



Community  
of Democracies

# 2023 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies

February 2024



## **2023 Annual Report of the Community of Democracies**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

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

In 2023, the world witnessed positive signs in new and record voter participation in reversing democratic decline through the ballot box in places as varied as Latin America and Europe. Countries bound by human rights and the rule of law joined together to secure seats for democracies on multilateral bodies, which authoritarian members had long exploited. The United States of America co-hosted a Summit for Democracy II with Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Zambia.

Yet, Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and independence within its internationally recognized borders remained under horrific and unjustified assault by Russia. As well, terrible conflicts targeting civilians spread to other regions of the world. More and more often, the challenges presented by rapid digitalization threatened civil society and pressed global leaders to enact policies to prevent AI's misuse by malign actors.

The Community of Democracies addressed these opportunities and challenges in 2023. The Presidency of Canada meaningfully led the Community of Democracies and provided vital support for implementing activities under the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. The organization of several Presidency activities highlighted the importance of democratic resilience and the role of youth in building inclusive democracies and provided opportunities to promote the shared values of the Warsaw Declaration.

The Governing Council grew to 30 Member States, which advocated for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights-related issues through dialogue and joint action. The convening power of the Community of Democracies was at work all year through its Governing Council, which served as a forum for peer learning and the exchange of experiences among democratic states, civil society partners, and youth from different parts of the world. On behalf of the Governing Council, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies increased engagement with international bodies and multilateral organizations, including

the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Organization of American States to support the protection of shared democratic values.

Promoting youth engagement and the ongoing need to remove barriers to advance their meaningful participation in public and civic life moved to the forefront of many activities undertaken by the Community of Democracies. The CoD YouthLeads took prominent roles within the Summit for Democracy II events in Costa Rica, where a forthcoming global Youth Democracy Network was announced.

The CoD Working Group on Women and Democracy, chaired by Finland and Lithuania, joined the Permanent Secretariat of the Community on Democracies in launching the voluntary guidelines for Gender-Based Budgeting on the margins of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. The Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society, chaired by the United States, monitored positive and negative civic space trends, issuing Calls for Action and for Recognition. The Working Group on Democracy and Technology, chaired by Georgia, submitted input in the UN consultation process for the Global Digital Compact.

During these and other activities, a substantial focus of the work of the Community of Democracies looked ahead, and 2024 will see a new multi-year Strategic Plan come into effect, as well as the implementation of new programmatic activities.

In the last months of my final term as Secretary General of the Community of Democracies, I look forward to working together with the Governing Council Member States, civil society partners, and the YouthLeads on the implementation of these new activities and continuing joint efforts to promote and advance shared values of democracy.

# INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## Presidency

In 2023, Canada served as Presidency of the Community of Democracies. A global leader in the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic values, Canada provided an active and supportive leadership to the Community of Democracies.

Canada pursued a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and policy expertise among the Governing Council Member States, civil society partners, and other important stakeholders. These initiatives included workshops, dialogues, and diplomatic engagement, described in more detail in other sections of this report.

Much of the focus of the Canadian Presidency was placed on democratic resilience and its crucial elements such as 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 to advance the important tenets of democracy.





## Governing Council

The Community of Democracies' Governing Council, with its diverse membership of democracies from across the globe, provided an important platform for dialogue and cooperation on democracy-related issues.

### Expansion of the Governing Council Membership

In 2023, the Governing Council welcomed Moldova and Panama as new Member States.

The membership of Moldova in July 2023 came as an acknowledgment of the tangible progress made in its democratic development, including advancing the state of fundamental rights, political rights, and civil liberties. During the 36<sup>th</sup> CoD Governing Council Meeting in May 2023, **Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova, H.E. Mr. Nicu Popescu**, outlined Moldova's commitment to democracy and its recent progress, including its path to accession to the European Union, highlighting the will of the Moldovan people to continue efforts to build strong democratic practices and institutions and strengthen democratic resilience.

Panama joined the Governing Council in November 2023. During an earlier visit to Panama, **SG Thomas E. Garrett and International Steering Committee Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio** met with **President Nito Cortizo** and **Foreign Minister Janaina Tewaney Mencomo** to discuss Panama's engagement with the CoD. Panama's experience building an inclusive democracy and a strong economy will be an asset to the Community of Democracies.

