

INTERNATIONAL IDEA STRATEGY



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)'s fourth institutional Strategy, valid from January 2023.¹ This Strategy addresses challenges and opportunities in the democracy landscape, building on International IDEA's strengths, comparative advantage, and niche in the democracy support and assistance field. It sets out the Institute's strategic direction and implementation framework, while ensuring there is sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging needs and challenges at the global, regional and national levels.

The Strategy is organized into the following sections:

1. International IDEA's identity, added value and comparative advantage (who we are)
2. Democracy in perspective: current challenges and opportunities (why)
3. International IDEA's workstreams (what)
4. Working modalities, mainstreaming lenses, criteria for engagement, optimizing our work, communication and resource mobilization (how)
5. Stakeholders—governance actors, target groups, strategic partners (with whom)
6. Conclusion (in sum)

¹ This document will be updated periodically in line with decisions taken by International IDEA's Member States based on the changing democracy landscape.

These sections are summarized in a conclusion and complemented by Annexes describing International IDEA's:

- A. Definition of democracy
- B. Theory of change and results framework
- C. 2020–2021 strategic reviews and 2022 strategy development process
- D. Criteria for country-level engagement

1.1. INTERNATIONAL IDEA'S IDENTITY, ADDED VALUE AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE—WHO ARE WE?

International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization (IGO) with an explicit mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide. As an IGO with a worldwide presence, International IDEA fills a key niche. Through its 'think-and-do' approach, the Institute aspires to be associated with the credibility, excellence, relevance, agility and integrity of its work.

International IDEA's diverse [membership](#) of democracies from all over the world reinforces its legitimacy. The Institute's statutes require Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the rule of law, human rights, the principles of democratic pluralism and to strengthening democracy. It seeks to enhance Member State engagement to fully capitalize on its IGO status, while extending its membership base in all regions and expanding the diversity of democratic experiences.

The Institute is the only IGO dedicated solely to supporting democracy worldwide; it has permanent United Nations (UN) Observer status. Combined with its ability to convene multilateral institutions, national actors, democracy defenders and civil society organizations (CSOs), International IDEA plays a unique role in harnessing collective global action to champion, defend and advance democracy. Through its strategic partnerships with the UN and regional organizations, International IDEA also has a catalytic role in advocacy to enhance the effectiveness of international democracy support.

International IDEA's 'think-and-do' approach is underpinned by continuous learning; it is an *impartial global knowledge provider* on democracy that offers *country- and region-specific capacity development and advisory support*. The Institute bridges the gap between academic research and on-the-ground project implementation, while systematically ensuring that both benefit from continuous learning. It *assesses and shares best-fit options, convenes policy dialogues*, and strengthens countries' capacities to negotiate and implement democratic reform. While other organizations may also focus on these functions, few, if any, consistently combine them in a reinforcing cycle of global

knowledge production and practical tools designed to build the capacity of democratic actors and use convening power and *policy influence to advocate* for a democracy-building perspective in multilateral policy fora.

International IDEA considers democracy essential for promoting and guaranteeing human rights, and believes that participation in political life, including government, is part of human rights, proclaimed and guaranteed by international treaties and declarations, as well as the Institute's Statutes.

1.2. VISION STATEMENT

Our Vision

A world in which everyone lives in inclusive and resilient democracies¹ with accountable actors, institutions and processes able to respond to citizens' needs, protect human rights and deliver sustainable development.

¹ The bold vision statement will be the short version for external use.

1.3. MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission

International IDEA advances, promotes and protects sustainable democracy worldwide in consideration of human rights commitments through policy-relevant knowledge, capacity development, advocacy and the convening of dialogues.

International IDEA's mission statement² considers the challenges and threats to democracy, acknowledging the link to the protection of human rights and the need for advocacy to protect and safeguard democracy around the world. It describes *how* the Institute intends to achieve its vision and mandate and highlights its key modalities of engagement, which include developing capacity and knowledge products, advocacy and convening dialogues.

In the framework of this strategy, the convening of dialogues and advocacy have been added as instruments to enable International IDEA to advance democratic reform at the global, regional and national levels. To achieve these

² Mexico presented observations regarding the competence of International IDEA to protect democracy and electoral institutions, which can be found in Annex E.

goals, the Institute aims to inform and influence multilateral and national foreign policy agendas and priorities to advance sustainable democracy.

International IDEA's focus remains supporting and advancing democracy, which requires adherence to universal and legally binding human rights commitments. Respect for human rights, democracy, equality and the rule of law continue to underpin all aspects of the Institute's work.

1.4. INTERNATIONAL IDEA AND THE 2030 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

International IDEA's vision is anchored in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Institute believes that democratic principles are core to (and important enablers of) the Agenda's realization. Rule of law; access to justice; accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making in line with the 'Leave no one behind' principle; and fundamental freedoms are cornerstones for achieving all of the Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International IDEA and the Sustainable Development Goals

The following Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and targets are particularly relevant to International IDEA's mandate:

- SDG 16.6: Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels.
- SDG 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.
- SDG 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- SDG 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- SDG 5b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- SDG 5.9: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
- SDG 10.2: Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- SDG 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
- SDG 13.3 Improve education, awareness raising, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- SDG 17.8 Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.

Chapter 2

DEMOCRACY IN PERSPECTIVE: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES—WHY?

2.1. THE DEMOCRACY LANDSCAPE

International IDEA's strategic direction and work aim to respond to key challenges to, and opportunities for strengthening, democracy in the current and emerging democracy landscape. These challenges and opportunities form the basis of the Institute's programmatic and strategic focus within its areas of expertise and the development of new workstreams on relevant topics for the future of democracy. The next section outlines the key features of the democracy landscape in 2022.

Democracy *is in decline* around the world: the number of countries moving towards authoritarianism now exceeds the number moving towards or consolidating democracy. The number of backsliding democracies has never been as high as in the last decade. In 2022, more than two-thirds of the world's population live in either a backsliding hybrid or authoritarian regime—a significant rise in authoritarianism. Moreover, International IDEA's data indicate that 45 per cent of non-democratic countries are experiencing a deepening of authoritarianism, and authoritarian leaders are using new and increasingly brazen tactics.

A complex interplay of factors has influenced the democratic downturn, starting with the 2008–2009 financial crisis as well as reactions against equality and civil rights advances, which contributed to a decline in democratic quality and a rise of illiberal democracies. Furthermore, social media and new communication technologies have exacerbated societal and political polarization, enabling the spread of disinformation and undermining the protection of online rights and freedoms. New types of cyberthreats continue to disrupt democratic processes and institutions across national borders, independent of income levels and the democratic maturity of governments. Geopolitical powers strive to export their authoritarian model, which creates economic and military dependencies in the Global South that weaken the

incentives for democracy. The unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine has highlighted how authoritarian regimes undermine multilateralism and the international order. The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to prolonging the democratic crisis and has been used to justify excessive democratic restrictions in democratically weak contexts. Democracy risks eroding further amid a pandemic and war-fueled economic recession, rising food and fuel prices and exacerbating inequality, thereby contributing to social tension and political polarization.

As such, the democracy landscape in 2022 combines ‘traditional’ and ‘emerging’ challenges, including citizens’ increased disaffection with democracies’ failure to respond to their needs and demands, increased polarization of society and distrust in democratic institutions, rising economic inequality, climate change, and the need to protect rights and freedoms online.

Yet democratic processes and the global legitimacy of democracy have come [a long way](#) over the past 50 years. There is also evidence of [broad public support](#) for democracy around the world, including in undemocratic systems. Pro-democracy movements continue to challenge the authoritarian tide from Belarus to Myanmar. Protests over climate change and racial and ethnic inequality have gone global, despite restrictions on assembly in most countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many states have adhered to democratic principles during the public health crisis, thanks to transparent and innovative governance. These developments indicate global support for democratic values, including among the younger generations. Digital technology and Internet access enable an unprecedented exchange of information and discourse, connecting democratic actors worldwide.

International IDEA has identified challenges and opportunities linked to vital elements of democracy. These include elections, constitutions, political participation, and representation as well as climate change and digitalization.

2.2. KEY CHALLENGES

2.2.1. Ensuring elections with integrity

Electoral regulations, institutions, and processes are in transformation and under scrutiny. Electoral and regulatory authorities face multiple global challenges such as the political undermining of electoral credibility, security threats, evolving digital landscapes and extreme weather events. These threats can be well known or unpredictable; they can be acts of deliberate and targeted harm such as cyberattacks, intentional policies leading to democratic backsliding or breakdown; or broader phenomena such as climate change that impact elections. Effective responses to these threats aim to protect and enable democracy.

Such crises disproportionately affect political rights, including through online and offline violence, which particularly targets women. Electoral management

bodies and regulatory agencies in new and old democracies are revisiting established practices in electoral system design, voting arrangements and campaign regulation, while reassessing policies to safeguard the independence of electoral authorities. Rapid digitalization warrants an assessment of increasing electoral risks. Electoral assistance providers are similarly recognizing that they should devise new strategies to protect electoral institutions and processes. They acknowledge the need to develop inclusive mechanisms to support voters, candidates and electoral officials against the risks of undue influence, marginalization and harm. These rapid and dramatic global shifts require rethinking the design and safeguarding of elections.

2.2.2. Protecting constitutionalism

Constitutions and constitutional change are central to the protection and advancement of democracy, peace, stability and development. Given the increased scale of conflict around the world, as well as attempted and successful coups, constitutional transitions are becoming increasingly frequent. Coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Myanmar and Sudan have increased the need for advice on transitional constitutional arrangements among pro-democracy actors. Further, in democratic backsliding countries, the constitution is usually among the first institutions to be attacked in combination with increased legal restrictions on civic space and independent media. Strengthening democratic constitutions within a rule of law and governance framework is therefore important to prevent democratic breakdown.

