



Summit For Democracy

Opening plenary – Day 2, March 19

Remarks by the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett

Excellencies, representatives of civil society, young leaders:

It is a great pleasure to join you today as we inaugurate DAY 2

the Civil Society and Youth Day of the Third Summit for Democracy.

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the Republic of Korea, a valued member of the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies, for hosting this significant gathering. In the first Summit for Democracy in 2021, President Biden said he was looking for Champions for Democracy.

With this momentous Third Summit, the Republic of Korea has clearly stepped up as one of the Champions for Democracy.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the East Asia Institute, whose key role in crafting the program for DAY 2 has been invaluable.

Many of us have looked forward to this day. Over the past several months, International IDEA, the Open Government Partnership, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) working together with the Community of Democracies, formed the Platform for Engagement of Civil Society, to support the Republic of Korea in the organization of Day 2 of the Third Summit for Democracy.

I can say on behalf of all four Platform Members that we have been honored and pleased to be part of this collaboration, and the results of this partnership will be seen today in more than 50 vibrant events addressing critical topics such as technology and democracy, electoral processes, climate change, gender equality, and transparency as well as youth inclusion, aligning with the Summit's overarching theme, "Democracy for Future Generations."

The Community of Democracies has been engaged in the Summit for Democracy process since 2021, specifically bringing forward the vital importance for democracy of engaging youth.

During the inaugural Summit, we facilitated an online Youth Assembly and at last year's Summit for Democracy II, co-hosted by Costa Rica, our CoD YouthLeads deliberated on effective strategies to enhance youth involvement in democratic processes.

It was during this assembly in San José that the concept of the global Youth Democracy Network, supported by the United States, was conceived—an initiative also highlighted by Secretary of State Blinken in yesterday's Ministerial.

The Youth Democracy Network will serve as a digital hub, engaging thousands of youths worldwide, offering free e-learning opportunities, showcasing youth expertise, and complemented by a series of regional initiatives.

We eagerly anticipate collaborating with many of you on this initiative, which seeks not to duplicate but to strengthen and amplify existing youth organizations and networks at international, regional, and national levels.

In the words of the US Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield: We need to invest in youth, to support youth, to engage youth. We are looking to youth for leadership, to refresh our policies and economy.

As someone speaking from the farther side of the age divide: It's on us to include you—not just to give you a seat at the table, but to share the head of the table and relinquish it to you one day.

This is exactly what the Youth Democracy Network will try to achieve.

At the Community of Democracies, our Member States have committed to the idea that meaningful youth participation is critical to the vitality of our democracies, and it is a source of pride to witness the presence of so many young colleagues here today.

In highlighting the efforts of several CoD member states toward inclusive democracy, there is one more commendable initiative to spotlight.

While we meet here in Seoul, Community of Democracies Executive Committee Member Romania is advocating for enhanced youth engagement in electoral processes worldwide at the ongoing 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, through a statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of countries.

In keeping with the Summit theme, the CoD YouthLeads will lead a Tech Talks session today on the role of technology and social media in elections and the importance of digital literacy, engaging representatives from the United States, Canada, and International IDEA in a dialogue.

Furthermore, to reflect on the role of youth in the Summit, the CoD will host a session on Day 3 at 11 am at Coex inviting all youth stakeholders—session organizers, youth organizations, and civil society—to share their reflections and recommendations. The future of the Summit process needs your input and all interested parties are warmly encouraged to participate.

I look forward to following many of the events and exchanging ideas with many of you today.

Thank you.