



**Regular Session of the OAS Permanent Council
April 17, 2024**

Virtual remarks by the CoD Secretary General Thomas E. Garrett

Dear Excellencies,

It is a pleasure and an honor to address the Organization of American States Permanent Council and speak to the outcomes of the Third Summit for Democracy.

Allow me to offer to the Republic of Korea, my sincere appreciation on behalf of the Community of Democracies, for their leadership in hosting the Third Summit, along with the United States, Ecuador, and the United Kingdom.

In the first Summit for Democracy in 2021, President Biden said he was looking for Champions for Democracy.

With this Third Summit, the Republic of Korea became one of those Champions for Democracy.

In Seoul, Democracy's resilience and renewal were highlighted to a global audience.

expressions of and shared commitments to democratic principles such as those outlined in the Warsaw Declaration, the founding document of the Community of Democracies, and the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the OAS, mark three years of democratic solidarity in the Summit process, drawing upon all regions of the world.

The three Summits have drawn more than 100 countries in participation, and each has shown growth and development, with each Summit making an important contribution to this ongoing process.

It was at the initiative of the Republic of Korea that the Community of Democracies, along with International IDEA, the Open Government Partnership, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

formed the Platform for Engagement of Civil Society, to support the Republic of Korea in including civil society and young people in the Summit for Democracy.

Speaking on behalf of all four Platform Members, we have been pleased to be part of this collaboration, and the results of this partnership with Korea's leadership were seen during the Summit's Day 2, the Civil Society and Youth Day, with more than 50 vibrant events and 800 participants 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."

In keeping with the theme, the Summit convened prominent global youth stakeholders, including the Youth Democracy Cohort, Generation Democracy—an initiative led by the International Republican Institute—and numerous youth activists worldwide, alongside our Community of Democracies YouthLeads.

I would like to highlight the efforts of the Youth Democracy Cohort, led by Costa Rica, Ghana, and Nepal, in collaboration with the European Commission, the European Partnership for Democracy, Africivistes, International IDEA, and the European Democracy Youth Network.

The Cohort successfully crafted a comprehensive set of potential commitments for states and developed a Youth Participation Handbook for the second Summit. To advance the shared objectives this year, the Cohort disbursed small grants to grassroots civil society organizations.

The CoD YouthLeads presented a Tech Talks session at the Third Summit.

They focused on the role of technology and social media in elections and the importance of digital literacy, engaging high-level representatives from the United States and Canada, as well as International IDEA, in a dialogue.

The YouthLeads called for:

- Safeguarding access to trusted news sources.
- Empowering the youth voice in elections - despite high levels of political engagement among youth, a significant disparity exists in their participation in elections.
- Fostering genuine engagement through social media.

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

During the inaugural Summit, we facilitated an online Youth Assembly, our CoD YouthLeads spoke to effective strategies to enhance youth involvement in democratic processes.

During the second Summit in San José, Costa Rica, the concept of the global Youth Democracy Network was conceived—an initiative also highlighted by Secretary Blinken during the Ministerial Day of the Third Summit.

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

The Youth Democracy Network will strengthen and amplify existing youth organizations and networks at international, regional, and national levels rather than duplicate them.

The OAS similarly strives to support civically and politically engaged youth across the Western Hemisphere.

We eagerly anticipate our continued collaboration with the Organization of American States, specifically on the YDN regional component.

In recent elections spanning from Poland to Guatemala to Pakistan, we have all observed firsthand the significant impact of youth turnout and engagement on electoral outcomes. Harnessing this potential and ensuring the continued involvement of young people in the democratic process is crucial.

Again, I commended the Republic of Korea for actively supporting the Platform for the Engagement of Civil Society.

The Platform for Engagement Members are presently engaged in discussions regarding potential pathways forward for the Summit process. However, two key determinants have become evident at this stage:

- Firstly, this mechanism will be integral to future Summits or other united democratic actions, particularly in supporting the vital voices of civil society and youth.
- Secondly, the active leadership of democracies is essential for the sustained progression of this process.

In this light, I thank the Republic of Korea for building upon previous Summits and using this gathering to bring forward the youth's fantastic potential.

I want to conclude with a quote from a CoD YouthLead from the Global South reflecting on the Summit. He said, "The Summit was a culmination of thought-provoking sentiments from young leaders and policy experts - and such progressive views should not end in the corridors of the Summit but should begin to trickle down into action points."

And that is my hope as well.

Thank you