Call for a UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy

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A. Statement

Global reports on the state of democracy and human rights indicate that democracy is threatened and authoritarianism is on the rise. Civic space and freedoms are fiercely and increasingly restricted in many countries. In addition, democratic backsliding or a decline in the quality of democracy is occurring in newer as well as long-established democracies across all regions.

In this situation, the United Nations needs to do more to strengthen human rights and democracy. The undersigned organizations and individuals thus call for the creation of a new mandate by the UN’s Human Rights Council: a UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy (UN-RoD).

Protecting human rights is a fundamental pillar of the UN and democracy is one of its core values. The opening words of the UN Charter, “We the Peoples,” imply support for democracy. They underscore the central democratic principle that public authority must derive from the will of the people.

A democratic society offers the best conditions for guaranteeing human rights for all, in particular minorities and excluded groups. At the same time, full implementation of human rights is a foundation of a democratic society. The UN needs to recognize the nexus between democracy and human rights and help further strengthen democratic governance. A UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy will serve this purpose.

The new mandate will be based on and guided by principles the UN enshrined in past and present resolutions and instruments, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1993 Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights.

The Rapporteur would be mandated to investigate the state of democracy around the world from a broader perspective, going beyond, complementing and linking together analysis and data on specific issues being investigated by existing mandates set up by the Human Rights Council that deal with democratic rights such as freedom of opinion and expression; peaceful assembly and association; independence of judges and lawyers; freedom of religion or belief; minority issues; as well as human rights defenders.

The UNRoD would examine challenges and opportunities related to the realization of democracy. This includes, but is not limited to, constitutional and institutional arrangements such as checks and balances; effectiveness of parliaments; free, fair and competitive elections and election environments; political participation including of minorities and women; direct and deliberative mechanisms; as well as civic space and freedoms.
The Rapporteur, assisted by an independent advisory board, will gather, manage, and assess information, data and evidence as well as conduct and evaluate research. The mandate holder will engage, as appropriate, with Member States, other Rapporteurs, relevant stakeholders, and the public. In particular, the Rapporteur will seek input from citizens and civil society groups, acknowledging the crucial role of civil society in strengthening and protecting democracy. The Rapporteur will share observations on shortcomings but also on best practices and offer recommendations for improvement, thus serving an important oversight function, among other things.

On the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration, we call on all governments that are committed to democracy to support the establishment of this new mandate under the auspices of the Human Rights Council. We call on like-minded organizations, policy-makers and individuals to join our cause and endorse this appeal.

B. Endorsing organizations

With country of national or international headquarters:

