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ВМЕСТЕ
ДО
КОНЦА

**FIVE MESSAGES
FOR THE SUMMIT
FOR DEMOCRACY**

SUMMARY

A group of pro-democracy institutions and organizations working globally to support human rights defenders, independent media, civil society, elections, and democratic transformations agreed to address these Five Messages to leading democracies on the occasion of the Summit for Democracy. We believe these issues are of key importance for advancing democracy worldwide.

- 1.** Show solidarity with the world's democrats. Democracies must deploy resources more effectively to assist the citizens of autocracies and weak democracies.
- 2.** Renew international settings. Democracies must reform international institutions so that they reflect and promote democratic values.
- 3.** Scale-up support to independent, ethical media and the overall information ecosystem to ensure access to accurate information while addressing mis-/disinformation. Democracies must promote independent, verified, and fact-checked information.
- 4.** Strengthen and support existing structures and encourage the creation of new structures and systems to enable greater transparency, accountability, and coordination among governments, technology companies, and civil society. Democracies must address the business models of internet platforms and algorithms that actively push harmful, violent content.
- 5.** Put our own house in order. Democracies must restore their credibility.



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EUROPEAN
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Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy

Five Messages for the Summit for Democracy



INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Summit for Democracy is a unique opportunity to remind us that democracy is “government of the people, by the people, for the people”.

Yet 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, as the world faced a perfect storm of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, increasing economic and physical insecurity, and violent conflict.¹ Seventy percent of the world’s population live in either outright non-democratic regimes or democratically backsliding countries, compared to only 46 percent ten years ago.²

At a time when many people talk of a crisis of democracy, it is more important than ever that democratic states work together to show global leadership and solidarity in defending and advancing democracy at home and abroad. The democracy support community is key to this process, particularly today when autocrats are increasingly exploiting democratic weaknesses in other countries to advance their interests.

Democracy assistance programs support inclusive and credible elections, strengthen the capacity of local civil society actors to uncover corruption and defend basic rights, increase transparency, and hold leaders accountable. They bolster independent media within countries, often helping to keep these independent media alive, enabling them to play a critical watchdog role in society. They support human rights defenders and activists so they can continue to operate and be heard in their societies. They ensure that the political participation of women, people with disabilities, young people, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented groups is key to democratic processes and resilience.

A group of pro-democracy institutions and organizations working globally to support human rights defenders, independent media, civil society, and democratic transformations agreed to address these Five Messages to leading democracies on the occasion of the Summit for Democracy. We believe these issues are of crucial importance for advancing democracy worldwide.

‘it is more important than ever that democratic states work together to show global leadership and solidarity in defending and advancing democracy at home and abroad.’

1. Repucci, S. & Slipowitz, A. (2021) *Democracy Under Siege — Freedom in the World 2021*, Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>

2. International IDEA (2021) *Global State of Democracy Report 2021*. <https://www.idea.int/gsod>

FIVE MESSAGES

1.

Show solidarity with the world's democrats. Democracies must deploy resources more effectively to assist the citizens of autocracies and weak democracies.

When providing aid and assistance, **we shall support the development of democratic institutions capable of demanding accountability of their governments.** When corrupt, oppressive governments deprive their societies of their basic rights, we shall provide direct support to the society, civic organizations, and all pro-democracy actors. This is a paradigm shift from a government-centered approach to a society-centered approach.

We must continue to support the development of inclusive, policy-based political parties, given the central role of political parties as the gatekeepers to political decision-making and the development of policies that improve the lives of citizens.

We need greater coordination in the distribution of support, a greater focus on democracy in aid budgets and loan agreements, and guarantees of long-term support.

We must work together to deter and defend against malign foreign interference in democracy. This requires sharing lessons learned and best practices to develop a toolkit of solutions and strategies to build resilient institutions, practices, and publics.

We must push back forcefully against illiberal laws that limit the ability of societies to organize, stigmatize civil society, or hamper their ability to receive support from democratic partners abroad.

We must create stronger relationships between democratic countries and institutions worldwide, going beyond the “transatlantic” space and urging all democracies to engage in democracy assistance.



2.

Renew international settings. Democracies must reform international institutions so that they reflect and promote democratic values.

We need Special Rapporteurs or officers responsible for democracy inside such organizations as the UN, the OSCE, the OECD, the OAS, and the African Union, with broad mandates to investigate and report on democracy deterioration.

We need to challenge authoritarian regimes using international institutions to undermine human rights and democratic values, promoting “sovereignty” as the only ideal instead.

Every democracy should **incorporate a democratization agenda into its foreign policy**, focused on strengthening and supporting democratic institutions in bilateral and multilateral relations.

We need new institutions or **we need to adapt existing institutions to coordinate the democratic world’s response to aggression by authoritarian states** (e.g. murders, hijacking, kidnapping).



3.

Scale-up support to independent, ethical media and the overall information ecosystem to ensure access to accurate information while addressing mis-/disinformation. Democracies must promote independent, verified, and fact-checked information.



We need to create dedicated, long term, and core funding mechanisms for independent public interest media, targeted at journalists working inside autocracies and weak democracies, as well as at journalists working in exile.

We need to develop policy responses for regulators that balance the benefits of the free flow of information and the dangers of false and unverified information. Russia and China alone spend billions on internal and external propaganda. We need a more robust coordinated international response to counter this and other such propaganda around the world.

4.

Strengthen and support existing structures and encourage the creation of new structures and systems to enable greater transparency, accountability, and coordination among governments, technology companies, and civil society. Democracies must address the business models of internet platforms and algorithms that actively push harmful, violent content.

We need a human rights-based approach to digital technologies for the responsible handling of data and the open and free exchange of ideas. We have an opportunity and a joint obligation to develop, use, regulate, and promote technology for the benefit of democracy.

We must ensure that technology companies do not facilitate authoritarian censorship and we must play an active role in lobbying against any such action.

We need to enable citizens to control their data and protect against abuse by those who seek to influence them using that data.

We need to invest in digital literacy to give citizens the tools to distinguish truth from disinformation, protect human rights, and participate constructively in digital democratic activity.

We need an effective mechanism to ensure that democracy activists, human rights defenders, investigative journalists, and all vulnerable and marginalized voices are not removed from social media platforms and that all individuals are protected from online abuse. Social media platforms complying with authoritarian states' censorship demands should face the consequences of not meeting democratic standards.

5.

Put our own house in order. Democracies must restore their credibility.

We must speak clearly and confidently on behalf of democracy and defend the democratic norms and rights enshrined in international law and democratic constitutions.

We must ensure that democracy is constantly inclusive and that all members of society can participate equally within the democratic process, including women, those with disabilities, young people, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented groups. We must share these experiences to constantly strengthen assistance approaches.

We must speak in unison where democratic values are at stake. The commitment to these challenges must be clear and verifiable, and tangible action must back up our words.

We must address corruption and confront kleptocracy. The world's autocrats cannot continue to use the global financial system to hide and launder stolen money.

We must recommit to democracy at home, including by ensuring that elections uphold key international standards and obligations and have credible and transparent results that foster public trust.





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