SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY COHORTS

Advancing Democracy through Collaboration
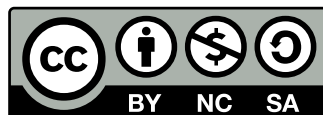
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SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY COHORTS

Advancing Democracy through Collaboration

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

COFE	Conference on the Future of Europe
CSO	Civil society organization
EDYN	European Democracy Youth Network
EMB	Electoral management body
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
IACC	International Anti-Corruption Conference
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OGP	Open Government Partnership
UNCAC	UN Convention against Corruption
WYDE	Women and Youth in Democracy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of the purpose, work and outputs of the 16 Democracy Cohorts established or announced by February 2023 in the context of the Summit for Democracy organized by the US Government. The First Summit for Democracy was held in December 2021 to set out an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal. The Summit brought together national governments and representatives of the European Union, as well as voices from civil society and the private sector from across the globe. A Second Summit will be held on 29–30 March 2023.

The interim period between the two summits was dubbed the 'Year of Action', in which countries have pursued implementation of the national commitments made at the First Summit to build more resilient democracies, combat corruption and defend human rights. To support the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, the United States facilitated the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms known as Democracy Cohorts.[1] The purpose of these cohorts is to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector to take concerted action to support the implementation of commitments in their area of interest.

The main contribution of the Democracy Cohorts to the Summit for Democracy process is as key drivers of change by following up on and scaling up existing commitments, and establishing a vision for democratic renewal beyond the Second Summit. In all, 16 Democracy Cohorts were established, co-led by 24 different governments and 25 different civil society organizations (CSOs). Table 1 lists the 16 cohorts, the lead governments and the lead CSOs, and provides a brief description of their key objectives.

The Democracy Cohorts took a variety of approaches to organizing their efforts during the Year of Action. Common across the cohorts, however, was

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[1]   For more information, see Summit for Democracy, 'Democracy Cohorts', [n.d.], <https://summit4democracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Democracy-Cohorts-One-Pager-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 1 March 2023

that objectives were set and outcomes planned, and various activities such as meetings, conferences and workshops were organized. The lack of structure and guidance on expectations for the Democracy Cohorts resulted in a variety of structures, and organizational and working modalities among the different cohorts. While this allowed for greater flexibility, it also led to reduced focus and cohesion.

The expected outcomes of the Democracy Cohorts generally fell into four categories: (a) reviewing Summit for Democracy commitments and developing model commitments; (b) sharing knowledge and best practices, and making joint statements and calls for action; (c) facilitating cooperation and information exchange, multilateral action and cross-sectoral cooperation; and (d) channelling efforts to new or existing international initiatives.

The cohort outcomes supported the Summit for Democracy in a number of ways. Analysing existing and proposing new commitments helped to increase knowledge and awareness of those commitments, foster monitoring and accountability mechanisms, encourage uptake and upscaling of activities and identify cross-cutting themes. The work on commitments also helped to encourage more ambitious ideas and plans among key stakeholders. The sharing of knowledge and best practices, as well as joint statements and calls to action, helped to create and communicate practical materials and advice that drove interest and support for important initiatives and campaigns. Solutions to democracy challenges are increasingly cross-border, which makes assistance to build trust and solid channels for communication and multilateral action across diverse sets of actors highly valuable. Finally, the cohorts made a significant contribution to increasing the visibility of and buy-in to existing international initiatives, while also establishing their own to further support positive global change.

The leadership of the cohorts is predominantly from the Global North, with some notable exceptions which significantly incorporate voices from the Global South. The cohorts have helped to create new connections between government institutions and actors, as well as between governments and civil society. Notable links were also created between the work of the Democracy Cohorts and existing initiatives, providing much-needed attention for specific initiatives that were otherwise in danger of being ignored. In more than one example, the attention, connections and initiatives established will help to ensure the continuation of efforts after the Second Summit.

Bringing together governments and CSOs in the cohort structure has enabled focused discussion and cooperation on priority topics, frequently helping to draw attention to and align efforts across closely related issues. The initiatives have also helped to energize existing work, inspire innovative ideas and create pressure and the political will for positive change. The work of the cohorts has ensured that thinking surrounding reinvigorating democracy is not just broad, but also deep.

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METHODOLOGY

This paper was developed by International IDEA with support from the European Commission and is based on the collection of various printed documents from the cohorts, including concept notes and fact sheets, minutes of meetings and workshops, and online blog posts, as well as from conversations with civil society cohort co-leads.

This Discussion Paper provides participants and other stakeholders at the Second Summit for Democracy with key highlights of the work and contributions of stakeholders and cohorts during the Year of Action. The insights will help to support preparations for the Second Summit and recognize the invaluable civil society engagement in the process. International IDEA has supported the Summit for Democracy since 2021.

We invite you to visit our Summit for Democracy Resources Portal and Commitment Dashboard for updates on the summit process, progress with commitments and cohort activities The paper contains cohort updates on activities up to and including 1 March 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The First Summit for Democracy was organized by the US Government in December 2021 to set an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal. It brought together governments, representatives of the European Union and international organizations, as well as voices from civil society and the private sector from across the globe. At the Summit, representatives of 98 participating governments announced around 750 commitments aimed at strengthening and safeguarding democracy at home and abroad. A Second Summit will follow on 29–30 March 2023. In the interim period, dubbed the Year of Action, countries have pursued implementation of their national commitments to build more resilient democracies, combat corruption and defend human rights. The Second Summit will be co-hosted by the US government and the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and Zambia. Contemporaneous regional summits will focus on a specific topic: Costa Rica on 'Promoting the role of youth and political and democratic spaces'; the Netherlands on 'Media freedom for the wider European region'; Zambia on 'Free, fair and transparent elections in Africa'; and the Republic of Korea on 'Anti-Corruption in the Indo-Pacific region'.

To support the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, the USA facilitated the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms known as Democracy Cohorts.[2] The purpose of these cohorts is to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, from among governments, civil society and the private sector, to focus on taking concerted action to support the implementation of commitments in their area of interest. Democracy Cohorts were initially established to support key topics related to the three thematic pillars of the Summit for Democracy: defending against authoritarianism, promoting respect for human rights, and addressing and fighting corruption. However, the cohorts eventually covered a broader range of topics related to democracy, as in the case of the Deliberative

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[2]   See Summit for Democracy, 'Democracy Cohorts', [n.d.], <https://summit4democracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Democracy-Cohorts-One-Pager-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 1 March 2023.

Democracy cohort, which actively pursued the topic's inclusion following its absence from the summit proceedings.

This paper provides an overview of the work of the Democracy Cohorts during the Year of Action, highlighting their contributions to democratic innovation and renewal, their activities, events and recommendations, and the model commitments that will help to maintain the momentum for positive change beyond the Second Summit.

Chapter 1
DEMOCRACY COHORTS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN THE YEAR OF ACTION

The main contribution of the Democracy Cohorts to the Summit for Democracy process is that they work as key drivers of change by following up on and scaling up existing commitments and establishing a vision for democratic renewal past the Second Summit. In all, 16 Democracy Cohorts were launched led by 24 governments and 25 civil society organizations (CSOs). The first was launched in the summer of 2022 and the most recent in January 2023. Each cohort is co-led by governmental entities and a CSO, and numbers countries, international organizations, civil society groups, private sector organizations and academic institutions among its members, all of which assist with various activities. A number of cohorts—such as the Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies; Financial Transparency and Integrity; Information Integrity; Media Freedom; Technology for Democracy; and Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohorts—have expressed their intention to continue their work beyond the Second Summit.

Eleven of the 24 governments co-leading a cohort are EU member states. (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Sweden each co-lead cohorts.) In addition, the European Commission co-leads two cohorts. EU member states have also been active participants. Nearly all the cohorts have at least one EU member state participant, and only six cohorts have no EU member state as co-leader. The high degree of engagement shows the significant commitment of the EU and its member states to the summit process, but also demonstrates the need to increase the participation of governments outside the EU and especially from the Global South. Many of the non-EU co-leads are also industrial countries. The other Democracy Cohort co-leads are Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Kosovo, India, Mauritius, Moldova, Nepal, Norway, the United Kingdom and the USA.

A similar picture can be observed among civil society, where most of the participating CSOs represent global democracy organizations with headquarters based in the EU or the USA. The only exceptions are the

The main contribution of the Democracy Cohorts is that they work as key drivers of change by following-up on and scaling-up existing commitments and establishing a vision for democratic renewal past the Second Summit.

Deliberative Democracy cohort, as the New Democracy Foundation is based in Australia, and the Youth cohort, as its co-lead, Africtivistes, is based in Senegal. The Youth cohort is also unique in its inclusion of CSOs from countries that were not invited to the First Summit; CSOs from Guinea and Mauritania have been invited to participate. Civil society participation in the Democracy Cohorts would benefit from increased participation by organizations from outside the USA and the EU, and especially from the Global South.

