

Menu of possible commitments



**YOUTH
DEMOCRACY
COHORT**

by
the Democracy Cohort
on Youth Political and Civic engagement



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INTRODUCTION

The Youth Democracy Cohort is proud to present the Menu of Possible Commitments meant to help prioritize, facilitate and enhance youth civic and political participation. These 33 actionable and specific recommendations are provided as a set of policy options for participating governments in the Summit for Democracy – as well as other interested governments or international institutions – to choose from to adopt as commitments, reforms, and initiatives to improve youth rights and participation in their national contexts.

The possible commitments include several thematic focus areas, namely: prioritizing youth in governance, supporting youth in government, supporting youth freedom of expression, promoting a culture of youth political participation, and promoting a culture of human rights amongst youth. The diversity of focus areas reflects the current state of youth political and civic engagement, because, far from being a niche issue, young people's disengagement from democracy is a cross-cutting problem that affects all levels of political and civic engagement.

These model commitments were put together through a consultative process involving democracy support organisations, youth representatives and youth-focussed organisations from all continents. As such, the Menu of Possible Commitments also includes commitments concerning the broader context of human rights and democracy, which were raised by youth representatives as being crucial to creating an enabling environment in which young citizens – especially girls and young women – can thrive and safely participate in democratic processes.

In further stages, the Youth Democracy Cohort plans to conduct or support actions meant to promote these possible commitments, advocate for their adoption, and assess their implementation at national or regional level.

The Menu of Possible Commitments will be officially presented on 28th February 2023 during the pre-Summit Global Democracy Coalition Forum in Brussels, Belgium.

PRIORITIZE YOUTH VOICE IN GOVERNANCE

- Ensuring youth input is included in legislative reform processes. This can happen through structured, continuous and meaningful mechanisms, including substantive political and policy dialogues with national authorities.
- Supporting the creation of All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) that include young politicians, or work with young citizens on the issues selected by them.
- Strengthening national capacities at all governance levels to work with youth, including facilitating and promoting training of governmental officials in how to collaborate with youth.
- Creating, supporting, and funding relevant national youth policies and frameworks.
- Strengthening the independence, transparency and inclusivity of National Youth Councils and similar coordinating structures of youth organizations.
- Proactively create mechanisms to hire young people into governmental roles, including young women and people with disabilities, reflecting equal opportunities amongst all youth.

50% of the world's population is under the age of 30. However, young people are conspicuously absent from political institutions and decision-making bodies.

**Governments,
political
parties, and
administrations
are regularly
accused of
'gerontocratic'
rule across the
globe...**

SUPPORTING YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

- Adopting or strengthening fairer laws on political financing, and monitoring their implementation, so that the political landscape allows young people including young women and newcomers to engage in politics.
- Substantively involving Youth in Parliamentary processes, including supporting key legislative reforms that allow young people to run for parliament, as well as the creation and running costs of Youth Parliaments.
- Incentivizing political parties to create inclusive environments for young people and ensure that they offer meaningful political roles to their young members, including through trainings, cross-party exchanges, and capacity building initiatives.
- Supporting young candidates running for office (with a particular attention to women, youth with disabilities, ethnic and minority youth, Indigenous youth), by providing capacity building, addressing age-related barriers, financial obstacles and promoting behavioral changes in political parties and societies.
- Bringing together youth representatives from all political parties to adopt a pact, a declaration of principles, or a code of conduct focused on rejecting disinformation and political violence ahead of elections.

- Monitoring and providing transparency on the real costs (official costs, traditional costs, hidden costs) of running for office, sensitizing on the impediments these costs represent on the renewal of political life in a given country or cultural barriers to entry for running for office, especially for young people.
- Establishing youth quotas which promote inclusive youth engagement, rather than create competition among diverse populations of young people.
- Entrusting competent young officials with policymaking tasks, jobs, and positions.
- Adopting equal opportunity, inclusivity and transparency processes for opportunities to serve as an official in public service and government, in particular from marginalized or disadvantaged groups or backgrounds.

