to seniors and to the fact that democracies must tackle the problems that young people are experiencing.” His message also included appreciation for the new UN Youth Office at the United Nations in New York City.



## CoD Youth Leads Statement on the War Against Ukraine

“We call for the prompt and peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue based on the full respect for international law, sovereignty of states and their territorial integrity and profound respect for human rights.”

[Read full statement.](#)

## Youth Activism Debate

On June 4 2022, on the anniversary of the 1989 first partially-free elections in Poland, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, together with a Warsaw-based think tank Institute of Public Affairs (Member of CoD Civil Society Pillar) organized a public debate on Youth Activism. “For all its challenges, democracy can work for youth. Across the world, democracy is under assault. I think it is young people who will save it and, in the process, change and improve it” – said SG Thomas E. Garrett.



## Secretary General's Country Visits

### KYIV, UKRAINE (FEBRUARY 2022)

During his visit to the capital of Ukraine, SG Garrett met with former President Viktor Yuschenko and First Lady Katherine Yuschenko, civil society leaders, political party activists, and human rights defenders. "The defensive force of NATO is not an actual threat to Russia; the Kremlin perceives democracy and freedom in Ukraine as the real threat" – he said following the visit. He also urged all democratic nations to join the CoD Governing Council Member States and actively commit to Ukraine's freedom and sovereignty.



### NEW YORK CITY AND WASHINGTON D.C., UNITED STATES (MARCH 2022)

SG Thomas E. Garrett met in New York with H.E. Ambassador Karlito Nunes, Permanent Representative of Timor-Leste to the United Nations, to discuss multilateralism and democracy.



In Washington, D.C., SG Thomas E. Garrett met with Secretary General Luis Almagro of the Organization of American States to discuss the state of democracy, solidarity on the crisis in Ukraine, and the need for more collective action in reinforcing states' commitment to democratic principles.



## LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2022)

During his visit to London, SG Garrett met with government officials at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to discuss continued engagement in the Community of Democracies. SG Garrett also met with Civil Society Pillar member Article 19, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

## BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (OCTOBER 24-25, 2022)

During his visit to Brussels, SG Garrett participated in a European Democracy Youth Network event, moderating a roundtable on the exchange of case studies and best practices on fighting disinformation. During the event, the SG highlighted the work of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology and areas of focus including “Promoting initiatives aimed at safeguarding digital democracy and government transparency,” noting the importance of tools and frameworks to fight disinformation, ensure cybersecurity and counterbalance efforts to undermine democratic institutions.

Additionally, SG Garrett held meetings with Mr. Colin Scicluna, Head of Cabinet of Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, Democracy and Demography at the EU Commission; Jacob Moroza-Rasmussen, Secretary General of the inter-party coalition ALDE; Mr. Victor Spinu, Member of Parliament of Moldova; as well as with Google’s EU office.

**Country visits in the framework of the Governing Council membership renewal process:**

## OTTAWA, CANADA (MARCH 31-APRIL 1, 2022)

During the visit to Ottawa, Secretary General Garrett was joined by the International Steering Committee of the CoD Civil Society Pillar, represented by Mr. Robert Herman. Meetings took place with Global Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Privy Council Office, and a roundtable discussion with civil society organizations was held.

The meetings included discussions on diversity, civil society and youth engagement. Officials with Canadian Heritage underlined the importance of youth engagement, with concrete

examples such as Canada’s Youth Policy, the Youth Secretariat that coordinates actions related to youth engagement, and the Prime Minister’s Youth Council, a standing consultative body through which youth are able to voice opinions and concerns.

The role of civil society was reflected in discussions with the Treasury Board Secretariat, which highlighted Canada’s engagement in the Open Government Partnership and the consultative process with civil society.



## MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY (APRIL 25-26, 2022)

During the joint visit with the Civil Society Pillar representative Mr. Jaime Ibarra to Governing Council Member Uruguay, SG Garrett met with government representatives in Montevideo to discuss Uruguay’s renewal of membership in the Governing Council.

Foreign Minister Francisco Bustillo Bonaso echoed the importance placed by the country in democracy, mentioning that Uruguay’s voice is not only heard but also respected in the world. He noted that democracies may have different policy specific-views but all believe in the ultimate goal of democracy. The Foreign Minister spoke of current challenges in the world which he saw as highlighting the importance of democracies working together.