1. AfricTivistes, Senegal
2. Alliance for Vietnam's Democracy, Vietnam
3. Alma Cívica, Paraguay
4. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Indonesia
5. Asia Democracy Network, Thailand
6. Atlas, United Kingdom
7. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement BBE (National Network for Civil Society), Germany
8. CDD - Center for Development and Democracy, Georgia
9. Center for Democracy (DD Foundation), Estonia
10. Center for Strategic Litigation, Tanzania
11. Centro de Liderazgo e Innovación para Mujeres de las Américas, Peru
12. Citizens for Global Solutions, United States of America
13. Civic IDEA, Georgia
14. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, South Africa
15. Coalition for a World Security Community, Australia
16. Consejo Regional Indígena y Popular de Xpújil, Mexico
17. Counterpart International, United States of America
18. Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), Denmark
19. Democracia Digital, Peru
20. Democracia Global, Argentina
21. Democracy International, United States of America
22. Democracy International e.V., Germany
23. Democracy Reporting International, Germany
24. Democracy Today, Armenia
25. Democracy Without Borders, Germany
26. DT Institute, United States of America
27. EG Justice, Equatorial Guinea
28. Egyptian Green Party, Egypt
29. elbarlament e.V., Germany
30. Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, Azerbaijan
31. Election Observation Group, Kenya
32. Election Watch EU, Austria
33. European Endowment for Democracy, Brussels
34. European Exchange, Germany
35. European Partnership for Democracy, Belgium
36. Fundación Altiero Spinelli, Argentina
37. Fundación Puentes para el Desarrollo de Centroamérica, Nicaragua
38. Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, United States of America
39. Gobierno & Análisis Político AC, Mexico
40. Halley Movement, Mauritius
41. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement, Lebanon
42. Independent Journalists Association Of Vietnam-IJAVN, Vietnam
43. Institute G. Toniolo for the International Right of Peace, Italy
44. Integrity Initiatives International, United States of America
45. International Center for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Foresight, Universidad Austral (CIDEIPP), Argentina
46. International Youth Think Tank, Sweden
47. Lawyers for Human Rights, Ethiopia
48. LEDA - Leadership, Education, Democracy, Art and Environment, Mozambique
49. Liberal Democracy Institute, Egypt
50. Mujer a Mujer y de Hombre a Hombre, Cuba
51. Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Netherlands
52. Nigeria Network of NGOs, Nigeria
53. Olof Palme International Center, Sweden
54. One More Percent, Kenya
55. Open Society Foundations, United States of America
56. Pakistan Development Alliance, Pakistan
57. Parliamentarians for Global Action, United States of America
58. PEN America, United States of America
59. Peoples' Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), India
60. ProboxVE, Venezuela
61. Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe por la Democracia - Redlad, Colombia
62. Sapari, Georgia
63. Sassoufit collective, Congo (Brazzaville)
64. Social Development International (SODEIT), Nigeria
65. Society for Threatened Peoples, Germany
66. Students for Global Democracy Uganda, Uganda
67. Swedish International Liberal Centre (SILC), Sweden
68. Swiss Democracy Foundation, Switzerland
69. The Amarjargal Foundation, Mongolia
70. The Carter Center, United States of America
71. The Fund for Global Human Rights, United States of America
72. The Hong Kong Scots, United Kingdom
73. The May 18 Foundation, South Korea
74. Transparencia Electoral, Argentina
75. Union of European Federalists France, France
76. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Sweden
77. Vietnamese Community Of Oregon, United States of America
78. Westminster Foundation for Democracy, United Kingdom
