



# UNPACKING THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY COMMITMENTS

Opportunities for the Year of Action and Second Summit



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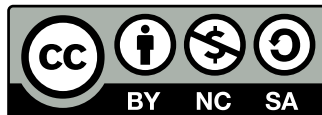


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# Abbreviations

<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>EMB</b>	electoral management body
<b>GSoD</b>	Global State of Democracy
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people
<b>MIP</b>	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
<b>NDICI</b>	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (EU)
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance (OECD)
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Summit for Democracy, held in December 2021 and organized by the US administration, brought together leaders from governments, representatives of the European Union and the United Nations with some involvement of civil society and the private sector from across the globe. The objective was to set out an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal. It was the first of two planned Summits, and the year in between them has been designated a ‘Year of Action’—an opportunity for governments to implement the commitments to democracy made during the first Summit and for civil society to monitor their progress. The first Summit for Democracy and the following Year of Action have provided a space for countries to make both individual and collective commitments to defend democracy and human rights at home and abroad.

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**This report provides an analysis of the first Summit and presents several options and opportunities for the second Summit.**

This report provides an analysis of the first Summit and presents several options and opportunities for the second Summit. Over half the countries that attended the first Summit followed up with written commitments. Among those countries, high-performing and mid-range-performing democracies were over-represented (86 per cent), especially from the European continent (58 per cent). Only around 30 per cent of the Latin American and African countries that were invited, around half of the Asian countries, and only one of the two Middle Eastern democracies (Israel)—all regions where democracy is generally less consolidated and weaker than in Europe—actually submitted written commitments. This means that the ailing democracies that would most benefit from scrutiny of their democratic progress—or setbacks—either did not attend the summit or did not follow up with written commitments. There was strong participation from European Union member states, representing 41 per cent of all written commitments submitted.

Of all the countries that did submit written commitments, only six published their commitments on their government websites, indicating weak national ownership. Potential reasons could include reticence to make commitments publicly available in writing; unclear accountability channels and a lack of clarity about who commitments are made to—citizens, the international



community of democracies or the United States; and a lack of time both to formulate and to implement commitments.

Among the countries that submitted commitments, the large majority committed to strengthening their own democracies. Key priorities of strengthening democracy at home included commitments to fight corruption and enhance transparency and open government, followed by efforts to strengthen gender and social group equality. Areas that received little attention were local and direct democracy, political parties and parliaments. The most common mechanisms to implement domestic commitments were through national action plans or strategies and ongoing or upcoming legislation.

Among the 43 countries that made commitments to strengthen democracy abroad, corruption also came out on top, followed by media freedom, gender equality and civil society support. Most of the countries with commitments abroad were high-income and often older democracies, although some countries from the Global South also made commitments to support democracy in their region or globally. Approaches to supporting and protecting democratic actors within authoritarian contexts were mostly absent from the international commitments, with the exception of those that referred to human rights defenders and some specific funding for civil society organizations (CSOs). There needs to be more focus on sharing good practices on how to best support democratic actors in closed contexts or in exile, as authoritarianism is on the rise and civic space continues to shrink globally.

Recent trends have shown that no democracy is immune to democratic decline, including the best-performing ones. Prompting countries to reaffirm publicly their commitment to a domestic and international democracy agenda is therefore of great value. To ensure internal and international scrutiny and encourage implementation, however, it is necessary to establish a proper monitoring system for commitments made at the Summit, preferably with a wide focus beyond submitted commitments. Covering both participating countries and non-participants could lead to fostering progress and learning from innovations, such as those pioneered by some democracy activists in closed environments. It could also encourage countries that submitted commitments to engage in an inclusive domestic dialogue about them. Although the existing shortcomings do not undermine the value of the Summit, some adjustments to reshape the process may enhance its favourable impact on the state of democracy globally.

The invasion of Ukraine has shown how real the threat of authoritarianism is to all democracies around the world. It has tested the objectives of the Summit in ways not foreseen and shattered the global geopolitical landscape. If the invasion of Ukraine had happened before the Summit for Democracy, it is quite certain that the Summit, and the commitments that followed, would have looked very different. The war on Ukraine brought security and democracy into focus, while their linkage remained underexposed in the commitments—most of which were drafted before the Russian invasion. With only four related references in the commitments, it will be important to get

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**Recent trends have shown that no democracy is immune to democratic decline, including the best-performing ones.**

a better understanding of the ramifications of the war for the global order and for the global democracy agenda to counter democratic backsliding and defend democracy. The Summit for Democracy and the Year of Action provide the potential to act as a catalyst for democratic change. This may be an incentive to build more inclusive Summits for Democracy going forward. As demonstrated in this report, countries invited to the first Summit represented a total of 52 per cent of the world's population, and many democracies in decline and autocratic regimes were not invited around the table. Among participating countries at the first Summit, the level of inclusion at a gender and regional level was low, and opportunities for civil society to participate were limited.

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**For the EU specifically, the Summit commitments show that democracy is a key policy priority for the EU and its member states, both at home and abroad.**

Finally, the Summit presents an opportunity for partnerships on democracy. Many countries referred to global or regional initiatives and conferences in their commitments. For the EU specifically, the Summit commitments show that democracy is a key policy priority for the EU and its member states, both at home and abroad. As a major democracy donor across the world, the EU recently launched the Team Europe Democracy initiative, which constitutes an international alliance to promote democracy and develop common approaches among the EU and its member states in defence of democracy. By facilitating collaboration with partner countries through international assistance, the EU and EU member states can leverage contributions to the Year of Action and the second Summit.

In conclusion, there are several strategic considerations that could strengthen the Year of Action and shape an inclusive and effective second Summit, especially for the 98 countries that attended the first Summit and made political commitments to strengthen democracy. Making publicly accessible written commitments is central to the accountability of the Summit for Democracy and should be promoted further. This enables civil society to hold governments to account, to participate in the implementation of commitments, and to monitor progress on democracy at home and abroad. However, effective commitments will also require strong partnerships and coalition-building at all levels to counter autocratic narratives and disinformation and to deliver on promises made to citizens, peer democracies and the international community.

Some key recommendations include:

- All countries participating in the Summit should be further encouraged to submit written commitments to publicly affirm their support for democracy at home and abroad.
- All countries that made written commitments should publish them domestically to increase domestic ownership of the process and encourage an inclusive dialogue about the commitments with citizens, civil society and other stakeholders.
- A monitoring system should be established that is designed both to track progress on the implementation of country commitments, on the one hand, and to ensure that countries that did not submit written commitments or were not invited to the Summit do not fall off the radar of international

scrutiny, on the other hand. The more specific the commitments, the better chance they have of being implemented and the easier they are to monitor.

- All countries and civil society should take the opportunity offered during the Year of Action to foster partnerships and collaboration on democracy.
- The second Summit offers the opportunity to be more inclusive in terms of geographical representation, gender and civil society inclusion, and to foster partnerships and collaboration for democracy. Given the centrality of democracy for the EU, the Year of Action and second Summit should allow for full EU participation.

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

The report aims to contribute to the success of the Summit for Democracy and its Year of Action by presenting options for inclusion and collaboration ahead of the second Summit. It analyses the level of inclusion at the first Summit, the potential impact of commitments either verbally expressed by participating countries during the Summit or later made publicly available in writing, and the opportunities for shaping an inclusive and effective second Summit. Special focus will be given to exploring opportunities for democracy support collaboration between the EU and its member states, which together form the world's biggest democracy donor.

The analysis conducted in the framework of this report focuses on the diversity and scope of Summit invitees and their commitments, comparing them with International IDEA's Global State of Democracy (GSoD) data at the global, regional and country level to assess the extent to which commitments adequately address current challenges.<sup>1</sup> Publicly available data on EU and EU member states' democracy support was analysed, alongside key initiatives to engage civil society in the Summit. The report also aims to invite the EU and EU member states to actively seek Team Europe Democracy collaborations in support of the implementation of commitments abroad.

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## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the written Summit commitments was done by coding commitments against the 28 aspects of International IDEA's GSoD Indices, which define democracy as based on five core pillars: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement. An additional 14 dimensions not covered by the GSoD Indices were added to allow for a more fine-grained analysis of the thematic focus areas of the commitments. The GSoD regime categories for democracies (weak, mid-range, high-performing and backsliding) were also used to contextualize the commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of data, including country and commitment profiles, see the Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard (International IDEA, EU and Freedom House n.d.).

Commitments were divided up by those that aimed to strengthen democracy domestically versus international commitments by level of specificity (whether commitments specified funding levels, and where and/or how they would be implemented) and by type (new or revisions to existing legislation or national strategies or action plans). The analysis of the time dimension of commitments (past, current or future) was conducted based on an analysis of a specific mention of a deadline in a commitment, as well as being drawn from the Open Government Partnership's Summit for Democracy commitment tracker (OGP 2022).

# INTRODUCTION

Authoritarianism is on the rise around the world and democracy is at risk of losing more ground. The 2021 edition of International IDEA's *Global State of Democracy* report (International IDEA 2021a) shows that 70 per cent of the world's population now lives in a non-democratic or democratically backsliding country compared with only 45 per cent a decade ago. The report shows that, after several decades of democratic expansion, since 2015 more countries have been moving towards authoritarianism than towards democracy. The number of backsliding democracies has grown more than twofold compared with the previous decade. Non-democratic regimes have also become more repressive and authoritarian in the last decade, with many hybrid regimes shedding their democratic façades in favour of more openly repressive tactics. Democratic decline has been more severe in the last decade than at any point since the third wave of democratization began in the 1970s, and no country—including those within the European Union—is immune to decline.

Over the past year, there have been multiple attempts to establish spheres of authoritarian influence that endanger both old and new democracies around the world. The Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated pressures on democracy. In many backsliding democracies, parliamentary majorities have been used to weaken democratic systems from within, passing reforms to weaken judiciaries and checks on government, tightening control of the media and restricting civic space. The pandemic has prolonged and deepened the democratic crisis by providing a shield for weak and backsliding democracies and non-democratic regimes to tighten their grip on power. Particularly prolonged lockdowns, movement restrictions and the spread of disinformation have provided excuses for unduly restricting and silencing dissent. The weakening of checks and balances has often coincided with an attack on electoral integrity, whereby elections have been manipulated by autocrats. This can lead to major distrust in the electoral process and an overall decline in the confidence of citizens in representative democracy.

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**'Authoritarianism advances in every corner of the earth. Universal values—the pillars of civilization that protect the most vulnerable—are under threat.'**  
—Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships at the launch of the *Global State of Democracy 2021*, 22 November 2021

It is in this increasingly challenging democratic context that President Joe Biden held the first Summit for Democracy on 9 and 10 December 2021, which brought together leaders from governments from across the globe, the EU and the UN with some involvement of civil society and the private sector, in an effort to promote democratic renewal and discuss the greatest threats faced by democracies. One of these recognized threats is the rise of authoritarianism, which was one of the core themes of the Summit. The other themes were the fight against corruption and the protection of human rights, both aspects that merit concerted effort to reverse negative trends.