During the country visit a roundtable meeting was also held with civil society organizations. Participants mentioned the important role played by civil society when the dictatorship ended.



## ABUJA, NIGERIA (MAY 16-17, 2022)

During his visit to CoD Member State Nigeria, SG Thomas E. Garrett was joined by ISC representative Mr. Oyeibisi Oluseyi, from the Nigeria Network of NGOs. Meetings were held with H.E. Foreign Minister of Nigeria Geoffrey Onyeama to discuss Nigeria's engagement within the Governing Council. Underlined by Foreign Minister Onyeama, with over 20 years of a stable democracy Nigeria plays an important role in the region and sub-region.

SG Garrett also met with Professor Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission, to discuss planning towards the 2023 national elections, and with representatives from the disability community in Nigeria to hear of their work with government on inclusivity in elections.







As part of civil society engagement, SG participated in a civil society roundtable, which gathered a diverse group of civil society organizations working on issues such as youth engagement, elder care, penal reform, and anti-corruption reform. As part of the renewal visit, he also met with CoD YouthLead Rafiu Lawal to discuss youth-led activities in Nigeria.



## STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN (MAY 9-10, 2022)

SG Thomas E. Garrett was joined by ISC Chair Ms. Paulina Ibarra during his visit to Stockholm in the framework of the renewal process. Ambassador Maria Leissner, focal point for Sweden and former Secretary General of the CoD, took part in the meetings.

A meeting with with **State Secretary Magnus Nilsson** discussed Sweden's engagement within CoD Governing Council. Secretary Nilsson spoke to the democracy-promotion focus of Sweden's foreign policy, including the initiative "Drive for Democracy"; while the meeting with **MP Kenneth G. Forslund**, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the Swedish Parliament allowed for a meaningful discussion on Sweden's foreign policy, developments in the region including security concerns due to the war in Ukraine and importance of countering the autocratization trend and safeguard democratic institutions.

Additional discussions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted the regular meetings held between Human Rights Ambassadors at the EU level and further explained the commitments presented by

Sweden for the Year of Action of the Summit for Democracy. A meeting with staff of the Democracy and Media Unit of the Ministry of Culture provided valuable insights of media freedoms in Sweden, and the importance of civil society.

During the visit, SG Garrett also met with civil society actors, including Civil Rights Defenders, who explained their activities both within Sweden, acting as watchdog and outside the country.

## Addressing country-specific activities

### UKRAINE

The war against Ukraine strongly influenced activities of the Community of Democracies throughout the whole year.

Ukraine and the Russian Federation are among the 106 nations that, in June 2000, adopted the Warsaw Declaration. Guided by its people's aspirations towards freedom and democracy, Ukraine since then followed a path towards democratization, although not without stops and starts and challenges. In Russia, by contrast, Vladimir Putin devoted the total resources of the Russian state to silencing voices of democracy.

At the beginning of February 2022, Secretary General Garrett visited Ukraine's capital to meet with civil society, political leaders, and human rights defenders to understand the security situation.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Governing Council Member States *Canada, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Uruguay*, the *Republic of Korea*, the *United Kingdom*, and the *United States*, released a statement condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine and expressing support towards Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

On March 2, 2022, CoD Governing Council Member States convened for a virtual Emergency Governing Council Meeting on Ukraine to discuss solidarity in a time of war on democracy. Member States discussed their support to Ukraine through various national and international mechanisms, including UN Human Rights Council, UN Security Council, EU, NATO, and OSCE, and reiterated their support for Ukraine and democratic aspirations of its people, in line with an earlier statement published in February.

Throughout the year, the CoD remained actively engaged in multilateral and bilateral discussions and activities concerning the evolving situation in Ukraine. In his many speaking engagements on democracy, SG Garrett reiterated his unequivocal support towards Ukraine's sovereignty and stressed the importance of democracies standing in solidarity with Ukraine and against ruthless dictatorships.

## Statements by SG Thomas Garrett on Ukraine included:

On eight months since Russia's invasion of Ukraine SG Garrett highlighted: "Russia is solely accountable for this brutal and unprovoked war. The international community must remain determined in its support of the Ukrainian people" – [read full statement by SG Thomas E. Garrett](#).

He also stated his support for the decision of UN General Assembly President to hold an emergency special session to begin debate on the unprecedented violation of international law by Russia against the territorial integrity of Ukraine. [Read full statement](#).