### Meetings of the CoD Governing Council

#### 36<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL, MAY 2023, WARSAW

The 36<sup>th</sup> CoD Governing Council was held in an in-person format for the first time since the pandemic. Chaired by the Canadian Presidency, the session facilitated discussions among Member States, invited Guest States, civil society and youth representatives on critical issues affecting democracy, including resisting authoritarianism, building the resilience of democracies, and enhancing youth civic and political engagement. The significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ahead of its milestone 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was also discussed, and the Outcome Statement of the Governing Council underlined that freedom, equality, and justice remain highly relevant to the Community's mission to advance and protect democracy.

The events held on the margins of the Governing Council provided an excellent opportunity for insightful discussions on topics ranging from gender equality to the impact of new technologies on human rights and democracy, particularly freedom of opinion and expression online.





## EXTRAORDINARY GOVERNING COUNCIL ON MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL, ONLINE, SEPTEMBER 2023

On September 27, 2023, Member States convened in an online format to decide the renewal of Governing Council membership of Argentina, Estonia, Norway, and the United Kingdom. Renewal of Governing Council membership is an ongoing process for all CoD Governing Council Member States and each of the four countries was renewed to a six-year term.

## 37<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 2023, LONDON

The 37<sup>th</sup> Governing Council, chaired by the Canadian Presidency, brought together Member States, civil society, and YouthLeads representatives to discuss democratic resilience, and multilateralism and democracy. In the framework of the Governing Council, meetings of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology and the Working Group on Women and Democracy focused on activities planning for 2024.

A side event on “Building the Resilience of Democracies through Women’s Political Participation” organized by the Presidency of Canada featured interactive discussions on how women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democracy.



## Executive Committee

Meeting monthly and in ad hoc sessions, the Executive Committee (EC) engaged in discussions on the programmatic and operational activities of the Community of Democracies and its Permanent Secretariat, including internal policy recommendations, budgeting, and planning. The EC Members elected for 2022-2024 are: Canada, Morocco, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, and the United States.



## Democracy Platform / CoD Engagement with the UN Human Rights Council

Engagement in multilateral fora addressing democracy-related issues continues to be emphasized in the work of the Community of Democracies.

In 2023, twelve Member States of the Governing Council served on the Human Rights Council (UNHRC), spanning across the UN's regional groupings. Seeking to enhance the Community of Democracies' presence in the United Nations Office in Geneva, the CoD organized Democracy Platform meetings in advance of sessions of the UNHRC.

Democracy Platform meetings gather Governing Council Member States both within and outside the UNHRC, democratic states on the UNHRC, and civil society organizations working on human rights, to discuss UNHRC session agenda, including UN resolutions, democracy initiatives and explore possibilities for common engagement in Geneva. Thematic CoD-led side events were also held on the margins of the UNHRC sessions.

In preparation for the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Democracy Platform met on February 8, 2023, to discuss session agenda items, democracy related initiatives and possibilities for common engagement. Additionally, the meeting featured a discussion on the importance of protecting and enabling civic space within the United Nations system.

In June, on the margins of the 53<sup>rd</sup> UNHRC session, the CoD organized an event to mark the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of its founding document, the Warsaw Declaration, and the Presidency-led event "Building the Resilience of Civil Society", co-organized by the Canadian Presidency together with International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, addressed the role of civil society in strengthening democracy. Another thematic event was held by the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology and brought together governments within and outside the CoD Governing Council, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Democracy and Human Rights. The event was hosted by Georgia in its capacity as Chair of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology and co-sponsored by Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, the United States, and the civil society organization Universal Rights Group.

On the margins of the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council, in October 2023, a CoD side event was co-organized with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to launch the updated "Toolkit on the Safety of Journalists for the Personnel of Diplomatic Missions." Held in the lead-up to the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, the discussion highlighted the important role that the personnel of diplomatic missions can play in providing support to journalists in danger, with valuable contributions by representatives of international organizations and CoD Member States speaking to this critical need.



## Civil Society

Partnership with civil society is an asset to the Community of Democracies, and throughout 2023 civil society continued to engage in multiple activities of the CoD.

The International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Civil Society Pillar contributed to the discussions during both Governing Council and Executive Committee meetings and also participated in CoD-led activities during the year. **The Chair of the ISC, Mr. Enrique de Obarrio**, joined the Secretary General in country visits to Governing Council Member States undergoing the renewal process and spoke on behalf of the Civil Society Pillar at various democracy gatherings and events.

Civil Society Pillar representatives were also invited as speakers to numerous events organized by the CoD and provided valuable insights into specific thematic areas.

Additionally, visits made by the Secretary General to countries both within and outside of the CoD Governing Council provided an opportunity for interaction with local civil society stakeholders who presented their perspectives on democracy and human rights-related issues in their countries.