The threat of autocratic takeover is not theoretical. The recent invasion of Ukraine has shown how real the threat to democracies in Europe and around the world is. The war in Ukraine has tested the objectives of the Summit in ways not foreseen and shattered the global geopolitical landscape. If the invasion of Ukraine had happened before the Summit for Democracy, it is quite certain that the Summit and the commitments that followed would have looked somewhat different. Understanding the ramifications of the war for the global order and for the global democracy agenda will require a greater understanding of the intricate linkages between economic and democratic agendas. It also calls for greater international efforts to counter democratic backsliding and defend democracy.

The invasion of Ukraine has been an opportunity for most EU member states and the EU itself to bolster their founding democratic principles and present themselves to the world as a community of democratic values. Within the international community, the EU member states have played a key role in condemning Russia for its actions and imposing economic sanctions on its leadership.

Looking beyond the current events, the Summit for Democracy is the first of two Summits, with the year between them designated a 'Year of Action'—a great opportunity to promote democracy and, especially for the 98 countries that attended the Summit and made political commitments, to strengthen democracy. The commitments open up the possibility for the EU, supported by Team Europe Democracy, to play a leading role in strengthening democracy at home and globally by engaging with partner countries in the Global South. Of the 59 written commitments, 24 (41 per cent) came from democracies in the EU. Making publicly accessible written commitments is central to the accountability of the Summit for Democracy. It enables democratic civil society to hold governments to account, to engage in the implementation of the commitments and to monitor progress at home or abroad. However, effective commitments will also require strong partnerships and coalition-building at all levels to counter autocratic narratives and disinformation and deliver on promises made to citizens, peer democracies and the international community.

## Chapter 1

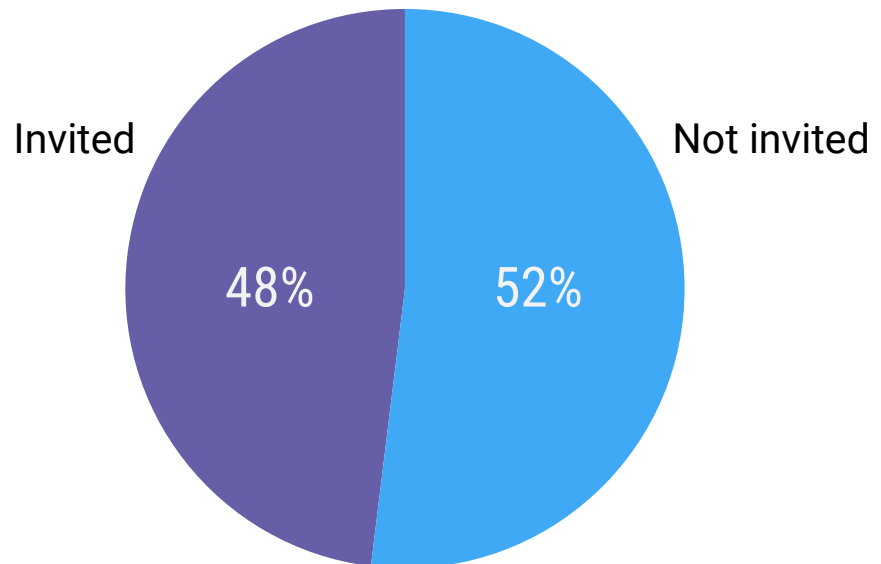
# GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

The first Summit for Democracy was convened in December 2021, with 110 countries (plus the United States) invited to join in the reaffirmation of democratic principles. Ahead of the first Summit for Democracy, much was written about the list of countries invited by the US administration. Summit analysts and stakeholders raised concerns about the lack of consistent selection criteria and inclusion, and the risk of reinforcing geopolitical rifts (Silva-Leander 2022a). This report does not aim to capture all these considerations but will provide data and some perspectives on strategic Summit participation in view of advancing democracy globally through cooperation and partnerships. It also includes options for building more inclusive future Summits for Democracy.

Of the 110 countries invited by the USA, 98 made an official statement at the first Summit. All of the 17 high-performing democracies in the world, 50 of the 56 mid-range-performing democracies and 16 of the 25 weak democracies were invited, as were four hybrid regimes and one authoritarian regime (Silva-Leander 2022a). The invited countries represented 4.1 billion people (Figure 1), with a breakdown by region provided in Table 1. In terms of participation, all regions were represented, although there was a clear over-representation of European countries (38 countries), followed by the Americas (27). Regions with a lower share of democracies had less representation (16 from Asia and the Pacific, 15 from Africa and only 2 from the Middle East) (Silva-Leander 2022a). Of the 98 countries, 65 are Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipients, on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Co-operation Directorate list (OECD n.d.). Looking closer at low-income countries, only 4 out of a total of 48 were invited. On the side of democracy donors, 29 countries that were invited are included on the OECD list of countries that prioritize government and civil society in their ODA efforts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These comprised 21 EU member states: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden; and 8 other countries: Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA. See OECD 2021.

Figure 1. Distribution of population in countries invited/not invited



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Note: The total world population is estimated at 7.9 billion people.

Table 1. Geographical distribution of countries invited to the Summit for Democracy

Region	Estimated total population	Estimated population represented at the Summit	Percentage of total population represented at the Summit
Europe	0.74 billion	0.58 billion	78%
Americas	1.02 billion	0.91 billion	89%
Africa	1.34 billion	0.56 billion	42%
Asia and the Pacific	4.68 billion	2.27 billion	48%

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Some invitations raised questions. For example, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Zambia all qualified as non-democratic in International IDEA's GSoD Indices in 2020. While some countries classified as weak democracies did not make the cut (e.g. Guatemala, Lebanon), some did (e.g. Iraq, Nigeria). Similar inconsistencies were observed for backsliding democracies, with Brazil, India, the Philippines, Poland and Slovenia invited but Hungary left out. The US administration had legitimate reasons not to invite Hungary to the Summit, as the EU is struggling internally to deal with its democratically backsliding member, and the Hungarian government's ties to some American illiberal groups may have distracted from the discussion about democracy (European Parliament n.d.). The exclusion was, however, more



difficult to justify in light of some of the surprising invitees listed above. The question could also be asked whether the Summit gained more from signalling clear discontent with one of the EU member states than from ensuring full participation on the part of the EU, which saw its attempts to issue new democracy commitments blocked by Hungary as a result of its exclusion. As a major donor on democracy across the world, the EU's curtailed Summit participation can be seen as a missed opportunity.

Some commentators mentioned geopolitical considerations and the intent to recognize the potential for democratic progress (as an incentive for further reforms) as reasons for some of the apparent inconsistencies (Silva-Leander 2022a). Another potential for the Summit is to act as a catalyst for democratic change supported by international cooperation. As many democracy donors participated in the Summit, progress could be further promoted by fostering partnerships between donors, ODA recipients and pro-democracy organizations on the implementation of commitments. From this perspective, it is unfortunate that many low-income ODA recipients (44 per cent), especially from Africa, were not invited to the Summit, or were invited but did not attend (the 12 invited countries that decided not to attend the first Summit are all ODA recipients) or did not submit any written commitments (see Chapter 2).

Some analysts suggested that concerns about upsetting China were a reason for non-attendance (European Parliament n.d.). It will require additional efforts and diplomacy to attract these countries to the second Summit. From a geopolitical perspective, it is interesting to explore the possible correlation between participation in the Summit for Democracy and voting behaviour at the United Nations General Assembly emergency session on 2 March 2022, where the Assembly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and demanded a full withdrawal of Russian forces (EEAS 2022). Nine countries that were invited to the Summit abstained from the vote in the General Assembly.<sup>3</sup> Three of those nine countries (Mongolia, Pakistan and South Africa) decided not to participate in the Summit, while the other six participated but did not submit written commitments. Considering the important cooperation ties between the US and the EU and these countries, there could be an interest in seeking a reconnection for the second Summit for Democracy.

In view of the fact that governments plus the UN and the EU participated in the Summit for Democracy, building an inclusive Summit was an important topic of discussion. The level of gender equality at the first Summit was low. Only 11 out of 98 countries present had women as their heads of state making their official statements, which reflects the under-representation of women in political leadership globally (Silva-Leander 2022a, 2022b). More positive are the gender equality scores of participating countries—38 of the 88 GSoD Indices countries that were invited had a high performance in Gender Equality in 2020 (International IDEA 2022)—and the importance given to gender equality in the verbal and written commitments from countries, where over half of the participants made references to gender equality (Silva-Leander 2022b).

<sup>3</sup> Angola, Armenia, India, Iraq, Mongolia, Namibia, Pakistan, Senegal and South Africa.

As this chapter shows, several strategic considerations suggest that exploring ways to strengthen government participation in the Summit and investing in inclusive participation and agenda-setting may be useful for the Summit's host, participants and stakeholders.

## Chapter 2

# SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY AND COUNTRY COMMITMENTS

The first Summit for Democracy, held in December 2021, brought together leaders from governments from across the globe, the EU and the UN, with some involvement of civil society and the private sector, to set out an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal. It was the first of two planned Summits, and the year in between them has been designated a ‘Year of Action’—an opportunity for governments to implement their commitments to democracy made during the first Summit and for civil society to monitor their progress. The first Summit for Democracy and its follow-up Year of Action have provided a space for countries to make both individual and collective commitments to defend democracy and human rights at home and abroad.

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**The first Summit for Democracy and its follow-up Year of Action have provided a space for countries to make both individual and collective commitments to defend democracy and human rights at home and abroad.**

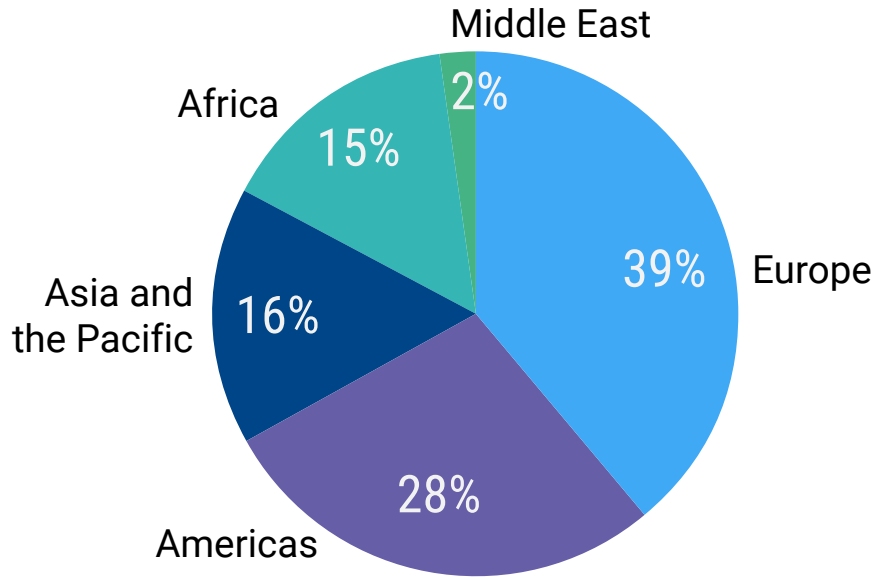
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### 2.1. UNPACKING THE VERBAL STATEMENTS

Of the 110 countries invited (plus the USA), 98 countries made official verbal statements. Of the participating countries, 39 per cent came from Europe, 28 per cent from the Americas, 16 per cent from Asia and the Pacific, 15 per cent from Africa and only 2 per cent from the Middle East (see Figure 2) (Silva-Leander 2022a). This analysis provides an overview of those verbal commitments in terms of their vision of democratic reform.