In October 2022, SG Garrett welcomed the adoption of the UNGA resolution on defending the UN Charter principles saying that: "The UNGA vote by 143 states, including 25 CoD Member States, sends a clear message: Russia must leave Ukraine and cease its aggression."

## AFGHANISTAN

On International Women's Day 2022, the Community of Democracies launched its **Policy Brief on Afghanistan and SDG5**. The report provides an in-depth analysis of the current and projected state of the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan and outlines relevant policy recommendations for the international community to support the protection of these rights. These recommendations were featured as part of a discussion on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, held in the framework of the CoD-led Democracy Platform meeting in Geneva, on the margins of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.

[Download publication](#).

## IRAN

In November 2022, 16 Member States of the CoD Governing Council joined together to proclaim support to the people of Iran, especially women, and called upon the Iranian government to halt its violence against its people ([full statement](#)). Later, motivated by the call of Iranian women and inspired by the leading example of GC Members Canada, Guatemala, and the United States, SG Thomas E. Garrett publicly expressed his support as Secretary General on December 8 for the expulsion of Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

## MALI

In 2021 Mali was suspended from the CoD Governing Council due to violations of human rights. In 2022, the CoD remained committed to support efforts in Mali to return to the democratic path. As the political situation in Mali worsened at the beginning of 2022, SG Garrett reiterated the CoD commitment to continue to support Mali to a return to democracy.

[Full statement](#).

The evolving situation in Mali and the challenges and opportunities ahead were also discussed at the CoD closed door session on Mali, held in February 2022, which gathered representatives of civil society and Governing Council Member States.

## MYANMAR

In his statement issued in February 2022 on the anniversary of the military coup in Myanmar, SG Thomas E. Garrett joined many of the CoD Governing Council Members in urging the military regime to immediately end any forms of violence.

In July 2022, SG Thomas E. Garrett joined Governing Council Member States in condemning the Myanmar military regime's politically motivated execution of pro-democracy and opposition leaders. "This despicable act of violence shows an utter disregard for human rights and a complete erosion of the rule of law" – he said. [Full statement](#).

In his later statement in November, which followed the reports by Mr. Tom Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, on the violence against people including children, SG Garrett urged the Myanmar military to immediately cease their bloody campaign, release all arbitrarily detained prisoners, and swiftly return to restoring the rule of law and democratic order.

## TAIWAN

Following U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, China embarked on a number of punitive and aggressive retaliatory measures, including sanctions on the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy – an important partner of the CoD through its long-time and active membership in the CoD Civil Society Pillar. In his [statement](#), SG Garrett condemned this arbitrary action and highlighted the important role of the civil society in a democratic landscape.





## Other Thematic Events and Activities

### NINTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

On the margins of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, SG Thomas E. Garrett joined multi-lateral gatherings with democratic leaders, civil society and youth for important discussions on the challenges and opportunities to democracy in the Americas, and developing new ways to promote and defend democracy.

The side event on **Safeguarding Democracy in the Americas**, co-organized by the Latin American Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Burkle Center for International Relations, Latin American Institute and the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California (UCLA), the Carter Center, and the Community of Democracies convened experts and senior leaders to discuss ways to strengthen the collective defense of democracy in the Americas. Chile's President Boric joined the event, speaking to reforms planned by his government. During the event, SG Thomas E. Garrett spoke of the relevance of democratic principles outlined in Warsaw Declaration and Inter-American Democratic





Charter, and the crucial role of civil society in strengthening democracy and holding governments accountable.

The side event on **Multiple Faces of Authoritarianism**, organized by REDLAD, Member of the CoD Civil Society Pillar, and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, brought together regional civil society organizations in looking at the advance of authoritarians in the Northern Hemisphere. SG Thomas E. Garrett participated in the opening of the first panel discussion, “Authoritarianism as a Global Tendency and its Impact in Civic Space.”

During his meeting with the **Latin American Youth Network for Democracy**, SG Garrett had a conversation with approximately 20 youth leaders from across the region, including CoD YouthLead Ms. Lourdes Argueta, where he discussed challenges and opportunities for youth engagement in the Americas.