79. World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy, United States of America
80. World Uyghur Congress, Germany
81. Yiaga Africa, Nigeria
82. Young European Federalists (JEF-Europe), Belgium
83. Young Women’s Actions For Rights, Peace and Development, Liberia
84. Youth Democracy Movement, United States of America
85. Zambia Free Press Initiative, Zambia
86. Society for Threatened Peoples, Italy
87. Human Rights Cities Network, Belgium
88. Model United Nations School, India
89. International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Switzerland
90. Students for Global Democracy, Uganda
91. International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC), Australia
92. Connect4Value, Netherlands
93. Gloco, Switzerland
94. Mahurangi Action Incorporated, New Zealand
95. Institute for Asian Democracy, United States of America
96. POLITICOM Inc., Canada
97. Provea, Venezuela
98. OIDP Afrique, Senegal
99. World Federalist Movement Canada - Toronto Region Branch, Canada
100. Public Association for Assistance to Free Economy, Azerbaijan
101. Alliance congolaise pour les foyers et combustibles améliorés (ACFCA), Congo (Kinshasa)
102. Center for International Media Research and Studies, India
103. SADC Youth Network, Zambia
104. Centro Faces, Dominican Republic
105. Institute of Public Affairs, Poland
106. PAK Education Society/Pakistan Development Network, Pakistan
107. International Federation for Human Rights (FDH), France
108. FAIR Italy, Italy
109. Foro permanente de organizaciones de sociedad civil, Honduras
110. Association pour la Promotion de la Solidarité, France
111. Assemblée des Citoyens du Monde, France
112. Human rights center Viasna, Belarus
113. Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker Schweiz, Switzerland
114. Centro de Capacitación y promoción de la Democracia, CECADE, El Salvador
115. Cultura Democrática, Argentina
116. The Good Lobby Italia, Italy
117. Peace And Justice Alliance, Canada
118. Democracy Without Borders-Kenya, Kenya
119. International Association for Democracy, United Kingdom
120. Trippinz Care International Foundation, Nigeria
121. 1000 Shades of Women Foundation International, United States of America
122. Extended Arms Diamond Inc., United States of America
123. Pleading for the Widows Foundation International, United States of America
124. Trippinz Care Inc., United States of America
125. One World: Movement for Global Democracy, Israel
126. Associazione Culturale dei Triangoli e della Buona Volontà Mondiale (The Good News Agency), Italy
127. Femmes et Droits Humains, Mali
128. Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Macedonia
129. Network of Democrats in the Arab World, Jordan
130. Alma Cívica, Paraguay
131. Narrative Hub, South Sudan
132. Humanistischer Verband Deutschlands HVD - German Humanist Association, Germany
133. Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen e.V./UNA Germany, Germany
134. Youth Awareness for Peace and Development (YAPD4Africa), Nigeria
135. McCain Institute at Arizona State University, United States of America
136. Jaringan Aktivis Kemanusiaan Internasional - JAKI (International Humanitarian Activists Network), Indonesia
137. Association des dynamiques des jeunes marocains, Morocco
138. Friends of Angola, United States of America
139. Group of Actions and Initiatives, Congo (Kinshasa)
140. Center for Global Nonkilling, United States of America
141. Share the Commons, United States of America
142. ACRD-Congo, France
143. Participatory Democracy Cultural Initiative, Inc., United States of America
144. SAAM Foundation, Islamabad, Pakistan
145. National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal, Nepal
146. HRM Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan
147. Association for Farmers Rights Defense (AFRD), Georgia
148. African Network of Young Researchers, Ivory Coast
149. Centro de Investigaciones de Política Comparada (CIPCOM), Venezuela

