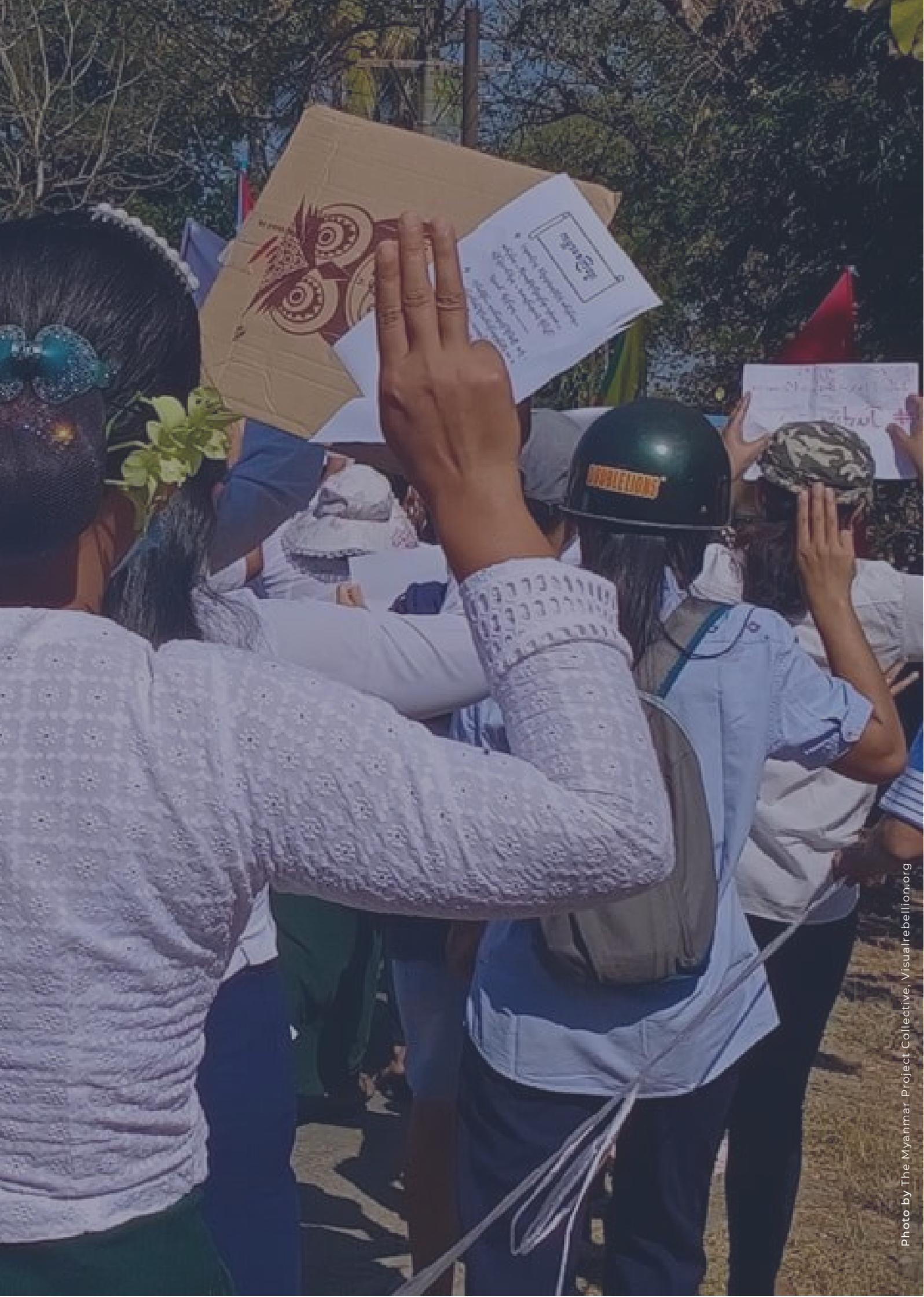




GLOBAL DEMOCRACY COALITION'S
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT FOR THE
SECOND SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY



**GLOBAL
DEMOCRACY
COALITION**



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ABOUT THE GLOBAL DEMOCRACY COALITION

The [Global Democracy Coalition](#) was formed in October of 2021, convened by democracy and democracy assistance organizations from around the world. The Coalition is an informal group of over [90 organizations](#)—most of which are from civil society—committed to the advancement of democracy, working together to enrich the global democracy debate and engage constructively with the Summit for Democracy, hosted by the United States Government and partner governments. More broadly, the Coalition provides a platform for dialogue, exchange of knowledge and experience, and advocacy on democracy.