Moreover, constitutional changes will be needed to address longstanding challenges such as climate change. Constitutional processes are also experiencing a demand for more inclusive participation and socio-economic equality, including gender equality, youth, and minority rights and representation.

2.2.3. Inclusive political participation and representation

Inclusive participation and representation are fundamental enabling elements and principles of a functioning democracy. Every citizen, and under certain conditions non-citizens,³ regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group, culture, and ethnic or religious background, should have an equal right and opportunity to engage with and contribute to the functioning of democratic institutions and processes.

³ As outlined in articles 2, 25 and 26 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and as stipulated by the UN Human Rights Committee, 'the rights set forth in the Covenant apply to everyone, irrespective of reciprocity, and irrespective of his or her nationality or statelessness. Thus, the general rule is that each one of the rights of the Covenant must be guaranteed without discrimination between citizens and aliens'. The Covenant permits states to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens in two categories of rights: political rights explicitly guaranteed to citizens and freedom of movement. Regarding political rights, article 25 establishes that 'every citizen' shall have the right to participate in public affairs, to vote and hold office, and to have access to public service. However, states' use of a 'guest worker' approach to immigration affects non-citizens' ability to organize themselves and defend their common interests. States should consider granting the right to participate in local public life, including the right to vote in local elections, to long-term non-citizen residents. See <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/noncitizensen.pdf>>.

However, democracies do not always provide equal opportunities for inclusive political participation and representation. Many people, particularly the young generation, have lost trust in existing political institutions and processes, which are seen as dominated by elites. The rise of populist and illiberal parties can contribute to democratic backsliding.⁴ Traditional forms and institutions of political participation—such as political parties—are no longer regarded as the only actor through which to channel public demands. Under the influence of new telecommunications and social media, citizen movements have emerged as an alternative to political party membership. Parliaments play a core role in representing citizens but face challenges in ensuring that legislative rules and the policy cycle are inclusive, effective and fair, particularly during crises.

Men and women still lack equal opportunities for participation and representation; gender-specific political violence, gender stereotypes and social norms, limited access to justice and increased attacks on women's rights limit their ability to participate. Minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, youth and people exposed to socio-economic challenges often struggle to access democratic institutions in order to participate or represent their interests. In addition, the integrity of political processes and institutions is under threat due to weak legal frameworks with which to regulate political finance.

Despite these challenges, citizens are reasserting control. In addition to increased protest movements, more countries are experiencing a boost in public interest in institutional, participation-enhancing reforms. New forms of organization deepen citizens' participation and facilitate an important renewal of democracy. They also signal a lack of connection between traditional political parties and citizens.

2.2.4. Climate change

The climate crisis and the degradation of the environment and biodiversity pose an existential threat to humanity. The outcome of the climate crisis will depend on whether all countries can drastically reduce their carbon footprint in the coming years. Democracy is a system limited by time and space, while climate change persists across generations and national borders. Climate change already has an impact on democratic governance through its effects on food security, conflict, water scarcity, migration and natural disasters, among other consequences. It also tests how democracies confront collective challenges. All countries need to formulate democratic policy responses to climate change to respond to the needs of current and future generations.

Climate change poses policy dilemmas at the nexus of human and natural systems in the social, economic and political spheres. Climate actions in democracies face perceived challenges such as short-term bias in decision making, inconsistency, policy capture and weak accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, the role of money in politics, corruption and economic pressures

⁴ International IDEA, *Global State of Democracy Report 2021*, Chapter 1.

make the policy-making process vulnerable to interests adverse to fighting climate change.

In addition to its intrinsic value to citizens, democracy brings critical advantages in formulating effective climate policy, such as representative parliaments that can hold governments to account and help solve policy dilemmas. Democracies also enjoy widespread civic participation, independent media and a free flow of information, CSOs' active engagement in policymaking, and a capacity for institutional learning with long-term global social and political implications.

The Institute's work on the interlinkages between climate change and democracy is key to building the capacities of democratic institutions and actors to respond to climate change. Its track record as a democracy assistance provider uniquely qualifies it to tackle this challenge.

2.2.5. Preventing digitalization from undermining democracy

Digitalization represents both an opportunity to renew democratic governance and a potential threat to democracy. It can bring institutions closer to citizens and offer services to all without discrimination. It can enable citizen empowerment and help organizations exchange knowledge on, and advocate, democratic reform. However, digitalization has the potential to deepen existing inequalities in countries with an underdeveloped digital infrastructure.

The digital divide creates gaps between those who have access to new technology and those who do not, which in many regions is also a gender-related gap. Digitalization creates challenges to navigating the digital transformation, including the increasingly complex information environment, expanding the risk of cyber incidents, information pollution, disinformation, misinformation, hate speech, and information operations targeting elections and democracy. Concerns about online security extend to verified and pernicious attempts to influence election outcomes, which highlights the importance of strategies to counter election-related digital threats.

Authoritarian regimes have learned to harness technologies to advance their aims either directly through digital surveillance systems or indirectly by passing repressive laws. These laws are often disguised by legitimate concerns and are designed to muzzle dissent, content and freedom online. They also often try to transform social media to serve the interests of the regime.

Technological advancements also offer new opportunities. In the last two decades, governing systems have expanded their e-governance infrastructure, introduced electronic voting, online voter registration, online campaigning, and the use of biometric data in voter registration and verification. The Covid-19 pandemic forced countries to rapidly move democratic and political activities online and to consider new voting arrangements, such as electronic voting. The pandemic also impacted how political parties worldwide conduct electoral campaigns, exposing vulnerabilities in regulation, such as the financing of

online advertising. With these rapid developments, digitalization is increasingly shaping democracies. An accessible, safe and equal online environment strengthens democratic institutions, processes and dialogue. Governments and the private sector must comply with international human rights laws when developing or using digital technology. Governments must also address rapidly weakening rights to privacy, which, combined with continuously advancing forms of surveillance technology and sophisticated disinformation campaigns, threaten democracy.

Addressing these challenges will help protect, rethink and strengthen democracy as well as achieve the 2030 SDGs.

Chapter 3

INTERNATIONAL IDEA'S WORKSTREAMS—WHAT?

To achieve International IDEA's mission, and in pursuit of its vision, it has defined its workstreams to align with the challenges and opportunities of the democracy landscape and the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Without assuming a hierarchy, International IDEA differentiates between established and emerging workstreams that intersect and reinforce each other.

Established workstreams reflect the Institute's work on key democratic processes and its core expertise in designing and strengthening inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes. These include:

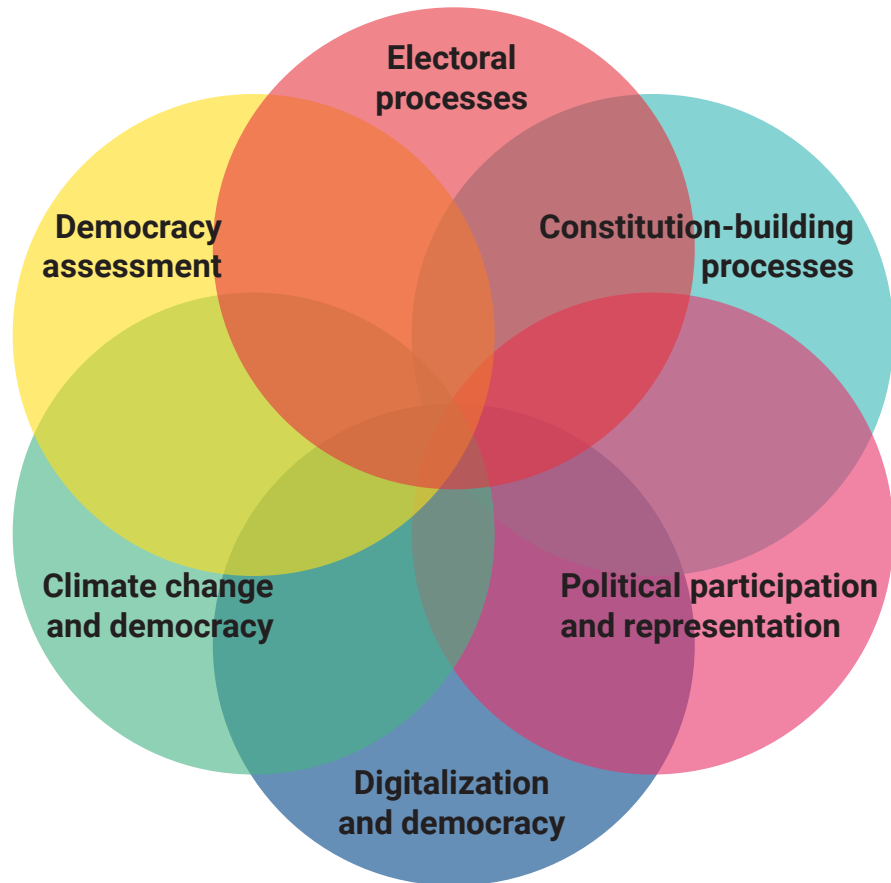
- Electoral Processes
- Constitution-building Processes
- Political Participation and Representation

Emerging workstreams reflect the Institute's more recent areas of engagement that interlink with established workstreams to create synergies. These include:

- Democracy Assessment⁵
- Climate Change and Democracy
- Digitalization and Democracy

⁵ Democracy assessment was prioritized under the 2018–2022 Strategy as a workstream after the conceptualization and development of the Global State of Democracy Indices and Report in 2016–2018.

