



**Statement by the Secretary General on the
38th Meeting of the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies
Warsaw, 11 June 2024**

Amidst the backdrop of a landmark year of elections across the world and Russia's unjustified war on Ukraine, the 38th Meeting of the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies (CoD) convened in Warsaw on June 11, 2024. This gathering was dedicated to addressing pressing issues of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The morning sessions, which united Governing Council Member States with representatives of the Civil Society Pillar and the CoD YouthLeads, focused on the challenges and opportunities in enhancing collaboration on information integrity, the establishment of a U.N. Special Rapporteur on Democracy, and the advancement of youth rights and democratic values. The afternoon sessions delved into planning for the 25th Anniversary of the Warsaw Declaration next year and a review of internal governance matters.

The 38th Governing Council Meeting was chaired by the United States of America, a Member of the CoD Executive Committee. The Meeting's direction was set by the Acting Deputy Assistant of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Ms. Alison Peters, in her opening remarks. She underscored the significance of the Community's upcoming 25th year, stating, "The work of promoting and protecting democratic principles is more crucial now than ever. The principles of the Warsaw Declaration continue to guide us as we strive to strengthen our democracies internally and, on a global scale, to support democratic governance and foster respect for human rights."

Strengthening Collaboration on Information Integrity: In his keynote speech to the Governing Council, the pressing issue of disinformation was brought to the forefront by H.E. Mr. Jakub Wisniewski, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. He warned Member States, saying, "Disinformation poses a threat to our security, stability, and can often lead to serious socio-economic repercussions." His insightful remarks sparked a significant discussion, underscoring the urgency of the issue and the need for collective action. The Undersecretary spoke to the role of the Community of Democracies in countering this and other challenges, stating, "We can see that the reinforcement of democratic values, protection and promotion of human rights and close cooperation are now more important than ever."

U.N. Special Rapporteur on Democracy: Many pro-democracy groups believe the U.N. needs to do more to strengthen human rights and democracy and, at the request of a Member State, the topic of creating a Special Rapporteur position was placed on the Meeting Agenda.

Executive Director Mr. Andreas Bummel of Democracy without Borders presented the initiative to Governing Council Members, saying, "The appointment of a U.N. Special Rapporteur on Democracy is seen as an important way to make this (strengthening democracy) happen. The Rapporteur would examine challenges and opportunities related to realizing democratic governance." This topic was a discussion point, not a decision point, in the meeting and a diverse range of views, questions, and suggestions were made by participants.

Youth Rights and Democratic Values: H.E. Ms. Mónica Renata Bolaños Pérez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala, delivered a keynote speech on the critical role of young voters in protecting Guatemala's constitutional election process in late 2023. She said, "The future of our democracies lies in the hands of our youth. Their engagement, passion, and leadership are not just beneficial but essential." A panel discussion followed to define civil and political rights for youth, reflecting Ambassador Bolaños' charge to the Governing Council: "Let us work together to support and amplify their efforts, ensuring that they have a seat at the table and a say in the decisions that affect their lives and the world they will inherit."

In closing, this was my final Governing Council Meeting as Secretary General and I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Governing Council Members. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to work with you.

My opening remarks at the 38th Governing Council can be found [here](#).