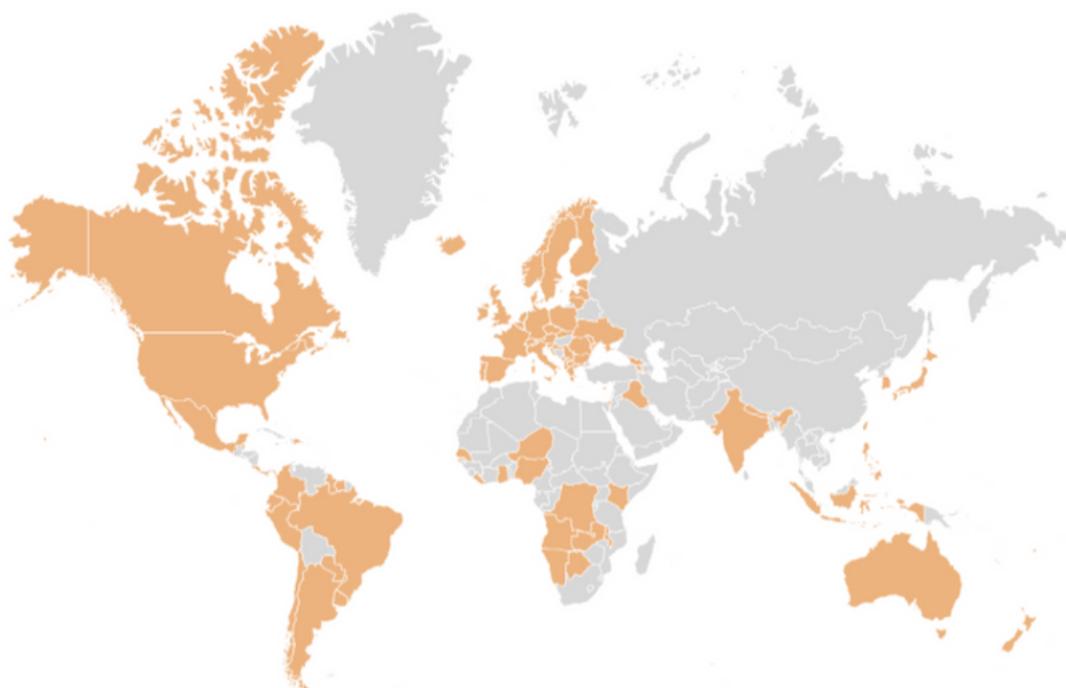
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2022, the Coordinators of the Global Democracy Coalition facilitated a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather Coalition members' recommendations for the Second Summit for Democracy, scheduled for 29–30 March 2023. Twenty-six of the Coalition's 90 members participated in the sessions, with discussion participants offering a variety of ideas for Summit planners to consider. The FGDs were held before the official announcement of the Summit and should be read with that caveat in mind. The FGDs focused on four primary lines of questions: (1) what does meaningful participation by civil society look like; (2) how can the Summit process be more transparent and accountable; (3) feedback on the commitment process; and (4) the value of cohorts. The recommendations outlined below, if taken up by Summit planners, could help the United States lead by example and set the tone for the importance of civil society in the Summit for Democracy process and discussions on democracy, good governance, human rights, corruption and countering growing authoritarianism.

A recurrent theme from the discussions was the need for greater transparency and inclusion in the Summit planning to enable civil society and other stakeholders —such as multilateral organizations, local and regional governments, and independent public institutions (e.g. human rights commissions, anti-corruption bodies, election management bodies) —which often serve as a bridge between government and civil society, to make meaningful contributions.

Clarifying the expected role and contributions of civil society and other stakeholders in the official Summit programme would also facilitate more concrete suggestions for their participation. Additional recommendations focused on including civil society reporting as part of the official record; developing an official mechanism for commitment monitoring; including cohorts in the official Summit programme; and ensuring that the Summit for Democracy does not duplicate similar processes in other forums and mechanisms.