Democracy Cohorts emerged as the engines of the Summit for Democracy Year of Action, helping to ensure that the attention paid to democracy support is not just broad, but also deep.

Democracy Cohorts emerged as the engines of the Summit for Democracy Year of Action, helping to ensure that the attention paid to democracy support is not just broad, but also deep. While the Summit for Democracy facilitated the making of a broad set of commitments by a wide range of countries, it is the Democracy Cohorts that have facilitated in-depth work on those commitments to translate them into concrete plans and actions. Their impact is largely due to the work of civil society: the commitments were made by governments but the initiatives to support progress on them have largely come from civil society. These efforts have been particularly impactful due to the broad ownership established early on in the process, which generated greater awareness of and investment in activities. The Democracy Cohorts have ensured that key topics are brought to light through new opportunities to push for necessary change, reinvigorated existing work and galvanized new efforts, especially by connecting important voices from all corners of society.

Democracy Cohorts were created independently at the initiative of government and CSOs interested in pursuing concerted action or fostering coordinated cooperation on specific topics and helping to align efforts. For example, Moldova is participating in both the International Cooperation for Anticorruption and the Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty cohorts, thereby enabling coordination across closely related issues. Similarly, Canada is co-leading both the Media Freedom cohort and the Information Integrity cohort, which can help to stimulate coordination between the closely related issues of media, information and disinformation.

Beyond co-leads and members participating in multiple Democracy Cohorts, the cohorts themselves have considered the work of other cohorts to see where they can support each other and avoid duplication. The Resisting Authoritarian Pressure cohort has made it a goal to support efforts by other cohorts working on critical aspects of preventing autocrats from building influence in democracies, such as media freedom, information integrity and financial transparency. Similarly, when the Disability Rights cohort published its sample commitments, it linked every commitment to the relevant Democracy Cohort for its consideration. At its launch, the Technology for Democracy cohort acknowledged the other cohorts that are working on topics in which technology is highly relevant—notably, the Information Integrity, Media Freedom and Elections Integrity cohorts.

The Democracy Cohorts brought together governments with civil society, along with other democracy experts and stakeholders, providing opportunities for

Table 1. **Democracy Cohorts overview, as of 1 March 2023**

Cohort topic	Co-lead countries	Co-lead organizations	Key objective
Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty	Bulgaria	Basel Institute on Governance Center for Study of Democracy	To build an informal alliance between states with comparable problems by identifying challenges and overviewing the approaches to overcome them across five topics related to national anti-corruption policies.
Civic Space	Czechia Norway	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)	To identify common commitments to strengthen support to and protection of civil society actors and the civic space for democracy.
Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies	Ireland European Commission	New Democracy Foundation	To give citizens a more meaningful role in public decisions through citizens' assemblies, by bringing together a random sample of the community with a wide range of views and giving them access to a diversity of sources as well as ample time to discuss questions and concerns. The aim is to inform elected representatives of where informed common ground can be found around difficult trade-offs on a public decision.
Disability Rights	Australia	International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	To support people with disabilities to participate in government institutions, public policy and legislation, providing the basis for promoting equality in all aspects of society by breaking down social stigmas and increasing accountability.
Elections Integrity	India Greece Mauritius	International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	To provide training and capacity-building programmes for electoral management bodies (EMBs) across the world and technical consultancy as required by other EMBs.

Table 1. **Democracy Cohorts overview, as of 1 March 2023 (cont.)**

Cohort topic	Co-lead countries	Co-lead organizations	Key objective
Financial Transparency and Integrity	USA	Open Government Partnership (OGP) The Brookings Institution	To advance collective action on financial transparency and other relevant anti-corruption issues and provide a forum for civil society and governments to design transparency reforms that can help to tackle corruption; to increase openness and transparency in the areas of beneficial ownership and real estate transparency; to promote open contracting and procurement procedures, and to counter the misuse of professional services industry to enable corruption; to ensure synergies with and reinforce existing mechanisms that cohort members may be engaged in.
Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy	Sweden Romania	Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace & Security (GIWPS) International IDEA	To highlight and promote the connection between gender equality and democracy; and to develop policy recommendations to bolster women's participation in and contribution to democracy, with special attention to inclusion, justice and security.
Inclusive Democracy	Spain	Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI) Fundación Triángulo	To strengthen the debate on the need to create more inclusive democracies through the full participation of the most vulnerable groups in the structures of a democratic society.
Information Integrity	Canada Latvia	Alliance for Securing Democracy	To highlight and amplify best practices on strengthening a healthy information ecosystem and information integrity while reinforcing democracy and respect for human rights, including through resilience to disinformation.
International Cooperation for Anticorruption	Moldova	Transparency International Basel Institute on Governance	To share knowledge, experience and best practices, discuss and draft recommendations, and increase awareness among summit participants on corruption prevention and international communication and cooperation on anti-corruption enforcement, with a view to continuing joint efforts after the Second Summit for Democracy.

Table 1. **Democracy Cohorts overview, as of 1 March 2023 (cont.)**

Cohort topic	Co-lead countries	Co-lead organizations	Key objective
Labour Rights	USA	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)	To bring together stakeholders to advance workplace democracy, labour union rights, workers' voice, and freedom of association by creating opportunities to hear from workers themselves.
Media Freedom	Canada The Netherlands	Internews	To measure the progress achieved on the commitments made at the First Summit, to bridge the gaps between commitments, where progress has been slower to attain, and to spark new and innovative commitments to measurably advance media freedom around the world.
Resisting Authoritarian Pressure	Lithuania	Freedom House Alliance of Democracies	To build resilience to authoritarian coercion and offer a hand to democrats and human rights defenders from non-democracies.
Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice	Dominican Republic Kosovo	Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies ABA Rule of Law Initiative World Justice Project Transparency International	To draft and deliver a Joint Statement and Call to Action on People-Centred Justice and Democracy during the Second Summit; to engage with interested governments, CSOs, private sector actors and donors to participate in the activities of the cohort to further global rule of law and access to justice processes, and facilitate cooperation with the Justice Action Coalition; to encourage participating member states and organizations to formulate achievable high ambition commitments; and to encourage and facilitate sharing around major achievements of and major challenges to rule of law and justice reforms at the national and international levels.
Technology for Democracy	Estonia United Kingdom	Access Now	To promote the use of technologies and digital connectivity to strengthen democracies and enhance the enjoyment of democratic freedoms, and to ensure that technologies are deployed in a free, responsible, secure and resilient way.

Table 1. **Democracy Cohorts overview, as of 1 March 2023 (cont.)**

Cohort topic	Co-lead countries	Co-lead organizations	Key objective
Youth Political and Civic Engagement	Ghana Nepal Costa Rica European Commission	International IDEA Africtivistes European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)	To take meaningful action to implement Summit for Democracy commitments on youth political and civic engagement through resources, expertise, research, activities and achievements. To ensure that more countries adopt youth-related commitments, and that youth political participation is mainstreamed into other democracy themes and cohorts.

Note: For regular updates, see the webpage 'Summit for Democracy Cohorts', <https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu/summit-for-democracy-cohorts>, accessed 14 March 2023.

collaboration and focused discussions on priority topics. Given the lack of civil society involvement in the First Summit, this aspect has been especially important and the cohorts helped to create connections where they otherwise may not have existed. This included contact between governments that had previously not cooperated, and between governments and CSOs, and bridging the gap between the different constellations of government institutions that might be involved in a topic of interest. For example, in cooperating on elections, electoral management bodies (EMBs) generally work with each other, but cohort activities helped to demonstrate the usefulness of cooperation between election bodies and ministries for foreign affairs.

Connections were also made between the work of Democracy Cohorts and international initiatives. The work of the Technology for Democracy cohort will feed into efforts such as the Freedom Online Coalition and the Danish Tech 4 Democracy initiative. Similarly, the Open Government Partnership (OGP), as a co-lead of the Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort, is using its established mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of summit commitments by embedding these into its National Action Plans, in collaboration with local CSOs where applicable. The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort is committed to supporting recommendations by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and connected with the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), where it organized a meeting and a workshop to foster action on summit commitments. The connections made were also important in breathing life into initiatives which had previously received little attention: the Media Freedom cohort is incorporating its work into the Media Freedom Coalition, a previously stagnant effort that will now continue the cohort's work after the Second Summit.

Democracy Cohorts were also useful in disaggregating the main themes of the summit into their core parts, simplifying complex topics and helping to

direct actions to where they are needed most. As a key theme of the First Summit, four cohorts were established to deal with aspects of tackling corruption—International Cooperation for Anticorruption; Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty; Financial Transparency and Integrity; and Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice. The International Cooperation for Anticorruption cohort has focused on improved bilateral and international cooperation to combat high-level corruption, including on illicit asset recovery and strengthening justice sectors. The Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty cohort has focused on how high-level and political corruption create security vulnerabilities to foreign interference, with the risk of increased political instability and threats to national security and sovereignty. This cohort is particularly focused on improving anti-corruption efforts in Central and South-eastern Europe, where progress has stalled for more than three decades despite ample assistance. The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort concentrates primarily on increasing transparency and openness as a means to combat corruption and money laundering, for instance with regard to beneficial ownership and real estate transparency, but also by advancing open contracting and procurement procedures. Through shared efforts, the cohort seeks to deny opportunities for the proceeds of corruption to be laundered into legitimate economic activities or transferred offshore. Finally, the Rule of Law cohort has focused on the institutional architecture needed to support anti-corruption efforts, including judicial reform and ensuring that people have sufficient and equal access to justice. In all the Democracy Cohorts, the focus has been on one or a few topics and helping to establish the necessary political will to accomplish outcomes in a limited timeframe.