## Working Groups

### Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society

In 2023, the Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society met and exchanged information regarding the status of civil society in numerous countries. It monitored civic space trends, heard from civil society representatives, and discussed how best to support an improved enabling environment for the sector globally. The Working Group issued three “Calls for Action” to address proposed legislation that would restrict civic space in Angola, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Venezuela. The Working Group also issued a “Call for Recognition” following the withdrawal of a controversial draft law in Georgia that would have labeled numerous organizations as “agents of foreign influence.” Members discussed opportunities for the Working Group to proactively support countries considering civil society legislation prior to drafting, to complement Calls for Action. The Chairship of the United States concluded, with leadership of the Working Group transitioning back to Canada for 2024.

### Working Group on Democracy and Technology

The Working Group on Democracy and Technology (WGD&T) provides a platform for multistakeholder 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 2023, the WGD&T held two meetings. At the meeting on May 11 in Warsaw, the mCitizen (mObywatel) Application was presented by Ms. Katarzyna Bis-Plaza, Director of the Projects and Strategy Department, Ministry of Digital Affairs, Poland, a member of the WGD&T. An open discussion followed, allowing the WGD&T members to share their comments and ideas. This meeting was also an opportunity for a conversation with the Chairship of the Freedom Online Coalition.

A second meeting of the WGD&T, held on November 15, in London, provided an opportunity take stock of the activities implemented in 2023 and to discuss in detail remaining activities of the 2023-2024 Work Plan to be implemented in 2024.



Additional activities of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology included a side event on “Global Principles for Upholding Information Integrity Online” hosted by Canada with the WGD&T on the margins of the 36<sup>th</sup> CoD Governing Council Meeting on May 11 in Warsaw and a side event on “How to Strengthen Democracy and Human Rights Protection in the AI Era Through Multilateral Cooperation,” held on the margins of the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council on June 28, in Geneva.

Furthermore in 2023, the WGD&T submitted written input for the ongoing consultations process on the Global Digital Compact taking place at the UN in New York.



### Working Group on Women and Democracy

In 2023, Working Group on Women and Democracy (WGWD) Members held both in-person and virtual meetings and supported side events and gender related initiatives of the CoD.

The year started with a fruitful cooperation with the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology organizing on 27 February an online discussion in advance of the 67<sup>th</sup> session

of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which priority theme was: “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

On March 14, 2023, a side-event on the “Importance of Gender Responsive Budgeting to Advance SDG 5” was held in New York City on the margins of the 67<sup>th</sup> session on the Committee on the Status of Women. The side-event was organized by the PSCD in coordination with the WGWD and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN Office in New York City. The event featured a presentation of the CoD Action Plan on Gender Responsive Budgeting by **gender expert Ms. Clare Hutchinson** followed by a panel discussion on the importance of gender responsive budgeting in contributing to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency of public finances, and in advancing gender equality. The side-event also provided an opportunity to share good practices on gender responsive budgeting. CoD Governing Council Member States, representatives of international organizations, New York City based civil society organizations working on gender-equality related issues, and UN diplomatic missions and representatives, were invited to the in-person event.





On May 9 the WGWD held a meeting in Warsaw in the margins of the 36<sup>th</sup> Governing Council meeting with a special discussion on the impact of the war on women in Ukraine, including ongoing work and assistance provided to Ukrainian women refugees in Poland. During the meeting Members also provided their input on the CoD Action Plan on Gender Responsive Budgeting and on the Community of Democracies Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy.

On November 15<sup>th</sup> the WG held a meeting in London in the margins of the 37<sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting to discuss actions and activities to include in the WG Work Plan for 2024 – 2025, as well as ideas for projects, and stakeholders with whom the WG could cooperate. The enlargement of WG membership was also addressed during the meeting.

## Gender Equality

In 2023, the Community of Democracies continued to promote the importance of advancing gender equality and women's participation in public life.

On the margins of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW67) in New York, the Governing Council Member States, civil society, and UN Women joined the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies for an in-person gathering in the office of the Permanent Mission of Finland to UN, for the presentation of an Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Budgeting. The Action Plan is intended as a voluntary tool to inform and provide guidance to CoD Member States and other democracies in drafting their own gender responsive budgets, and can be used to support national and local governmental initiatives on gender budgeting.

Also in the framework of the CSW67, CoD Member State Georgia, in its capacity as a chair of the CoD Working Group on Democracy and Technology, held a side event, "Joint Effort for Empowering Women in Technology". In it, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett highlighted that digital technology should support effective and accountable democratic governance as well as women's empowerment.