With the next Summit taking place in late March 2023, four months from this report's release, the Coalition hopes the recommendations outlined below will provide Summit planners with a menu of actionable ideas and suggestions that encourage and generate more meaningful participation by civil society, local and regional governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and the philanthropic community. The specific recommendations outlined below are suggested examples highlighted by one or several organizations in the FGDs. They may not all represent the views of all partner organizations in the Global Democracy Coalition and should therefore be read as a menu of proposed suggestions, rather than a strict checklist.



RECOMMENDATIONS



1

GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND TIMELY INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transparency and timely access to information. Ensure that information is shared with governments, civil society and the general public in a transparent and timely way. In addition to the items below, developing a regular drumbeat of information on the Summit can help maintain the momentum and keep stakeholders motivated and engaged. A few ideas for this include:

- **Vision and plans.** The Coalition recommends a greater emphasis on transparency and access to information on the vision and plans for the Second Summit for Democracy.
- **Official programme and agenda.** Communicate the draft agenda (including session topics), format and process for the Summit early on and provide an opportunity for civil society to react to these and provide inputs. Providing timely information on these will enable civil society and other stakeholders to expand or add topics via side events, which would ideally be considered an official part of the Summit programme.

Examples of other stakeholders include local and regional governments, and independent public institutions (e.g. human rights commissions, anti-corruption bodies, election management bodies, etc.) that often serve as a bridge between government and civil society, the private sector and academic institutions.

- **Invitees.** Communicate information on invitees to the Summit, including:
 - The criteria for inviting countries to the Summit, as well as willingness to revisit invitations to countries that have severely backslid since the last Summit and reward countries that, though not invited, have made progress.
 - Provide clarity on the invitation process and criteria early on so that the 2023 Summit is not overtaken by discussion of who is/is not invited.
 - Provide information on the following to allow for more tailored recommendations: What is the process for determining which countries will be invited to the Summit for Democracy? Will only heads of state be invited to the in-person sessions or will there be space for civil society, local and regional governments or other stakeholders as well? Will cohorts be included in the in-person sessions, and will participation by cohort members expand beyond the co-leads? What provisions will be made to include civil society by regional co-hosts?
 - Provide invitation opportunities for representatives of civil society, multilateral organizations, local and regional governments, exiled governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Role of civil society. Articulate the role envisaged for civil society in the second Summit and how it will be included in the official programme so it may better identify participation gaps and develop options for filling those gaps.

Role of other stakeholders. It will also be important to articulate the role envisaged for other important stakeholders in the Summit process, such as local and regional governments (as they represent the governance level closest to communities and play a key role in the democratic

process) as well as independent public institutions (e.g. human rights commissions, anti-corruption bodies, election management bodies, etc.) that often serve as a bridge between government and civil society, as well as multilateral organizations, the private sector and academic institutions.

Make information accessible. Provide as much information as possible on Summit plans via email and on the State Department website. Ensure that materials are provided in accessible formats such as sign language or easy-to-read formats. If some information cannot be shared via those channels, use other independent sites (such as [Global Democracy Coalition](#) and www.summit4democracy.org and [EU Summit for Democracy Resources Portal](#) websites) as repositories of Summit-related information. Provide information to the organizers of those sites.

Identify and make resources available. For any in-person participation, resources will be needed, particularly for those coming from the Global South, to attend. This includes not only travel resources but also visa support. If participating governments are unable to provide financial support, the Coalition recommends the Summit encourage, and facilitate as necessary, other stakeholders, including private sector and philanthropies, to consider sponsoring costs associated with attendance.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Willingness to engage. Coalition members are eager to engage, contribute and take part in the March 2023 Summit for Democracy.

Lack of (timely) information limits effective participation. The lack of information (provided in a timely manner) on the role and space envisaged for civil society and local and regional governments in the Summit process and on concrete Summit plans was identified as the main limiting factor for meaningful civil society and local and regional government participation in the Summit.

Complementarity of efforts. Effective participation depends on this as many civil society initiatives are shaped around the official plans, to fill gaps and complement these plans. If those are not announced until very late, all other independent activities have little time for preparation, the quality of the participation will suffer, the opportunity for complementarity of efforts decreases, and the risk of duplication increases.

Role of civil society. Knowing what role Summit planners envision for civil society would enable more relevant recommendations for engagement.

Parameters of Summit. It has been announced that the Summit will be part virtual, part hybrid, with four regional co-hosts. Additional information on the parameters of the hybrid programme and regional activities would enable more tailored recommendations.