International IDEA workstreams



3.1. ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Through the **Electoral Processes** workstream, International IDEA will support the improvement and protection of the integrity of electoral institutions and processes. The focus will be on: (a) improving the tools and practices of electoral assistance practitioners; (b) the quality of legal and institutional frameworks, procedures and practices in elections; (c) electoral authorities' capacity to implement their mandate; (d) gender equality and inclusive participation in electoral processes; and (e) the role of civil society, democracy defenders, and the media in ensuring the accountability of electoral institutions and the integrity of the electoral process. International IDEA will build on its convening power to articulate and exemplify options and best practices for electoral reform and regulatory policy.

The strategic framing of protection and institutional resilience will inform the development of election-focused global knowledge products, tools and services, while integrating existing knowledge resources. Protecting elections by systematizing regulatory and policy options to ensure oversight of the digital space in electoral campaigns will be a cornerstone of that work.

International IDEA will continue to support electoral management practitioners and regulatory decision makers with assessments, advisory services, and professional development opportunities. The Institute will further develop an electoral risk management resource package for conflict-sensitive decision making in fragile and conflict-affected states and curriculum packages on best practices, which can inform domestic conversations and bridge building on electoral reform.

The Institute will also engage in high-level fora to develop global norms and encourage conversations on transnational threats to electoral integrity. Due to the multipronged nature of threats to elections, this agenda-setting work demands a broadening of alliances to include policy communities in areas such as anti-corruption, security and development cooperation.

International IDEA will take an integrated approach to election reform across all its workstreams and link to our core expertise in Constitution Building and Political Participation and Representation as well as to workstreams on Climate Change, Digital Democracy, and Democracy Assessment to advance democratic reform, while also considering gender equality, rule of law and human rights protection.

3.2. CONSTITUTION-BUILDING PROCESSES

Through the **Constitution-Building Processes** workstream, International IDEA will support inclusive democratic constitution-building processes and respect for constitutionalism to enable democratic transition and recovery and prevent democratic backsliding or breakdown, in consideration of rule of law and good governance principles.

The primary focus of the workstream will be on (a) constitution-building processes; (b) constitutional design; and (c) enabling a culture of constitutionalism and raising constitutional awareness. Examples of themes within this workstream include decentralization, separation of powers, constitution building in fragile and post-conflict settings, environmental protection and the protection of future generations' rights, as well as gender and inclusion.

In response to democracy landscape challenges, International IDEA will seek to broaden its focus on enabling democratic transitions or recovery in post-conflict or post-coup contexts. It will do so by working on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security in a constitutional context. In addition, it will reinforce the links between constitution-building processes and the rule of law—including prioritizing justice and judicial independence—as well as between constitution-building processes and governance, in close cooperation with strategic partners and civil society.

This workstream will link to the Institute's workstreams on Electoral Processes and Political Participation and Representation to prioritize inclusive processes that consider diverse societal interests in constitutional design and processes. It will link to the workstream on Climate Change and to the protection of the environment in constitutions and future generations' rights.

3.3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Through the **Political Participation and Representation** workstream, International IDEA will build on its track record of supporting political parties through capacity development and comparative knowledge production in the areas of party organization and finance, gender equality and inclusion, interparty dialogue and citizens' engagement.

While the workstream will focus on strengthening political parties and political finance regulation, it will take a broader approach to (a) produce knowledge and convene dialogues related to new and different forms of political participation and representation; (b) provide policy advice and capacity development through a multiparty approach to parties to help navigate challenges to their roles and changing membership; (c) build the capacity of parliaments; and (d) enhance the participation of women and youth.

International IDEA will produce comparative tools that build on its Digital Parties Portal and Money in Politics initiative and will use its convening power to organize dialogues at the global, regional and country levels that analyze the phenomena of social movements and the young generation and the link between political parties and citizen movements.

The workstream will strengthen its focus on representation through capacity development of parliaments, building on lessons learned from the Institute's INTER-PARES project in cooperation with strategic partners. A focus on women's political participation will identify gender-specific obstacles, cultural and economic as well as health and sexual rights limitations to their online and offline participation in democratic processes. Capacity building will focus on women candidates, women and men politicians, and political parties, while advocacy will target policymakers in global and regional multilateral fora and governments.

This workstream will link to those on Electoral Processes and Constitution Building to prioritize inclusive processes, and to the workstream on Climate Change, given the role that young people play in the climate change movement. It will also link to digitalization due to the role that technology can play in enhancing political participation, particularly of young people.

3.4. DEMOCRACY ASSESSMENT

Through the **Democracy Assessment** workstream, International IDEA will contribute to advancing and safeguarding democracy by monitoring and analyzing the democratic landscape, with a focus on global and regional trends. This workstream will produce evidence-based tools, publications and communication products, including the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices, the Democracy Tracker and the GSoD reports. In addition, developments impacting democracy will be featured on a GSoD platform as a one-stop shop for democracy data and analysis.

This workstream will enable the Institute to act as a policy advocate in multilateral global and regional fora. It will allow the Institute and its partners to 'make the case' for democracy, highlighting its benefits and contributing to its resilience while alerting stakeholders to vulnerabilities and opportunities for growth and innovation. In addition, Democracy Assessment will inform programming on a continuous basis in the other workstreams, creating synergies and capacity to innovate and learn within the Institute.

The democracy assessment tools will bind and draw upon the Institute's core workstreams on Elections, Constitution Building, and Political Participation and Representation, and inform other workstreams on Climate Change and Digitalization. They will also consider gender and inclusion as a mainstreaming lens.

3.5. CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEMOCRACY

Through the **Climate Change and Democracy** workstream, International IDEA will support democracies to address the climate crisis by leveraging their inherent advantages and mitigating their shortcomings. It will aim to help strengthen democratic and inclusive development based on the effective participation and ownership of people with climate policy agendas. This will be done by transferring knowledge and good practices from Member States and partners. Democracies' performance in relation to climate change will be analyzed against democratic attributes as a basis for policymaking. International IDEA will also raise awareness of the threats that climate change poses to democracy, including the nexus between public health crises and democracy, while exploring how democracies' climate change actions link to the prevention of biodiversity loss.

The focus will be on (a) democratic innovation to tackle climate change; (b) analyzing how climate change affects electoral processes, political participation and constitution-building processes; and (c) promoting democratic consensus for effective climate action.

Innovative institutional approaches that can enhance democracies' responses to climate change will be highlighted. The role of constitutions, parliaments,

the judiciary and political finance in responding to climate change, securing climate justice and enforcing climate change judgements will be examined.

Examples of themes include the potential to use citizen assemblies or citizen juries on the issue of climate change; the role of constitutional innovations related to climate change; the role of intercultural and intergenerational dialogues; the role of environmental and human rights defenders; the inclusion of youth, Indigenous peoples and marginalized groups in climate change policymaking; the impact of fossil fuel companies, lobbying and money in politics; and supporting parliaments to improve their legislative, oversight and representation functions to accelerate climate action.

International IDEA's work on Climate Change and Democracy will relate to its core expertise on elections and constitution building; it will take a bottom-up approach by emphasizing the inclusive political participation of the groups most vulnerable to climate change in line with the 'leave no one behind' principle. The Institute will cooperate with partners and experts that specialize in climate change. The workstream will place a strong focus on analyzing the obstacles and identifying innovative policymaking approaches and tools to enable the effective participation of marginalized groups such as youth (future generations), women, and Indigenous peoples in climate change policymaking, including convening and promoting dialogue between them and governments and representative institutions at the national, regional and global levels.

3.6. DIGITALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

Through the **Digitalization and Democracy** workstream, International IDEA will take a holistic approach and support democratic institutions and actors in reaping the benefits of digital innovation for governance and oversight. It will provide them with analysis and tools to protect and renew democracy by countering digital threats and ensuring inclusive digital participation and the protection of human rights.

Building on International IDEA's core expertise on democracy assessment, elections and constitution building and its work in the field of political parties, the Institute will focus on a) the impact of digitalization on the global state of democracy, including through digital innovation, e-governance and digital rights; b) protecting democratic processes (particularly elections) and institutions in the context of digital transformation and disinformation, including through ensuring democratic regulation and oversight of the online space; and c) digitalization and participation, including questions of democratic rights, equality and inclusion.

Examples of potential themes include harnessing the potential of digitalization to increase political participation; governance transparency and trust in democratic processes (analysing the abuse of digital tools and the impacts of disinformation and gender-based online violence, mass surveillance,

ensorship and state-sponsored content online information blocks on democracy; and increasing oversight of political finance. Themes will also cover new regulations that affect digitalization and elections, campaigning, political advertising and freedom of speech. Trends will be monitored through International IDEA's democracy assessment tools, the Democracy Tracker and the GSoD Indices.

International IDEA's work will seek to enhance dialogue between the Global North and South on digitalization and democracy, and to boost digital participation by analysing how digitalization affects disadvantaged groups. Such groups can experience multiple discrimination because of their age, remote location, economic or social status, education level, gender, ability or membership in certain groups.

This workstream will link to the Institute's workstreams on Electoral Processes, Constitution Building, and Political Participation and Representation to identify challenges and solutions related to the impact of digitalization. To reinforce knowledge sharing and information exchange, International IDEA will cooperate and match its comparative advantage to strategic partners in this field, including the private sector.

