



# Summit for Democracy Cohort on Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy Statement of Recommendations

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## INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Gender equality is an imperative for thriving democracies. Any effort to build strong democracies and inclusive institutions will be flawed if it excludes or marginalizes half the world's population. Countries where women prosper also tend to be healthier democracies.<sup>1</sup> Hence, empowering women and safeguarding democracy go together, gender equality is a prerequisite for inclusive democracy.

Around the world, gender equality and women's rights to participate in public life are being undermined by the same forces that are pushing back on democracy. For instance, gendered disinformation and online abuse against women in politics are increasingly used to erode the gains on gender equality, women's empowerment and democracy. Efforts towards more inclusive and equitable democracy are taking place but need to be strengthened and accelerated. At the current rate of change, it would take about 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and at least 40 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments.<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.5 "aims to 'ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.'"<sup>3</sup>

The recommendations of the Summit for Democracy's Gender Cohort, co-led by Sweden, Romania, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and International IDEA, provide suggestions to strengthen democracy by striving for gender equality. The recommendations and proposed actions were

<sup>1</sup> "Exploring the Links between Women's Status and Democracy", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2023. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/exploring-the-links-between-womens-status-and-democracy/>

<sup>2</sup> Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the gender snapshot 2022, UN Women and UN Statistics Division.

<sup>3</sup> "Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021", International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2021. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2021.pdf>

identified in consultation with the cohort consisting of over 100 representatives of governments and civil society from all regions of the world. Governments and civil society are encouraged to consider the recommendations as tools for strengthening democracy by promoting gender equality. The recommendations focus on three pillars: inclusion; legislative and policy frameworks; and conflict prevention, peace and security. Each thematic pillar is fundamental for gender equality in democracy processes.

Gender equality and women's political empowerment are directly and indirectly affected by a combination of complex social norms, practices, laws and policies. Socio-cultural norms and practices define *inclusion* and entrench the challenges that women encounter in exercising their democratic right to participate and be represented in public life and leadership. *Legislative and policy frameworks* shape the opportunities and abilities to participate and be represented in democratic processes and institutions. *Conflict prevention, peace and security processes* determine how a country or region addresses conflicts that have a disproportionate effect on women and girls. The participation and representation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace and security processes are essential in enhancing women's safety and security and strengthening of democratic processes and institutions.

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## INCLUSION

### **Identify and address harmful and discriminatory gender norms and practices in political, legal and educational systems and processes.**

- **Proposed action:** Develop public advocacy campaigns tailored for women/girls and boys/men with messages to dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality and shared decision making in both the private and public spheres.
- **Proposed action:** Consider adopting educational curriculums for educators and students that empower women and girls and promote gender equality.

### **Eliminate violence against women in politics (VAWIP) and address the proliferation of technology facilitated gender-based violence and abuse.**

- **Proposed action:** Adopt legal standards on zero tolerance for all forms of gender-based violence including online and between/within political parties.
- **Proposed action:** Address technology facilitated gender-based violence and abuse in collaboration with social media companies. Increase coordination between online platforms and law enforcement entities in order to identify and respond to threats and hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Proposed action:** Develop strategies and tools to mitigate threats and risks towards women in politics, human rights defenders, and civil society leaders. This includes measures to prevent, track, report and respond to online and offline threats and risks women encounter in civic spaces.

**Engage men and boys in transforming discriminatory practices, attitudes and behaviours that prevent gender equality and women's political empowerment.**

- **Proposed action:** Build the capacity of men and boys to become strategic allies and advocates for gender equality by challenging discriminatory practices, attitudes and behaviors in societies, within organizations and political parties.
- **Proposed action:** Build alliances with traditional community leaders to address socio-cultural norms, stereotypes and harmful social practices that hinder gender equality and women's participation, representation and leadership.
- **Proposed action:** Develop national/regional networks of male political leaders as champions for gender equality and women's political empowerment and leadership in public life.

**Foster conditions that promote women's political empowerment, leadership and representation in decision making.**

- **Proposed action:** Support strategic networks and access to resources by earmarking funding for women's political empowerment and leadership programs; convene networks of women for mutual support and collaboration across political parties to promote opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration and mentorship.
- **Proposed action:** Invest in women's economic empowerment; promote a more equitable distribution of care work between men and women; encourage media actors to recognise and address gender stereotypes in the coverage of women in politics and promote a culture of equality and equity.
- **Proposed action:** Call upon political parties to adopt inclusive and transparent policies and practices to proactively support gender equality and women's political empowerment. This includes adopting gender equality commitments within political parties' policy frameworks and political parties adopting candidate lists that alternate men and women candidates to enable women to compete equally.

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**LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS****Implement policies and legal reforms for achieving gender equality in political and public life.**

- **Proposed action:** Identify gaps in legislative frameworks to eliminate discriminatory laws and policies, including addressing conflicts between formal laws and customary laws and practices.
- **Proposed action:** Integrate gender equality in broader democracy agendas and leverage existing international gender frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Istanbul Convention and the Women, Peace and Security agenda to strengthen gender equality in democracy building endeavors.

**Incorporate gender responsive planning and budgeting in policies and resources allocation.**

- **Proposed action:** Create national systems to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data to inform policy decisions of national and local governments.
- **Proposed action:** Adopt gender budgeting to ensure that resources are equitably distributed and promote the empowerment of women and girls.

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**CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACE AND SECURITY****Leverage UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda to strengthen democratic processes and institutions.**

- **Proposed action:** Ensure the participation and contributions of women in all aspects of peace and security processes. Prioritise women's meaningful inclusion as a key strategy to prevent and address conflict, build peace and security and strengthen democratic resilience.
- **Proposed action:** Improve coordination and resource allocation between women, peace and security efforts and democracy-building efforts. This includes adopting WPS National Action Plans as mechanisms for advancing women's roles in peace building, governance and security efforts.
- **Proposed action:** Integrate the WPS Agenda into post-conflict reconstruction and political transition processes to establish and strengthen democratic processes and institutions and good governance structures.

**Work collaboratively to develop strategies and tools to mitigate risks to women politicians, human rights defenders and civil society leaders.**

- **Proposed action:** Partner with democratic governments, civil society, law enforcement and women in politics to develop strategies to identify and respond to risks women face; tools to track and report threats and violent incidents; and rapid response plans.
- **Proposed action:** Redefine security more broadly to encompass the day-to-day safety needs of women and provide women with security training to mitigate threats and access to resources that increase safety.