



End of Term Report

2023 CANADIAN PRESIDENCY OF
THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES



Community
of Democracies

Message from the Presidency

Distinguished members of the Community of Democracies' Governing Council,

It has been a tremendous privilege for Canada to work closely with all of you in our year as President of the Community of Democracies' Governing Council. Canada's 2023 Presidency term focused on the thematic of **"Building the Resilience of Democracies"**. Democracy faces increasing threats in our interconnected world, with various pressures, ranging from disinformation to electoral interference, as well as restrictions on civic spaces. Building the resilience of long-established and emerging democracies and societies to address these challenges is paramount.

Over the course of its Presidency, Canada has pursued a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and policy expertise among members of the Community, civil society partners, and other important stakeholders. These initiatives included workshops, dialogues, and diplomatic engagement, among other endeavors. Canada focused on how we, as a Community, can build the resilience of democracies through strengthening democratic institutions, upholding information integrity, protecting civic space, and increasing the political participation of women and youth. Canada's year as President has underscored the tremendous value in collaboration and partnership, and the importance of working collectively in a cross-disciplinary manner to advance the important tenets of democracy. We are pleased with the ongoing growth of the Community of Democracies, with new members from two different regions of the world acceding to the organization in the past year - Moldova and Panama.

Canada extends a special thank you to the Secretary General, Thomas Garrett, to the staff of the Permanent Secretariat, and to our colleague member states on the Executive Committee and in the Governing Council for their support over the past year. We look forward to maintaining our close ties with the Community of Democracies and Governing Council member states to promote inclusive democratic governance around the world.

Kind regards,



Tara Denham
 Director General
 Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion
 Global Affairs Canada



Global Affairs
Canada

Affaires mondiales
Canada

Highlights of Canada's Presidency

Facilitating Dialogue on Democratic Resilience

Building Resilience of Democratic Institutions

March 1, 2023

Canada hosted a virtual workshop on strengthening democratic institutions, with over forty participants. The workshop panel was comprised of representatives from Canada, Costa Rica, and Estonia who talked about actions their respective governments are taking to build the resilience of institutions. A discussion followed, where panelists reflected on the biggest challenges their governments are facing in relation to combatting mis- and dis-information, such as the need to take into consideration both freedom of speech and respect for human rights when developing policy initiatives.

36th Governing Council Meeting in Warsaw

May 10, 2023

This meeting was an opportunity to discuss critical issues including resisting authoritarianism, key elements to building the resilience of democracies, and enhancing youth civic and political engagement. The Governing Council meeting facilitated open discussions amongst members, providing regional perspectives on the significant challenges democracy continues to face in different contexts. When discussing strengthening the resilience of democracies, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Mr. Zubair Dada, spoke of Nigeria's path towards a stable democracy and the pressures they have had to overcome. On the topic of resisting authoritarianism, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Mr. Mantas Adomėnas, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova, Mr. Nicu Popescu, raised their countries' experience with Russian authoritarianism and their counter-efforts.



The ceremony of the Presidency transfer from Romania, represented by Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, to Canada, represented by Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, was held on September 22, 2022 on the margins of the 77th UN General Assembly session in New York.

Facilitating Dialogue on Democratic Resilience

Global Principles for Upholding Information Integrity Online

May 11, 2023

Canada hosted a workshop on information integrity online, in co-operation with the Community of Democracies' Working Group on Democracy and Technology. The panel included representatives from Canada, Code for Africa, the Atlantic Council, International IDEA, and Google. The panel engaged in a thought-provoking discussion on defining information integrity, the need for high-level principles related to information integrity, provided an overview of Canada and the Netherlands' joint efforts to develop a Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online, and identified the multi-fold challenges panelists have faced as researchers, practitioners, government officials, and the tech industry.



Secretary General Thomas Garrett addresses a panel on information integrity.

Building the Resilience of Civil Society

June 27, 2023

Canada – together with the International Centre for Not-for-Profit-Law – cohosted a workshop discussion on the resilience of civil society in Geneva on the margins of the UN Human Rights Council. Participants heard from the International Steering Committee and other partners in civil society on the increasing number of restrictions on civic space, including restrictions on peaceful assembly, the right to free association, and other vital freedoms. Panelists delved into strategies for empowering local civil society organizations to navigate context-specific challenges and the need for greater resilience among governments and civil society to address these issues.