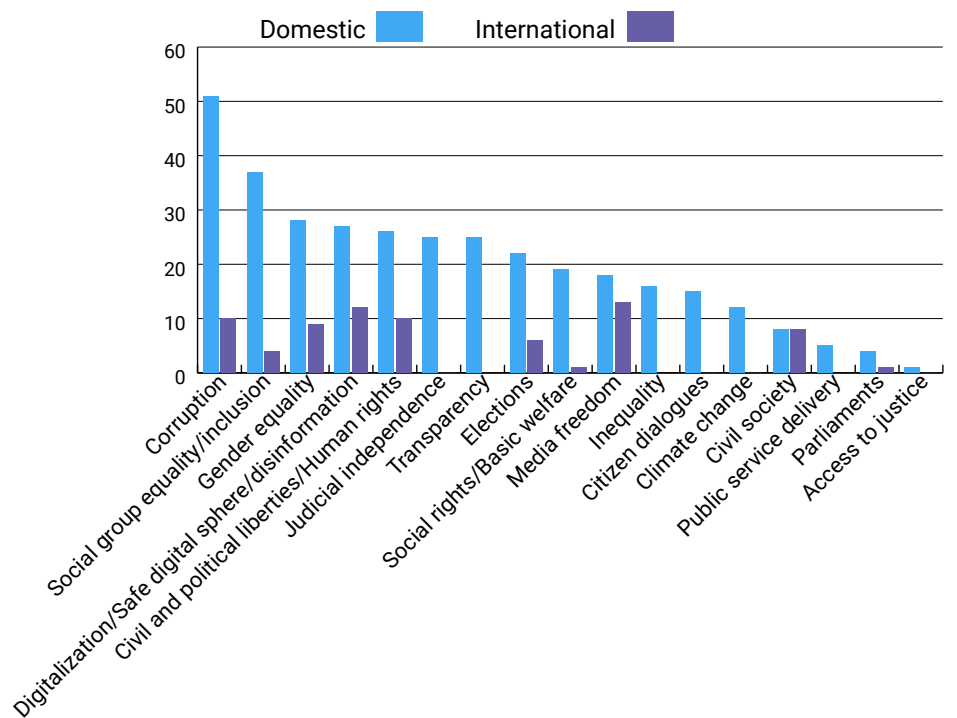
The verbal commitments that were made during the Summit for Democracy provided an opportunity for participating governments to share their vision for strengthening democracy at home and abroad. However, the analysis of verbal commitments undertaken for this report shows that the majority (53 per cent) of countries either made no formal commitments or made general verbal statements that did not go into any specific policies or reforms for strengthening democracy, making for a blurry and unaccountable vision of democratic reform. This analysis is important: of the 98 countries that made verbal commitments, 29 referred to specific and new commitments—mostly from high-performing and mid-range-performing democracies (Silva-Leander 2022a). Many of these verbal commitments were then complemented by written commitments (see Section 2.2 for analysis of these).

Figure 2. Countries that submitted verbal commitments by region



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Figure 3. Verbal commitments by topic, number of countries



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

The top three themes included in these verbal commitments at home were combating corruption, promoting marginalized groups and fighting discrimination. The three top themes of the verbal commitments abroad were supporting media freedom, promoting digitalization and the fight against disinformation, and combating corruption (Silva-Leander 2022a).

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## 2.2. GREAT VARIATION IN WRITTEN COMMITMENTS

In early 2022 countries were asked to follow up with written monitorable commitments to strengthen democracy at home and abroad—commitments for which they could be held to account. This analysis provides an overview of these commitments and what they may mean for the global democracy agenda.

### 2.2.1. Geographic and thematic scope of commitments

The world community of democracies willing to publicly affirm in writing their domestic and international commitments to strengthen democracy boils down to 59 countries, or three out of five democracies and around a quarter of the world's countries.

When taking into account the scope, ambition and specificity of these written commitments, the number of countries is far lower.

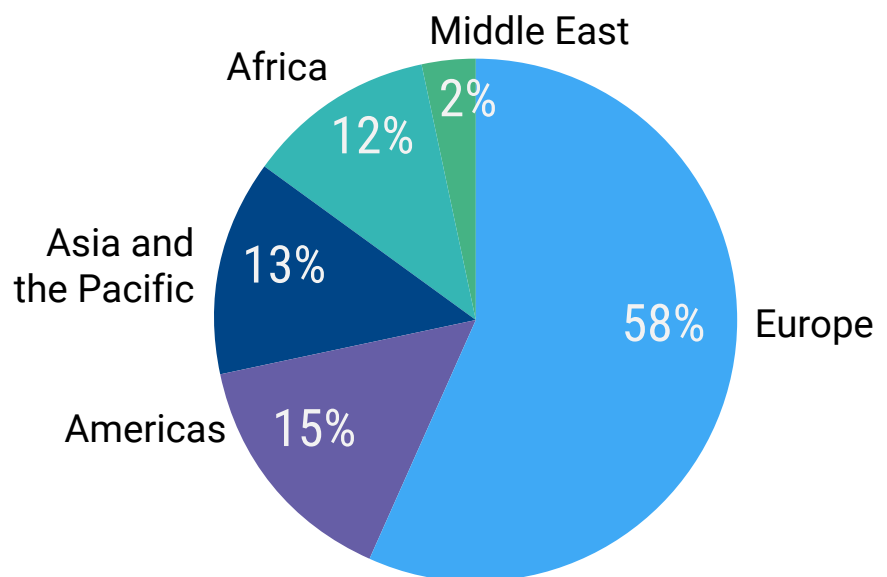
Of the 59 countries submitting written commitments, 49 provided commitments they drafted themselves, while 10 had the US State Department turn their verbal commitments into brief bullet points. In total, 16 countries submitted commitments of less than half a page, and 18 countries did not include any specific or new action in their commitments, sticking to broad aspirations and past achievements. Despite this, of the 59 countries, all but 10 specified some kind of action to achieve at least one of the commitments, and more than half (58 per cent) referenced national plans or strategies, indicating actionable commitments that can be effectively monitored and used to hold governments to account.

There is a concern is that commitments were to a large extent submitted by countries that are already relatively healthy and committed democracies. While that shows commitment to domestic and global democracy agendas and has an important signalling effect, all democracies—irrespective of their performance—should ideally make commitments, including the less well-performing or ailing ones that may benefit from international scrutiny. Among the countries that submitted commitments, high-performing and mid-range-performing democracies were over-represented (86 per cent), as were European countries (58 per cent). Only around 30 per cent of the Latin American and African countries that were invited, around half of the Asian countries, and only one of the two Middle Eastern democracies (Israel but not Iraq)—all regions where democracy is generally less consolidated and weaker than in Europe—actually submitted commitments. The small island

nations were also largely absent from the written commitments, with only 2 of the 22 attending from the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean making written submissions (Samoa, and Trinidad and Tobago). Only 3 of the 11 weak democracies that were invited submitted written commitments. While four of the six backsliding democracies (Brazil, Poland, Slovenia and the USA) submitted written commitments, Poland focused only on strengthening democracy abroad. The other two backsliding democracies—India and the Philippines—did not submit anything in writing, despite concerning democratic declines in both countries in recent years. Given that recent global trends have shown declines even in older democracies, such countries' commitment to strengthening their democracies has important symbolic value. However, a global democracy agenda and its monitoring system cannot and should not leave out the democracies that are most in need of strengthening, as well as non-democracies, as it would not be sufficient to curb the global democratic reversal currently observed.

While weak democracies were under-represented among countries that submitted written commitments, some high-performing democracies stood out for not submitting any, despite delivering ambitious official verbal statements at the Summit. These included two invited countries in the EU (Luxembourg and France), Iceland and Uruguay. Moreover, not all high-performing democracies that submitted written commitments impressed with their scope. The Netherlands and New Zealand had their official verbal statements turned into five bullet points by the US State Department, and Austria formulated similarly sparse commitments to strengthening democracy abroad.

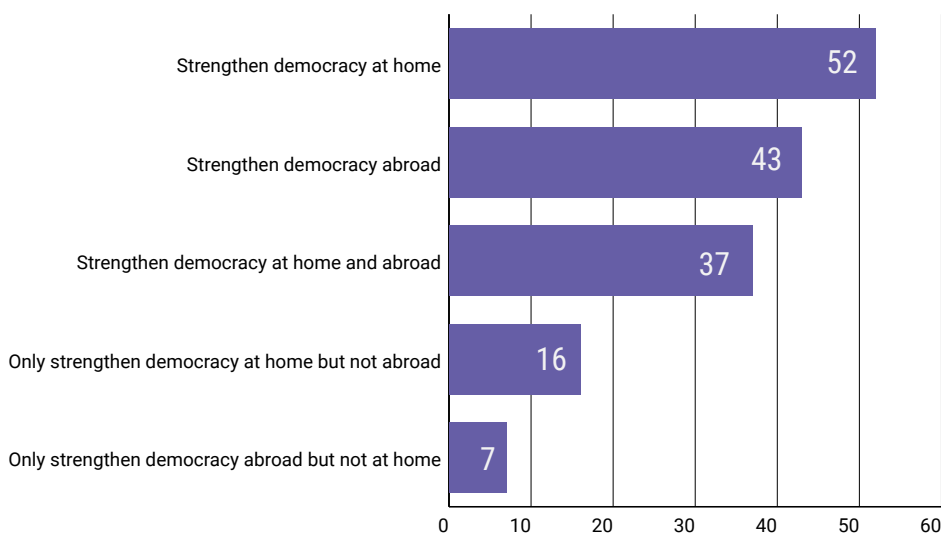
Figure 4. Countries that submitted written commitments by region



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Among the countries that submitted commitments, the large majority committed to strengthening their own democracies. All but 7 countries committed to strengthening democracy domestically, while 43 countries committed to strengthening democracy abroad and 36 countries committed to both. Notably, four of the seven countries that did not include commitments to strengthen democracy domestically were EU member states (Austria, Estonia, the Netherlands and Poland), with the other three being Israel, New Zealand and South Korea. Among priorities for strengthening democracy at home were commitments to fight corruption and enhance transparency and open government, followed by efforts to strengthen gender and social group equality. Areas that received little attention were local and direct democracy, political parties and parliaments.