Transparency on country criteria. The first Summit generated questions on the criteria and transparency for inviting countries to the Summit as some countries that were not classified as democracies (by standard democracy indices) were invited, while some that were classified as such were not.



2

CIVIL SOCIETY AS AN EQUAL PARTNER

RECOMMENDATIONS

A seat at the table. The Coalition recommends that Summit planners offer a seat at the Summit planning table to civil society members and other stakeholders. Including civil society and other stakeholders as an equal partner in advance of the Summit not only illustrates their important role for democracy, but may also help address many of the transparency and lack of information issues raised in Recommendation 1. For manageability, the Coalition recommends the selection of two to three network-based organizations who can gather and represent civil society interests for meaningful participation in planning the programme and format of the main Summit. Consider providing rapid funding to support the Summit-related work of these organizations.

Provide an entry point for civil society participation from non-participating countries. Including civil society at the table will also ensure that civil society from non-participating countries can still be included in the Summit. This could also include representatives of political prisoners, human rights groups, media, unions, and other entities banned or otherwise silenced in their countries due to their opposition to autocracy.

Report back on civil society engagement. We would also encourage Summit organizers to report back on how they used or are going to use the inputs given by civil society during the thematic consultations already carried out during the Year of Action.

Engaging civil society and other stakeholders in the Summit.

Provide opportunities for civil society and other stakeholders to engage in the official Summit programme on 29 and 30 March 2023. Also provide opportunities for participation in official and non-official side events. Including independent efforts, such as a 'Civil Society' (or 'Friends of Democracy') Day as proposed by the Global Democracy Coalition, in or linked to the official programme could provide additional avenues for civil society and other stakeholder engagement around the Summit.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The importance of civil society. Creating opportunities for civil society to be an active partner in the Summit, and have a seat at the table, shows commitment to the principle that civil society has an important role to play in strengthening democracy and holding governments to account. Coalition partners recognize the confidence placed upon them if this recommendation were to be taken up and are eager to illustrate how this type of partnership can contribute to establishing trust and respect.

Opportunities for co-creation. Opening up the discussion on agenda setting, official panel and side event planning and contributing to the Summit declaration would provide an opportunity for co-creation between all spheres of governments and civil society. Having closed discussions might affect the flow of creative ideas and the opportunity to build positive, collaborative relationships between government and civil society.

Equal partnership. Currently, governments have a direct path into the Summit process via the Focal Group; but civil society does not. Democracy cohorts provide a role for civil society to engage on thematic issues with governments and other stakeholders, but there is no current path for civil society that is equivalent to the Focal Group.

Sharing the burden. Civil society is eager to contribute positively to the Summit agenda setting and planning. Civil society is willing to help share the burden of organizing part of the Summit if they can be assured their input is valued. A way to do that is to bring them into discussions on the agenda, format, and so on.

Inclusion of local and regional governments: local and regional governments are willing to be a part of the Summit.

The goal to transform the multilateral system into one that is networked and inclusive calls for bringing together all spheres of government, and in particular those that are closest to their communities. By having local and regional governments involved in the process, the value of governance of proximity can be included in the process of the Summit.



3

DEMOCRACY COHORTS MUST BE PART OF THE FORMAL PROCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Include democracy cohorts in the official programme and agenda. Coalition members who are also co-leads or members of cohorts are eager for their cohort work to be included in the official Summit programme. The Coalition recommends that cohorts (and the outputs they produced) be included in the official Summit process.

Facilitate linkages between and across democracy cohorts. Summit planners could facilitate, via an initial group meeting or some other mechanism, connections between cohort participants. For example, establishing a single email list of all cohort co-leads could facilitate connections.

Identify and facilitate access to financial resources. Encourage other participating governments, private sector organizations and philanthropies to devote resources to supporting the work of democracy cohorts.

Filling gaps of democracy cohort topics. Plugging key gaps vis-à-vis political prisoners, refugees and internally displaced persons and exiles in existing cohorts, either by establishing a cohort or a subgroup on political prisoners and the participation of refugees/exiles in policy formation/policy dialogue, or alternatively by treating it as a cross-cutting issue across multiple cohorts.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Civil society is eager for cohorts to have impact. The United States launched democracy cohorts as a part of their official Year of Action. Civil society has enthusiastically joined these multi-stakeholder platforms and are eager to contribute to developing action-oriented outcomes in advance of the March 2023 Summit.