The Democracy Cohorts have also been helpful in extending the focus to important topics that received little to no attention during the formal summit process. The Deliberative Democracy cohort is a key example of this dynamic, as is elaborated on in Case Study 3 below.

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Chapter 2
STRUCTURE AND PROCESS OF ACTIVITIES

The way the Democracy Cohorts were set up and organized varied greatly.

The way the Democracy Cohorts were set up and organized varied greatly in terms of the frequency and type of their events, how activities were structured and the outcomes set as goals. Common to all the events was that they facilitated discussion and interaction among key stakeholders under the umbrella of the cohort topic, strengthening linkages and establishing trust, and enabling learning and experience sharing.

Each Democracy Cohort approached the launch of its cohort activities differently. As noted above, the timeframe for their launches varied greatly, from the summer of 2022 to January 2023. Some cohorts opted to start their activities with a formal launch, while others made significant progress with members before engaging in a formal launch and some chose to have no formal launch at all, instead opting for a general group meeting to introduce the cohort.

Practically all the Democracy Cohorts opted for online meetings as part of their activities. Many, such as the Technology for Democracy cohort, the Youth cohort and the Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort, made an effort to plan hybrid meetings with an important in-person element. Other cohorts planned or participated in larger forums or conferences to help increase their visibility and impact. For example, the Youth cohort was launched in Brussels during the International Day of Democracy; the Resisting Authoritarian Pressure cohort was officially launched during the second Future of Democracy Forum in Vilnius; and the Technology for Democracy cohort was launched at the Tallinn Digital Summit. Similarly, the Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort held one of its meetings in the margins of the IACC. Other Democracy Cohorts, such as the Elections Integrity cohort, focused their work on larger conferences to gather stakeholders and share knowledge, leaving the door open for further arrangements for technical experience sharing.

Early in the process, the results of Democracy Cohort meetings fed into the structures that emerged for organizing activities. Many cohorts chose to

structure their activities in specific Working Groups oriented around a key topic of interest for democracy. Each group designated roles and responsibilities of co-leaders and members, as well as meeting frequencies, and organized around a common objective and expected outcomes. These efforts were expected to feed into the overarching objective and outcomes of the cohort. This arrangement allowed a more specific and dedicated focus on important themes, as well as closer collaboration with other cohorts or organizations engaged in related work.

Cohorts that organized their activities across different groups allowed actions to be organized around specific focus points, helping co-leads and participants to best utilize their experience and expertise. This method of organizing activities also helped participants to make sense of highly complex issues and to connect Democracy Cohort efforts with existing interests and efforts at the national, regional and international levels. Table 2 gives some examples of how different cohorts chose to organize around different areas of interest. The Technology for Democracy cohort provides a good example of how co-lead experience was prioritized. As one of the most experienced countries in the online provision of public goods, Estonia has taken the lead in the Technology for Good Governance Working Group, while the UK is making its research available following its experience with online manipulation in the Cambridge Analytica scandal and progress in countering online harm (for more detail see Case Study 4: Technology for Democracy cohort).[3] The Media Freedom cohort set up its Working Groups by analysing the commitments made on media at the First Summit, helping the cohort to deliver activities where they are needed most.

Thus, there has been significant diversity in the Working Group structures, activities, outcomes and objectives of the Democracy Cohorts throughout the Year of Action. The lack of structure, mandate and guidance on expectations for the Democracy Cohorts provided by the US Government came with both benefits and drawbacks. Greater flexibility allowed for a broad breadth of topics and stakeholders and was exercised to great effect by the Deliberative Democracy; Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy; and Youth cohorts. The Deliberative Democracy cohort demonstrated how efforts by governments and civil society can broaden and enrich the summit process, as the topic of deliberative democracy was initially not included in the summit. The Youth cohort demonstrated how a greater diversity of voices can be brought into the conversation, which is especially important in repressive contexts where such voices might not be heard at the national level. However, the lack of guidance also reduced focus and cohesion among the cohorts. A lack of clear expectations of the activities made it more difficult for cohorts to plan coordination ahead of time, and some cohorts took a long time to get their activities off the ground, wasting valuable time during the Year of Action. The lack of funding also constituted a drawback, making it hard for some of

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3   For more information on the work of the UK Government, see its Online Harms White Paper, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>, and Guidance on the use of personal data in political campaigning, <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/key-dp-themes/guidance-for-the-use-of-personal-data-in-political-campaigning> (UK Information Commissioner's Office n.d.).

Table 2. **Examples of cohort Working Groups**

Cohort	Working Groups
Civic Space	• Participation of civil society and national human rights institutions in public decision-making processes at the national level • Non-violent collective action: A safe and enabling environment for social movements • Support to civil society in exile • 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders • Civil society participation in the UN • OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) recommendations on enabling civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance
Information Integrity	• Taxonomy • Literacy • International cooperation on resilience to disinformation • Political micro-targeting (PMT) in the Global South
Media Freedom	• Protecting journalists' safety and security • Advancing freedom of expression • Bolstering independent and diverse media
Technology for Democracy	• Technology to support open and secure access to the Internet • Harnessing the potential of technology/data for the benefit of open, democratic societies • Technology for good governance

Source: Authors' compilation.

the cohorts to deliver planned outcomes, whereas others managed to mobilize resources and dedicated staff time or to make use of established structures to help drive activities.

Chapter 3
DEMOCRACY COHORT OUTCOMES

Despite the short timeframe, the Democracy Cohorts achieved concrete results, marked by invaluable contributions by CSOs with the support of the co-leads. Many of the cohorts are planning to present the results of their efforts during the Second Summit as inputs for discussion and to inspire further action.

Outcomes are defined as the concrete deliverables that will impact and drive positive and lasting democratic change at the Second Summit and beyond. Outcomes include: reviewing Summit for Democracy commitments and developing model commitments; sharing knowledge and best practices and making joint statements and calls to action; facilitating cooperation and information exchange, multilateral action and cross-sectoral cooperation; and channelling efforts to new or existing international initiatives.

Despite the short timeframe, the Democracy Cohorts achieved concrete results.

3.1. REVIEWING SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY COMMITMENTS AND DEVELOPING MODEL COMMITMENTS

Many Democracy Cohorts reviewed the written commitments that countries made under the umbrella of the First Summit for Democracy at the start of their work. To increase knowledge and foster monitoring of commitments, International IDEA developed a Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard, which allows commitments to be tracked by country and by theme.[4] In addition, Accountability Lab, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute analysed and released an infographic on youth-focused commitments (Summit for Democracy 2022).

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[4]   See the Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard, <https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu/commitment-dashboard>, accessed 14 March 2023.

Table 3. **Expected outcomes of the Democracy Cohorts**

Cohort	Expected outcomes
Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty	A joint statement at the Second Summit; a system of alert for identified cases of corruption or attempts from abroad to corrupt state officials; a better environment for common investigations and preventive actions; sustainable communication channels and cooperation mechanisms between relevant institutions and non-state actors.
Civic Space	Consideration and preparation of commitments that address the need to safeguard civic space and relate to cohort workstreams; advocacy for joint commitments, both domestically and internationally oriented; discussion of implementation of and share best practices related to the commitments on civic space made during the First Summit.
Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies	A published agenda of 12 commitments ahead of the Second Summit, including three international initiatives that will endure past the Second Summit, to help motivate countries to form citizens' assemblies and other deliberative tools and mechanisms.
Disability Rights	A series of disability-inclusive sample commitments for EMBs, CSOs, legislatures and political parties based on suggestions by disability rights and democracy advocates at a series of listening sessions related to voting, elections and civic engagement, to feed into commitments states could make at the Second Summit.
Elections Integrity	Groundwork laid for numerous additional dialogues and institutionalized mechanisms and for collaboration on contextual challenges and opportunities.
Financial Transparency and Integrity	Recommendations compiled on beneficial ownership reform and a document outlining key considerations for countries establishing national beneficial ownership registries of enabling companies, industries and state agents based on Financial Action Task Force standards. To monitor and increase implementation of the summit commitments, the cohort has issued a Call to Action for greater collaboration.
Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy	To convene reference groups that will provide substantive inputs to inform model commitments and policy recommendations.
Inclusive Democracy	To promote a Call to Action to increase awareness of inclusive democracy at the international level, share knowledge and best practices, draw attention to existing and new initiatives, promote the adoption and implementation of inclusive measures, establish concrete targets and plans, and ultimately help to create a culture of renewed respect for people and their diversity through the actions of governments and all the actors involved.
Information Integrity	Policy recommendations developed based on the conclusions of the work of the four Working Groups; highlight and amplify best practices on identifying, reacting to and monitoring responses to mis- and disinformation; and ensure a healthy information ecosystem and address disinformation in a democratic way. The cohort will also develop a White Paper on political micro-targeting and a series of resources to inspire a healthier information space, such as an Information Integrity Organization Map and a Resources webpage with four categories: fact finding, media literacy and training, research and monitoring, and policy and standards.
International Cooperation for Anticorruption	To improve international communication and cooperation among states, national and international organizations, and existing anti-corruption platforms; to improve bilateral and international exchange of information and collaboration between anti-corruption institutions, law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's offices and other specialized anti-corruption bodies; and to establish clear recommendations on enhancing justice sector integrity, independence and capacity.

