



YOUTH FOR DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL DECLARATION

Washington D.C.— On December 9-10, the Biden Administration will host a virtual Summit for Democracy (S4D) for leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector. In advance of the Summit, the Administration is consulting with experts from multilateral organizations, philanthropies, civil society, government, and the private sector to solicit bold, practicable ideas around three key themes:

- ◆ Defending against authoritarianism;
- ◆ Addressing and fighting corruption; and
- ◆ Advancing respect for human rights.

In order to ensure that youth perspectives are brought into the conversation around the S4D's themes, the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS)¹ with support from USAID through the Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) Leader with Associates Award hosted the Youth Voices for Democracy roundtable to identify actionable recommendations to inform the U.S. government's efforts to reestablish and strengthen democratic norms around the globe. The following recommendations were developed by a diverse group of young leaders and youth development practitioners in response to the S4D's three key themes and should be considered broadly applicable to all youth populations regardless of their gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, and geographic location.²

Defending Against Authoritarianism

Governments should:

1. Publicly condemn authoritarianism and agree on actions to uphold human rights, such as adopting human rights reforms, with a focus on freedom of expression and working specifically with communities most impacted by authoritarianism. This includes but is not limited to young people from communities who experience social and political marginalization.
2. Collaborate with and encourage other governments to protect civic freedoms with a focus on curbing nepotism and combating corruption in politics. Governments should also share promising practices, such as using social media as a tool to raise awareness or the development of mechanisms that track human rights violations.
3. Demonstrate solidarity with young leaders in closed and closing spaces by engaging local and regional youth networks and creating safe spaces for young leaders to participate in dialogues about democracy. Engaging youth networks can also create a platform to amplify their advocacy.

Civil society organizations and young changemakers should:

1. Challenge existing political systems by encouraging meaningful youth inclusion and participation in political parties, protest movements, civil society organizations, public service, election management bodies, and other groups working to protect against democratic backsliding.
2. Harness the power of global youth movements and transnational organizing by amplifying youth-led advocacy efforts, in addition to supporting youth networking and coalition building to advance democracy. Civil society organizations should also enact safeguards or safety mechanisms for young people who are politically active or have a desire to be politically active.
3. Engage young people in developing innovative initiatives to protect democratic space, such as investing in the development and deployment of technologies to circumvent repression and foster creative means of civic protest.

¹ This activity is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

² CEPPS is a nonprofit organization that pools the expertise of three premier international organizations – the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems – to support elections and political transitions across the globe. The mission of CEPPS is to work together with local, regional and global partners to build resilient, inclusive, and accountable democracies.



Addressing and Fighting Corruption

Governments should:

1. Challenge social norms that reinforce corruption and invest in effective mechanisms and oversight for reporting corruption. Governments that already have effective reporting mechanisms in place should work with young people to share best practices across borders.
2. Empower young government officials to design and lead policymaking efforts focused on anti-corruption, including the promotion of transparent and accountable decision-making processes.
3. Ensure that digitized goods and services are widely accessible and commit to training all civil servants on the use of new technologies.

Civil society organizations and young changemakers should:

1. Foster and elevate public perceptions of young people as changemakers, positioning them as credible, necessary, and trustworthy voices in the fight against corruption.
2. Work with youth-led and youth-focused organizations or networks to monitor the efficacy of government systems and advocate for more transparent, inclusive, accessible, and accountable ways to provide goods and services.
3. Establish collaborative relationships with media outlets and their representatives to raise public awareness and shift public perception of corruption, as well as share opportunities for stakeholders who are negatively impacted by corruption to participate in anti-corruption efforts. This includes exposing corrupt practices and encouraging media outlets to share positive examples.

Advancing Respect for Human Rights

Governments should:

1. Uphold human rights by ratifying legislation and creating mechanisms that address human rights violations.
2. Invest in civic education that promotes young people's understanding of their civic and political rights that is accessible to all youth populations, especially young women, ethnic minority and Indigenous youth, and young people with disabilities.
3. Advance young people's involvement in political career pathways by providing internship and mentorship programs, in addition to creating internal mechanisms through which young leaders can formally participate in decision-making processes either as politicians or civil servants.

Civil society organizations and young changemakers should:

1. Work across sectors to link human rights issues, particularly issues related to the discrimination and marginalization of diverse and underrepresented communities, in advocacy efforts. Collaborate with groups facing extreme marginalization, such as young people who are in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community.
2. Challenge social norms that uphold the discrimination and dehumanization of specific groups. Apply inclusive approaches as part of advocacy efforts to ensure the inclusion of all peoples' voices with respect to their diverse identities.
3. Engage in collaborative efforts that raise awareness of and actively combat misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech regarding minority communities, such as ethnic and religious minorities, Indigenous communities, people with disabilities, women of all ages, and LGBTQI+ communities, amongst others.



We, the undersigned signatories of Youth Voices for Democracy, stand firmly in solidarity with efforts to promote democratic resilience and recognize the critical roles that young people play in efforts to defend against authoritarianism, fight corruption, and promote respect for human rights.



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