Cohorts and official participation. Many civil society organizations (CSOs) see their participation in the cohorts as an official avenue to participate in the Summit, as cohorts have received guidance from Summit planners that they should be prepared to present on the work of the cohort at the second Summit. However, civil society cohort participants have yet to receive guidance on how they will be included in the Summit itself. While the Coalition is cognizant that decisions are still being made on the official programme and agenda, the lack of information may impact cohorts' ability to produce tangible and relevant outputs and outcomes in time for the official Summit. It can also impact their momentum and motivation. Some questioned the Summit organizers' genuine commitment to democracy cohorts if they were not given a clear space in the Summit.

Lack of connection. Cohort members have also expressed an interest in developing connections to other cohorts. Many are eager to develop mutually reinforcing action items and learn from each other in order to further the impact of cohorts collectively and individually.

Lack of resources. Civil society cohort participants are eager to have their cohorts develop and produce outcomes that will have a lasting impact on democratic renewal. To do this, many expressed a need for resources to cover the necessary costs (human resources, research and report writing, coordination, etc).



OFFICIAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION REPORTING MECHANISM

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a CSO reporting mechanism. Coalition members recommend that Summit planners develop a mechanism by which civil society can submit their own reports, analysis and statements to be included in the official record and included on the official Summit website alongside participating government interventions. This would give civil society another opportunity to contribute to the official Summit dialogue and is a practice used in other international summits and forums, including around the Universal Periodic Review process.

- The Coalition understands the complexities of including unofficial (i.e. non-USG) information on a government website. While the Coalition would hope that CSO reports could be handled in the same manner as official written commitments governments submit, an alternative would be to add a disclaimer and hyperlink to external website(s), such as www.summit4democracy.org, [Global Democracy Coalition](#) or [EU Summit for Democracy Resources Portal](#).

Provide opportunities for influencing the official Summit declaration. It would be important to provide an opportunity for civil society and other stakeholders to comment on the official Summit declaration before its final adoption. It may be too cumbersome to open it up for all interested stakeholders. Therefore, an option to consider is to open it for feedback by the civil society cohort co-leads.

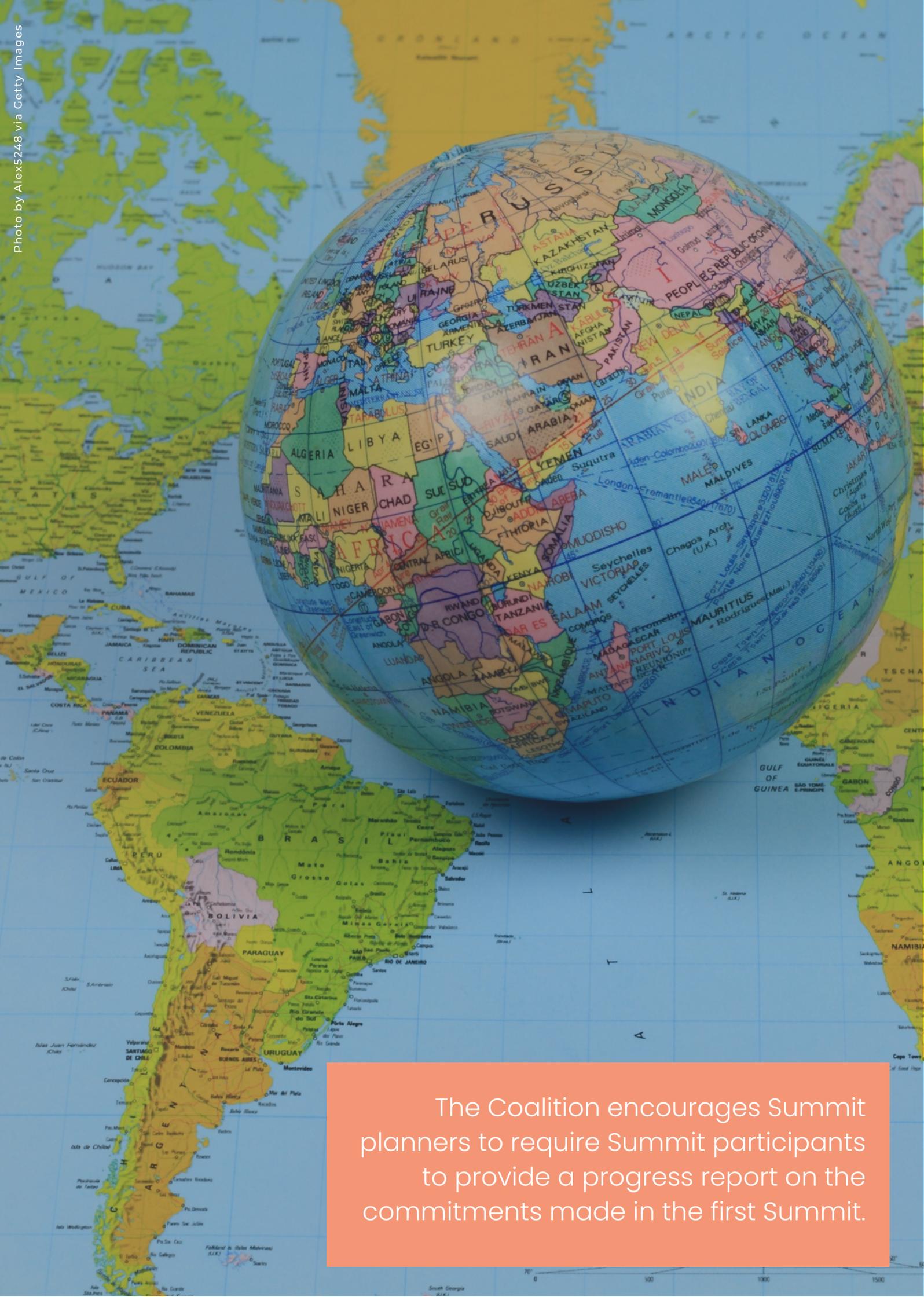
KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Give CSOs a voice. Currently civil society efforts around the Summit are to a large extent expected to be self-organized. Establishing a CSO reporting mechanism would enable civil society to have a more official role, and provide meaningful, independent analysis on the progress of country commitments and to make recommendations for additional commitments governments and other stakeholders can make to further democratic progress.