Table 3. **Expected outcomes of the Democracy Cohorts (cont.)**

Cohort	Expected outcomes
Labour Rights	To integrate workers' voices into other summit dialogues to expand conversations on workers' rights.
Media Freedom	To issue a Call to Action to catalyse commitments to action that protects journalists, advances freedom of expression and bolsters independent and diverse media. To submit a cohort findings report that highlights commitments made by cohort members designed for meaningful, replicable or innovative progress; and an annex of general commitments made by all cohort members representing a diverse range of actions by governments, businesses and CSOs.
Resisting Authoritarian Pressure	To implement a set of deliverables within the four areas of releasing political prisoners, protecting democratic activists fleeing authoritarian regimes, countering transnational repression and building resilience to economic coercion by authoritarian regimes. This will be achieved through the development of various written products such as briefings, memos and documents, and the development of best practices for shielding human rights defenders. To engage in multilateral actions, such as strengthening cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation to protect democratic activists, as well as the introduction of trade and investment restrictions and export controls on regimes that engage in economic coercion. To engage with civil society to develop training materials for documenting and responding to transnational repression. To establish a civil society Working Group.
Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice	To release a Joint Statement and Call to Action on People-Centred Justice and Democracy, expand membership of the Justice Action Coalition and strengthen partnerships between like-minded member states and civil society organizations on the people-centred justice agenda; contribute to sustained collaborative engagement beyond the Second Summit for Democracy in 2023 vis-a-vis the Justice Action Coalition; and make specific high-ambition commitments from individual cohort members to advance the Joint Statement and Call to Action on People-Centred Justice and Democracy.
Technology for Democracy	To raise awareness of the impact of Internet Shutdowns and Restrictions (ISRs) and to harness technology to support open and secure access to the Internet. This will be accomplished through the development of a portal providing key information on ISRs aimed at non-technical audiences; a shutdown impact stories project to show the personal impact of Internet restrictions on a diverse range of voices globally; a technology for good governance toolbox/product hub that showcases free, open and secure digital public infrastructure available around the world and shares best practices and learning to promote greater transparency and understanding about the various tools deployed to shape governance outcomes; guidelines and tools that harness technology to make civic and election information more accessible; and a shared understanding of and guidelines on responsible adoption and deployment of privacy-enhancing technologies.
Youth Political and Civic Engagement	A menu of possible youth commitments to be adopted by governments participating in the summit; a Youth Participation Handbook on successful youth empowerment initiatives that can be replicated in other countries; and a Youth Political Participation Index to fill a gap in the data on the state of youth participation in key public spheres.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Based on an analysis of existing commitments by and inputs from the members of their Democracy Cohort, some cohorts, such as the Financial Transparency and Integrity, Media Freedom, Rule of Law and Youth cohorts, supported individual countries with implementing their own commitments, or to make further commitments. The Media Freedom cohort went one step further by calling for and collecting more than 115 commitments and deliverables from its diverse set of members. Fourteen of these that are uniquely designed for meaningful, replicable or innovative progress will be highlighted in the cohort's findings report.

Other Democracy Cohorts opted to draft their own sets of commitments, which will be presented at the Second Summit to encourage uptake of more ambitious and concrete commitments by governments. These commitments were useful in identifying and addressing cross-cutting issues that affect all levels of political and civic engagement, and building on the work of experts and existing initiatives.

Some of the thematic areas of the cohorts had barely been covered by country commitments, so some cohorts developed menus of standard or sample commitments to inspire governments to adopt additional thematic commitments. A menu of 33 commitments for fostering youth participation was launched by the Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohort on 28 February 2023. These included recommendations for governments or international institutions to improve youth rights and participation in their national contexts. This menu of commitments covers a wide array of topics, including the broader context of human rights and democracy, and features relevant commitments for other cohorts, such as Media Freedom, Elections Integrity, Information Integrity and Gender.

The Disability Rights cohort published a menu of 29 commitments, showing how cohort outputs can feed off one another.

The Disability Rights cohort published a menu of 29 commitments, showing how cohort outputs can feed off one another. Commitments included links to other cohorts, such as Elections Integrity; Civic Space; Media Freedom; Technology for Democracy; Information Integrity; Youth; Gender; and Labour Rights. The commitments released by the Disability Rights cohort also demonstrated how cohort efforts can help to better coordinate overseas development assistance, as several of the commitments focused on how funding can be structured, as well as ensuring that political participation by people with disabilities is included as a priority in international development strategies.

The Deliberative Democracy cohort released an agenda of 12 commitments that focused on the international level and efforts at the national level in terms of learning, exploring and committing to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) principles, as well as moving from projects to permanent fixtures.[5] The Civic Space cohort worked to prepare its

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[5]   For more information on the agenda of 12 commitments, see Case Study 3: Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies cohort.

own commitments and to share best practices related to the implementation of existing commitments.

The Gender cohort is also planning to issue a set of recommendations on gender equality, along with a roadmap for governments and civil society to implement. The cohort will extract and make recommendations relevant to each of the topics covered by the regional summits.

3.2. SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES, AND MAKING JOINT STATEMENTS AND CALLS TO ACTION

Another common output across Democracy Cohorts was sharing knowledge and best practices, as well as making joint statements and calls to action. Sharing knowledge and best practices includes the gathering of stakeholders at online, hybrid or in-person meetings and producing various documents such as recommendations, briefings, memos and training materials. Joint statements and calls to action were useful in helping countries to set concrete targets and plans for positive change towards democracy. For example, the Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty cohort will make a joint statement at the Second Summit to draw attention to the cross-border solutions necessary for tackling the issue. Similarly, the International Cooperation for Anticorruption cohort will issue clear recommendations on enhancing justice sector integrity, independence and capacity.

The Civic Space cohort is channelling its activities through its Working Groups to formulate between one and three recommendations to be presented at the Second Summit. The cohort is also working to put human rights defenders at the forefront of its efforts to promote the significance of their work and achievements.

The Elections Integrity cohort brought together key oversight bodies and other interested stakeholders on elections management to share knowledge and best practices, with a view to further technical support and capacity building in the future. The cohort organized two conferences with global reach: one on the role, framework and capacity of EMBs, and the second on the use of technology and elections integrity. It also provided training, capacity building and technical consultancy. The conferences featured sessions that drew on the expertise of EMBs across the globe, as well as presentations by International IDEA and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The gatherings also provided valuable opportunities for networking. The cohort will hold a third conference on inclusive elections and elections integrity in March 2023.

The Inclusive Democracy cohort will promote a Call to Action to advance awareness, share knowledge and best practices, publicize existing international initiatives, promote implementation of effective measures and

A common output across Democracy Cohorts was sharing knowledge and best practices, as well as making joint statements and calls to action.

establish concrete targets and plans. The goal of the Call to Action is to help create a culture of renewed respect for people and their diversity through the actions of all the governments and actors involved.

The Information Integrity cohort will produce a set of recommendations through three of its Working Groups—Taxonomy, Literacy and International Cooperation—for the Second Summit. This will highlight and amplify best practices on identifying, reacting to and monitoring responses to mis- and disinformation, and promoting more consistent policy development, including regulatory approaches to tackling misinformation, while seeking to increase the coherence of work in different international forums (the G7, the OECD, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the EU and the UN). The cohort also plans to develop a White Paper on political micro-targeting and a series of resources to promote a healthier information space, such as an Information Integrity Organization Map and a Resources webpage.

The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort agreed to issue a Call to Action whereby cohort members would pledge to support each other in the process of undertaking relevant anti-corruption reforms. Members would cooperate to ensure the durability of such reforms, share technical knowledge, provide capacity building, exchange information and ideas, and disseminate good practices and learning. The Call to Action would also support the efforts of the other Democracy Cohorts dedicated to tackling corruption and identify areas of mutual interest and concern.

The Media Freedom cohort also issued a Call to Action for its members to make public commitments on policy action, and to new initiatives and support mechanisms that advance democratic principles around media freedom. More than 115 commitments were submitted from a wide array of interlocutors in the cohort, which also included the private sector, businesses, philanthropic entities, media houses and tech companies.

The Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy cohort plans to issue a statement of key recommendations and to develop a roadmap for the implementation of those recommendations intended for governments, civil society and other actors. The cohort also plans to issue a one pager linking gender equality on each of the topics on the agendas of the regional summits.

The Resisting Authoritarian Pressure cohort engaged in advocacy activities and promoted a diplomatic campaign to raise awareness of political imprisonment and transnational repression. The cohort is developing a training manual for civil society actors that work to document and respond to transnational repression and will publish a memo on practices to shield human rights defenders and support governments in pushing for the release of political prisoners.

The Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice cohort will publish a joint statement, driven by the specific commitments of cohort members, that will tie the themes of the Summit to the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The statement will also include a Call to Action on people-centred justice and its five principles as articulated in The Hague Declaration and the Joint Action Plan of the G7+ Countries.

The Technology for Democracy cohort organized three Working Groups, the outputs of which will be channelled towards making recommendations and sharing best practices.[6] The cohort worked to produce practical outputs focused on real world applications, offering possible solutions to shared challenges such as helping to establish guidelines on a transparent and effective digital public infrastructure.

The Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohort has been advocating for more countries to adopt youth-related commitments and the mainstreaming of youth participation into other democracy themes and Democracy Cohorts. The cohort produced a menu of recommendations for governments to ensure greater political participation across five key themes; a *Youth Participation Handbook* with best practices and successful youth empowerment initiatives that can be replicated in other countries; and a Youth Political Participation Index that maps youth participation in political affairs, elections, civil society and media.

3.3. FACILITATING COOPERATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE, MULTILATERAL ACTION AND CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION

Certain challenges facing democracy can only be effectively addressed through collective efforts. Some Democracy Cohorts recognized the importance of international cooperation, focusing work on multilateral action, information exchange, structured systems of communication, partnerships, and efficient cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The Anticorruption Policies as a Guarantee for National Security, Stability and Sovereignty cohort sought to build an informal alliance among states with similar issues, such as high-level corruption, bribery and irregular foreign interference, the role of civic education in tackling corruption, and investigation and punishment. The cohort plans to support the development of an alert system for corruption or attempts by foreign actors to corrupt state officials, to create a more enabling environment for cross-border investigations and taking preventative action, and to organize efficient and sustainable communications channels between key actors—both state and non-state.

The International Cooperation for Anticorruption cohort has recognized the importance of cross-border cooperation in countering corruption since its inception, making it an objective to increase awareness of and engage in further joint actions and efforts beyond the Second Summit. The cohort's

Some Democracy Cohorts recognized the importance of international cooperation.

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[6]   For more information, see Case Study 4: Technology for Democracy cohort.

efforts will work to improve international communication and cooperation among states, national and international organizations, and existing anti-corruption platforms. These improvements will also involve better bilateral and international exchanges of information and collaboration between anti-corruption institutions, law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's offices and other specialized anti-corruption bodies. The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort has also contributed to better cross-border communication of key information by helping to ensure the effective implementation of beneficial ownership registries, which will help to prevent the abuse of corporate structures through engagement in money laundering.

The Resisting Authoritarian Pressure cohort has worked to strengthen cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation to protect democracy activists, and advocated for the introduction of trade and investments restrictions on regimes that engage in transnational economic coercion.

Several Democracy Cohorts provided increased visibility for certain democracy initiatives or took the opportunity to establish their own.

3.4. CHANNELLING EFFORTS TOWARDS NEW OR EXISTING INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Several Democracy Cohorts provided increased visibility for certain democracy initiatives or took the opportunity to establish their own. The Deliberative Democracy cohort helped to publicize the significant benefits for public trust and collective ownership of decisions that are offered by establishing citizens' assemblies, as well as the increased opportunities for civil society input offered by digital solutions. The cohort is also spearheading three global initiatives:

1. A Global Citizens' Deliberation for participating countries to support that would give citizens a more significant voice at the Summit for Democracy and any future such summits. The deliberation would continue in session beyond the Second Summit, giving citizens the opportunity to assess challenges to democracy, learn more about reforms and innovations, and find common ground.

2. A Marshall Plan for Democracy to energize and focus activity on new democracies threatened by autocracy by supporting and funding deliberative projects. Given the significant threat posed by Russia, priority will be given to Central and Eastern European nations.

3. A Global 'What Works' Centre for Deliberative Democracy, which would make rigorous evidence and advice available to all free of charge, while also advocating the usefulness and importance of deliberative democracy. An existing, trusted global institution would support its implementation and maintenance, and help to supply trusted and rigorous evidence.

The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort is engaging with existing mechanisms to measure and assist in the implementation of relevant

commitments. For example, the co-leading organisation OGP is supporting the effective implementation of commitments using its established mechanisms. The commitments will be embedded into OGP's National Action Plans in collaboration with local CSOs. The cohort is also aiming to ensure synergies with existing mechanisms and forums in which members are already engaged. One of the cohort's meetings was held in the margins of the IACC in 2022, where a workshop on fostering collective action on summit anti-corruption commitments was also convened. The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort is also committed to supporting recommendations by the FATF and is seeking to do so while maintaining full compliance with obligations under the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

The Information Integrity cohort is fostering synergies with other established groups that work to strengthen a healthy information space and counter disinformation, and the co-leads are interested in continuing their work after the Second Summit by establishing a Community of Practice. The cohort has also made strides to align its work with other cohorts—especially the Media Freedom cohort—and is seeking to promote more consistent policy and regulatory development to tackle misinformation at both the national and the international levels.

The Media Freedom cohort has built on the work of the Media Freedom Coalition, and its work will be incorporated into and continued further by the Media Freedom Coalition after the Second Summit. The Global Forum for Media Development will use the cohort as an opportunity to continue work on documenting best practices for supporting journalism and media.

The Rule of Law and People-Centred Justice cohort will work to expand membership of the Justice Action Coalition, a group of countries that is seeking to close the global justice gap and contribute to sustained collaborative engagement beyond the Second Summit.

The Technology for Democracy cohort took advantage of the global network of Access Now, supplementing it with the experiences of Estonia and the UK and a diverse set of other cohort members. Access Now has committed staff working in the Technology for Democracy cohort, which will feed into its #KeepItOn campaign beyond the Second Summit (see Case Study 4 below). Moreover, the work of the cohort could be channelled into a longer project on a portal to track Internet shutdowns, which would use real-time on-the-ground reporting and carry out economic impact assessments. The portal could be especially useful in tracking shutdowns in the lead-up to and aftermath of elections.

The Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohort will provide small grants to CSOs from the Global South to promote the menu of possible commitments, advocate their adoption and assess their implementation.

Chapter 4
THE SECOND SUMMIT AND BEYOND

Many of the Democracy Cohorts are looking beyond the Second Summit for Democracy and their co-leads have been encouraging countries to preserve initiatives and their outcomes.

Despite the added value of the Summit for Democracy process and the Democracy Cohorts, the US Government has not expressed any plans to hold a third summit. However, many of the Democracy Cohorts are looking beyond the Second Summit for Democracy and their co-leads have been encouraging countries to preserve initiatives and their outcomes. This continuation could take place under a continuing Summit for Democracy initiative or could be facilitated by one or more established and impartial international institutions. Importantly, the process relies on the willingness of one or more countries to take a leading role in carrying it forward, and that these leading countries are representatives of both the Global North and the Global South. Finally, the process will require funding for coordinating the cohorts, tracking commitments and organizing events. The Deliberative Democracy cohort has gone so far as to propose an enduring deliberative mechanism, the Global Deliberation on Democracy, that would feed into successive Annual Summits for Democracy.

In February 2023, International IDEA and the Global Democracy Coalition[7] conducted a survey on perceptions of the work of the Democracy Cohorts. The 112 participants comprised representatives from democracy-oriented CSOs (54 per cent), other CSOs (19 per cent) and a smaller number from think tanks, multilateral organizations and government agencies. Survey respondents included voices from all 16 cohorts. Among the respondents who knew of or had been involved in the work or activities of the Democracy Cohorts, 60 per cent were from democracy-oriented CSOs. Of all the respondents familiar with the cohorts, 74 per cent were of the opinion that the Democracy Cohorts had been effective in raising awareness of specific topics and increasing the commitment for implementation in their focus areas.[8] The most effective

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[7]   The Global Democracy Coalition was formed in October 2021, convened by International IDEA and other democracy and democracy assistance organizations from around the world. The goal was to create an informal group of organizations committed to the advancement of democracy, working together to engage constructively with the Summit for Democracy (Global Democracy Coalition n.d.).

[8]   15 per cent found the Cohorts to be very effective, 59 per cent found them to be effective, 18 per cent saw them as not so effective and 2 per cent as not effective.

cohorts were identified as Technology for Democracy (86 per cent), Civic Space (84 per cent), Gender (83 per cent) and Elections Integrity (82 per cent).