**... and indeed,
the majority
of world
leaders are
significantly
older than the
median adult
population in
their country.**

SUPPORTING YOUTH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- Helping young advocates, artists, journalists and bloggers enjoy peaceful freedom of expression by strengthening the legal frameworks and enabling safe civic spaces.
- Promoting youth access to voting by facilitating access to citizen ID and the inclusive registration of voters via digitized civil and voter registries, and systematizing the link between the two registries.
- Accrediting young citizens to observe democratic institutions (e.g. parliamentary monitoring) and processes (e.g. peace monitoring, election observation, parallel vote tally) and advise on possible reforms.

Today's younger generation is more dissatisfied with democracy in comparison to their elders. As a result, this generation participates less in elections, yet they are active and knowledgeable about democratic processes.

Far from being a niche issue, young people's disengagement from democracy is a cross-cutting problem...

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Supporting Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to identify and implement voter registration systems which best enfranchise first-time voters.
- Working with EMBs and coordinating agencies responsible for processing ID cards needed for voter registration to ensure young voters can receive these and are empowered to cast ballots on Election Day.
- Identifying ways, alongside EMBs, to diversify sending CVE election-related messages targeting first-time voters through various dissemination mechanisms including media outlets including traditional means such as text messaging, newspaper, television and radio ads and through online platforms like webpages, social media, ads and digital apps.
- Connecting EMBs with educators and relevant ministries to incorporate youth participation in elections information into formal school-based lesson plans and to develop opportunities for their engagement such as student government.
- Improving first voter experiences so as to sustain voter turnout in the long run, including potentially lowering the voting age.

- Developing participatory mechanisms (participatory budgeting, consultation/engagement mechanisms,) targeted to young people.
- Supporting civil society organisations to involve young people in key democratic processes, including through active citizenship, citizen observation of democratic processes, contribution to reforms and policy-making.
- Supporting Election Management Bodies in selecting accessible polling stations where possible, and developing a plan for making all polling stations accessible in the future.
- Designing and delivering voter and civic education programs with a focus on the unique experiences of young people who are also women, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples, or ethnic or religious minorities.
- Collaborating with, and encouraging other governments, to protect civic freedoms with a focus on curbing nepotism and combating corruption in politics.
- Investing 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 children (under 18) and young people with disabilities.

In elections and everyday civic acts, young people's ideas of what political participation means is much broader than conventional politics.

Creating an enabling environment in which young citizens can thrive and safely participate in democratic processes is crucial.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AMONGST YOUTH

- Committing to ending all forms of discrimination against women, including concrete legislative, policy and programmatic interventions have been put in place to eliminate harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage.
- Addressing the problem of trafficking of women and girls, as well as all forms of gender based violence.
- Committing to incorporate democratic governance concepts and human rights issues in secondary school curricula.
- Ensuring gender equality in youth political participation especially putting in place mechanisms that encourage and facilitate young women's participation.

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European partnership for Democracy (EPD)
AfricTivistes
European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN)
European Commission
Ministerio de Cultura y Juventud (Costa Rica)
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto (Costa Rica)
Ministry of Youth and Sports (Nepal)
Nepal Youth Council (NYC, Nepal)
National Planning Commission (NPC, Nepal)
National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE, Ghana)
International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance (IDEA)
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)
Association des Blogueurs de Guinée (ABLOGUI, Guinée)
Accountability Lab (Nepal)
Afrobarometer (Ghana)
Association of Youth Organizations in Nepal (AYON)
Club de Madrid (Spain)
International Republican Institute (IRI, USA)
Alma Cívica (Paraguay), DIPART Think Tank (Germany), Horn Peace
Institute (HPI), La Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de
l'Homme (RADDHO, Sénégal), Latin American Youth Network for
Democracy (Juventud LAC), L'Observatoire SAFIDY Fanaraha-maso
ny fifidianana (Madagascar), Ministry Of Foreign Affairs of Denmark,
National Democratic Institute (NDI, USA), Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organisation URU (Central
African Republic), Plateforme "Jeunes et engagés !" (Madagascar), Réseau
Ouest Africain des Jeunes Femmes Leaders (ROAJELF, Senegal), Save
the Children (USA), The International Foundation for Electoral Systems
(IFES, USA), The YP Foundation (India), UNDI18 (Malaysia), Tracoda (El
Salvador), Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO, Nepal), YIAGA (Africa), Young
Innovations (Nepal), Youth Innovation Lab (YI-Lab, Nepal), YLP (Ghana),
Youth Cafe (Kenya), Youth Leadership Parliament (Ghana).