B. Individual signatories

With current and/or former affiliations at the time of signature:

1. Jacqueline Abramian, Corporate Communications Consultant, NGO Advisor, United States of America
2. Rozaina Adam, Member of Parliament, Maldives
3. Irune Aguirrezabal Quijera, Director for Human Rights, Democracy and Equality at the Organisation for Iberoamerican States, Spain
4. Raghad Al Saadi, International Consultant, Polar Lights Prime, LLC, United States of America
5. Luca Alfieri, University of Tartu, Italy
6. Tutu Alicante, Executive Director, EG Justice, Equatorial Guinea
7. Richelle Allison, Executive Director, Young Women's Actions For Rights Peace and Development, Liberia
8. Ann-Sofie Alm, Member of Parliament, Sweden
9. Angel Alonso Arroba, Vice Dean, IE School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs, Spain
10. Emilio Álvarez Icaza, Member of Parliament, Mexico
11. Daniele Archibugi, Professor, Italian National Research Council and University of London, Birkbeck College, Italy
12. Ameha Mekonnen Asfaw, Executive Director, Lawyers for Human Rights, Ethiopia
13. Mohamed Awad, Président, Egyptian Green Party, Egypt
14. Lloyd Axworthy, Chair, World Refugee and Migration Council, former Foreign Minister of Canada, Canada
15. Elisenda Balleste Buxo, Coordinator, Global Democracy Coalition, Sweden
16. Petra Bayr, Member of the National Assembly, Austria
17. Thijs Berman, Executive Director, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, Netherlands
18. Eric Bjornlund, Democracy International, United States of America
19. Sebastian Bloching, Managing director, elbarlament e.V., Germany
20. Stefanie Bosshard, Managing Director, Swiss Democracy Foundation, Switzerland
21. Angela Brown Burke, Member of Parliament, Jamaica
22. Gabriela Bucher, President and CEO, The Fund for Global Human Rights, United Kingdom
23. Andreas Bummel, Executive Director, Democracy Without Borders, Germany
24. Mahendranath Busgopaul, Secretary General, Halley Movement, Mauritius
25. Hallu Suleiman Bwaje, Chief Press Secretary, Gurara Local Government, Niger State, Nigeria
26. Olga Caballero, Alma Cívica, Paraguay
27. Colombe Cahen-Salvador, Co-Founder at Atlas, United Kingdom
28. Sandro Calvani, President of the scientific council of the G. Toniolo institute for the International Right of Peace, Thailand
29. Thomas Carothers, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, United States of America
30. David Carroll, Director, Democracy Program, The Carter Center, United States of America
31. Kevin Casas-Zamora, Secretary-General of International IDEA, Costa Rica
32. Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Member of the European Parliament, Italy
33. Ketevab Chachava, Executive Director, CDD - Center for Development and Democracy, Georgia
34. Armando Chaguaceda, Director de Investigación, Gobierno & Análisis Político AC, Mexico
35. Joan Chinwa, Founder - Zambia Free Press Initiative, Zambia
36. Wing Cheung Chung, Finland
37. Juan de Dios Cincunegui, Director, International Center for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Foresight (CIDEIIPP), School of Government, Universidad Austral, Argentina
38. Elizabeth Corley, VP of Communications, Counterpart International, United States of America
39. François Crépeau, Professor, McGill University, Canada
40. Esther Cuesta, Member of Parliament, Ecuador
41. Aisha Dabo, Coordinator, AfricTivistes, Senegal
42. Isa kwambo Dagona, Senior Program Officer, Social Development International (SO-DEIT), Nigeria
43. Srdjan Darmanovic, Full professor, University of Montenegro / Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Montenegro
44. Jesús Delgado, Executive Director of Transparencia Electoral, Argentina
45. Michelle Desreux, Canada
46. Boris Dittrich, Member of Parliament, The Netherlands
47. Ashutosh Dubey, Journalist, public affairs advisor, founding editor, KanishkSocialMedia, India
48. Edipcia, Dubón, Fundación Puentes para el Desarrollo de Centroamérica, Nicaragua
50. Yordanos Eyoel, Founder and CEO, Keseb, United States of America
51. Dirk Filzek, Germany
52. Elaine Ford, Director, Democracia Digital, Peru
53. George Foulkes, Labour Member of the House of Lords, former MP and MSP, United Kingdom
54. Manuela Franco, Ambassador, Portugal
55. Dewan K. Gabriel, Minority Whip, Pankship North, Plateau State, Nigeria
56. Michael Gahler, Member of the European Parliament, Germany