The respondents took issue with the differences in structure, working modalities, funding and envisaged outcomes of the Democracy Cohorts. The main shortcomings of the cohorts were identified as lack of funding (36 per cent), unclear structure (28 per cent), unclear mandate (18 per cent) and lack of linkage to the summits (17 per cent). The respondents somewhat supported the idea that the cohorts should continue beyond the Summit for Democracy initiative: 50 per cent of respondents stated that the Democracy Cohorts should continue to play a role after the Second Summit and 45 per cent believed the cohorts should be developed into permanent mechanisms. The issue of a disconnect with the summits itself is an issue in the lead-up to the Second Summit. Certain cohorts have no specific space at the regional summits to present the outcomes of their work. In response to this dynamic, the Gender cohort sought to produce a document for each of the regional summits, outlining how gender equality links to the topics of each of these events.

Most of the Democracy Cohorts operated without external funding throughout the Year of Action, placing a natural constraint on their activities. However, cohorts that benefited from external financing, such as the Youth cohort through the support of the European Commission, will be able to expand their activities and continue their work after the Second Summit. Similarly, the Deliberative Democracy cohort is already working on a two-year EU-funded project that will use deliberative methods to help stimulate interest in political life among young people. Other Democracy Cohorts would also benefit from dedicated resources or mechanisms that provide key support for their work, which might allow them to continue some of their work after March 2023. This would be especially helpful for the cohorts that prioritized outcomes that will feed into new or existing global initiatives.

Most of the Democracy Cohorts operated without external funding throughout the Year of Action, placing a natural constraint on their activities.

Chapter 5
RECOMMENDATIONS

International IDEA suggests the following be considered by participating governments to enhance the Democracy Cohorts process going forward:

1. Establish a coordination mechanism across the Democracy Cohorts to ensure that activities are optimized, funding makes its way to where it is needed most and efforts are not duplicated. This secretariat could be an impartial third party international organization or a consortium of organizations with the global democracy expertise and capacity to organize and maintain cohort activities. Funding should be made available to sustain it.

2. Channel Democracy Cohort efforts more explicitly into existing international bodies and/or initiatives. Each cohort should be linked not only with co-leads, but also with bodies for follow-up and to integrate cohort outcomes. The Technology for Democracy cohort provides a good example, where identifying its activities and plugging them into relevant ongoing discussions or existing initiatives was made a priority from the start.

3. Better engage with countries and civil society from the Global South to lead and participate in Democracy Cohorts. Their inputs should be meaningfully included in any cohort activities and outputs.

4. Governments should dedicate more funding to, or donors should be engaged to seek more funding for, the Democracy Cohorts or prioritize existing structures that will help to prolong summit initiatives. The benefits of dedicated funding for Democracy Cohorts have already been demonstrated by the paid staff that helped certain cohorts increase their level of activities.

Chapter 6
CASE STUDIES

This section features case studies of four Democracy Cohorts: the Youth Political and Civic Engagement; Financial Transparency and Integrity; Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies; and Technology for Democracy cohorts. These cohorts were selected based on their extensive work during the Year of Action and to illustrate the different ways in which Democracy Cohorts chose to organize their activities and work towards different outcomes. The case studies reflect the diverse nature of the cohorts' work. They are each structured slightly differently, which reflects the work of each cohort during the period.

Each of the case studies clarifies why each Democracy Cohort was set up, to what ends and with what outcomes in mind, as well as how the cohort organized itself to pursue its goals. The analysis addresses the leadership, launch, membership and overall structure of the cohort, as well as any events, publications and other work products, and the overall added value of each specific cohort for the summit process and beyond.

CASE **STUDY 1. YOUTH POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COHORT**

The Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohort was devised as an inclusive platform for taking meaningful action towards implementing Summit for Democracy commitments on youth political participation through resources, expertise, research, activities and achievements.

Youth political participation was not a priority among the participating governments when countries made their commitments at the First Summit. According to the Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard, only six

countries[9] adopted commitments on youth at the summit. This demonstrated the need for a robust and dynamic initiative to put youth on the global democracy agenda. A number of dedicated governments and international and civil society organizations set up the cohort, which has since developed into one of the more active Democracy Cohorts. Its main objectives are to promote political and civic engagement by young people and their understanding of democratic principles, as well as promoting diversity and inclusion. It also seeks to support youth and youth-led organizations, democracy support grass-root organizations and young people to promote a more inclusive and accountable form of democracy. With regard to the overall summit process, the cohort heavily advocates that more countries should adopt youth-related commitments and the mainstreaming of youth participation into other democracy themes and cohorts.

The cohort was officially launched on 15 September 2022, with eight lead organizations and more than 40 other members. The cohort is structured in layers. The European Commission and the governments of Costa Rica, Ghana and Nepal co-lead the cohort together with three non-governmental organization (NGO) leads: the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), Africtivistes, the European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) and an intergovernmental organization, International IDEA. The core group comprises those organizations and governments that wished to involve themselves more closely in the cohort by implementing at least one event or activity that contributed to the Year of Action. The general group includes those CSOs, governments, international organizations, private sector partners and other stakeholders that want to advance the goals of the cohort. For governments, this involved making at least one commitment, while for other actors this meant supporting the implementation of at least one commitment. The Youth Democracy cohort is currently one of the more geographically diverse cohorts with a high number of countries, institutions and civil society groups participating from the Global South, including its co-leads.

The cohort has worked on a set of deliverables:

1. *Development of a menu of possible youth commitments*. This document, officially launched on 28 February 2023, proposes a range of model commitments for countries to adopt. The model commitments prioritize youth civic and political engagement under five key themes: prioritizing youth voice in governance; supporting youth in government; supporting youth freedom of expression; promoting a culture of youth political participation; and promoting a culture of human rights among youth.

2. *Assistance with conducting or supporting actions*. The Youth Democracy cohort will provide small grants to CSOs to promote the model commitments, advocate for their adoption and assess their implementation at the national and/or regional levels.

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[9]   The six countries were Botswana, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, Greece and Slovakia. See the Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard, <https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu/commitment-dashboard>, accessed 14 March 2023.

3. *Development of a Youth Participation Handbook*. This initiative, led by EDYN and EPD, is a volume of case studies of successful youth empowerment initiatives that resulted in increased youth participation, which draws lessons and provides guidance on how they can be replicated in other countries. The Handbook will be published at the Second Summit in March 2023. It will also be translated into French and Spanish.

4. *Development of a Youth Political Participation Index*. The Index seeks to fill a gap in the available data on the state of youth participation in key public spheres. The European Commission and EPD are conducting a scoping study to assess youth participation in political affairs, elections, civil society and media in 15 countries. It will be expanded to include additional countries at a later stage.

Between July and December 2022, members of the Youth Democracy cohort, notably the European Commission, EPD, EDYN, Accountability Lab and International IDEA, organized at least 15 events focused on youth political and civic engagement. Frequent core group and co-leader meetings were organized, as well as workshops, webinars, dialogues and advocacy events. Several events sought to create links between youth and other cohorts and democracy themes, for instance with disinformation and elections integrity. For example, in October 2022, EDYN organized two events, in Bratislava and in Brussels, on disinformation and threats to democracy which included youth representatives, European stakeholders and government officials.

In October 2022, International IDEA, with the support of the European Commission, engaged with civil society in Kenya, Moldova, Nepal and Paraguay to raise civil society awareness of the Summit for Democracy. A survey was developed to help identify community perceptions of the summit process and recommendations that should be added, with particular emphasis on how youth and civil society perceive national recommendations. Workshops were held with civil society groups and national authorities to discuss the survey, progress made to date and a set of model recommendations that were developed based on the survey. Ways to strengthen collaboration between national authorities and civil society during the Year of Action were also discussed. The objective was for the model recommendations on strengthening youth political participation, which were discussed and agreed on by more than 100 CSOs, to be added to the national commitments made by countries.

Accountability Lab, one of the core group members, has produced a short video on the cohort, and has been surveying citizens in the Democratic Republic of the Congo about their government's progress on the commitments (Accountability Lab 2022). The findings were summarized in a series of infographics in English and French. Accountability Lab also worked with International IDEA on the above-mentioned survey and development of the model recommendations in Nepal. The organization also produced a short video on Nepal's commitments focusing on public knowledge and perceptions

and making recommendations for improvement (Summit for Democracy Resources n.d.).

The Youth Democracy cohort worked actively throughout the Year of Action to make the summit process more inclusive. Facilitated by its layered structure, the cohort has invited participation from CSOs from countries, such as Ethiopia, Guinea and Mauritania, that were not part of the summit process. The cohort has also worked to have youth participation included as a topic in national and international democratic initiatives, and for its inclusion as a cross-cutting theme at the Second Summit by including the topic in several of the regional summit events. The regional summit in Costa Rica will focus on youth democratic participation and will host a side event on 30 March dedicated to the Youth Democracy cohort. The Costa Rican event aims to take a truly global approach by inviting a diverse group of CSOs from outside the EU and the USA. At the regional summit in Zambia, which will focus on free, fair and transparent elections in Africa, the Youth Democracy cohort is co-organizing a session on political party financing, which will have a specific focus on youth inclusion—*Beyond tokenism, towards meaningful inclusion and participation in democratization and electoral processes of youth*.