Chapter 4

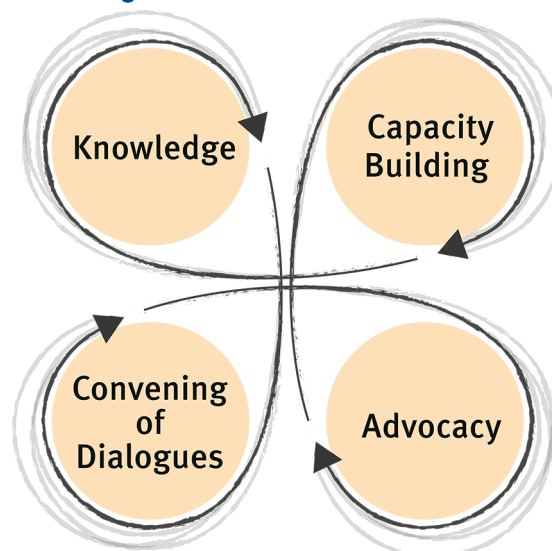
IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY—HOW?

4.1. WORKING MODALITIES

As an IGO with a ‘think and do’ approach underpinned by continuous learning, International IDEA will apply a set of working modalities in pursuit of its vision and mission, and to fulfil its mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

These modalities include a virtuous cycle of **knowledge production, capacity development, advocacy** and the **convening of dialogues**. International IDEA’s comparative knowledge and research inform its capacity development, which in turn facilitate advocacy and convening dialogues. Capacity development provides valuable lessons from the field for knowledge production and advocacy, enabling **continuous learning** within the Institute.

Our four ways of working



The Institute's global and regional presence and cross-geographical cooperation come in the form of its global programme, regional and country offices, as well as its liaison offices to multilateral and regional organizations.⁶ This engagement allows the Institute to stay abreast of developments in the democracy landscape, learn from comparative experiences and adjust its programming, particularly in rapidly evolving country contexts.

Based on the institutional Strategy, global and regional programmes will develop multiyear regional strategic priorities and country-level programmes that feed into the annual Programme and Budget approved by the Institute's Council of Member States. These regional priorities and country programmes will align with the Strategy's institutional priorities and will be designed to enable Outcome Mapping to measure impact (see also Annex B). The Programme and Budget will drive the enhanced monitoring and evaluation and results assessment, and serve as a reporting reference point for all programmatic projects. International IDEA has defined objectives for its financial and administration support functions to align them with the strategic objectives.

4.1.1. Knowledge production

International IDEA will produce and disseminate global comparative knowledge, policy-relevant analysis and tools, communication products and data through in-house expertise in combination with professional networks of external experts and a rigorous system of peer review for quality assurance.

The Institute conducts its analysis and knowledge production at all levels at which it engages—at the global, regional and country levels—and aims to provide policy-relevant research and political economy analysis to enable advocacy and contribute to public debate.

Emphasis will be placed on producing and disseminating International IDEA's analysis and knowledge products in an innovative manner through a variety of channels and technical modalities. These channels include the institutional website, social media and traditional media, while technical dissemination modalities should consider digital innovations to increase access to the Institute's knowledge products. The dissemination of each product will be tailored to the needs of the target audience.

4.1.2. Capacity development

International IDEA will provide high-quality capacity development and training on democracy-building and reform processes in its workstreams. This will take the form of expert-based technical advice, face-to-face and online training, mentoring, fellowships and facilitation of North–South, South–South and other peer exchanges. International IDEA's capacity development efforts allow local actors to debate and refine solutions. International experiences may be useful, but the way forward should build on local knowledge.

⁶ [International IDEA Where we work](#)

International IDEA will provide capacity building through global, regional and country-level expertise to optimize synergies between thematic and technical knowledge, regional expertise and country-level knowledge. Global knowledge products and research (including knowledge of democratic good practices and analytical tools) inform regional- and country-level programmatic interventions, while lessons learned from country-level projects and policymaking inform global knowledge production.

4.1.3. Advocacy

International IDEA will exert its mandate and role as an IGO to mobilize alliances to defend and protect democracy. As such it will strive to influence policies, highlighting its benefits and providing democratic institutions and actors with innovative policy options in the face of challenges to democracy across its workstreams. In consideration of the credibility of the Institute, International IDEA will take on an advocacy role and ‘take sides’ to protect and safeguard democracy when it is challenged by undemocratic and authoritarian forces, thereby defining its impartiality only towards democratic actors, but never towards non-democratic actors.

At the global level, International IDEA will conduct agenda-setting and agenda-influencing on issues on which there is a global consensus, such as those reflected in the SDGs, and on democracy issues on which International IDEA believes that such consensus should be pursued. This includes using its Permanent Observer Status at the United Nations and the UN General Assembly. At the regional level, the Institute will engage with the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union (AU), and UN Regional Economic Commissions, among others. International IDEA’s agenda-influencing work will always be based on robust analysis and data.

Complementing its work in multilateral fora, through its participation and coordination of alliances, International IDEA will partner with peer and CSOs, democracy champions and democracy defenders to enhance their collective voice.

Advocacy may take the form of public statements, policy briefs, educational campaigns, publications, communication products, organization of dialogues or low-profile safe platforms of exchange, mediation and diplomacy.

4.1.4. Convening of dialogues

International IDEA will capitalize on its status as an impartial IGO and trusted democracy assistance provider by convening actors working in the democracy space to facilitate global, regional and national dialogues on democratic reform. The Institute may also facilitate dialogues with a focus on post-conflict and post-coup transition, including exploring pro-democracy mediation.

For example, International IDEA could facilitate policy exchanges among its Member States; high-level dialogues at the global or regional level to discuss

the democracy landscape; dialogues among experts and practitioners on democratic reform; multiparty dialogues, providing politically neutral spaces for democratic stakeholders, including members of the opposition or governments in exile to share their views; dialogues to engage civil society, democracy champions, democracy defenders and under-represented groups; and conflict mediation dialogues.

4.2. MAINSTREAMING LENSES

International IDEA will mainstream (a) **gender and inclusion**; (b) **conflict sensitivity**; and (c) **environmental protection** across all workstreams because inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes are only possible if gender equality and the inclusion of various marginalized groups are attained. The Institute will ensure that the challenges and specific obstacles of all people are considered, regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group, culture, and ethnic or religious background, as well as their equal rights and opportunities. The Institute will continue to apply its [Gender Policy](#) in its work.

The Institute will also pursue a conflict-sensitive approach to prevent and respond to crises, including democratic breakdown, coups and conflicts, which respects and observes the ‘do no harm’ principle.⁷ International IDEA’s conflict sensitivity mainstreaming policy and plan of action and its [Crisis Management Policy](#) are important tools in this regard.

Finally, International IDEA will ensure that it contributes to environmental protection in the design and implementation of its programmes in accordance with its [Green Policy](#).⁸

Mainstreaming will be done by enhancing the knowledge and capacities of the Institute’s staff through training to apply a gender, youth, inclusion and conflict-sensitive lens to programming, and through a system of focal points as well as communities of practice to transfer knowledge and enable learning.

In its work on gender equality and inclusion of youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups, the Institute will focus on promoting innovative approaches to tackling stereotypes and the root causes of inequality in public life. It will also strengthen global data and trends analysis and create platforms to facilitate networking and increase such groups’ access to policymaking.

⁷ Conflict-sensitive actions in programming will seek to consciously avoid or minimize negative impacts (‘do no harm’) and equally consciously try to create positive impacts on conflict dynamics.

⁸ The Green Policy aims to ensure that International IDEA’s programmes, activities, offices, staff and other stakeholders consider issues of environmental sustainability whenever relevant; for example, by reducing the institutional carbon footprint as much as possible. The Green Policy updates institutional programming, project design and implementation, office policies and practices.

4.3. CRITERIA FOR ENGAGEMENT

Based on International IDEA's vision of democracy and its status as an IGO, its Strategy characterizes its work as an impartial, collaborative, demand-driven and holistic approach to democracy cooperation. This approach serves as the basis for acting as a trusted partner to those leading national democratic change.

Key criteria for International IDEA's engagement at the global, regional and country levels include:

- impartiality, defined as neutrality towards and among democratic actors, but never as neutrality towards non-democratic actors;
- the existence of political willingness of state and non-state democratic actors within and outside the country to engage in advancing democracy; and
- considering and ensuring the protection of the credibility and integrity of the Institute ('do no harm')⁹ with a conflict-sensitive and human rights-based approach to programming.

4.3.1. Engagement with countries

International IDEA's vision recognizes that democracy comes in different shapes and forms, which makes it difficult to categorize democracy types. The Institute's work refers to three types of government based on its definition of democracy and GSoD attributes: (a) democracies of varying performance;¹⁰ (b) hybrid regimes;¹¹ and (c) non-democracies.¹²

Based on the engagement criteria in Annex D, International IDEA will work in all democratic countries to counteract challenges to democracy where there are opportunities to remedy democratic erosion and breakdown or to improve and advance democracy. Specifically, it will:

⁹ Conflict-sensitive actions in programming will seek to consciously avoid or minimize negative impacts ('do no harm') and equally consciously try to create positive impacts on conflict dynamics.

¹⁰ International IDEA's GSoD classifies political regimes as 'democratic' if they have governments selected in sufficiently inclusive, clean and competitive elections. However, these are the minimum requirements; countries classified as democratic by these standards may differ widely in the quality of their democracy and in the performance of their various democratic attributes. The GSoD Indices define three performance levels of democracies depending on how they rank in five core democratic attributes: high-performing democracies, mid-range-performing democracies and weak-/low-performing democracies (see Annex A).

¹¹ Hybrid regimes combine democratic and non-democratic characteristics. They often adopt the formal characteristics of democracy (while allowing little real competition for power) with weak respect for basic political and civil rights. Hybrid regimes may have some nominally democratic institutions and some democratic processes and practices, but have pervasive informal practices that erode the functioning of formal institutions, which may also include weakened checks and balances.