57. Thomas Garrett, Secretary General, Community of Democracies, United States of America
58. Daniel Garzón López, Senior Program Officer, Democracy, Gender, and Inclusion Program - Parliamentarians for Global Action, Colombia
59. Bernard Georges, Member of Parliament, Seychelles
60. Romel Rubén González Díaz, Coordinador de Democracia y Buen vivir del Consejo Regional Indígena y Popular de Xpujil y Coordinador General de la Coordinadora Indígena Abya Yala, Mexico
61. Meenu Gupta, Germany
62. Chris Hamer, President, Coalition for a World Security Community, Australia
63. Justin Haner, Ph.D. Candidate, Northeastern University, United States of America
64. Adamu Haruna, Supervisory Councilor on Special Duties, Niger State, Nigeria
65. Frank Heuberger, Senior Advisor European Policy, National Network for Civil Society (BBE), Germany
66. Yoojung Hong, Assistance Manager, The May 18 Foundation, South Korea
67. Fernando Iglesias, Member of Parliament; Co-President, World Federalist Movement, Argentina
68. Natalie Imboden, Former Member of Parliament, Switzerland
69. Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress, Germany
70. Samson Itodo, Executive Director, Yiaga Africa, Nigeria
71. Earl James, Common Home of Humanity, United States of America
72. Juuso Järvinen, Vice-President, Young European Federalists (JEF-Europe), Finland
73. Daniel Jositsch, Member of Parliament (Council of States), Switzerland
74. Marc Jost, Member of the Swiss Parliament, Switzerland
75. Renata Juliotti, Brazil
76. Titatin Khidasheli, Chair, Civic IDEA, former Minister of Defense, Georgia
77. Evelyn Kleinert, Germany
78. Renate Knudsen, Sweden
79. Arndis Anna Kristinardottir Gunnarsdottir, Member of Althingi, the Icelandic parliament, Iceland
80. Roman Kühn, Executive Director, Society for Threatened Peoples, Germany
81. Sonja Kühne, Germany
82. Batu kutelia, Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Georgia
83. Daniel Kwok, Scottish Hongkongers, United Kingdom
84. Lars-Göran Larsson, Sweden
85. Jo Leinen, Former MEP, Germany
86. François Leray, former President of UEF France, France
87. Taopiphop Limjitrakorn, Member of Thai National Assembly, Thailand
88. Staffan Lindberg, Director, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Sweden
89. Sigrid Lipott, UN Advisor, Geneva Hub, Switzerland
90. Camila Lopez Badra, Executive Director, Democracia Global, Argentina
91. Jean Jacques Lumumba, Unis, Réseau Panafricain de lutte contre la corruption, France
92. Ian Lynch, Managing Director and Program Director at Integrity Initiatives International, United States of America
93. Carlos Africo Madrid Hart, Human Rights and Democracy Observatory/White City Foundation, Honduras
94. Anis Mahfoudh, Human rights defender, Tunisia
95. Brian Malika, One More Percent, Kenya
96. Anar Mammadli, Chairperson, Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, Azerbaijan
97. Nestus Fru Manju, Member of Parliament, Cameroon
98. Norman Mapela, South Africa
99. Gaia Marchiori, Directora, Fundación Altiero Spinelli, Argentina
100. Maria V Marin, ProboxVE Executive Director, Venezuela
101. Kyle Matthews, Executive Director, Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, Canada
102. Oleksandra Matviichuk, Center for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Laureate, Ukraine
103. Herbert Emmanuel Mba Aki Nze, Assistant Professor in Political Science/ Université Omar Bongo, Gabon
104. Monday Mbah, Councilor Nenwe 2, Aninri LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria
105. Michael Mo, The Hong Kong Scots, United Kingdom
106. Christian Moos, European Rep for the Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (National Network for Civil Society), Germany
107. Athayde Motta, Former member of the Executive Committee of the Brazilian Association of Non-governmental Organizations (ABONG), Brazil
108. Henry Muguzi, Executive Director, ACFIM / Overall Coordinator, African Election Observers Network (AEONet), Uganda
109. Gesa Mike, Munabi, Students for Global Democracy Uganda, Uganda
110. Tim Murithi, Head of Programme, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, South Africa
111. Mulle Musau, African Election Observation Network, Kenya
112. Florence Mutua, Former Member of the National Assembly, Kenya
113. Kumi Naidoo, Global Ambassador, Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity, South Africa
114. Ucha Nanuashvili, Founder, Democracy Research Institute (DRI), Georgia; former Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia, Georgia