The discussion on the use of digital technology to empower women within effective democratic governance was also featured as part of a virtual event held by the Working Group on Democracy and Technology on International Women's Day.





## Youth Empowerment

In 2023, promoting the advancement of youth inclusion in public life remained an important theme for the Community of Democracies. CoD YouthLeads and other young democracy leaders provided valuable perspectives and contributions to multiple events and activities of the CoD including its Governing Council sessions, thematic events, and major democracy gatherings.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

#### Welcoming new cohort of the CoD YouthLeads

In September 2023, at the beginning of their 2023/2024 mandate, a new cohort of 10 YouthLeads convened at the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies in Warsaw to brainstorm and plan activities. YouthLeads comprise young pro-democracy representatives spanning Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, who are advising the CoD on actions and strategies to advance youth participation in public life.

During the meeting, **Romania's Foreign Minister H.E. Ms. Luminita Odobescu** affirmed her country's ongoing support for youth engagement in an opening message, **H.E. Ms. Aylin Estrella Joo Liem, Chile's Ambassador to Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Georgia** shared invaluable diplomatic communication knowledge with the group, and **Ms. Victoria Nibarger of the U.S. Department of State** engaged with CoD YouthLeads to brainstorm ideas for the global Youth Democracy Network. As meeting outcomes, the YouthLeads issued a Statement and a Work Plan that focuses on youth participation in elections as a main priority of their term.

Throughout the year, the CoD YouthLeads remained actively engaged in numerous events and activities of the CoD, providing much valuable perspectives and ideas.





## Discussing youth engagement at the Summit for Democracy II in San Jose, Costa Rica

Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett joined high-level delegates and youth representatives from around the world at the Summit for Democracy II, co-hosted by CoD Member State Costa Rica under the theme of youth engagement. In the framework of the Summit, the CoD held an event on “How to increase youth engagement and participation in democracies”, which gave voice to CoD YouthLeads and other young democracy leaders who discussed practical ways to advance youth engagement in democracies. During the event, CoD YouthLeads presented 20 policy recommendations to bring young people into greater inclusion, developed by CoD YouthLeads following 2021 Summit of Democracies.



## Summit for Democracy: Youth Democracy Cohort

The Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies has joined the Youth Democracy Cohort, one of several multi-stakeholder platforms that have been launched as part of the Year of Action of the Summit for Democracy, initiated by U.S. President Joe Biden in December 2021. The CoD YouthLeads will be actively engaged in the preparations for the upcoming Summit for Democracy, to be hosted in 2024 by CoD Member State, the Republic of Korea.

## CoD Youth Leads supporting global Shared Values campaign

CoD YouthLeads were at the forefront of the Shared Values campaign, which highlights the importance of democratic values for future generations, and is led by the UK Cabinet Office in partnership with other governments and organizations, including the CoD. As part of the campaign, Youth Leads created videos on selected international days to promote human rights and democratic values.



## Secretary General's Country Visits

### COSTA RICA, MARCH 2023

In the framework of the Summit for Democracy II, SG Garrett met with Foreign Minister of Costa Rica Arnoldo Andre Tinoco to discuss support to democracy in the region and the world.

### MOLDOVA, APRIL 2023

On April 5-7, 2023, Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett visited Moldova to hold a number of meetings with representatives of the Moldovan government and civil society organizations. During the visit, SG Garrett was accompanied by H.E. Ambassador of Canada to Moldova Annick Goulet who represented the Canadian Presidency of the Community of Democracies.



During the meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova Nicu Popescu, SG Garrett and H.E. Ambassador Goulet discussed current situation in Moldova and other global and regional democracy-related issues including Russia's aggression on Ukraine.

SG Garrett also met with civil society representatives at a meeting hosted by the International Republican Institute (IRI).

### UNITED KINGDOM, MAY 2023

In May, SG Thomas E. Garrett visited CoD Member State United Kingdom in the framework of the renewal of its membership in the Governing Council. On the first day of the visit, SG Garrett, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez, and ISC Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio, joined by Ms. Rosemary Forest, Civil Society Pillar UK focal point, met with Mr. Kanbar Hossein Bor, Deputy Director of the Democratic, Governance and Media Freedom Department at the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. SG Garrett also met with Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon to discuss democracy-related issues in the UK and worldwide and participated in a civil society roundtable with UK-based civil society organizations.