¹² Non-democracies or authoritarian regimes are autocracies, one-party systems, military regimes, authoritarian monarchies, and failed states or war-torn, conflict-ravaged countries without a centralized monopoly on the use of force.

- prioritize countries experiencing visible signs of democratic erosion, including democratic backsliding;¹³
- continue to engage in countries experiencing democratic breakdown,¹⁴ as measured by its GSoD Indices on a case-by-case basis and with reference to political–economic and risk assessments; and
- focus on emerging democracies, choosing opportunities for cooperation by conducting stakeholder analysis and identifying pro-democracy target groups.

The Institute will facilitate dialogue to establish or support pro-democracy alliances, including in global and regional multilateral fora. It will also consider its comparative strengths in terms of professional networks, knowledge products, and staff security and capacity.

4.3.2. Programmatic and regional/country strategic priorities

International IDEA will work worldwide at the global, regional and country levels. Programming at the regional and country levels will be defined based on regional multiyear strategic priorities and annual plans. To guide the Institute's work more strategically at the country level, the different types of country contexts in which International IDEA engages have been broadly categorized. International IDEA recognizes that countries' democratic progress fluctuates; advances and reversals lead to movement between categories. Annex D outlines the Institute's criteria for country-level engagement and setting up country offices.

4.4. OPTIMIZING OUR WORK—ASSESSING IMPACT, ENHANCING LEARNING AND CREATING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

As part of its new strategic approach, and in response to the Institute's Internal Strategic Review (2021) and Midterm Strategy Review (2020) (Annex C), International IDEA aims to continuously optimize its work and improve its internal operations.

4.4.1. Assessing impact and increasing our learning capacities

The Institute strives to maintain an organizational culture that emphasizes the need for monitoring and evaluation, and rewards learning and knowledge sharing. It will seek to expand its monitoring and evaluation capacities to better assess how its work contributes to outcomes that protect and advance democracy as set out in International IDEA's Theory of Change (Annex B).

¹³ International IDEA uses the term '(modern) democratic backsliding' to describe the gradual and usually intentional weakening of checks on government and civil liberties by democratically elected governments. Democratic backsliding is a form of democratic erosion; it is always used to describe countries that were democratic at the onset of the backsliding episode.

¹⁴ International IDEA uses the term 'democratic breakdown' to describe a country's movement from democracy to a hybrid regime (partial breakdown) or to a non-democracy (full breakdown).

International IDEA will enhance learning by systematizing knowledge sharing from project evaluations and lessons learned through Communities for Practice, internal communication and processes that help improve the Institute's work.

4.4.2. Enhancing integrated programming and collaboration within the organization

International IDEA's global footprint, as well as its extensive thematic, regional and country expertise, are substantial assets. This is particularly visible when projects and initiatives build on a combination of regional/country expertise and thematic knowledge. In order to nurture a cohesive institutional culture and knowledge management structure, the Institute will encourage co-owned, institute-wide projects such as the Global State of Democracy.

The Institute seeks to work as 'one'; global and regional teams will conduct joint planning, hold thematic and management-level exchanges, and mutually strengthen regional expertise within global teams and global thematic expertise in regional teams.

4.4.3. Expanding and harnessing our digital footprint

International IDEA will strengthen its digital footprint and invest in its staff's digital technology and capabilities to facilitate internal and external communication. This will enhance the capacity of the Institute's administrative services to sustain substantive work and allow the Institute to regularly engage with key stakeholders (e.g. in Member State capitals). Furthermore, the Institute will develop digital versions of its products to increase cost efficiency, visibility and reach.

4.4.4. Investing in International IDEA's human capital

The expertise, composition and retention of International IDEA's staff play a crucial role as the Institute strives for excellence and credibility in its work as a global knowledge and capacity development provider, convener and advocate for democracy. The Institute must invest in human capital to ensure high-quality knowledge production, capacity building and continuous learning.

International IDEA will therefore continue to invest in staff to attract and maintain talent by offering competitive working conditions, professional development as well as flexible working and residence modalities. The Institute will highlight and ensure inclusivity and non-discrimination in its workforce. It will also prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in the execution of its mission and the realization of its vision, including by creating institutional Diversity, Equality and Inclusion goals and an accompanying action plan.

4.5. FINANCING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

International IDEA is funded through voluntary contributions from Member States and project grants from donors. Voluntary contributions are defined as

‘core income’ and can include core financial contributions, earmarked core, secondments and in-kind contributions. Their use is more flexible than project grants, which are linked to specific outputs and outcomes.

Increasingly restricted project-related funding, mostly connected to capacity development, will be the Institute’s main financial source of growth for the foreseeable future. This will require a flexible and modular institutional structure and procedures that can adapt to the variable availability of project funding and innovative resource mobilization and project management. The Institute will also need to take further steps to safeguard its ability to produce policy-oriented, comparative knowledge, which so far has been largely supported through core resources.

International IDEA will prioritize its core funding to cover costs that are not easily, or are only partly, covered by project/restricted funds, including its global knowledge production and advocacy work, its regional programmes, its liaison offices, its institutional functions (communications, governance support, and the Secretary General’s Office), as well as its Executive Division, which provides accounting and treasury, human resources and organizational development, procurement, programme design and support, monitoring and evaluation, and budgeting. Core funding is also used to seed new strategic priority projects before additional restricted project funding can be obtained, and to bridge funding to restricted projects between external grants. Recognizing the changing donor landscape and the need for flexibility in contributions, the Institute will increase its capacity to manage diverse modalities of core funding including earmarked core, secondments and in-kind contributions.

Restricted project funding is utilized across the program teams. International IDEA’s country programmes are generally fully funded by restricted funds, which also contribute to the development of knowledge products. Restricted project funding will increasingly be sought for new knowledge products, capacity building or thematic global priorities to diversify the Institute’s funding base and expand its work. The Institute will also seek to grow its capacity to secure basket funding, to give Member States and donors more options in funding modalities and to streamline funding for strategic priorities.

Both core and restricted funding have rigorous controls to assure high levels of quality, transparency, and accountability to Member States and donors. The Institute will continue to compile detailed annual Programmes and Budgets based on transparent and sound regulations and internal controls while ensuring high-quality reporting (including through its Annual Outcome and Activities Reports, International Public Sector Accounting Standards IPSAS-compliant Annual Financial Statements and International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) compliance), in alignment with this Strategy.

To ensure International IDEA’s financial sustainability and to maintain or modestly augment its current levels of core funding, while increasing its restricted funding, the Institute will (a) be guided by its institutional Strategy, to advance democracy via strategic programmes at the global, regional

and country levels; (b) enhance its monitoring and evaluation systems and results reporting to Member States and other donors, to better showcase the outcomes of its programmes on democratic reform processes; (c) improve the transparency and clarity of reporting; (d) implement cost-effective programmes and closely monitor overhead costs; (e) seek to diversify its donor base, including through the incorporation of new Member States, and increased engagement with both international multilateral organizations and non-traditional donors¹⁵ such as foundations that can provide additional funding; (f) increase its capacity for resource mobilization; and (g) develop its ability to manage various funding modalities including 'basket funding' to balance core and restricted funds.

4.6. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

To support its mission and help realize its strategic objectives, International IDEA will seek to increase its visibility with a heightened focus on creative and digital democracy promotion tools.

In its communications, the Institute will focus on creating and strengthening its Member States' and donors' ownership of the outcomes of its work on the state of democracy, democratic reform and democracy building, highlighting its relevance as an IGO and a credible partner for sustainable democracy.

International IDEA will also work to enhance its outreach efforts and relationships with the media by communicating its initiatives and opportunities for collaboration to current and potential partners as well as other stakeholders, and securing their interest and potential funding. The Institute will also strengthen its relations with traditional and social media to better inform the public and the Institute's stakeholders about its work and contribute to the public debate on democracy. It will also advance the International IDEA brand by sustaining and disseminating the Institute's corporate identity.

The Institute will support the publication of relevant and user-friendly comparative knowledge resources about democratic experiences to inform and support democratic reform processes and contribute to the exchange of best practices and mutual learning. The Institute will also promote internal communications to facilitate knowledge management and inculcate a communications-oriented culture within International IDEA.

¹⁵ In accordance with International IDEA's [Resource Mobilization Policy](#), which states that financial assistance will only be accepted from institutions that share the Institute's values. The activities of the prospective funder or donor and the kind of support offered shall not be contrary to International IDEA's Statutes and mandate.

Chapter 5

INTERNATIONAL IDEA STAKEHOLDERS—WITH WHOM?

To achieve its strategic objective, International IDEA identifies three groups of stakeholders, depending on their interest in the organization and their willingness to engage to advance democracy.

1. *Governance actors*:¹⁶ International IDEA Member States, the Steering Committee, the Finance and Audit Committee, the Institute's Board of Advisors, donors and the Secretariat.
2. *Target groups*:¹⁷ CSOs, democracy champions, democracy defenders, media, political parties (including opposition), parliaments (supranational, national and subnational), electoral management bodies, constitution-making bodies, oversight agencies, governments (including in exile), regional organizations and the judiciary.
3. *Strategic Partners*: professional networks, peer organizations, CSOs and multilateral organizations (e.g., EU, AU, and UN).

These stakeholders operate at the international, regional, national and local levels. In implementing the Institute's modalities of engagement and when targeted by programmes, these stakeholders become boundary partners.