115. Mary Navicha, Member of Parliament, Malawi
116. Andrea Ngombet, Founder, Sassoufit collective, Congo (Brazzaville)
117. Giaquoc Nguyen, Overseas Coordinator & Representative, Independent Journalists Association Of Vietnam IJAVN, United States of America
118. Antonio Niquice, Member of Parliament, Mozambique
119. Ede Magnus Nnaemeka, House Committee Chairman on Transport, Inter governmental and House matters, Enugu State, Nigeria
120. Martin A. Noorkõiv, CEO, Center for Democracy (DD Foundation), Estonia
122. Millie Odhiambo, Member of Parliament, Kenya
123. Matthew Kenechukwu Ogbonna, Majority Leader of 10th Assembly, Enugu State, Nigeria
124. Amy Oloo, Executive Director, World Federalist Movement/ Institute for Global Policy, Kenya
125. Ibrahim Yahaya Oloriegbe, Chairman Senate Committee on Health of 9th Assembly, Kwara State, Nigeria
126. Per Olsson, Secretary General, Swedish International Liberal Centre (SILC), Sweden
127. Okay Joe Onuakalusi, Member House of Representatives, representing Isolo, Oshodi Federal Constituency, Lagos State, Nigeria
128. Willice Onyango, Executive Director, The Youth Cafe, Kenya
129. Iver Ørstavik, Senior Adviser, Rafto Foundation for Human Rights, Norway
130. Diego Osorio, Fellow Harvard's Weatherhead Centre International Affairs, Canada
131. Oluseyi, Oyebisi, Executive Director, Nigeria Network of NGOs, Nigeria
132. Evangelia Papada, Analyst for strategic based research and policy, Varieties of Democracy, Sweden
133. George Papandreou, Former Prime Minister and Member of Parliament, Greece
134. Baia Pataraia, Director of Sapari; Chair of Human Rights House Tbilisi, Georgia
136. Lucas Peña, Rotary International member; University professor, Colombia
137. Lisbeth Pilegaard, Executive Director, Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), Denmark
138. Jerzy Pomianowski, Executive Director, European Endowment for Democracy, Poland
139. Syed Naveed, Qamar, Member National Assembly, Pakistan
140. Armin Rabitsch, Chairperson, Election Watch EU, Austria
141. Lenin Raghuvanshi, Founder and CEO, People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), India
142. Nadia Ramos Serrano, CEO & Founder, Centro de Liderazgo e Innovación para Mujeres de las Américas, Peru
143. Amarjargal Rinchinnyam, Former Prime Minister of Mongolia, Mongolia
144. Cristina Maria Rodriguez Penton, Presidenta, Mujer a Mujer y de Hombre a Hombre, Cuba
145. Gina Romero, Executive Director, Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe por la Democracia - Redlad, Colombia
146. Antonio Roque, Co-founder, World Peace Alliance, United Kingdom
147. Laina Rosberg, Sweden
148. Deus Rweyemamu, Chief Executive Officer, Center for Strategic Litigation, Tanzania
149. Christopher Sabatini, Senior Research Fellow for Latin America and Senior Professor of Practice, Chatham House and London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom
150. Niranjan Sahoo, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India
151. Stefanie Schiffer, Director, European Exchange, Germany
152. Nicola Schmidt, Executive Director, Democracy Reporting International, Germany
153. Livingstone Sewanyana, UN Independent Expert for the Promotion of an Equitable and Democratic International Order, Uganda
154. Gulnara Shahinian, Founder, Democracy Today; former UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Armenia
155. Rebecca Shoot, Executive Director, Citizens for Global Solutions, United States of America
156. Annika Silva-Leander, Head of North America and Permanent Observer of International IDEA to the United Nations, Sweden
157. Anthony Smith, CEO, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, United Kingdom
158. Ivone Soares, Member of Parliament, Mozambique
159. Miriam Solaimankhil, Member of Parliament, Afghanistan
160. Jordi Solé, Member of the European Parliament, Spain
161. Jenny Sporrong, Sweden
162. Margarita Stolbizer, Member of Parliament, Argentina
163. Urban Strandberg, Managing Director & Co-Founder, International Youth Think Tank; Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
164. Kannavee Suebsang, Member of Parliament, Thailand
165. Anna Sundström, Secretary General, Olof Palme International Center, Sweden
166. Ichal Supriadi, Secretary-General, Asia Democracy Network, Thailand
167. Ulrike Talkner, Germany
168. Karina Tehusijarana, Media Officer, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Indonesia
