



Declaration on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy 2015

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

9th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Member States

Stockholm, Sweden

15 September 2015

We, the Representatives of the Council of Member States of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), gathered in Stockholm, Sweden on this day, the International Day of Democracy, 15 September 2015, have agreed upon the following:

Our mutual ambitions and core values are espoused in the Declaration issued on 27-28 February 1995 by the 14 Founding Member States of International IDEA; we identify with the concept of democracy as enshrined in the Resolution 62/7 which created the International Day of Democracy and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at its Sixty-second session in November 2007.

We, the Member States, reaffirm our strong and continued engagement and support for International IDEA and its non-prescriptive approach and reaffirm our commitment to its mandate and the principles expressed in the Statutes of International IDEA, which state that democratic participation forms an integral part of human rights and that democracy remains essential for guaranteeing human rights, that sustainable democracy, democratic governance, access to information, accountability and transparency remain central elements of national, regional and international development commitments and that strengthening democratic institutions and democratic norms remains a vital goal in itself and a key component in conflict-prevention and peace-building efforts.

We take note that in March 2015 the UN Human Rights Council established with Resolution 28/L.24 a Forum on human rights, democracy and the rule of law to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between these areas, that shall identify and analyse best practices, challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In the past twenty years, many countries have transitioned from authoritarian to democratic rule. Democracy comes in multiple forms and there is no single or universally applicable model of democracy. We consider, however, that at its core, democracy is a system in which the government is controlled by the people and in which citizens are considered equals in the exercise of that control.

Intrinsic links between sustainable democracy, human rights, democratic institutions and inclusive social and economic development, have not prevented continued challenges posed to democracy, such as insecurity, extremism and shrinking space for civil society, a persisting number of countries emerging from violent conflict or marked by tensions among ethnic, religious or political groups, a diminishing public trust in formal political institutions and disengagement from traditional forms of democratic actors such as political parties, and despite some progress made, the under-representation of women and youth in political decision-making.

We are proud of the numerous achievements of International IDEA over the last two decades, which have contributed to advancing democracy worldwide, including the introduction of the electoral cycle approach which transformed the concepts and practices of electoral assistance, the recognition of the need to address and advocate for the strengthening of women's political empowerment and representation, the support to innovative citizen-led assessments of the quality of democracy, the value of inclusive and representative democratic processes and institutions to foster sustainable democratic development, the strengthening of political party systems, the support to participatory and representative constitution building processes and the development and dissemination of comparative and non-prescriptive knowledge resources and experience.

We, the Member States, note with appreciation the increased scope and depth of International IDEA's programmes and activities, both in terms of geographical presence and range of issues addressed, which illustrate the growing demand for International IDEA's assistance. We express our support to an expanded, geographically balanced and complementary membership of International IDEA and encourage the organization to continue responding to the evolving nature of requests for support and the growing need for supporting and strengthening the capacity of democratic actors at all levels.

Notwithstanding strong global commitments to democratic norms and institutions, existing democratic transition and consolidation processes are at times fragile, reversible and perishable, and remain vulnerable to standstills, delays and setbacks, we, the Member States, call for renewed efforts in order to ensure sustainable development of democratic processes and institutions since it is a universal human aspiration and underscore the need for taking a holistic approach to democracy support.

We, the Member States, confirm the relevance of the future directions set for International IDEA and express pride in the achievements, and confidence in the prospects and the strategic position of International IDEA as an important actor on the international democracy landscape.

Finally, we, the Representatives of the Council of Member States, state our reinvigorated ambitions for International IDEA for the coming 20 years and highlight among our common aspirations, the opportunities for the organization to address the critical issue of the need for democratic institutions to respond to people's desire to exercise their democratic rights and realize their aspirations of political expression and become active in shaping the future of their democracies.