CSO contributions. With participation likely being limited given the hybrid nature of the Summit, creating a space for civil society to contribute written analysis specific to the Summit would recognize the value of civil society inputs, including their ability to provide a non-governmental perspective on the issues discussed in the official programme.

Give local and regional governments a voice. Ensuring that local and regional governments are fully included in the Summit and within reporting mechanisms will enable reporting to not only reflect priorities and aspirations of the level of government closest to people but also amplify the messages of communities and civil society. Moreover, it will aid in accelerating action from cities in the follow-up process to the Summit.





The Coalition encourages Summit planners to require Summit participants to provide a progress report on the commitments made in the first Summit.

5

DEVELOP AN OFFICIAL MONITORING MECHANISM TO STRENGTHEN THE COMMITMENT PROCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Require written commitments. The Coalition strongly urges Summit organizers to require written commitments from participating countries in a specific, comparable format with a clear outline of deliverables and timelines. Templates developed by organizations in the Global Democracy Coalition could be encouraged to ensure quality across country commitments. Commitments should be realistic and actionable. This would be for commitments made during the 2021 Summit as well as the upcoming 2023 Summit and beyond. This will help in the monitoring and tracking of progress on the implementation of those commitments. Having written commitments to refer to also enhances civil society's ability to more effectively engage governments on their official commitments.

Create an official monitoring mechanism. The Coalition recommends that Summit planners develop an official monitoring mechanism for commitments made by participating governments. To promote neutrality and independence, resources could be devoted to establishing an independent monitoring mechanism whereby a secretariat-style body could (1) establish a reporting mechanism for participating governments to self-report their own progress and (2) develop a repository for external reporting/analysis on commitment progress. Several independent entities are already tracking and conducting analysis on democracy themes, including a number of organizations in the Global Democracy Coalition. This official Summit reporting mechanism could potentially be embedded in one of these

existing structures. Lessons can be learned from the reporting mechanism of the Open Government Partnership and from the Latin American and the Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD) monitoring of agreements from the Summit of the Americas.

Require government participants to submit written progress reports. The Coalition encourages Summit planners to require Summit participants to provide a progress report on the commitments made in the first Summit. If the State Department cannot upload them on their site, encourage participating countries to make them available on the Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard, which now has a section on commitment implementation. Reports are being uploaded on the site by countries that have voluntarily submitted self-reports and agreed for them to be made publicly available.