## NORWAY, JUNE 2023

During the joint mission of the Permanent Secretariat and the International Steering Committee (ISC) to CoD Member State Norway in the framework of the renewal of Governing Council membership, SG Thomas E. Garrett and ISC Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio met with State Secretary Erling Rimestad to discuss human rights and democracy-related issues. The Secretary General and ISC Chair also met with Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide and members of the Standing Committee of Foreign Policy and Defence at the Parliament of Norway.

SG Garrett, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez, and civil society representative Ms. Maria Dahle of Human Rights House Foundation met with Mr. Bjorn Erik Thon and Ms. Guri Gabrielsen at the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud to discuss human rights-related issues.

As part of the engagement with civil society, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez also participated in a civil society roundtable, hosted by Human Rights House Foundation, civil society focal point for Norway.



## ESTONIA, JUNE 2023

Following the visit to Norway, the Permanent Secretariat and ISC joint renewal mission visited Member State Estonia. During the meeting with Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna, the mission team discussed promoting and safeguarding democracy and the current situation in neighbouring Ukraine.

Continuing engagement with civil society, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez and ISC Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio participated in a roundtable discussion with Estonian civil society organizations.

At the Parliament of Estonia, Senior Advisor Patricia Galdamez and the ISC Chair met with the Constitutional Committee.







## UKRAINE, JULY 2023

Ahead of the tragic anniversary of 500 days since Russia's unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine, Secretary General Garrett visited Kyiv on 3-7 July 2023 to meet with government, elected officials, youth, civil society, and the media to discuss Ukraine's role in today's frontline of democracy. He also traveled to the towns of Bucha and Irpin, to pay tribute to civilians murdered during Russian occupation.

## TAIWAN, JULY 2023

SG Thomas E. Garrett joined global democracy leaders and Taiwan's President and Foreign Minister in celebrating the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy's 20th anniversary. He addressed the gathering on the topic "Understanding and Combatting Authoritarian Influence in Europe," drawing upon Governing Council Member State experiences with China and Russia as well as lessons learned from the CoD Democracy Platform initiative.



## ARGENTINA, JULY 2023

In Buenos Aires, SG Thomas E. Garrett and ISC Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio met with Ambassador Pablo Anselmo Tettamanti, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship to discuss Argentina's engagement with the CoD. During the visit the joint mission also participated in a civil society roundtable with local civil society organizations hosted by the Civil Society Focal Point for Argentina.



## GUATEMALA, JULY 2023

During the visit to Guatemala in the framework of the renewal process, SG Thomas E. Garrett met with Mr. Mika Kanervavouri, country representative for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) who provided a general overview of the state of democracy and human rights in the country.

SG Garrret and ISC Chair Pillar Enrique de Obarrio met with Foreign Minister H.E. Mario Adolfo Búcaro Flores and held further substantial meetings with various government institutions including the Ministry of Education, Public Ministry, Supreme Electoral Tribunal, Ombudsman Office and members of Congress from the Human Rights Commission and Foreign Affairs Commission.

Additionally, a roundtable with civil society stakeholders was held to discuss current democracy-related challenges in the country.

## PANAMA, AUGUST 2023

During his visit to Panama City, SG Thomas E. Garrett and ISC Chair Enrique de Obarrio met with President Nito Cortizo and Foreign Minister Janaina Tewaney Mencomo to discuss the work of the Community of Democracies. Panama joined the CoD Governing Council in November 2023.



## Addressing country-specific activities

### AFGHANISTAN

The Community of Democracies strongly condemned the Taliban's latest discriminatory decision to ban Afghan women from working with the United Nations in Afghanistan and joined UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in calling on the Taliban to immediately revoke this decision. The CoD Policy Brief on Afghanistan, which outlines recommendations on SDG5 in Afghanistan, notes the country's legal obligation to guarantee the human rights of women.

### MYANMAR

"Despite widespread opposition and peaceful protests, the military-led government extended the state of emergency, causing yet another delay in elections. I call on Myanmar's government to respect the will of the people expressed in free and fair election"- underlined SG Thomas E. Garrett in his statement released in August 2023.

### GUATEMALA

In November 2023, to address the situation in Guatemala, the Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett together with the Secretary General of the Organization of American States Luis Almagro, issued a joint statement in which they urged Guatemalan authorities to uphold the values and principles as stated in the Warsaw Declaration and the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

### UKRAINE

In the statement released on the one year marking of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, Governing Council Member States (Canada, Chile, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States) reaffirmed their support to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. They also called upon Russia to immediately withdraw all its troops, military equipment, and personnel from the entire territory of Ukraine.