¹⁶ [Governance of International IDEA](#)

¹⁷ International IDEA's results framework refers to target groups as boundary partners, which are institutions and actors with which the Institute interacts, and thus directly influences (see Annex C). These interactions are designed to inspire and support boundary partners to adopt more democratic behaviors, relationships and practices.

International IDEA's stakeholders



5.1. GOVERNANCE ACTORS

International IDEA will continue to enhance its value for members, to ensure an active partnership with all its Member States. This may include organizing events and programmatic activities with (and in) Member States; establishing partnerships with relevant organizations in Member States; facilitating peer learning between Member States and programmatic countries; and ensuring positive media outreach related to International IDEA's work, and enhancing public knowledge about the Institute.

The Institute will also continue to benefit from its Board of Advisors, the members of which have technical knowledge and experience (e.g. as academics, practitioners or policymakers) in the Institute's work areas. International IDEA will strive to increase Board Members' engagement in its programmes and their collective role as 'ambassadors' for the Institute and democracy more generally.

5.2. TARGET GROUPS

Democratic processes involve a variety of state and non-state actors, which have different roles and perspectives. In its, International IDEA's results framework refers to target groups as 'boundary partners' which are defined as institutions and actors with which the Institute interacts, and thus influences directly with the aim to help them develop more democratic behaviours, relationships and practices. International IDEA's range of target groups is outlined below (see Annex C).

While International IDEA has always engaged with CSOs, during the Strategy period, it will broaden its engagement with citizen movements and CSOs—including democracy activists, champions and defenders—to better address the challenges posed by the democracy landscape. The Institute will support CSOs, political parties and movements, media, and others in their engagement and monitoring of democratic institutions and processes. It will also facilitate CSOs' interactions with democratic institutions (e.g. in electoral processes, constitution-building processes and engagement with parliament) and help

inform citizens about how to engage in those processes and what their rights and entitlements are. Within target groups, International IDEA will emphasize the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

5.3. STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Partnerships are embedded in International IDEA's working methodology at the global, regional, national and local levels. International IDEA seeks to maintain and establish relationships with national, regional and international strategic partners, defined as organizations with which the Institute cooperates. The purpose is to achieve joint objectives to maximize the Institute's impact, ensure complementarity with the work of others, and raise restricted funding for its projects.

International IDEA views its strategic partnerships as mutually beneficial: the Institute's expertise and knowledge can provide added value to organizations that may lack the same knowledge-oriented focus, which can in turn help International IDEA enhance its outreach, provide political leverage, complement its skills base, provide local knowledge and help access relevant networks.

In accordance with Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, International IDEA will seek to further strengthen its network of strategic, institutional, operational and geographic partners based on shared values, principles and goals, as well as through thematic and methodological synergies.

Strategic partnerships help address global, regional and national challenges, and generate sustainable reform and impacts. By joining forces with its strategic partners, International IDEA can better coordinate action, leverage resources, improve visibility, and share experiences and best practices.

International IDEA will map its partners across diverse areas of work, and deepen partnerships with institutions, entities and individuals, including the UN General Assembly and UN bodies and institutions; continental, regional and subregional organizations (e.g. EU, AU, OSCE and ASEAN); governments, IGOs, CSOs and coalitions; as well as public sector institutions, private sector entities, academic institutions and universities, corporate and philanthropic foundations, media organizations, parliamentarians, political parties and foundations.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

International IDEA's strategy reaffirms its identity as an IGO with a global footprint and a diverse membership, which is committed to advancing sustainable democracy worldwide. Its mission commits it to adhere to human rights commitments in line with international human rights instruments. The Institute will also work within the framework of the 2030 SDG agenda to develop policy-relevant knowledge and conduct capacity development for democratic actors and institutions. In addition, it will engage in advocacy efforts and act as an impartial bridge builder to convene dialogues between state and non-state actors—particularly civil society and democracy activists—and complement these dialogues by leveraging its role as a UN Permanent Observer.

This mission aims to help realize the Institute's vision of a world in which everyone lives in resilient democracies, with inclusive and accountable actors, institutions and processes that can respond to citizens' needs, protect human rights and deliver sustainable development to all.

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities of the global democracy landscape, International IDEA will work at the global, regional and country levels on the following workstreams:

Electoral Processes—improving and protecting the integrity of electoral institutions and processes, improving the quality of electoral processes, ensuring inclusive participation and an active role for civil society.

Constitution-Building Processes—supporting inclusive constitution-building processes that enable democratic transition and recovery and prevent democratic backsliding or breakdown.

Political Participation and Representation—exploring new forms of political participation and representation, as well as issues related to political party organization, finance and inclusion.

Democracy Assessment—developing evidence-based tools, publications and communication products, including the GSoD Indices, the *Global Monitor* and the GSoD reports.

Climate Change and Democracy—supporting democracies to leverage democracy’s inherent qualities and address its challenges to formulate effective, citizen-owned climate policy agendas.

Digitalization and Democracy—helping democratic institutions and actors reap the benefits of digital innovation for governance and oversight, and protect and renew democracy by countering digital threats.

Across all areas of work, International IDEA will mainstream gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and environmental protection.

International IDEA’s activities will be directed towards three groups of stakeholders: 1) *governance actors* (e.g. IDEA Member States, governance bodies and donors); 2) *target groups* (e.g. governments, parliaments, electoral management bodies, constitution-making bodies, regional organizations, CSOs, democracy activists, defenders and champions); and 3) *strategic partners* (e.g. peer organizations and multilateral organizations such as the EU, AU and UN).

As part of its working modalities, International IDEA’s knowledge production will inform its capacity development and vice versa. Both will enable advocacy efforts and the convening of dialogues.

In its operations, International IDEA will aim to optimize its work by measuring the impact and increasing its learning capacities, enhancing cross-fertilization and collaboration within the organization, expanding and harnessing its digital footprint, and investing in the Institute’s human capital.

In its communications, International IDEA will seek to boost its visibility via an increased focus on creative and digital democracy promotion tools.

To ensure the Institute’s financial sustainability, it will increase its capacity for resource mobilization and seek to diversify its donor base, enhance its monitoring and evaluation systems, and grow its ability to manage various funding modalities, including ‘basket funding’ to balance core and restricted funds.

Annex A. International IDEA's definition of democracy

International IDEA's vision is derived from its definition of democracy as a political system that is based on principles of 'popular control' over decision making and 'political equality' among those exercising that control.

International IDEA believes that democracy is a universal human aspiration based on universal principles and an experience that is pursued and lived in different ways around the world; that democracy comes in multiple forms; and that these forms are constantly evolving.

Democracy is a power-sharing mechanism that seeks to guarantee equality and basic rights and freedoms, empower ordinary people, resolve disagreements through peaceful dialogue, respect differences, and bring about political and social renewal through institutional channels. International IDEA's broad concept of democracy encompasses fundamental attributes beyond free and fair elections to include civil and political rights; social, economic and cultural rights; democratic governance and the rule of law.

Global State of Democracy framework



International IDEA's broad understanding of democracy overlaps with features emphasized by different traditions of democratic thought associated with the concepts of electoral democracy, liberal democracy, social democracy and participatory democracy. This concept of democracy reflects a core value enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), which has been given legal effect in many subsequent UN treaties and instruments such as the 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration

states that the 'will of the people' is the basis for the legitimacy and authority of sovereign states. It also highlights that 'this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage' and guarantees everyone 'the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives [and] the right of equal access to public service'. This reflects a common and universal desire for peace, security and justice. Article 29 of the Universal Declaration requires that any limitations on human rights and freedoms must be 'determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society'. Democracy reflects the fundamental ethical principles of human equality and individuals' dignity, and is therefore inseparable from human rights.¹⁸

International IDEA's definition of democracy is translated through its [Global State of Democracy Indices](#) into a set of attributes and subattributes, which measure the quality and performance of democracies over time, beginning in 1975. The conceptual framework of the GSoD assigns five fundamental attributes for the functioning of a healthy democracy (which are disaggregated into several subattributes).

Representative Government covers the extent to which access to political power is free and equal as demonstrated by competitive, inclusive and regular elections. It includes four subattributes: Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, Free Political Parties and Elected Government.

Fundamental Rights captures the degree to which civil liberties are respected, and whether people have access to basic resources that enable their active participation in the political process. This aspect overlaps significantly with the international covenants on civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights. It includes three subattributes: Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, and Social Rights and Equality. It also includes the following subcomponents: Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Assembly, Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Movement, Personal Integrity and Security, Basic Welfare, Social Group Equality and Gender Equality

Checks on Government measures effective control of executive power. It includes three subattributes: Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence and Media Integrity.

Impartial Administration concerns how fairly and predictably political decisions are implemented, and therefore reflects key aspects of the rule of law. It includes two subattributes: Absence of Corruption and Predictable Enforcement.

Participatory Engagement measures people's political participation and societal engagement at multiple levels and captures different phenomena under the subattributes of Civil Society Participation, Electoral Participation, Direct Democracy and Local Democracy.

While International IDEA argues that these five attributes are essential to democracy, it also recognizes that the degree, shapes, and forms through which these attributes are expressed and implemented differ between countries.

¹⁸ For a full description of International IDEA's conceptual understanding of democracy, see *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide* (Beetham et al. 2008) and the Background Paper (Sisk 2017) issued in conjunction with *The Global State of Democracy: Exploring Democracy's Resilience* (International IDEA 2017) as well as the *Global State of Democracy Indices Methodology* (International IDEA 2020).