Facilitating Dialogue on Democratic Resilience

37th Governing Council Meeting in London

November 14, 2023

This meeting featured a dialogue focused on the resilience of democracy that highlighted regional perspectives from a variety of member states, including Finland, Morocco, India, Costa Rica, and Poland, among others. Representatives discussed the value of the Warsaw Principles, and how they remain relevant in reflecting and improving countries' democratic processes and governance. Civil society leaders from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and Article-19 provided framing remarks to the second thematic discussion among member states about the need for stronger multilateral coordination among countries and the complexities of the language used around democracy in multilateral fora. Several additional meetings took place in the margins of the Governing Council, including one on the next 5-year strategy of the organization.

Building the Resilience of Democracies through Women's Political Participation

November 15, 2023

Canada hosted a workshop focused on examining the importance of women in strengthening democratic processes, and the role of governments in removing barriers to their political participation. Canadian participation included former Government of Canada Minister Catherine McKenna, who took part as a panelist. This event featured discussions on how women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including improved responsiveness, increased cooperation across political parties, and a more sustainable future.



Former Canadian Cabinet Minister Catherine McKenna addresses a panel on women's political participation.

Leveraging the Capacity of Youth and Building Inclusive Democratic Spaces

Increasing Youth Engagement and Participation in Democracies

March 30, 2023

Canada supported and participated in the Summit for Democracy side event “How to increase youth engagement and participation in democracies,” which was hosted by Costa Rica’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Canada’s Ambassador to Costa Rica, Elizabeth Williams, along with Secretary General Thomas Garrett, recognized the importance of youth participation and the valuable work the Community of Democracies YouthLeads are doing to encourage youth engagement. Four YouthLeads attended the event in person, allowing them to engage with a variety of stakeholders on youth-related issues.

Including Youth Voices at Governing Council Meetings

Canada has supported the inclusion of youth voices at Governing Council meetings through the participation of YouthLeads. The YouthLeads provide an important voice for youth issues and have helped advise the Community of Democracies on practices and strategies to enhance youth engagement in democracies. YouthLead Tinatin Oboladze participated in the 36th Governing Council that took place in Warsaw, Poland and YouthLead Mwila Bwanga participated in the 37th Governing Council in London, United Kingdom.

Supporting the Strategic Renewal of the Community of Democracies

With the current institutional strategy coming to an end in 2023, Canada has championed the process for the development of the Community of Democracies’ next institutional strategy and has engaged with the Secretariat, the Executive Committee, and Governing Council members on the issue of strategic renewal. Canada continues to support the development of the Community’s next strategy, notably by contributing to the hiring of a consultant and focusing on robust institutional governance.



Group photo from the Summit for Democracy youth event with CoD YouthLeads.

Seeking Opportunities to Promote the Warsaw Principles

Supporting the Democracy Platform and Countering Authoritarianism

Canada has engaged with and provided logistical support to the Community of Democracies' Democracy Platform. On May 30, 2023, Canada's Mission in Geneva hosted a Democracy Platform meeting in advance of the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council. This gathering enabled discussions pertaining to democracy-related human rights initiatives, efforts to counter authoritarian repression, and the need to raise awareness on political prisoners.

Engaging with a Variety of Democracies on the Warsaw Principles

Canada has supported the Secretariat's efforts to engage with a variety of democracies to promote adherence to the Warsaw Principles. This included a visit to Moldova on April 6, 2023, where Secretary General Thomas Garrett and Canada's Ambassador to Moldova Annick Goulet met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicu Popescu. The Secretariat's engagement efforts led to two new countries, Moldova and Panama, joining the Community in the past year.

Advocating for the Protection of Journalists and Media Freedom

Canada participated in a Community of Democracies' side-event on October 3, 2023, titled "Journalists at Risk: How diplomatic missions can effectively protect journalists and safeguard media freedoms," which was held on the margins of the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The event aimed to discuss how states and diplomatic missions can contribute to ensuring a safe and secure working environment for journalists, with a focus on media freedoms as a key pillar of democracy.



Secretary General Garrett and Canadian Ambassador Goulet meet with Minister Popescu in Chisinau, Moldova.