169. Olga Tokariuk, Independent journalist, Ukraine
170. Quoc-Hung Tran, MD, Coordinator, Alliance for Vietnam's Democracy, Vietnam
171. Violet Tsagka, DT Institute, United States of America
172. Thao Tu, President of Vietnamese Community of Oregon, United States of America
173. Zia Ur Rehman, Pakistan Development Alliance, Pakistan
174. Caroline Vermaillen, Head of Community Building, Democracy International e.V., Germany
175. Melissa Verpile, Director, Democracy, Gender, and Inclusion (DGI) Program, United States of America
176. Wendy Via, CEO, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, United States of America
177. Nicolas Walder, Member of Parliament, Switzerland
178. Njeri Wanjeri, Coalition for Peace and Gender Champions in Africa, Kenya
179. Alyn Ware, Program Director, World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy, New Zealand
180. Uwe Welteke-Fabricius, Germany
181. Robert Wilkens, Lawyer, Germany
182. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Belize
183. Henry Wright, Chair, Youth Democracy Movement, former Global Youth Representative, UN Fund for Education in Emergencies, United States of America
184. Mathew Danjuma Yare, Speaker Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), FCT, Abuja Nigeria
185. Dalia Ziada, Director, Liberal Democracy Institute, Egypt
186. Mauro di Vieste, Society for Threatened Peoples, Italy, Italy
187. Frederique Hanotier, Board Member, Human Rights Cities Network, Belgium
188. Deepak Baruah, Founder and President, Model United Nations School, India
189. Rosa Valerio, NGO Representative, United States of America
190. Gesa Mike Munabi, Programme Advisor, Students for Global Democracy, Uganda
191. Susanne Hughes, Executive Director, International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC), Australia
192. Hilton Dawson, Former Member of Parliament. Founding member, The North East Party, United Kingdom
193. Magda Laurans, PA, teacher, TA, United Kingdom
194. Birgit Plate, Germany
195. Martin Dixon, United Kingdom
196. Jaco Momberg, South Africa
197. Jimmy Lövgren, Board member, UNA Stenungsund and UNA Gothenburg & Bohuslän, Sweden
198. Olette Bollen, Advisor, Connect4Value, Netherlands
199. Gery Colombo, Secretary General, Global Community Gloco, Switzerland
200. Louise Lungley, United Kingdom
201. Ian Dawson, United Kingdom
202. Frederic Eger, TV Journalist, Producer, Entrepreneur, former WFM-IMO Secretary, Israel
203. Marcelo Mella, Professor, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile
204. Francine John-Calame, Former parliamentarian, Switzerland
205. Muhammad Ayaz, Young Parliamentary Associate at the National Assembly of Pakistan, Pakistan
206. Mariano Ramon Bareiro Soria, Paraguay
207. José Gabriel Zura Zamora, El Salvador
208. Cimino Cole, Secretary of Mahurangi Action, New Zealand
209. Shakeeb Qaid, Yemen
210. Colleen Mac Dougall, Founder, Soul of Peace; Founder, Beyond Fear, Canada
211. Luisito Miguel Gepeuela, Member, Barangay Assembly, Barangay Pedro Cruz, Philippines
212. Francisco Lara, Chief of Staff, World Liberty Congress, United States of America
213. Lawrence Khoza, Politician, South Africa
214. Michele Bohana, Director, Institute for Asian Democracy, United States of America
215. Karminn C.D. Daytec Yañgot, Philippines
216. Isa kwanbo Dagona, Nigeria
217. Alejandro Monsivais Carrillo, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Mexico
218. Henri Lourdou, Ancien conseiller municipal de Tarbes (2008-2014), France
219. Tamar Iakobidze, Sweden
220. Fernando Maidana, Paraguay
221. Ann-Britt Sternfeldt, Sweden
222. Shafiq Butt, Dawn newspaper, Pakistan
223. Renate Knudsen, Sweden
224. Gunnar Widen, Sweden
225. Neil Alldred, United Kingdom
226. Wendy Bond, United Kingdom
227. Gudrun Fleetwood, Sweden
228. John Miller Beauvoir, Senior Democracy and Governance Specialist, POLITICOM Inc., Canada
229. Ratan Capoor, India
230. Deborah Van Berkel, Venezuela
231. Rafael Uzcategui, Coordinador General de Provea, Venezuela
232. Bachir Kanoute, General Secretary, OIDP Afrique, Senegal
233. Nigel Johnson, United Kingdom
234. Blaise Konya, Hungary
235. Jorge Leguizamon, Spain
236. Norbert D’Costa, President, Toronto Branch of the World Federalist Movement Canada, Canada
237. Patrik Gyland, Sweden
238. Soheila Comininos, United States of America
239. Matthew Kenechukwu, Majority leader Aninri LGA Enugu State Nigeria, Nigeria