Annex B. International IDEA's theory of change and results framework

B.1. INTERNATIONAL IDEA'S THEORY OF CHANGE

International IDEA has developed an overarching theory of change (see graphic below) to measure the outcomes of its work. It provides the framework for the context and programme-specific theories of change developed at the country level in which it engages. The Institute's vision represents the overall goal of all activities it undertakes. The overall programme and project goal for each country are complemented by an impact objective that specifies what a project or programme intends to contribute to the overarching institutional goal. Impact objectives are the high-level changes that a project or programme is striving for within International IDEA's workstreams.

Based on Outcome Mapping, International IDEA's theory of change identifies how activities and outputs inspire and support target groups defined as 'boundary partners' to adopt new behaviours, relationships and practices. If this process is successful, the boundary partners will contribute to societal changes in democratic practices within International IDEA's workstreams. This theory can be summarized as follows:

if International IDEA, in its think tank capacity, develops high-quality, value-based and utilization-focused publications, tools, databases and communications products; and

if strategic partners such as media and international CSOs use these products to inform the public about the state of democracy and hold decision makers to account; and

if International IDEA effectively delivers high-quality products and services to relevant boundary partners; and

if the boundary partners then obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge and tools needed to fulfil their roles in a democratic system to a greater capacity; and

if these boundary partners then demonstrate the necessary political will to utilize these skills, knowledge, and tools to improve their institutional behaviours, relationships and practices;

then they will contribute to societal changes in democratic practices globally or in the societies in which they operate.¹⁹

International IDEA has formalized this theory of change into a results framework that is used at the institutional and project levels. The theory of change maps out or 'fills in' what is often

¹⁹ The graphic in this Annex illustrates the framework in a theory of change model, which is further specified in theories of change for International IDEA's workstreams: Electoral Processes, Constitution-building Processes, and Political Participation and Representation.

described as the 'missing middle' between activities and desired higher-level societal goals in a model inspired by Outcome Mapping. It does so by paying special attention to *outcomes*, defined as the changes in behaviours, relationships, and practices by the institutions and actors with which International IDEA interacts. These agents of change are referred to as *boundary partners*. Thus the results in the Institute's theory of change are ascribed to *who*—rather than *what*—changes.

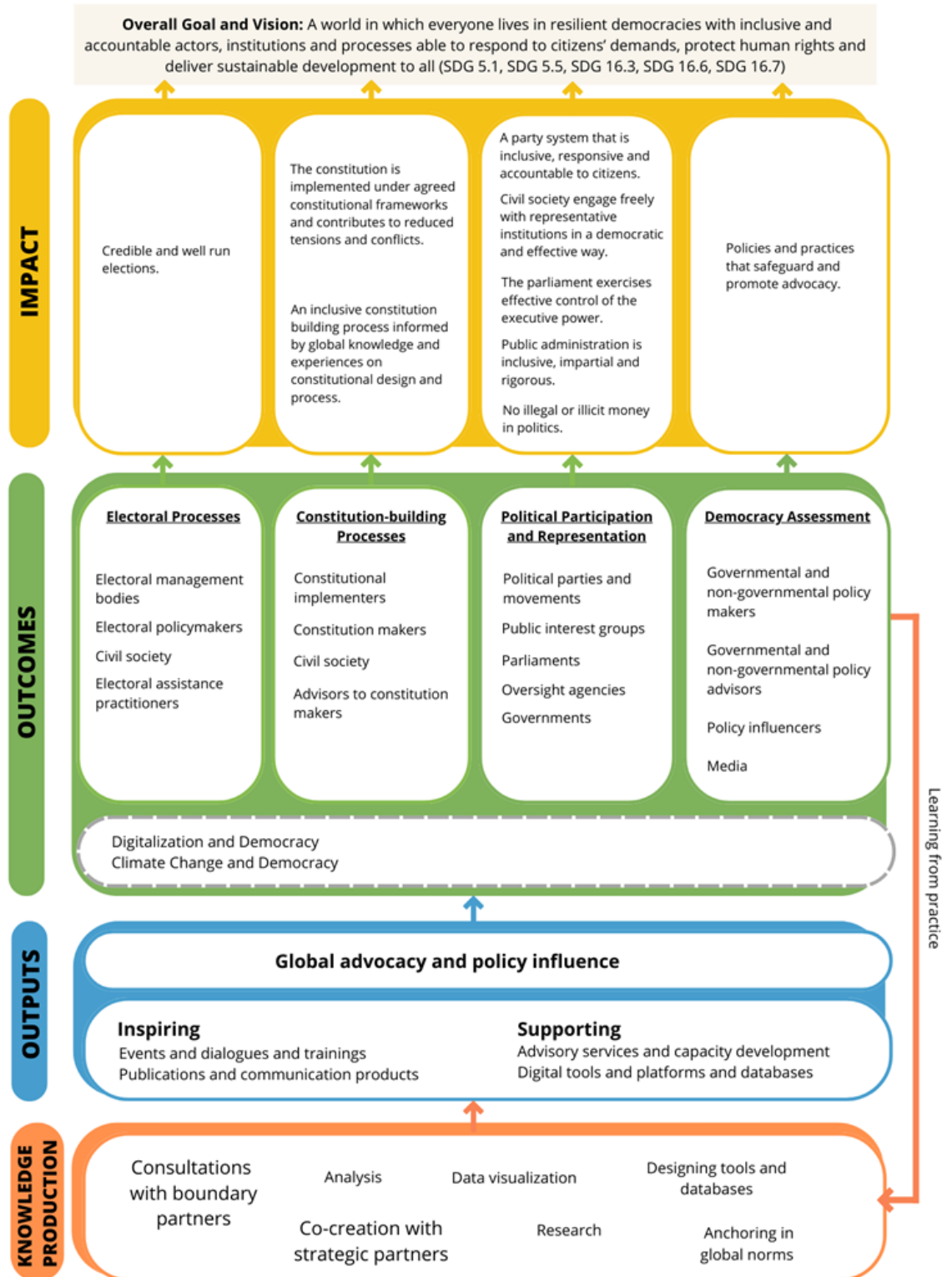
International IDEA has identified categories of boundary partners²⁰ that it aspires to assist to obtain, improve and retain the skills, knowledge and tools needed to more completely fulfil their roles in a democratic system. A standardized outcome objective is formulated for each of these boundary partners. The outcome objectives are linked to a set of impact objectives and indicators that relate to SDG targets. Outcome objectives are specified in progress markers to provide context and clarify each project's theory of change. Progress markers serve as both a target and indicators, and identify practices, behaviours and relationships that will emerge during and continue beyond the life and influence of a project. Progress markers cannot be standardized, as all activities aim to solve problems that vary depending on the context. Hence, the starting point for developing progress markers is to identify the boundary partner's main challenges or obstacles. At this point, International IDEA can decide which of its publications, tools, databases and communication products are most relevant for the boundary partner. This also serves as an opportunity to anchor the workstreams on Democracy Assessment, Digitalization and Climate Change in the Institute's work with boundary partners.

The Institute's impact *indicators* consist of a mix of attributes, subattributes and indicators from International IDEA's GSoD indices.²¹ These indicators can be used to establish baselines and measure progress on impact objectives as they are updated annually and provide scientifically reliable numerical values for the status of impact variables over long time periods. GSoD indicators may be complemented with impact indicators used by the country in which a specific project or programme is implemented.

²⁰ The new theory of change, which may be adapted during the Strategy process, outlines 17 categories of boundary partners grouped by four of the Institute's strategic workstreams: Electoral Processes, Constitution Building, Political Participation and Representation, and Democracy Assessment.

²¹ For a list of indicators and sources used to develop the GSoD Indices conceptual framework, see <<https://www.idea.int/gsoD-indices/sites/default/files/gsoD-indicators-and-sources.pdf>>.

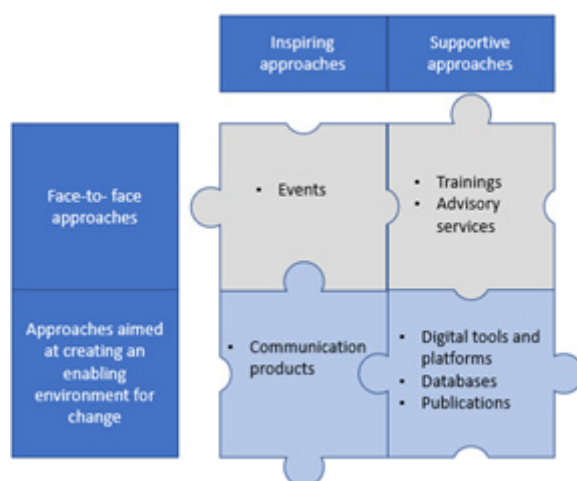
International IDEA's Theory of Change



B.2. INTERNATIONAL IDEA'S RESULTS FRAMEWORK

International IDEA's results framework is the conceptual foundation for its Learning Based Management system. The framework identifies three levels of results management. The first level relates to *performance*—the products and services (or *outputs*) the Institute delivers. The second level is associated with *outcomes*—the changes in behaviours, relationships and practices by the Institute's *boundary partners* (the institutions and actors it interacts with). These 'target groups' are referred to as *boundary partners* in the results framework. The boundary partner concept comes from the Outcome Mapping methodology and is crucial in the framework. The third level of results management refers to changes in *democratic practices* to which International IDEA contributes.²²

As illustrated by the jigsaw puzzle, International IDEA's work seeks to inspire institutions and actors to engage in change processes. Such inspiring activities do not themselves lead to sustainable outcomes. However, they are crucial means of fostering an enabling environment for change. They also create and deepen the Institute's relationships with various actors and institutions. Through such relationships, interest in change processes may emerge and tailored supportive activities can be developed.



