

Press Release

Youth Democracy Network Launched to Support the Next Generation of Democratic Leaders

The Community of Democracies Permanent Secretariat has announced the launch of the Youth Democracy Network (YDN), an initiative aimed at supporting young leaders committed to advancing democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. With over half the world's population under the age of 30, the YDN seeks to provide tools, resources, and opportunities for young people to engage with decision-makers and contribute meaningfully to democratic systems.

“Young people demonstrate their commitment to democracy through their votes and their drive to create positive change – whether it’s the high youth turnout in Moldova’s elections or the social mobilization in Guatemala ahead of the presidential elections,” said **Dr. Mantas Adomėnas**, Secretary General of the Community of Democracies. “They are fact-checkers, champions of democracy, protest leaders, and, in some cases, imprisoned activists. What they need is our support: tools, resources, networks, and the amplification of their voices to reach decision-makers. This is precisely what the Youth Democracy Network aims to provide.”

The YDN serves as a space for collaboration and exchange, bringing together young civil society activists, politicians, and other leaders to work on initiatives addressing key challenges facing democracy today. It is designed to support young leaders and is dedicated to enhancing their advocacy efforts. YDN aims to engage young people worldwide, particularly in countries with large youth populations that face the threat of democratic erosion. Guided by the YDN board, with members from all over the world, the network strives to ensure representation of pro-democratic voices and perspectives. By fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, YDN seeks to connect youth organizations at international, regional, and national levels, enabling meaningful interactions that strengthen democratic initiatives. One of its key objectives is to engage and collaborate with smaller, lesser-known NGOs and grassroots organizations to ensure diverse representation.

Anna Bondarenko, YDN Board Member from Ukraine, highlighted the significance of youth leadership: “Seeing so many young people rise to lead across all sectors in Ukraine – from civil society to business and government – underscores just how vital the mission of the Youth Democracy Network is. Now more than ever, we need to unite to protect our democracies against the relentless efforts of autocrats who seek to undermine them every day, in every corner of the world.”

The launch of Youth Democracy Network will be marked by a regional meeting in Panama City on December 4, 2024, hosted at the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Panama. This gathering will bring together YDN members from Latin America and the Caribbean, alongside representatives from Community of Democracies (CoD) member states, to discuss regional challenges and opportunities. Key topics will include promoting transparency, countering authoritarian influence, and using digital tools to safeguard information integrity.

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Bringing together YDN members from across Latin America, along with prominent figures, the event will see contributions from distinguished attendees such as **María Del Carmen Aponte, U.S. Ambassador to Panama**, who will discuss with **Daryna Onyshko, YDN Project Manager**, the vision and mission in a keynote session. The gathering will also feature the Foreign Minister of Panama, the Community of Democracies Secretary General Dr. Mantas Adoménas, and respected young leaders like Mr. Juan Diego Vásquez.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Youth Democracy Network

Youth Democracy Network (YDN) is a dynamic community of young leaders dedicated to promoting democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. YDN creates opportunities for young people to engage with decision-makers and strengthening democratic resilience.

About Community of Democracies

The Community of Democracies (CoD) is a global intergovernmental coalition of states working together to promote, defend and strengthen democracy worldwide. Building on its founding document, the Warsaw Declaration, the Community is committed to taking concerted action to advance and protect democratic freedoms, strengthen democratic institutions, and expand political participation.

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