The European Commission has expressed the will to continue its support to the Youth Political and Civic Engagement cohort beyond the Second Summit through its flagship programme Women and Youth in Democracy initiative (WYDE). WYDE's first chapter, Youth Participation in Public Affairs, implemented by EPD, covers the cohort's technical secretariat, and the inclusion, participation and activities of CSOs from the Global South. The WYDE initiative is also funding the Youth Political Participation Index and the menu of commitments.

CASE **STUDY 2. FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY COHORT**

The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort was officially launched in July 2022 with a consultation session to discuss the focus of the cohort. The cohort is intended to be a forum where CSOs and governments can design transparency reforms to help to tackle corruption.

The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort feeds directly into one of the three thematic pillars of the Summit for Democracy: addressing and fighting corruption. More than 40 countries made approximately 125 commitments broadly related to anti-corruption during the First Summit, around one-third of which addressed money in politics, including electoral reform (Foti et al. 2022). Other commitments focused on financial crimes and abuses of power, such as whistleblower protection reforms, while others concentrated on the intersection of anti-corruption and democratic freedoms, such as protecting journalists' independence through transparency in media ownership and regulated political advertising. Half of the anti-corruption commitments made

at the First Summit are relevant to at least one principle of open government: transparency, civic participation or public accountability (OECD iLibrary n.d.).

The importance of anti-corruption priorities to the summit process is reflected in the establishment of four different Democracy Cohorts focused on different important aspects of countering corruption globally. The anti-corruption Democracy Cohorts stressed the need to avoid overlap while at the same time highlighting the need for collaboration and to identify areas of mutual interest and concern. Representatives from the different cohorts attended each other's meetings.

The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort is co-led by the US Government, the OGP and the Brookings Institution. Around 20 countries and a number of CSOs are regularly involved in its work, depending on the thematic focus of the cohort's activities.

The cohort defined three priority areas for its work in support of financial transparency and the fight against global corruption:

1. Ensuring the effective implementation of beneficial ownership registries to prevent corrupt actors and financial enablers from abusing corporate structures to launder and move the proceeds of corruption.

2. Countering the misuse of professional services industries to facilitate, encourage and enable corruption.

3. Maximizing transparency in public procurement to minimize opportunities for corruption and ensure that open procurement systems are reinforced through effective complaints and oversight mechanisms.

The cohort has stressed the importance of supporting the implementation not only of the commitments on financial transparency announced at the First Summit, but also the recommendations by the FATF. It seeks to do so while maintaining full compliance with its obligations under the UNCAC. The cohort organized a set of workshops and meetings to advance, strengthen and support relevant summit commitments (see Table 4).

These meetings resulted in concrete recommendations and suggestions on how to improve and advance the cohort's work. For instance, during the October meeting, participants noted the value of beneficial ownership reform for a wider set of problems than anti-corruption and anti-money laundering, such as conflicts of interest. Participants proposed a focus on financial transparency related to politics and lobbying; public procurement; and the roles of legal, financial and other enablers and gatekeepers. Enablers and gatekeepers constituted one of the key issues in the February and March 2023 Spotlight discussions. During the IACC meeting in December, CSOs recommended strengthening collaboration between governments, CSOs and businesses, and establishing an independent reporting mechanism to review commitments. Co-leads reiterated the need to focus on fewer

Table 4. **Financial Transparency and Integrity meetings and Spotlight discussions**

October 2022 meeting	The cohort came together to discuss beneficial ownership transparency. Participants explored beneficial ownership reform efforts, issues related to privacy, data verification and transnational collaboration opportunities for ownership registries and advancing the use of data.
December 2022 meeting	In the margins of the high-level International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), the cohort met to discuss progress to date on anti-corruption reforms to support financial transparency and integrity in the Year of Action, and to examine what is needed to address implementation gaps in the lead up to the Second Summit for Democracy and beyond.
February and March 2023 Spotlight discussions	The cohort held two Spotlight discussions on *enablers* (lawyers, accountants, state agents who may enable corrupt practices) and *open contracting and procurement*, also with a focus on countering risks of money laundering and misuse in the professional services sector. In addition, the cohort discussed key considerations for beneficial ownership reform, challenges and opportunities for enhancing transparency, and accountability in public procurement.

Source: Authors' compilation.

issues with higher potential impact, highlighting topics such as beneficial ownership transparency, open procurement, and addressing enabling and gatekeeping industries. Participants also argued that the cohort's work could be enhanced by strengthening engagement with the private sector, encouraging governments to make commitments beyond the Second Summit and encouraging participation by additional countries. The December event also led to an agreement to issue a Call to Action at the Second Summit. The February 2023 Spotlight discussions focused on procurement and corruption, and money laundering risks in professional services sectors, with a focus on enablers and gatekeepers. It also included a discussion of progress on developing a document outlining beneficial ownership registries ahead of the Second Summit.

In the Call to Action, cohort members pledged to share information on steps planned, and to consider new commitments, support one another in the process of undertaking relevant reforms, work to ensure the durability of anti-corruption reforms, champion anti-corruption principles as a foreign policy priority, convene regularly, support the efforts of other Democracy Cohorts dedicated to anti-corruption, and enhance the inclusivity and representativeness of the cohort.

To ensure that the Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort's efforts and reforms are sustainable and durable, the cohort is engaging with existing mechanisms to foster and measure the implementation of relevant commitments. Both the OGP and the Brookings Institution have been supporting civil society engagement in the cohort. The OGP for instance has used its established mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of Summit for Democracy commitments by embedding commitments into its OGP Action Plans in collaboration with local CSOs, where applicable. The cohort is also using existing international structures and standards, including the FATF recommendations, to support the implementation of its activities and relevant summit commitments (Financial Action Task Force 2022). The FATF works to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism and has established the global standard on beneficial ownership transparency for companies. The cohort is working to develop a document of key considerations for countries establishing and operating beneficial ownership registries for the Second Summit. The Financial Transparency and Integrity cohort aims for the Second Summit to serve as a springboard for further collective action to sustain its work beyond March 2023.

CASE **STUDY 3. DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES COHORT**

The Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies cohort was organized to advance the idea that the most important democratic reform necessary is to create a meaningful role for people, placing citizen engagement and meaningful inclusion at the heart of a healthy democratic society.

A key value of democracy is deliberation and the importance of listening to and considering the evidence and perspectives offered by others. Productive, meaningful, honest and inclusive discussion is central to democratic change and improvement. These values have been challenged in recent years. People feel disconnected and disengaged from a political sphere that increasingly feels like it belongs to the elite, while online manipulation sows public mistrust and polarization, and distorts productive and respectful public discussion.

In response to these significant challenges to citizen participation and input into their democracies and decision making, there has been a recent push to integrate people's voices into policy- and decision-making processes in new and transparent ways. These solutions will underlie the other innovations inspired by the First Summit, as they target the more underlying central drivers of mistrust and disengagement in the political process—the public themselves. Central to the process is the creation of partnerships between citizens and the decision makers in their government, ensuring that their voices are adequately and effectively represented in its actions. It is important for democracies to leverage the processes enabled by new technologies to engage with and involve citizens in their institutions and the democratic process.

One of the most notable tools that has been tested more than 600 times in democracies across the globe is the power of citizens' assemblies. These initiatives bring together a broadly representative, diverse group from the public, and engage them in productive discussions that equip them with the time and resources to process complex topics, listen to experts, stakeholders and each other, and come to collaborative conclusions with shared ownership. Citizens' assemblies and other such innovative participation tools are working and spreading in nearly every OECD country (OECD iLibrary 2020), creating a strong base of evidence on which other countries can build. However, the cohort notes that the USA has been slow to take up these concepts and tools, which was reflected in the topic's omission from the First Summit.

The Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies cohort is co-led by the European Commission and Ireland, both of which have unique knowledge and experience to offer in arranging deliberative mechanisms to support democracy. The Irish experience with the 2018 abortion referendum shows the usefulness of deliberative democratic tools in tackling thorny issues where both sides have dug in their heels. Instead of allowing politicians to lead the discussion, 100 everyday people were given the opportunity to engage in a structured discussion with one another, coming to conclusions that felt like they truly belonged to the people rather than to an unknowable elite. Many of their proposals passed through the legislature, and the referendum question was ultimately backed by 67 per cent of voters (Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy 2022).

The Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE), facilitated by the European Commission, demonstrated how new technological evolutions can structure and guide meaningful discussions, even across a diverse set of viewpoints, languages and backgrounds from 27 different countries. The panels at the COFE were structured using algorithms that reflected the socio-economic, geographic and gender diversity of the group, while also weighing the voices of those under 25 more strongly so that the youth voice was adequately heard. Tools enabled by artificial intelligence can be useful to help pool ideas and organize the outcomes of discussions, showing where there is the most agreement and what the main options are to move forward with these ideas.