On June 30, 2023, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies hosted a meeting with a diverse group of Ukrainian women, activists and representatives of religious and ethnic minority organizations, who visited Warsaw as part of the National Democratic Institution coalition building workshop.

In July 2023, SG Garrett visited Kyiv to meet with government officials, civil society, youth, and media representatives. Based on his discussions with Ukrainian youth, a CoD report, “Enhancing Youth’s Role in Ukraine’s Reconstruction and Development” was drafted and outlined key strategies to empower and engage Ukrainian youth as crucial stakeholders in the country’s reconstruction.

In his statement released on the occasion of Ukraine’s Independence Day in August 2023, SG Garrett said: “In moments when optimism may seem elusive, Ukrainians must remember democracies around the world stand with you”.

In November, CoD Youth Coordinator Daryna Onyshko moderated a discussion on the conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine at the Warsaw Justice for Ukraine Conference, held by the British Embassy in Warsaw with the Casimir Pulaski Foundation.

## Other Thematic Events and Activities – 2023 highlights

### JOURNALISTS AT RISK: HOW DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS CAN EFFECTIVELY PROTECT JOURNALISTS AND SAFEGUARD MEDIA FREEDOMS, NOVEMBER 2023, GENEVA

The critical role of the diplomatic missions in protecting journalists and safeguarding media freedoms was discussed at a side event co-organized by the CoD and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the margins of the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The high-level panel included U.S. Permanent Representative H.E. Ms. Michele Taylor, H.E. Ms Riia Salsa-Audiffren, Permanent Representative of Estonia, H.E. Ms. Patricia McCullagh, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada, Mr. Abdoul Aziz Thioye and Mr. Renaud de Villaine of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Silvia Chocarro of the NGO Article 19, and speaking from Guatemala City, Ms. Pia Flores, journalist and anthropologist.



## SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

In marking the International Day of Democracy, SG Garrett joined UN Secretary General Guterres and OAS Secretary for Strengthening Democracy Francisco Guerrero Aguirre on a panel before the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. In his remarks, SG Garrett highlighted the vital role of youth in shaping democracies.

## SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY MEETING IN BRUSSELS

Democracy support under pressure in this time of geopolitical confrontation was the focus of a gathering hosted in Brussels by the European Endowment for Democracy. Attendees represented a seasoned cross-section of transatlantic leaders and afforded invaluable insights, predictions, and policies for international democracy infrastructure support. The Secretary General co-chaired a panel with Ms. Lisbeth Pilegaard of the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy on the Summit for Democracy process.

## SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE LUND SERIES DEBATE ON DEMOCRACY AND ITS OPPOSITES

In April, SG Thomas E. Garrett joined Damon Wilson of the National Endowment for Democracy in keynote presentations at the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University. He spoke to democratic backsliding, strategies for resilience, and conditions and practices that undermine democracy.

## BEYOND ELECTIONS: YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

A joint event held by the CoD, the Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa (IDM), and GLOBSEC gathered youth and public sector representatives to share experiences and ideas on youth engagement in public life.

## THE UNIQUE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE

In October, the CoD Youth Coordinator delivered a keynote message on the unique role young people play in decision-making and in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine at an event in Washington, D.C., co-hosted by the National Democratic Institute and the Hudson Institute.

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

In December, CoD YouthLeads Mr. Walter Corzo from Guatemala and Ms. Lourdes Argueta from El Salvador spoke at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) focused on Human Rights for Future Generations, held in Washington D.C.

## WARSAW DIALOGUE FOR DEMOCRACY

In the lead up to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, SG Thomas E. Garrett and ISC Chair Mr. Enrique de Obarrio participated in panel discussions at the Warsaw Dialogue on Democracy on different aspects of the human rights-based architecture in the modern world.





## BUILDING RESILIENCE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

In March, 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 panellists 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.

## GLOBAL PRINCIPLES FOR UPHOLDING INFORMATION INTEGRITY ONLINE

In May, 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.



## BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In June, Canada – together with the International Centre for Not-for-Profit-Law (ICNL) – cohosted a workshop discussion on the resilience of civil society held 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.







## BREAKING THE TOXIC CYCLE OF MEDIA AND POLITICS

In June, CoD Youth Coordinator joined the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy events at the Folkemodet democracy festival in Bornholm, Denmark, for speaker engagements together with members of parliament, journalists and democracy experts on youth political participation, as well as on the interconnection of media and politics.

## BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF DEMOCRACIES THROUGH WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In November, 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.



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