To assess and report on performance, International IDEA has grouped activities into eight output categories and developed a set of 15 standardized output indicators, which measure the quantity of products and services delivered and how many men and women have been reached by the Institute's activities across projects.²³

In addition to its annual outcome reporting based on the institutional theory of change and results framework, International IDEA's programmes and projects are subject to external midterm and final evaluations that inform the design and adjustment of new programmes and projects or their continuation. International IDEA will conduct an external institution-wide evaluation in 2025 to elicit lessons learned from the Strategy's implementation and make suggestions for any necessary revisions or adaptations.

²² See the full framework in the Institute's overall theory of change above.

²³ This set of output categories and indicators may be adjusted if further working modalities are agreed on in the Strategy development process.

International IDEA's output categories and indicators

#	Output category	Output indicators
01	Publications	01. Number of released publications 02. Number of copies distributed 03. Number of downloads from International IDEA's websites
02	Communication products	04. Number of released communication products 05. Number of visits to individual web pages
03	Digital tools and platforms	06. Number of visits via International IDEA's websites 07. Number of countries where visitors come from
04	Databases	08. Number of visits via International IDEA's websites 09. Number of external media mentions
05	Events	10. Number of events convened 11. Number of participants disaggregated by gender
06	Training	12. Number of trainings held 13. Number of participants disaggregated by gender
07	Advisory services	14. Number of boundary partners that receive advice from International IDEA
08	Capacity development	15. Number of projects with restricted funding

Annex C. 2020–2021 strategic reviews and 2022 Strategy development process²⁴

International IDEA's institutional Strategy outlines its key priority areas going forward to guide programmatic and strategic decision making and ensure the Institute's relevance, added value and competitive advantage. The new institutional Strategy was developed in 2022 in a process led by International IDEA's Member States (led by the 2022 Council Chair Canada, and Vice-Chairs Finland and Cabo Verde), with the participation of the Board of Advisors and the Secretariat.

The Strategy development process aimed to update the Institute's prior institutional Strategy (2018–2022); the strategic guidelines and recommendations emanated from the Internal Strategic Review carried out by the Management Committee in 2021 and the comprehensive Midterm Strategy Review carried out by Member States, the Board of Advisors and the Secretariat in 2020. The process was based on International IDEA's Results Framework approved by the Council in 2018, which outlines the current system for learning-based management and results reporting.

The Internal Strategic Review was a key institutional priority for 2021. It aimed to contribute to the drafting of a new institutional strategy by providing recommendations on a) defining International IDEA's identity, vision and mission; b) thematic and geographic priorities; c) organizational structure; and d) financial structure. International IDEA's senior management led the review and received input from its Board of Advisors, staff members and strategic partner organizations.

The **Midterm Review of International IDEA's Strategy for 2018–2022** was carried out in 2020. Its purpose was to take stock of how operations have evolved under the current strategy and to assess whether any strategic adjustments are needed. International IDEA's Council of Member States, Board of Advisors and staff members contributed to this review by providing input in a survey and participating in workshop discussions. The 2022 Strategy development process also considered the lessons learned and recommendations from restricted project evaluations conducted during the current Strategy cycle. The process was complemented by surveys, focus group discussions and thematic workshops with International IDEA Member States, Board of Advisors and international staff.

²⁴ See also: [Internal Strategic Review: Key Recommendations PPT Council Meeting 1 December 2021.pdf](#) and [Mid-Term Review of International IDEA's Strategy for 2018-2022.pdf](#)

Annex D. Criteria for country engagement

International IDEA's criteria for country engagement will be guided by its global and regional strategic priorities. The following criteria will guide the establishment of new country programmes and the continuation of existing country programmes without prioritizing countries to enable the Institute to seize opportunities for engagement as they arise:

- requests for support or advice from national or regional actors or institutions
- sufficient political space to engage
- the ability to deliver on reform needs through International IDEA's knowledge and practical tools
- programmatic impact is relative to International IDEA's funds and capacity
- countries with an important regional position, of which developments can also impact reforms in other countries
- countries where International IDEA can work to advance multiple workstreams
- availability and potential for additional external (preferably multiyear) restricted funding

To optimize resources and make International IDEA's margin of operations more flexible, innovative approaches for country engagement will be considered, including by joining efforts with partners to establish a semi-permanent presence in certain priority countries. The following criteria will guide the provision of regular or occasional capacity development:

- requests for support or advice from national or regional actors and institutions
- sufficient political space to engage
- potential for International IDEA to continue to provide ongoing support or for other organizations to carry that support forward

Different types of assessments will be conducted to establish the need and opportunity for engagement and disengagement based on relevant criteria, including country context, potential impacts at the national and subnational levels, political will, country-specific needs, the relevance of workstreams and relationships with key stakeholders. Country disengagement or office closure will occur if:

- the government or independent bodies such as electoral management bodies no longer require full time support, but occasional support can be channelled through other means in the regional context;
- the political situation no longer permits meaningful engagement inside or outside of the country; or
- funding is no longer available for programming.

Annex E. Considerations to the adoption of International IDEA's Strategy by Mexico

Considerations to the adoption of International IDEA's 2023 Institutional Strategy, made by Mexico regarding the alleged competence of the Institute to protect democracy and electoral institutions.

On the occasion of the adoption of International IDEA's 2023 Institutional Strategy, Mexico wishes to express some considerations regarding the alleged competence of the Institute to protect democracy and electoral institutions.

In sections 1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.1.3 of the Strategy 2023 of the Institute it is used language that foresees the capacity of International IDEA to 'protect sustainable democracy', 'protect and safeguard democracy', 'protect and enable democracy', 'mobilize alliances to defend and protect democracy', and to 'take on an advocacy role and "take sides" to protect and safeguard democracy'.

On the other hand, in section 3.1 it is envisaged that International IDEA possesses the competence to 'support the continuous improvement and protection of the integrity of electoral institutions' and in section 6.1 it is provided that this international organization will focus on 'protecting the integrity of electoral institutions and processes'.

Regarding the previous provisions, Mexico observes that neither the Declaration adopted during the founding conference of International IDEA in 1995 nor the Statutes of this international organization foresee any provision regarding IDEA's power to 'protect' democracy.

Instead, the Declaration of 1995 establishes that 'democracy must be advanced', that 'a better and more just world requires nurturing and reinforcing a democratic culture', that 'democracy must be sustained' and that 'democratic institutions must be sustained and sustainable', among other references. None of the aforementioned expressions amount to concluding that States Parties granted International IDEA the power to 'protect' democracy or electoral institutions.

In turn, the IDEA's Statutes envisage that some of the objectives of the Institute are 'to promote and advance sustainable democracy', 'to improve and consolidate democratic electoral processes' and to 'promote transparency and accountability, professionalism and efficiency in the electoral process in the context of democratic development'.

In light of the previous considerations, Mexico argues that the alleged IDEA's competence to 'protect' the democracy or national electoral institutions cannot be derived from the texts of its constitutive instruments. Instead, International IDEA has the power to promote democracy and to help in the consolidation and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes.

The position of Mexico is also supported by the previous practice of the Institute since, for instance, IDEA's Strategy 2012 to 2017 only refers to the 'need to protect the integrity and credibility of electoral processes'. In turn, in IDEA's Institutional Strategy 2018 to 2022 reference is made to the noun 'protection' in passages that point out the 'undermining of constitutionalism by the ruling elite (in some countries and regions) to protect their personal interests' and the 'guarantee and protection of fundamental rights'.

In addition, it is relevant to recall the agreement concluded in 2017 between the Government of México and International IDEA for the installation of an office of the Institute in Mexico. This document foresees in its article 2 called 'purpose' that International IDEA was created to nurture and support sustainable democracy in the world and that its purpose is to promote and consolidate sustainable and democratic electoral processes.

In this order of ideas, Mexico highlights that on its consideration International IDEA's Strategy 2023 exceeds the Institute's scope and capacity when referring capacities to protect democracy or to protect electoral institutions. Instead, Mexico considers that International IDEA has the competence to promote, nurture and strengthen democracy and electoral democratic processes under the Declaration of 1995 and the Statutes of 2006. Any other interpretation of the constitutive instruments that would grant International IDEA the power to protect democracy and electoral institutions might constitute a violation of the consent given by Mexico in the relevant opportunities and a violation of international law.

Mexico underlines that it does not ignore the fact that the text of IDEA's Strategy 2023 was accepted by the vast majority of the Member States. Thus, considering the effects of the above-mentioned considerations, understands these to be applicable in the relations between International IDEA and Mexico, and the interactions of Mexico with the international community concerning its membership to International IDEA.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 34 Member States founded in 1995, with an exclusive mandate to support and advance democracy worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

We produce comparative, policy-friendly knowledge and provide technical assistance on issues relating to elections, parliaments, constitutions, money in politics and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and reports. Our work is expanding to address issues related to climate change and democracy.

We use our knowledge to provide technical assistance and expert advice to governments and civil society around the world. We publish books, databases, and primers annually in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to Indigenous peoples' rights in constitution-building. Gender equality and inclusion are mainstreamed in all our work.

We engage in conversations and convene agenda-setting dialogues and partner with like-minded organizations, including the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, to achieve greater impact.

WHERE WE WORK

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

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International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization with an explicit mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA combines a global presence based on a diverse membership, a feature that reinforces the legitimacy of its actions.

With its 'think-and-do' approach underpinned by continuous learning, International IDEA combines the role of a global knowledge provider on democracy with country- and region-specific capacity development and advisory support.

International IDEA's focus remains support to and advancement of democracy, with the acknowledgement that such progress requires adherence to universal and legally binding human rights commitments. Respect for human rights, democracy, equality, and the rule of law continue to underpin all aspects of the Institute's work.