**Figure 5. Number of countries that made domestic and international commitments**



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

The countries that stood out for the ambition and breadth of their commitments included the USA, which provided 42 pages of concrete reforms and initiatives to strengthen democracy at home and abroad, covering more than 12 commitment areas, followed by the mid-range-performing democracies Croatia, Italy and Kosovo<sup>4</sup>. Slovakia and Taiwan also stood out for their breadth of commitments at home and abroad, while Malawi stood out for the breadth of its domestic commitments.

Fighting corruption was a key priority in all regions. As the first day of the Summit was held on International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December), many

<sup>4</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

heads of state used this opportunity to declare their efforts in combating corruption. While fighting corruption took first place, secondary priorities varied. A determination to strengthen electoral processes dominated the African countries' commitments, ranging from holding elections on schedule in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to strengthening the capacity of the electoral commission in Zambia, increasing female representation in Liberia, and respecting court independence and judgements in resolving electoral disputes in Malawi.

In Asia and the Pacific, the focus was on enhancing transparency, strengthening civil and political liberties, and fighting disinformation. European commitments focused to a larger extent on enhancing transparency, protecting media freedom, and strengthening gender and social group equality, with a strong focus on combating racism and anti-Semitism (see further analysis in Chapter 4). In the Americas, the priority focus was on strengthening social group equality and strengthening civil and political liberties.

Issues that received the lowest priority domestically were local democracy, political parties, direct democracy and parliaments. While not a significant priority for many countries, a number of European countries made commitments to strengthen their democracy education in school, including media literacy as prevention against disinformation, and longer-term strategies to build resilience against democratic backsliding.

The most common mechanisms to implement domestic commitments were through national action plans or strategies and ongoing or upcoming legislation. Only 10 per cent of countries indicated specific funding amounts for domestic initiatives.

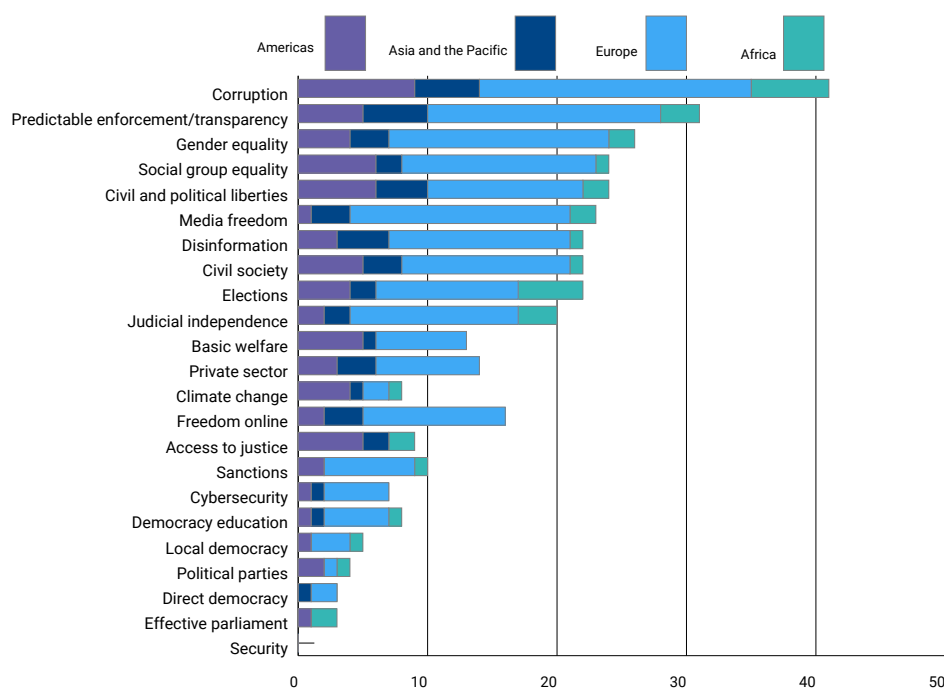
### **2.2.2. International support for democracy**

Among the 43 countries that made commitments to strengthen democracy abroad, corruption also came out on top, followed by media freedom, gender equality and civil society support. Most of the countries with commitments abroad were high-income and often older democracies, although some countries from the Global South also made commitments to support democracy in their region or globally. These included Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru.

While international concerted action on key priorities, such as corruption, media freedom and gender equality, should be lauded, there is a risk of initiative proliferation that could hamper effective coordination. The 43 countries that made international commitments made reference to supporting 27 different global initiatives through either funding or active engagement. The most frequently referenced initiatives focused on corruption and government, media freedom and the digital sphere, followed by initiatives to enhance equality, support human rights protection and defenders, protect elections and improve service delivery. A total of 11 of these global initiatives were launched at the Summit. To encourage more countries to join these different global initiatives, the Summit for Democracy can provide an opportunity to better



Figure 6. Domestic commitments by topic, number of countries



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

explain the comparative focus, approaches and complementarities of these various global initiatives, particularly those focusing on similar issues. The most frequently supported global initiatives were the Freedom Online Coalition and the Open Government Partnership.

The war on Ukraine brought security and democracy into focus, while their linkage remained underexposed in the commitments, most of which were drafted before the Russian invasion. However, issues that were already relatively high on the agenda of European and North American country commitments were responsible business behaviour (14 countries) and sanctions for human rights abuses (10 countries). These commitments focused mainly on developing voluntary codes of conduct for preventing the proliferation of technologies that might enable human rights abuses, establishing guiding principles for responsible business conduct and supporting human rights due diligence regulation at the EU level. Ten countries also made commitments to strengthen their efforts to combat foreign interference, mostly in the electoral arena (Australia, Italy, Kosovo\*, Slovenia and the USA), but also in the university sector (Australia), in fighting disinformation and foreign propaganda, mainly with reference to Russia (Kosovo\*, Slovakia and Ukraine), and against attacks on national sovereignty and democracy (Georgia, Ukraine and Taiwan).

Finally, ways to support and protect democratic actors from authoritarian contexts was somewhat absent from the international commitments, with

Table 2. Map of global initiatives mentioned in Summit for Democracy commitments

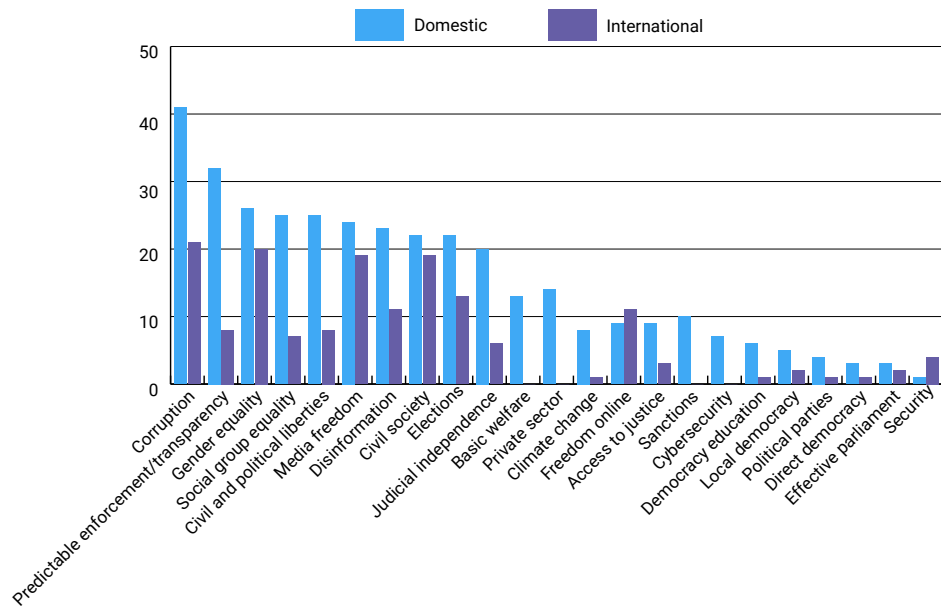
Corruption and open government	Equality	Media freedom	Digital	Human rights and civic space	Elections	Human development
Open Government Partnership	Global Equality Fund	Media Freedom Coalition	Freedom Online Coalition	Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative	Defending Democratic Elections Fund	Partnerships for Democracy
Empowering Anti-Corruption Change Agents Program	Generation Equality campaign	Defamation Defense Fund	Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace	Fund for Democratic Renewal (FDR)	Coalition for Securing Electoral Integrity	
Global Anti-Corruption Consortium	Global LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment Fund	Global Media Defence Fund	Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online	Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund		
Global Accountability Project		UNESCO multi-partner trust fund established in 2019 as part of the Global Campaign for Media Freedom	Digital Public Goods Alliance			
Anti-Corruption Response Fund		International Fund for Public Interest Media	Digital Defenders Partnership			
Global Initiative to Galvanize the Private Sector as Partners in Combatting Corruption		Media Viability Accelerator	Multilateral Surge and Sustain Fund for Anti-Censorship Technology			

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

the exception of those that referred to support for human rights defenders and funding for the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund (Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the USA). Sharing good practices on how to best support democratic actors in closed contexts or

in exile needs more focus, as authoritarianism is on the rise and civic space continues to shrink globally.

Figure 7. International and domestic commitments by topic, number of countries



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

### 2.2.3. Country examples

#### *Media freedom*

Of the 59 countries submitting written commitments, 24 committed to strengthening media freedom, independence and pluralism at home, while 19 countries made commitments to strengthen it abroad, and 11 countries made media freedom-related commitments both at home and abroad.

The commitments to protect media freedom can be clustered into three broad categories: (a) support, strengthen and safeguard media vibrancy, independence and freedom, and the safety of journalists; (b) support media pluralism and diversify the media landscape, including by getting input from women, minorities and journalists in exile; and (c) support and strengthen the accountability, transparency and sustainability of news media. While domestic commitments focused on all three, international commitments focused mainly on the first category—protecting media freedom and the safety of journalists.

The high priority given to media freedom in both domestic and international commitments is laudable because it is an important cornerstone of accountable democracy. The enabling environment for journalists has worsened in recent years, with an increasing number of journalists subject to threats and harassment even in older democracies. Efforts to fight

disinformation, particularly during the pandemic, have also had a chilling effect on media institutions in many countries, which have also suffered financially.