240. Sheila Camerer, former Ambassador to Bulgaria and Deputy Minister of Justice in President Nelson Mandela’s government of national unity, South Africa
241. Wayne Smith, Canada
242. Lars-Göran Larsson, Sweden
243. Lennart Jonasson, Sweden
244. Zohrab Ismayil, Chairperson of Board, Public Association for Assistance to Free Economy, Azerbaijan
245. Rosakebia Liliana Estela Mendoza, Peru
246. Bengt Carlsson, Sweden
247. Donna Park, Chair of the Board, Citizens for Global Solutions Education Fund, United States of America
248. Carlos Rodriguez, El Salvador
249. Fernando Saldaña Rosete, Mexico
250. Kinga Szabadváry, Sweden
Liss H. Eriksson, Sweden
Christoph J. Rohland, Switzerland
Camilo Rubinos, United States of America
Montina Cole, Principal, Jai Green Consulting LLC, United States of America
Victor Pascual Planchuelo, Professor of International Law and Human Rights, Spain
Luis Cordova, Presidente de Centro Faces, Dominican Republic
Rui Oliveira, Portugal
José Brian Schapira, attorney-consultant, Former Undersecretary for the Protection of Human Rights of Argentina, Argentina
Eddie Cóndor Chuquiruna, Peru
Jesús Castellanos, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Venezuela
Carla Young, social scientist, Germany
Francisco Yepez Cadena, Advisor at National Electoral Council - Ecuador, Ecuador
Alejandra Saucedo, Paraguay
Vasila Hajiyeva, Professor of Khazar University, former Head of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Western Caspian University, Azerbaijan
Iris Schweizer, Germany
Lidija Vuckovic, President, CHR-Nis, Serbia
José Ignacio Hernández, CSIS, Harvard Kennedy School, United States of America
Della Matilde Ferreira Rubio, independent consultant on institutional and electoral law, Chair of Transparency International (2017-2023), Argentina
Karin Malmgren, Sweden
Jacek Kucharczyk, President, Institute of Public Affairs, Poland
Richard Forth, Thailand
Finn Heinrich, Director, European Transformations, Open Society Foundations, Germany
Natalia Natsika, Program Manager, V-Dem Institute, Sweden
Zeeshan Shoki, Pak Education Society/Pakistan Development Network, Pakistan
Gerry Arthurs, Lecturer in International Relations and Politics, Ireland
Gustavo Amaya V., Director de CECADE Centroamérica, miembro de REDLAD y del ISC del Pilar de Sociedad Civil de la Comunidad de las Democracias, El Salvador
Felix Igbokwe, Nigeria
Micaela Hierro DOri, REDLAD-CIVICUS, Argentina
Federico Anghelé, Director, The Good Lobby Italia, Italy
Camille Dieu, Belgium
Daniel Durand, France
Tom Brake, Director of Unlock Democracy, United Kingdom
Frank Iszatt, United Kingdom
Mohammed Haque, Peace And Justice Alliance, Canada
Marjan Ehsassi, Future of Democracy Fellow, United States of America
Ana Silveira, Portugal
Didi Fall, Executive Director, 1000 Shades of Women Foundation International, United States of America
Celine Orji, Executive Director of Extended Arms Diamond Inc, United States of America
Charmaine Moses, Executive Director, Pleading for the Widows, United States of America
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298. Thomas Pogge, Yale University, United States of America
299. Maartje Mensink, University of St Andrews, previous research intern, Democracy Without Borders, Netherlands
300. Biljana Spasovska, Executive Director, Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Macedonia
301. Sameer Jarrah, Executive Director, Network of Democrats in the Arab World, Jordan
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304. Siv Östman, Sweden
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334. holiness kibelo dimbu, Executive Secretary of N'Djili youth council and cofounder, Group of Actions and Initiatives, Congo (Kinshasa)
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353. Rebecca Ekpe, Ghana  
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371. Omololu Fagbadebo, Research Associate, Durban University of Technology, South Africa  
373. Ying Hooi Khoo, Universiti of Malaya, Malaysia  
374. Meen Nordin, Universiti of Malaya, Malaysia  
375. Thomas Carlhed, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Olof Palmes Internationella Center, Sweden  
376. Guy Armand Adjoumani, Country expert for V-Dem Institute, Ivory Coast  
377. Calvin Elison, American University, Washington DC, United States of America  
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379. Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Professor, Keio University, Japan