Reporting templates. A common reporting framework and reporting templates, developed by some organizations in the Global Democracy Coalition, can be encouraged by Summit organizers to ensure consistency in reporting across countries.

Encourage civil society engagement in commitment formulation. Encourage countries to ensure civil society and other stakeholder participation (i.e. local and regional governments and other government or public entities) in formulating country commitments, or at least a selected number of commitments. This will ensure more relevant and more broadly owned commitments. Additionally, encourage countries to facilitate civil society participation (and that of other stakeholders) in monitoring country commitments.

Encourage others to make official commitments. Governments alone cannot protect or advance democracy. The Summit organizers should invite and encourage major corporations, unions, the boards and donors of government-supported philanthropies, international CSOs and multilateral organizations to announce their own commitments for strengthening and advancing democracy in their countries,

recognizing its multi-stakeholder nature and their role in advancing the democracy agenda.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Written commitments are necessary. A written record of official commitments helps facilitate accountability as governments can more easily be held to account on their commitments. Written commitments can also be referenced in other bilateral and multilateral forums and can be better integrated into existing mechanisms.

Include civil society. For the December 2021 Summit, civil society and local and regional governments were not well engaged in the development of commitments, even though they can play a strategic role in both shaping commitments to be more responsive to citizen needs and monitoring them for accountability purposes. The Coalition is aware that commitments are a government vehicle, but we believe it could be expanded to civil society too.



6

ENSURE INCLUSIVITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop an inclusive invitation process. The Coalition recommends that Summit planners make the Summit more inclusive.

- Invite pro-democracy actors from all Countries, but not all governments. Invitations to participants could be expanded by inviting pro-democracy actors from all countries but not all governments to participate in the Summit.
- Invite civil society to be official participants. Invite civil society from non-invited countries to participate, as they have the most to gain by the networking and relationship building that could come from their involvement.
- Invite local and regional governments as official participants.

Mainstream youth participation in Summit proceedings. The Coalition recommends that youth be included in every aspect of the Summit —showcasing youth leaders in elected positions, youth leaders in local and regional government, youth in the private sector and youth in civil society. This includes having youth representatives in all sessions, and ensuring that panel or discussion topics touch on the impact on youth or how youth could impact those issues.

Increase participation of marginalized populations, including women, LGBTQIA+ people and persons with disabilities.

Likewise, the Coalition notes that marginalized populations — including women, youth, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities—have been especially impacted by the backsliding of democracy and human rights over this past year and including them in the official programme will provide a platform for the rights of these groups to be showcased and amplified.

Include media. Media outlets and journalists play a critical role in a democracy and should also have a place at the table in the official Summit programme. Including media at the table would provide recognition for the important role of a free and independent press for democracy and can also help enhance reporting on the Summit and ensure that information on it is shared more broadly.

Provide translation and interpretation services. The Coalition encourages the Summit organizers to provide translation and interpretation and sign language/transcription for all official events, but also to facilitate translation for side events. This will ensure more meaningful participation, especially from civil society organizations from the Global South.

Inclusive and diverse agenda topics. Recognizing the limitations of a two-day event and the abundance of possible panel and discussion topics, the Coalition recommends the Summit diversify the topics covered during the official programme to not only include a diversity of speakers but to also consider how Summit themes and session topics impact others and what unique perspectives could be brought to bear on different topics. For example: how has the backsliding of women's and LGBTQIA+ rights impacted trust in democracy? How does climate change impact Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities and nations? What role can youth have in combating corruption?

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Create opportunities for inclusion. Coalition members commend the inclusion of a youth town hall in the first Summit, as well as the inclusion of young women and transgender government leaders. The Coalition is eager to see more diversity in official participation, as well as in agenda topics, to include other marginalized populations that have experienced a backsliding of rights or who are traditionally underrepresented including LGBTQIA+ people and persons with disabilities.

Limited space for civil society from non-participating countries. Civil society from non-invited countries had limited access to participate in the Summit process.



Photo by Mathias P.R. Reding



The Coalition is eager to see more diversity in official participation, as well as in agenda topics, to include other marginalized populations that have experienced a backsliding of rights or who are traditionally underrepresented.