The domestic commitments on media freedom were made more frequently by countries that already perform well on these aspects in the GSoD Indices (half of countries with high scores for Media Integrity made commitments) than by countries that perform less well (42 per cent of countries with mid-range scores for Media Integrity made such commitments), pointing again to the need to encourage commitments from those that may need them the most. All of the countries that have a low score, and most of the countries that have seen significant declines on Media Integrity or Freedom of Expression in recent years, either submitted no written commitments at all (e.g. Colombia, Indonesia and the Philippines) or none on media freedom specifically (e.g. Brazil, Cyprus, Kenya and Poland). Global South countries were under-represented in domestic media freedom commitments (only Malawi, Nepal and Zambia)—and where those commitments were made they were sparse on details. However, a few countries that have seen declines on these aspects of democracy in recent years (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia and the USA) did make commitments to address those declines.

**Table 3. Mapping commitments on media freedom**

Focus of commitments	At home	Abroad
Support, strengthen and safeguard media vibrancy, independence and freedom, and the safety of journalists	Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Malawi, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Taiwan, UK, USA, Zambia	Australia, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA
Support media pluralism and diversify the media landscape, including hearing from women, minorities and journalists in exile	Australia, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Montenegro, Slovakia, Sweden, Taiwan, Ukraine, USA	
Support and strengthen the accountability, transparency and sustainability of news media	Australia, Denmark, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, UK, USA	

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

### *Gender equality*

Of the 59 countries submitting written commitments, 34 committed to strengthening gender equality. Of these, 26 countries made commitments to strengthen gender equality at home, while 20 countries made commitments to strengthen gender equality abroad.

**Table 4. Mapping domestic media initiatives**

Country	Domestic media initiative
Australia	Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code to support the sustainability of public interest journalism
Croatia	Establishment of an editorial office for minorities in the news sector
Germany	Programme to strengthen exile programmes for foreign journalists
Ireland	Future of Media Commission, an independent, expert body tasked with identifying a sustainable pathway for the media sector over the next decade Review of its Defamation Act 2009 to ensure that it strikes the correct balance between constitutional rights and those of the European Convention on Human Rights such as freedom of expression and right to privacy
Malta	Standard operating procedures for the police on how they deal with threats to journalists, a crucial step following the 2017 murder of investigative journalist and anti-corruption activist Daphne Caruana Galizia
Montenegro	Dialogue with the Parliament, Media Union representatives and the NGO sector to improve existing solutions for criminal justice protection of journalists
Norway	Freedom of Expression Commission
Slovakia	Inventory of best practices and tested solutions in media freedom
Sweden	Efforts to fund 'easy-to-read news' to ensure voters are well informed ahead of the upcoming elections
Taiwan	Annual national action plan for media literacy education in public school curricula
Ukraine	Initiative to create an international television platform to counter the spread of disinformation and the information aggression in the Russian-language media space
UK	National Committee and the Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists
USA	Build Back Better Act that will support local journalism through tax credits for local newsrooms

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Domestic and international commitments to strengthen gender equality spanned widely, including combating gender-based violence, promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls, strengthening women's political representation, providing equal economic opportunities, gender and technology and cybersecurity, gender in development cooperation, and women in the peace and security agenda.

There was a broader diversity of countries with domestic commitments on gender equality, with more Global South countries included (i.e. Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Liberia, Mauritius and Nepal). However, as is also the case with other themes of the written commitments, countries with a high score for Gender Equality in the GSoD Indices more frequently made commitments (59 per cent of those high scorers) than those that score in the mid-range

(42 per cent), meaning a lack of written commitments from those that may need them the most. Neither of the countries that score low on Gender Equality made any commitments at all (Iraq and Nigeria). However, on the positive side, Croatia, Cyprus, Slovakia and Slovenia, which rank among the bottom 10 countries with the lowest levels of gender equality in the EU, all made commitments on gender equality, showing political will to address this imbalance.

**Table 5. Mapping commitments on gender equality**

Focus of commitments	At home	Abroad
Combating gender-based violence	Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo*, Liberia, Nepal, Romania	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Slovenia, Ukraine, UK
Promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls	Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Greece, Japan, Nepal, Norway, Portugal	Austria, Denmark, Germany, Slovakia
Women's political participation and representation	Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Mauritius, Nepal	Israel, Slovakia, Spain, USA
Gender-sensitive development cooperation		Croatia, Norway, Spain
Women, peace and security agenda	Cyprus, Georgia, Italy	Cyprus, Germany, Israel, Ukraine
Equal opportunities for women (labour market, economy, etc.)	Cyprus, Georgia, Germany, Slovenia, Taiwan	Taiwan
Gender and technology and cybersecurity		Canada, Finland, USA

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

### *Elections*

In total, 22 countries made commitments to strengthen electoral processes at home, while 13 countries made commitments to strengthen them abroad, and 5 countries made commitments both at home and abroad (Australia, Czechia, Italy, Sweden and the USA).

Domestic electoral commitments were made by high-performing democracies, such as Australia, Ireland, Sweden, the UK and the USA; mid-range-performing democracies, such as Malawi; weak democracies, such as Liberia; and the two non-democracies that submitted written commitments (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia).

The commitments ranged from holding elections on schedule (Democratic Republic of the Congo), strengthening the capacity of the electoral commission (Zambia) and creating an independent electoral commission (Ireland), to protecting election integrity through combating disinformation and foreign

interference (Australia, Costa Rica, Italy, Kosovo\*, Liberia, Romania, Slovakia, the UK and the USA), expanding voting and voting rights (Belgium, Montenegro, Sweden and USA) and implementing electoral reform (Georgia, Malawi, Mauritius and Romania).

International commitments focused on strengthening electoral management body (EMB) capacity, protecting electoral integrity and supporting electoral observation.

**Table 6. Mapping commitments on elections**

Focus of commitments	Efforts at home	Efforts abroad
Holding elections on schedule	Democratic Republic of the Congo	
Strengthening capacity for electoral processes, including strengthening the electoral commission	Zambia	Italy, Japan, Switzerland
Protecting electoral integrity through combating disinformation and electoral interference (and other means)	Australia, Costa Rica, Italy, Kosovo*, Liberia, Romania, Slovakia, UK, USA	Japan, Slovenia, USA
Voting (voting age, voter registry, voter education and rights)	Belgium, Montenegro, Sweden, USA	
Electoral reform	Georgia, Malawi, Mauritius, Romania	
Creation of EMB	Ireland	
Election observation		Canada, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

### Disinformation

In total, 23 countries made commitments to combat disinformation. Italy, Japan, Romania and the USA focused specifically on combating disinformation around elections, while the others had a more generic focus.

Interesting initiatives included the Italian Digital Media Observatory (IDMO), one of the eight national observatories that constitute the European Digital Media Observatory tasked with monitoring and reporting on the impact of disinformation and disseminating good and best practices on the use of digital media through e-literacy and fact-checking. The US-supported Defending Democratic Elections Fund will pilot, scale and apply evidence-based responses to threats to electoral integrity and related political processes globally. Costa Rica has implemented a pact to reject disinformation involving youth representatives from all political parties. Sweden's establishment of a new government agency by 2022 for psychological defence will be tasked

with promoting knowledge and resilience among the Swedish population, and strengthening resilience against antagonistic actors that are spreading disinformation, fuelling social conflicts and/or undermining faith in democracy.



## Chapter 3

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

Civil society is essential to healthy democracies. In a context of democratic backsliding and erosion, it plays an even more important role, promoting and protecting democracy and human rights, holding governments to account and calling out abuse. Given the often-heard criticism that civil society was not sufficiently involved in the preparations for the first Summit for Democracy, there is a valuable opportunity with the Year of Action and the second Summit to allow civil society to hold governments accountable for their commitments.

The commitments made by governments at the Summit enable civil society and the media to exercise their democratic role as checks on government. Civil society can devise different tactics to oversee progress on commitments depending on the nature of their relationship with their government and the country context. Some civil society organizations (CSOs) may use more advocacy-oriented approaches, often through the media, to present their criticism and incite governments to act. Others may choose more collaborative approaches, engaging in dialogue and supporting the government in its commitment implementation through technical expertise, research or networks. Ideally, both approaches will co-exist, as each approach plays a distinct role in holding governments to account and helping them to deliver on their commitments.

The type of commitments made during the Summit for Democracy can provide an indicator of a country's engagement with democracy and can provide a basis for coordinating and sharing democratic good practices and innovations nationally and internationally. Civil society networks that cut across regions, sectors and areas of specialization can accelerate this democratic learning among actors in diverse locations and implement strategies to engage and inform policymakers more effectively (Global Democracy Coalition 2021). By supporting each other, CSOs can devote special attention to those organizations operating in closed or shrinking civic spaces (Global Democracy Coalition 2021).

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**The commitments made by governments at the Summit enable civil society and the media to exercise their democratic role as checks on government.**

In September 2021 the US administration organized a virtual meeting with CSOs as part of Summit preparations to welcome their engagement in the Summit. In terms of formal participation, the Summit organizers assisted in the establishment of three civil society working groups on corruption, human rights and the fight against authoritarianism, and a list of over 1,000 CSOs was established. Regular calls were held with about 40 representatives from the three working groups in the weeks leading up to the Summit to share available information on Summit preparations, rather than inviting them to be co-creators of the Summit or seeking input for the formulation of the guest list or agenda.

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**Much of the involvement of civil society, including from the Global South, was self-initiated.**

Apart from the formal participation of civil society in the Summit, it can be argued that much of the involvement of civil society, including from the Global South, was self-initiated. Civil society supported the Summit by organizing a number of unofficial side events. Unfortunately, these events were not coordinated and did not feed directly into the Summit. According to Accountability Lab, there were more than 120 events related to the three themes of the Summit, led by almost 100 organizations, including participants from more than 500 different groups (Glencorse 2021).

An example of such self-led initiatives was when a group of international CSOs, convened by International IDEA, came together to organize the Global Democracy Coalition Forum in early December 2021, a few days before the Summit. The purpose of the Forum was to facilitate a global conversation on democracy to broaden the Summit discussions, providing a multistakeholder platform for voices, actors and issues that were not part of the official Summit. On 7 December 2021 the first Forum brought together 52 democracy organizations across the world, with more than 250 speakers from over 50 countries and various sectors in 41 webinars, which were held over 24 hours and across time zones, to discuss a variety of issues relevant to the democracy debate. These issues included the integrity of elections, women's political participation, disinformation, hate speech, transnational repression, the state of democracy globally and regionally, youth and democracy, corruption and malign finance, and the role of a free media, among many others. Coalition partners consisted of democracy assistance organizations from the Global North and democracy organizations from the Global South, including from authoritarian contexts. A report summarizing the recommendations to the Summit for Democracy was put together following the Forum and shared with the Summit organizers to inform the discussions in the first Summit and the following Year of Action (Global Democracy Coalition 2021). The Global Democracy Coalition<sup>5</sup> continues to exist today and has grown to over 75 participating organizations, which makes it the largest global democracy coalition worldwide. It is coordinated by International IDEA and Counterpart International. The Coalition is planning to convene another Forum prior to the second Summit.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, please see: <<https://www.globaldemocracycoalition.org>>.