## OSCE WARSAW HUMAN DIMENSION CONFERENCE

“The need to defend democracy is today stronger than ever – like never before it is clear democracy means peace and autocracy means war and violence” – SG Thomas E. Garrett delivered remarks at the closing session of the OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension Conference on October 7, 2022. [Full remarks.](#)



## WARSAW DIALOGUE FOR DEMOCRACY

Within the framework of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, SG Garrett also participated in the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy, where he spoke in a panel discussion on “Democracy as a Remedy for Authoritarianism.” [Full remarks.](#)

## COUNTERING DISINFORMATION

Countering fake news and disinformation is crucial to defend and strengthen democracy. On October 25, 2022, SG Thomas E. Garrett moderated a panel discussion on fighting disinformation, held in Brussels by **EDYN** and the **Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies**. The event featured expert discussion on challenges and tools that democracies can use to counter false narratives in both traditional and social media.

Mr. Mateusz Mielczarek, Program Officer at the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, joined another EDYN-organized event, held in Bratislava, to discuss fighting disinformation.



## HIGH-LEVEL FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY FORUM

On November 10, 2022, SG Thomas E. Garrett participated in the High-Level Future of Democracy Forum, hosted in Vilnius by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SG spoke in reply to a panel discussion on Authoritarian Weaponization of Peacetime Institutions – How to Resist it? [Full remarks.](#)

The Secretary General also joined the official response to the panel discussion on Democratic Activists under Authoritarian Regimes – What can the Free World do to Help? [Full remarks.](#)

## WOMEN LEADING IN CRISES

“Security has to be seen beyond war. Resilience is crucial when thinking about security – it’s about social cohesion, trust in institutions, media literacy, or addressing disinformation” – said Ms. Radmila Shekerinska, former Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia at the CoD event on Women Leading in Crises.

This hybrid event, held in March 2022 in New York City on the margins of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women, gathered women leaders from each world region to share their leadership experiences during military conflicts, natural disasters, political, health, and economic crises.

## THE CoD ENDORSED THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

The first Principle of the Warsaw Declaration speaks to regular, free and fair elections. The Community of Democracies joined global organizations that have endorsed the Declaration of Principles and the accompanying Code of Conduct and pledged their commitment to assuring integrity and transparency in election observations. [Read more.](#)

## XV INTER AMERICAN-MEETING ON ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES

Speaking in a panel discussion on Trends and Tools to Combat Disinformation, held in Quito on December 1, 2022 as part of XV Inter-American Meeting on Electoral Management Bodies, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez, presented findings of the 2022 CoD study on Technology in Elections produced by the Working Group on Democracy and Technology.

## TWENTY-TWO YEARS OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES AND THE WARSAW DECLARATION

“The Warsaw Declaration needs to be taken seriously, not only as a catalogue of democratic standards but as a road map to tackle challenges and promote democratic values and fundamental freedoms” – said SG Thomas E. Garrett at the CoD Anniversary Reception in June 2022, which gathered Warsaw-based Ambassadors and representatives of CoD Governing Council Member States to celebrate 22 years of the Community of Democracies and the Warsaw Declaration. Read the [anniversary message from SG Thomas E. Garrett.](#)

## COMMEMORATING THE LEGACY OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES CO-FOUNDERS: MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND BRONISŁAW GEREMEK

This year saw the passing of former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, a wise and inspiring stateswoman who was a great champion for freedom and democracy.

For 22 years, Secretary Albright, a co-founder of the Community of Democracies, was an inspiration to and a committed supporter of the CoD work to promote, defend, and protect democracy worldwide.





“The passing of Secretary of State Dr. Madeleine Albright is an incalculable loss to the United States and the free world. A champion for human rights and the rule of law, she was a co-founder and a tireless supporter of the Community of Democracies” – said SG Thomas E. Garrett in his statement following Madeleine Albright’s death. SG Garrett also attended the Albright memorial service, held on April 27 in Washington D.C., and joined international visitors, elected leaders, Secretary Albright’s friends, colleagues, and family members in paying tribute to her legacy as the first U.S. female Secretary of State.

Madeleine Albright co-founded the Community of Democracies together with Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek. In Poland, the Polish Senate announced 2022 as the Year of Bronisław Geremek.

In June 2022, speaking on the subject of “1989–2022: The Time of Breakthrough” at an event at the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk, SG Thomas E. Garrett commemorated the legacy of both CoD co-founders, Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek.

In December, SG Garrett spoke to the Polish Senate at a conference on the war of values and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The event commemorated the legacy of Bronisław Geremek. Following the conference, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies hosted a reception in honor of Bronisław Geremek, organized by the Geremek Foundation.



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