7

EXPAND AGENDA TOPICS TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE OF DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand official programme and agenda topics. The Summit process could have (1) a small number of high-level objectives monitored by leaders (e.g. (a) ensuring democratic delivery and (b) building democratic resilience) and (2) a broader agenda of collaborative work on relevant issues driven through the cohorts. Apart from the three topics of the December 2021 Summit (combating corruption, protecting human rights and countering authoritarianism), Coalition members recommend either expanding these three topics or including additional topics. An expansion of the existing topics could be phrased as 'combating corruption and undue influence of money on politics', 'protecting and expanding human rights', and 'countering internal and external threats to democracy'. Additional topics that could be added to the official programme and agenda could include: protecting electoral integrity; reforming campaign finance; local democracy; the importance and role of democratic institutions; media freedom; civic space; the future of democracy assistance; implications of war in Ukraine; security issues and how they link to the broader democracy agenda; backsliding of minority rights; and the role of the private sector in democracy protection.

Provide space to assess the state of democracy. Coalition members encourage the Summit to provide a space to assess the state of democracy and how and where it has progressed between the two Summits and how and where it has declined, drawing on the analysis of the partners in the Global Democracy Coalition that conduct such assessments. The Coalition includes both organizations that conduct

quantitative and qualitative expert analysis and those that generate public opinion data. Encouraging a joint independent assessment by these organizations can provide valuable inputs and help frame the Summit discussions. This can provide a basis for periodically revisiting key issues and challenges to be placed on the global democracy agenda.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Deepen and expand the discourse. The Coalition recognizes the limitations of a two-day event, which includes official interventions from heads of state. The first Summit deftly covered a range of topics in a limited amount of time, but there is much more to touch upon, even if briefly.



COMPLEMENT EXISTING EFFORTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Embedding Summit processes and themes. The Coalition recommends Summit planners continue to identify potential avenues to embed Summit themes and processes into existing mechanisms (i.e. Open Government Partnership, Community of Democracies, International IDEA and others) and begin concrete discussions with those stakeholders to advance that process ahead of the second Summit.

Create accountability. Make use of other existing mechanisms by linking to them early and often. These linkages will encourage accountability.

Encourage commitments to be incorporated into existing mechanisms. Identify ways to incorporate or align Summit commitments into existing mechanisms that require official commitments, such as the Open Government Partnership, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, and the Summit of the Americas, or follow up the UN Convention Against Corruption. Governments should also be encouraged to make commitments that are in alignment with these existing mechanisms; and if eligible, to commit to these existing mechanisms themselves as a Summit for Democracy commitment.

Value in continuity. The Summit for Democracy is unlike other efforts in that it provides a recurrent forum for democratic governments and civil societies (including from autocracies) to engage and to commit to specific short- and medium-term goals. While the Coalition sees value in linking the Summit for Democracy process to existing mechanisms,

there is also value in providing continuity to the uniqueness of the Summit process, and the Coalition encourages Summit planners, together with participating governments, CSOs and partners in the Global Democracy Coalition to think through and devise a strategy and plan to ensure such continuity, while effectively complementing and building on existing processes. A space for discussing this should be provided at the second Summit. An option to consider is a recurrent event with a small permanent governing body including representatives from several governments and international non-governmental organizations.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Value in Summit processes. The Coalition recognizes and values the Summit organizers' desire to not be duplicative of other existing mechanisms and forums to discuss democratic renewal. On the other hand, many partner organizations in the Coalition view the Summit for Democracy as a unique space that brings together different stakeholders for discussions on how to best advance and safeguard democracy. This unique space needs to complement existing mechanisms but should in some way be preserved and continued in different shapes and forms, in order to continue to advance this important global agenda.





RESOURCES

- **EU Summit for Democracy Resources Portal**
<<https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu>>
- **Global Democracy Coalition**
<<https://www.globaldemocracycoalition.org>>
- **Optional Commitment Reporting Template**
<<https://bit.ly/optionalcommitmentreporting>>
- **Optional New Commitment Filing Template**
<<https://bit.ly/newcommitmentfilingtemplate>>
- **Proposal: Shared Method for S4D Commitment Completion Assessment - A Learning Tool for S4D participants**
<<https://bit.ly/commitmentcompletionassessment>>
- **Summit4Democracy.org**
<<https://summit4democracy.org/>>
- **Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard**
<<https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu/commitment-dashboard/>>



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