Self-initiated activity by civil society continued after the Summit: since January 2022 CSOs have organized a multitude of events (International IDEA n.d.), mobilizing to promote democracy and hold governments to account on their commitments—for example, with the Global Disability Summit 2022 Civil Society Forum. Despite this mobilization, it has been challenging for civil society to organize events directly on the Summit, as very limited information has been shared since the first Summit, and the written commitments, which were initially meant to be posted at the end of January, were not all made available until April 2022.

Since the Summit ended, civil society has been vocal in demanding more transparency and a clearer role in supporting the Year of Action and the second Summit. In the USA, for example, more than 80 CSOs mobilized to urge the USA to lead by example with proactive and meaningful engagement with civil society (Article 19 2022). Some of the key recommendations included (a) the establishment of an interagency task force comprised of key domestic agencies to focus on the USA's domestic-facing commitments for the Summit for Democracy, including regular and meaningful consultation with civil society; (b) further clarification in the process for finalizing commitments and seeking feedback from civil society on the US commitments from the Summit for Democracy; (c) publishing all finalized government commitments, including those from the USA, in a public tracker; (d) providing periodic updates on US commitment implementation and opportunities for engagement with civil society; and (e) incorporating US CSOs as participants in the global civil society working-group structure and engaging civil society in the planning for the second Summit. Despite the fact that these recommendations specifically target the US administration, they can be useful for leading national dialogues across participating countries.

The US administration has already made a number of concrete steps to elevate the role of civil society in the Year of Action and promote a more inclusive second Summit. In their latest Year of Action Factsheet, published on 9 March 2022 (US State Department 2022), the US administration committed to continue holding informal, recurring consultations with a broad range of CSOs, philanthropic organizations and the private sector to discuss fulfilment of their Summit commitments and encourage other governments to hold their own, regular consultations with non-governmental stakeholders. The US State Department also organized a virtual Summit for Democracy civil society roundtable on 16 February 2022, and a follow-up survey was sent to 1,200 organizations in March 2022 to better understand civil society interests and the preferred level of involvement for the series of thematic consultations with civil society that the USA will organize as part of their Year of Action planning.

On the multi-stakeholder side, the US administration envisages the participation and co-chairmanship of civil society in 'democracy cohorts', which are multi-stakeholder processes for collaboration on Summit goals. Each democracy cohort will bring together governments that demonstrate political will towards progress on Summit commitments in a specific issue area with key non-governmental stakeholders invested in the outcome. The

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**Since the Summit ended, civil society has been vocal in demanding more transparency and a clearer role in supporting the Year of Action and the second Summit.**

process will provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among civil society representatives, private sector leaders, philanthropic partners and government decision-makers on issues vital to good governance and democratic renewal. The aim is for these democracy cohorts to feed into the second Summit. Terms of reference were prepared by the US State Department and shared with participating states in April 2022.

In order to gather civil society's and other stakeholders' feedback as inputs to the first Summit, International IDEA conducted a survey (International IDEA 2021b), with support from the EU. Some of the main recommendations from civil society to the Summit organizers are very relevant today for the Year of Action and the second Summit. These recommendations were to better involve civil society, including grassroots organizations and marginalized groups from the Global South and from closed contexts, as well as provide financial and capacity-building support to enable their effective participation. CSOs also requested more and better information on country commitments and on their own role well ahead of time for the second Summit. Respondents asked that the Year of Action and second Summit be planned well ahead of time, with timely information provided to all stakeholders, including a vision for the collaboration and participation of civil society and other stakeholders. Finally, they requested that the Summits for Democracy continue, with ongoing efforts beyond 2021 and the Year of Action in 2022.

## Chapter 4

# EU MEMBER STATES' COMMITMENTS ABROAD AND TEAM EUROPE DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a core founding value of the EU, laid out in its Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU and UN were the only invitees to the Summit for Democracy besides national governments, which demonstrates their leading role in supporting democracy around the world. Despite the centrality of democracy to EU values, democratic governance has been the subject of much debate, notably regarding the enduring democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland in recent years. In response to not being invited, Hungary vetoed the EU's formal participation in the Summit.

Democracy as a core value is reflected in many of the EU's and EU member states' policies. More recently, the EU increased its focus on protecting democracy internally and externally through different policy and financial initiatives (for an overview, see Youngs et al. 2022). Some of these major initiatives include the internally facing European Democracy Action Plan and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, as well as, externally, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)<sup>6</sup> and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance 2020–2027, including the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme and the Civil Society Organisations programme. These different initiatives alone amount to more than EUR 3 billion for the period 2021–2027. Existing democracy policies in many EU member states complemented their Summit commitments, such as Sweden's Drive for Democracy foreign policy, Finland's Demo Finland multiparty initiatives and Rule of Law Centre or Croatia's commitments to strengthening democracy in the Western Balkans.

All of these initiatives contributed to strong European participation at the Summit for Democracy and, in the majority of cases, solid commitments at home and abroad. Participation of EU member states was notable in that

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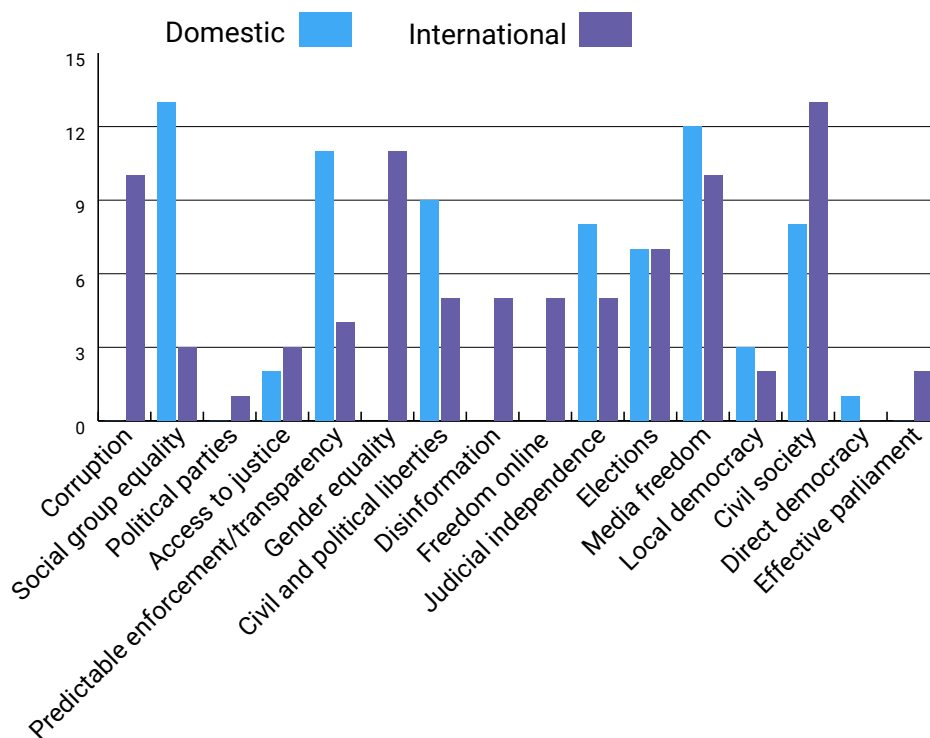
**The EU and UN were the only invitees to the Summit for Democracy besides national governments, which demonstrates their leading role in supporting democracy around the world.**

<sup>6</sup> NDICI total allocations are divided between geographic programmes, thematic programmes and a rapid response mechanism, as well as providing a cushion for unallocated funds.

all invited EU member states, except for France and Luxembourg, submitted written commitments. Of the total of 24, 3 EU member states (Bulgaria, Greece and Malta) made commitments only at home, 4 countries (Austria, Estonia, the Netherlands and Poland) only abroad, and 17 both at home and abroad. Corruption, social rights and equality, and media freedom were the topics most frequently chosen for commitments at home, while civil society, gender equality, corruption and media freedom were the most frequent themes abroad. The Eastern Partnership/Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans were the most frequently mentioned regions for democracy action abroad.

With 24 of 59 sets of written commitments coming from the EU, 41 per cent of all written commitments came from the democracies in the EU.

Figure 8. EU member states' commitments by topic, number of countries



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Many EU member states' commitments can be considered 'model commitments' in the sense that they are measurable and time-bound. Five EU member states (Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland) submitted less than half a page of text, with Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Poland having commitments from their official statement turned into written commitments by the US State Department. However, 17 EU member states submitted more than two pages detailing their commitments. In total, 13 EU

member states made time-bound commitments, and 20 EU member states mentioned specific actions that will be taken to achieve their stated goals.

Some EU member states' international commitments impressed with their scope and ambition. Some notable commitments for abroad include Denmark's Tech for Democracy initiative, which will support governments, multilateral organizations, the tech industry and civil society in protecting and promoting democracy and human rights amid rapid technological development by facilitating new partnerships and strengthening civil society's digital resilience. Germany committed to advocating internationally for Beneficial Ownership Transparency and to launching a new guiding concept aimed at a comprehensive, systematic and rigorously monitored mainstreaming of anti-corruption measures in its cooperation with partner countries. Italy committed to appointing a Special Envoy for Human Rights of LGBTQIA+ people to coordinate the action of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to combat discrimination and promote the rights of LGBTQIA+ people and communities around the world. Slovenia committed to contributing to the development of international standards for the protection of human rights in the context of new technologies and artificial intelligence. Sweden committed to launching a new development cooperation strategy for gender equality and women and girls' rights globally in 2022 to support women's rights organizations and the development of gender equality statistics and research. Spain committed to launching a reflection process in 2022 about the current challenges to democracy in Latin America through the organization of a series of discussions and workshops in different countries.

As part of their commitments abroad, a significant number of EU member states included joining or funding specific democracy coalitions or hosting high-level democracy events in 2022, illustrating their desire to build partnerships on democracy. Table 7 provides an overview of international coalitions and events that EU member states made commitments to. The Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative is one among the newly established US-led initiatives launched through the Summit. Governments will collaborate to help monitor and restrict the proliferation of digital technologies that can be used to limit human rights. A virtual conference was held in 2021, in which input was gathered from a wide range of voices, and a high-level in-person conference will take place in Copenhagen in June 2022. These coalitions and events are important, as they help to strengthen global action on democracy assistance and enable stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned. The initiatives also show the convening power of the EU and its member states on democracy issues.

In November 2021 the EU launched the Team Europe Democracy initiative, which aims to support evidence-based and coordinated action with EU member states in support of democracy. The effort is an inclusive international alliance to promote democracy and provide a coordinated response to develop common approaches to political and civic participation, media and digital, and accountability and the rule of law. The choice of democracy as a theme for this

**Table 7. International coalitions and events of EU member states**

Democracy coalition	Countries that committed support
Freedom Online Coalition	Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden
Open Government Partnership	Czechia, Estonia, Italy, Slovakia
Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative	Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden
Democracy event	Host city/country
A conference to promote media freedom and the safety of journalists	Vienna, Austria
A high-level meeting on environmental human rights defenders	Sweden
8th World Congress Against the Death Penalty	Germany
Tech for Democracy initiative	Copenhagen, Denmark
Tallinn Digital Summit; Global Conference on Media Freedom as part of the Media Freedom Coalition	Tallinn, Estonia

Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

new collective approach is another strong sign that the EU prioritizes the issue (Youngs et al. 2022).

To date, 14 EU member states<sup>7</sup> are part of Team Europe Democracy, which shows the level of importance that some member states give to the promotion of democracy abroad. Six EU member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Slovakia) specifically referred to Team Europe Democracy in their written commitments (they included one commitment each) as part of their engagements at the Summit for Democracy.

The commitments made at the Summit for Democracy by countries with which the EU has strong partnership ties could provide interesting leads for cooperation on democracy. This is especially true for EU partner countries where democratic governance has been identified as a priority in the EU Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2021–2027 for the country, as this is an indicator of available funds to provide democracy support.

<sup>7</sup> Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.



Of the 50 countries<sup>8</sup> where democratic governance has been identified as a key priority in the MIP, only about 36 per cent, or 18 countries (Albania, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Kenya, Kosovo\*, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritius, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, North Macedonia, Peru, Samoa, Ukraine and Zambia) submitted written commitments. Team Europe Democracy could take advantage of these commitments being discussed and propose support to implement reforms. Support should seek to involve civil society in implementing commitments and related monitoring.

An analysis of the 2021–2027 MIP<sup>9</sup> for each of the 18 priority countries that submitted written commitments has identified concrete opportunities for collaboration in 17 of them.

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#### 4.1. LINKAGES BETWEEN EU PARTNER COUNTRY COMMITMENTS AND EU MIPs

##### Africa

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's written commitments related to elections, public finance management and anti-corruption, which are all priority sectors under governance, peace and security priority sector one of the country's 2021–2027 MIP.

The Kenyan government made a written commitment related to strengthening the ongoing fight against corruption and strengthening accountable institutions, which is one of the specific objectives (3.1) of the country's 2021–2027 MIP aiming to create more accountable, transparent and efficient public institutions.

Liberia committed to fighting gender-based violence and female genital mutilation, as well as amending the anti-corruption act and prioritizing the participation of more women in the electoral process. These priorities for democratic reform converge with the country's 2021–2027 MIP, which identifies democratic participation (inclusive and transparent democracy, elections) and strengthening women's rights (gender equality, ending violence against women and girls) as priorities under the third priority area.

Malawi made written commitments related to strengthening democracy by conducting free and fair elections and strengthening oversight institutions, and to fighting corruption by strengthening public finance governance (revenue,

<sup>8</sup> Albania, Angola, Armenia, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Fiji, Georgia, Ghana, Guyana, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Kosovo\*, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Vanuatu and Zambia.

<sup>9</sup> Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) are the primary tool for the EU to identify priority areas for cooperation with partner countries and regions around the world for 2021–2027, and includes the financial allocation. Thematic MIPs on human rights and democracy; civil society organizations; peace, stability and conflict prevention; and global challenges, as well as regional programming if relevant in terms of content, have not been taken into account because they are not country-specific.

expenditure, public procurement, investigations) and by implementing a series of public sector reforms, such as introducing new requirements for public-owned enterprises. Moreover, it made commitments related to promoting respect for human rights, such as establishing regular dialogues between civil society and the government. In terms of its 2021–2027 MIP, these commitments link with priority area two, which focuses on democratic and economic governance, including on strengthening the quality of the electoral process and institutional capacities of oversight institutions (specific objective 1) and enhancing economic governance through improving public finance management systems (specific objective 2).

The Republic of Mauritius's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade submitted commitments related to electoral reform, the financing of political parties and the consolidation of the anti-corruption framework, which correspond to priorities identified under priority area two (good governance) of the country's 2021–2027 MIP, including sector one on the improvement of the democratic process and public accountability (fight against corruption, civil service accountability and policy effectiveness, the electoral system and distribution of powers).

Zambia's written commitments included ensuring a free media, restoring the rule of law by protecting freedoms of assembly and association, and improving the independence and transparency of the Electoral Commission of Zambia. These three commitments are also found in the country's 2021–2027 MIP, where the EU will support Zambia to promote the rule of law and strengthen the Electoral Commission of Zambia and relevant government institutions, civil society and media to ensure that they are able to fulfil their roles in democratic processes (priority area three on a fair, inclusive and peaceful society).

### **Asia and the Pacific**

The Maldives made written commitments related to increasing the representation of women in decision-making roles in society and ensuring the space for an independent civil society free from undue influence, which are two of the priorities of the 2021–2027 MIP aiming to improve the capacity of (women) political candidates and councillors at the local level (priority area two) and to strengthen measures in favour of civil society.

Commitments made by Nepal relate to human rights and equal rights of women, gender and religious minorities and disadvantaged groups, which correspond to priority area three of the 2021–2027 MIP, which stresses the EU's support for the creation of an enabling environment for the exercise of and respect for fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, electoral rights and right to equality, and for the prevention of all forms of violence and discrimination. Moreover, in its Summit for Democracy written commitments Nepal prioritized the fight against disinformation and hate speech and protecting freedom of expression. This priority can also be found in the 2021–2027 MIP, which has identified the promotion of free and independent media as a common area of support.

Samoa submitted written commitments related to the elaboration of an anti-corruption strategy, a right to information policy and legislation, an open access policy and clearer guidelines on conducting parallel investigations when it comes to official corruption in government. These commitments correspond in the Pacific Multi-Country MIP for 2021–2027 to priority area three (fundamental values, human development, peace and security), which has determined that the strengthening of the functioning of democratic institutions is a priority, and priority area two (inclusive and sustainable economic development), which identifies the fight against corruption as a necessity in economic governance.

### Europe

Albania's written commitments related to judicial reform, combating corruption, ensuring a meaningful dialogue with civil society and implementing digital public services. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III 2021–2027, which is the strategic document for the use of EU funds assisting Albania for the duration of the 2021–2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework, includes a specific funding window on rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy (window 1), as well as on good governance (window 2).

Georgia made specific written commitments related to judicial reform (appointment of judges, law on publication of judicial decisions), electoral reform (reform of the election code) and human rights (such as adoption of a national human rights strategy, a national plan on violence against women and domestic violence, and a national action plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325). The MIP for the Eastern Neighbourhood 2021–2027, which covers EU support to Georgia, identified in its priority area two (accountable institutions, the rule of law and security) support for judicial reforms and strengthening of gender-responsive policymaking and service delivery, including gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. Priority area five on resilient, gender-equal, fair and inclusive societies supports civil society, human rights and gender equality.

Kosovo\* made written commitments on specific actions to fight corruption (implementing the national strategy on the rule of law, establishing a vetting process, adopting the Magnitsky Act, seizing illicit wealth), defend against authoritarianism (establishing an electoral integrity pledge and a platform on information integrity, combating foreign interference, prohibiting the use of untrustworthy vendors and promoting civic space) and advance human rights (establishing a council for democracy and human rights, bolstering the role of women and hosting a global Summit for Women in Peace and Security). The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III 2021–2027, which is the strategic document for the use of EU funds assisting Kosovo\* for the duration of the 2021–2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework, includes a specific funding window on rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy (window 1), as well as on good governance (window 2).

Moldova committed in writing to reforming the justice sector, fighting against corruption in public institutions and fighting illegal financing of political parties.

The MIP for the Eastern Neighbourhood 2021–2027, which covers EU support to Moldova, identified in its priority area two (accountable institutions, the rule of law and security) support for judicial reforms and fighting corruption and economic crime.

Montenegro's written commitments related to supporting free and independent media through the elaboration of a media strategy, fighting corruption (including the passing of amendments to the law on free access to information), strengthening cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), defending free and fair elections by introducing amendments to the law on registers of residence and stay, and digitalizing the justice and public administration. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III 2021–2027, which is the strategic document for the use of EU funds assisting Montenegro for the duration of the 2021–2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework, includes a specific funding window on rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy (window 1), as well as on good governance (window 2).

North Macedonia's written commitments pertained to defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and safeguarding human rights and freedoms. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III 2021–2027, which is the strategic document for the use of EU funds assisting North Macedonia for the duration of the 2021–2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework, includes a specific funding window on rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy (window 1), as well as on good governance (window 2).

Ukraine committed to a series of detailed measures on protecting human rights, fighting corruption and combating authoritarianism. The 2021–2027 MIP for Ukraine identified in its priority area two (accountable institutions, the rule of law and security) support for the fight against corruption, and in its priority area five (a resilient, gender-equal, fair and inclusive society) support for the promotion of human rights and gender equality. Even if the invasion of Ukraine has resulted in shifting to military and humanitarian priorities domestically, strengthening democracy should be a top priority in the period of reconstruction.

### **Latin America**

Peru made quite an extensive list of written commitments on strengthening democracy, respecting and protecting human rights, and combating corruption. Broadly, these commitments converge with priority area three of its 2021–2027 MIP (governance and rule of law), which aims to consolidate and support democracy, protect and promote human rights, improve institutional capacities and governance, and fight corruption. Noteworthy is the intersection between Peru's written commitments and its MIP on environmental crimes.

Facilitating collaborations in various partner countries could add to the EU's and EU member states' contributions to the Year of Action and second Summit, in addition to delivering on their own commitments. Strong participation in the Summit will underline the EU member states' strong attachment to democracy both at home and abroad. Another way for the EU and EU member

states to boost their level of participation is to contribute to or lead in different democracy cohorts or thematic multi-stakeholder coordination groups that are being set up by the US administration, as well as in the focal group through which participants can contribute to shaping the next Summit. If the second Summit takes place during the first half of 2023, as expected, it will coincide with the Swedish EU Presidency from January to July 2023. This may offer an additional opportunity for Team Europe Democracy to weigh in on the success of the Summit, taking into consideration Sweden's strong democracy focus and its commitment related to the hosting of Democracy Talks in 2022.

The Summit for Democracy is a valuable initiative to build global coalitions in defence of democracy. During a meeting with Summit stakeholders in February 2022, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicated that the US administration has no plans to call for more Summits in the future. To ensure the Summit's subsistence in some form beyond 2023, there might be an opportunity for Team Europe Democracy to step in. Leading in the organization of annual or biannual summits—for example, around the International Day of Democracy—could be very favourable for the promotion of democracy worldwide and the shaping of future democracy assistance. First of all, the organization of successive summits could elevate the ambition of democracy commitments over time. As has been seen in similar initiatives, such as the Open Government Partnership cycle, commitments are likely to improve over time, especially when they are monitored (OGP 2021a). Similarly, commitments made for the Anti-Corruption Summit in London in 2016 have not led to the expected outcomes, as countries did not need to report on these commitments or make any new commitments (OGP 2021b). Second, regular summits can, on the one hand, pressure governments to showcase what they have done and outperform their commitments, and also, on the other hand, create opportunities for governments to learn from each other. Finally, regular summits allow for the inclusive engagement of all stakeholders that work on promoting democracy at home or abroad. The weight of the European commitments in the current Summit cycle add to Team Europe Democracy's credibility on democracy, allowing it to take an active role in the continuation of the initiative.

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**The Summit for Democracy is a valuable initiative to build global coalitions in defence of democracy.**

## Chapter 5

# DELIVERING ON EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

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**The recent global trends have shown that no democracy is immune from democratic decline and that democracy needs protection.**

The recent global trends have shown that no democracy is immune from democratic decline and that democracy needs protection. The Summit for Democracy and follow-up commitments have shown that there is value in democracies committing publicly to a domestic and international democracy agenda.

More than half the countries attending the Summit for Democracy followed up with written commitments to strengthen democracy either at home or abroad or both. This participation is encouraging and shows broad support for the Summit goals. Particularly positive is the concerted action on tackling corruption both at home and abroad, and the recognition of the interlinkages between financial systems in democracies as enablers of authoritarian kleptocrats, which came to the forefront after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Also encouraging are the efforts to support media freedom, which has been under threat in recent years. However, the submitted commitments came to a large extent from already relatively healthy and committed democracies. In the development and implementation of commitments, all countries should be encouraged to engage in a more inclusive domestic dialogue with citizens, civil society and other government agencies beyond foreign ministries.

Going forward, more countries need to be encouraged to submit written commitments, particularly those that merit closer scrutiny because their democratic systems are weaker or have suffered recent declines. Having more ODA recipient countries submit written commitments would open up opportunities for collaboration and for supporting progress. For the global democracy agenda to be truly robust, it needs to encompass measures to address democratic backsliding in older and newer democracies. It also needs a monitoring mechanism broad enough to ensure that the weaker democracies (those that did not submit commitments) and the non-democracies not invited to the Summit do not fall off the radar of international scrutiny. Such a monitoring system should also cover democratic developments in countries that were not invited to the first Summit, to acknowledge and support their

progress. A global democracy agenda also needs effective strategies to support the increasing number of democratic actors that work inside or in exile outside authoritarian contexts, which are on the rise. Beyond the domestic and international efforts to be undertaken during the Year of Action, there is an opportunity for Summit organizers to craft a second Summit that is inclusive of all voices, including those from civil society and with a broader representation of countries and regions around the world.

With 41 per cent of all written commitments and many robust and measurable commitments coming from democracies in the EU, the EU and its member states have sent a strong political message on the need to strengthen democracy at home and around the world. Through fostering collaborations with partner countries around the world, the EU together with its member states will be able to leverage contributions during the Year of Action and underline its strong attachment to democracy. The Team Europe Democracy initiative, as a European alliance to promote democracy and provide for coordinated democracy action, is a unique opportunity to increase the impact of efforts to promote democracy and contribute to shaping the future of democracy assistance beyond the second Summit.

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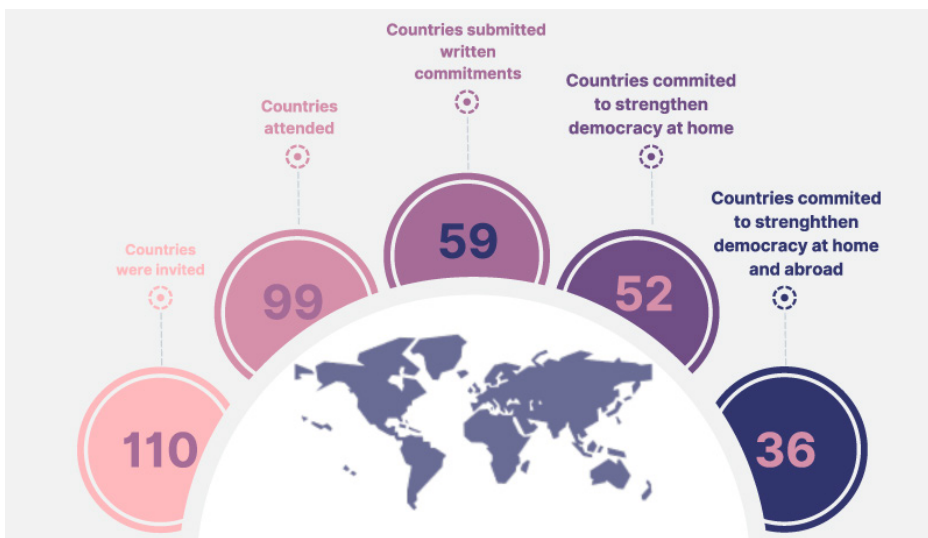


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# Annex

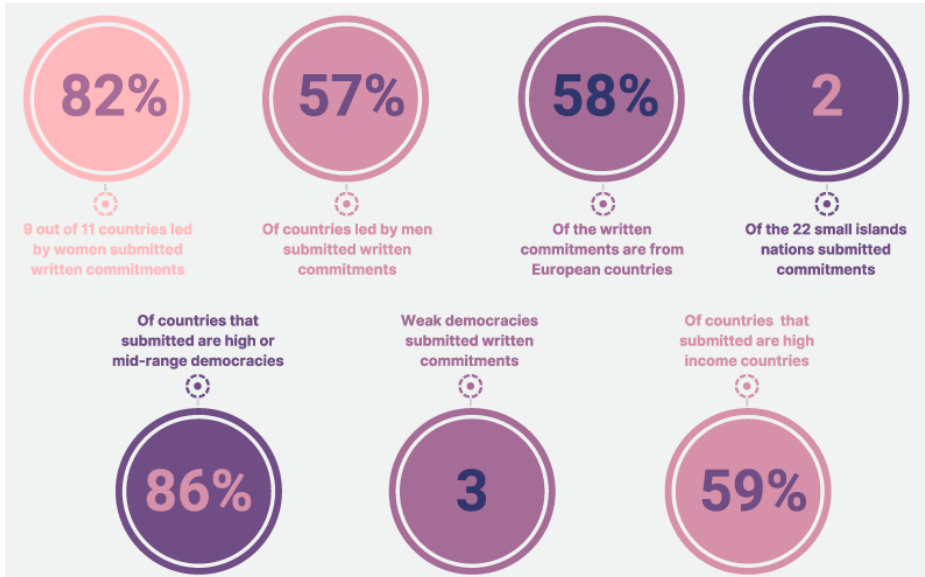
## Summit commitments in numbers

Figure A1. Summit for Democracy written commitments



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Figure A2. Summit for Democracy country commitments



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Figure A3. Summit for Democracy commitments by length



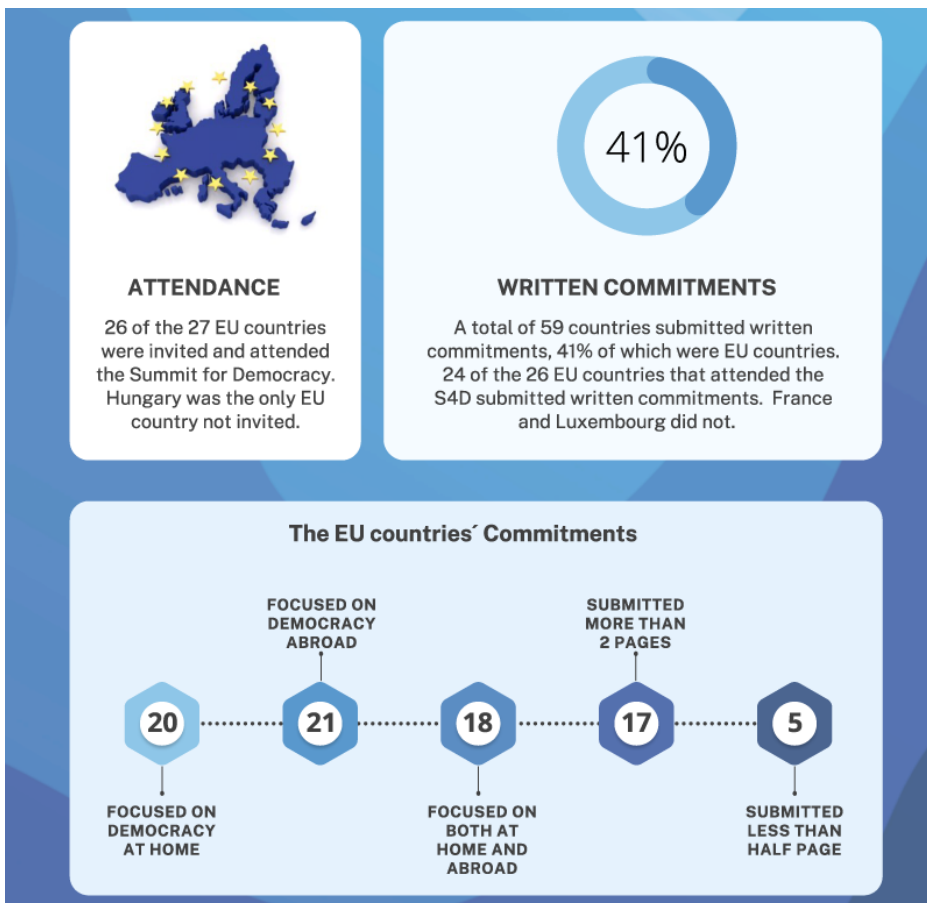
Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Figure A4. Summit for Democracy commitments by theme



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

Figure A5. Summit for Democracy in numbers—EU countries



Source: Data compiled by International IDEA

# About International IDEA

International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

## **Supporting the Team Europe Democracy project**

The European Union's Team Europe Democracy initiative aims to support evidence-based and coordinated action with member states in support of democracy. As part of this effort, International IDEA co-implements the EU-funded project Supporting Team Europe Democracy. The project aims to strengthen democracy evidence and foster and facilitate civil society and multi-stakeholder engagement in the Summit for Democracy and its preparations.



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The first Summit for Democracy, held in December 2021, brought together leaders from governments, representatives of the European Union and the United Nations with some involvement of civil society and the private sector. The objective was to set out an agenda for democratic renewal. It was the first of two planned Summits, and the year in between them has been designated a 'Year of Action'—an opportunity for governments to implement the commitments to democracy made during the first Summit and for civil society to monitor their progress.

This report provides an analysis of the first Summit and presents several options and opportunities for the second Summit. Just over half the countries that attended the first Summit followed up with written commitments. There are several strategic considerations that could strengthen the Year of Action and shape an inclusive and effective second Summit, especially for the 98 countries that attended the first Summit and made political commitments to strengthen democracy. Making publicly accessible written commitments is central to the accountability of the Summit for Democracy and should be promoted further.