The civil society participants organized under the umbrella of the newDemocracy foundation (Australia) included Iain Walker of the Citizens' Convention on UK Democracy (UK); Prof Jane Suiter of Dublin City University (Ireland); Dawn Nakagawa of the Berggruen Institute (USA); Yves Dejaeghere of FIDE (Belgium); Claudia Chwalisz of DemocracyNext (International); Dominik Hierlemann of Bertelsmann Stiftung (Germany); Linn Davis of Healthy Democracy (USA); and Peter MacLeod of MASS LBP (Canada). The cohort was especially open to new participants and ideas, and public communications frequently sought new input and collaboration to help expand deliberative democratic ideals across borders and to create shared leadership on a framework for future cooperation.

Work on the cohort started with the open letters submitted to President Joe Biden and Under Secretary Uzra Zeya in January 2022. The cohort was officially launched at a virtual event on 17 January 2023. The cohort organizers argued for deliberative democracy, and especially citizens' assemblies, to be formally included in the summit process and the cohorts. The two letters stressed the importance of structured and inclusive citizen engagement in revitalizing democracy and were signed by many leading figures in the field. The summit organizers received the letters positively and gave the green light to establish the Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies cohort, which met regularly and made much progress throughout 2022.

In a demonstration of the cohort's significant progress during the Year of Action, the cohort has already fed its work into a related two-year EU-funded project, 'Citizen Z: Strengthening the participation of young citizens in democratic and civic life', which will help to continue the cohort's momentum past the Second Summit. The cohort is holding an event on 13–15 March 2023 aimed at CSOs, researchers in democratic studies, practitioners, youth associations, teachers and youth workers, policymakers and representatives of public authorities. The project will help to improve understanding of deliberative democracy and the application of its methods with the goal of stimulating interest in civic and political life among young people and involving them in the decision-making process. The event is organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP) and its partners in partnership with the European Parliament, demonstrating how the EU institutions are working together under the umbrella of cohort activities to support the goals of the summit.

Over the course of 2022, the cohort published a Declaration (Department of Taoisigh and European Commission n.d.) that stressed the importance and demonstrated successes of citizens' assemblies. The declaration made the case for their importance in building public trust against the growing strength of autocracy, ensuring that decisions are taken through thinking, listening and understanding, rather than just reaching for simple yes/no choices; and engaging citizens in lesson-building and learning from experience. The cohort aspires to renew trust and faith in democracy, and will nurture this goal at the individual, national and global levels.

The publication also features an agenda of 12 commitments, at the shared international level and the national level, in terms of learning, exploration and commitment to OECD principles, and moving from projects to the creation of permanent deliberative fixtures in our democracies (see Table 5). Three of the 12 commitments propose ambitious international initiatives to support the development of a global architecture of deliberative democracy mechanisms beyond the summit, on which the cohort also organized its Working Groups (see Box 1). The Working Groups met monthly online to incorporate the work done between meetings, ensuring that their work has a solid basis in evidence, science and impartial methodology.

Table 5. Model commitments published by the Deliberative Democracy cohort

International level	National level OECD principles	National level Projects on permanence
Commit to the 2022 Declaration on Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies. Create a Global Marshall Plan for Democracy to empower countries with new or fragile democratic institutions by supporting and funding deliberative projects. Support and advocate the use of supranational democratic development funds for citizens' assemblies as a highly promising means of countering polarization, misinformation and low levels of public trust. Support and participate in a Summit for Democracy Global Deliberation on Democracy, giving citizens a significant voice at this and future Summits. Support an existing, trusted global institution, such as the OECD or UN Democracy Fund, to act as a clearinghouse for project trials and their successes, giving nations access to a global 'What Works for Democracy'.	Host an informational workshop for elected representatives to ensure they are informed on the array of democratic innovations that are proving effective, and to generate an understanding of the critical success factors in their use. Join a Senior Ministerial Coordination Group for bi-annual calls to remain informed on major international project experiences using citizens' assemblies. Commit to the principles and guidelines listed in the OECD 'Deliberative Wave' advice as representing a quality standard on more meaningful community engagement. Conduct a national-level citizens' assembly.	Establish a National Democracy Action Fund to be used for democratic innovation projects at the regional and local levels, where budgets are otherwise unavailable or insufficient. Create an Office of Citizen Deliberation as an institution providing centralized and high-quality process design and operational capability across the public sector. Institutionalize a formal structure for citizen deliberation within the parliamentary process, e.g., through integration with committees.

Source: Department of Taoisigh and European Commission, 'President Biden's Summit for Democracy 2022: Deliberative Democracy & Citizens' Assembly cohort', [n.d.] <https://cop-demos.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/UPLOADS/Files/S4D_Model%20Commitments_October%202022_Distribution%20Version.pdf>, accessed 15 March 2023.

Box 1. Working Groups under the Deliberative Democracy cohort

1. A Global Citizens' Deliberation Working Group for participating countries to support that would give citizens a more significant voice at the Summit for Democracy (S4D) and future summits. The deliberation would continue in session beyond the summit, giving citizens the opportunity to assess challenges to democracy, learn about reform and innovation, and find common ground.

2. A Marshall Plan for Democracy Working Group to energize and focus activity in new democracies threatened by autocracy by supporting and funding deliberative projects. Given the significant threat posed by Russia, priority will be given to Central and Eastern European nations.

3. A Global 'What Works' Centre for Deliberative Democracy Working Group, which would make rigorous evidence and advice available to all for free, as well as advocating the usefulness and importance of deliberative democracy. An existing, trusted global institution would support its implementation and maintenance, and help to supply trusted and rigorous evidence.

Looking towards the Second Summit and beyond, the cohort suggested that the organizers further consider the practicalities of making the means, methods and outcomes of citizen engagement available, given the unique contexts of every democracy. This process should include a standing, independent International Citizens' Assembly, in session throughout the year, that would contribute ideas to Annual Summits on Democracy. These recommendations would help to address a significant criticism of the First Summit—its lack of citizen engagement.

The added value of the Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies cohort to the Summit for Democracy process and beyond is significant. The cohort has made practical suggestions on the Second Summit and efforts to endure. It has also met frequently to develop these ideas in detail and help establish the enduring processes that will ensure that they are brought to fruition. In its practical recommendations and model commitments, the cohort drew on its well-developed knowledge and evidence base, connecting abstract summit ideals to solutions on the ground. Key to the cohort's contribution is that it recognized from the beginning that democratic innovation is an ongoing process, and that it has incorporated lessons and ideas for ongoing Summits for Democracy and made the explicit point that citizen engagement and deliberation is as important to democracy as the right to vote.

CASE **STUDY 4. TECHNOLOGY FOR DEMOCRACY COHORT**

The Technology for Democracy cohort was established to promote the use of technologies and digital connectivity to strengthen democracies and enhance the enjoyment of democratic freedoms, and to ensure that technologies are deployed in a free, responsible, secure and resilient way.

As the online sphere becomes more central to people's lives and democratic discussion, keeping the Internet free and open, and maintaining respect for human rights online have become increasingly important. According to the Commitment Dashboard, 27 countries made commitments related to a free and safe online sphere, and 12 made commitments related to digitalization. Online solutions are also increasingly affordable and available to governments seeking to make the provision of public goods more efficient, transparent and accessible. The online sphere is also being more frequently targeted by autocrats wanting to maintain control over their societies, however, as Internet blackouts and restrictions have become a common tool of autocratic governments and damaging technologies are exported beyond a country's borders to help malign actors elsewhere. With democracy in decline globally, and countries more interconnected than ever, it is paramount that like-minded countries come together to find solutions to shared challenges and bolster people's freedom online.

The Technology for Democracy cohort is co-led by the governments of Estonia and the UK and the lead NGO partner, Access Now. The structure of the cohort

recognizes the importance of the explicit inclusion of CSOs in the cohort process, as the under-inclusion of civil society has been a major criticism of the Summit for Democracy process. Access Now was therefore given responsibility for recommending CSOs that could participate in the cohort, and for communicating and engaging with these organizations in the course of cohort activities. Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Indonesia also participated in the cohort. A broad range of CSOs were invited to participate, covering a diverse group of regional and topical stakeholders. As of 23 February 2023, the cohort featured over 150 civil society, governmental and private sector organizations from 40 countries (Access Now 2023).

The cohort has taken an explicitly collaborative approach to its activities: decision making is to be achieved by 'rough consensus', meaning that individual co-leads cannot block decisions or participants—these choices must be made together. Planning activities also took the cross-border, international nature of online activities and solutions into account, and a cross-regional group of countries, CSOs, academia and private sector companies was invited to participate. The cohort met in plenary on a regular basis, both virtually and in a hybrid format, with participants suggesting locations and events. The first plenary meeting of the cohort was held virtually on 28 July 2022. The official public launch of the cohort took place at the Tallinn Digital Summit in Estonia on 10 October 2022.

The cohort divided its activities across three Working Groups, each of which was co-facilitated by at least one government and one NGO lead (see Table 6). There was also to have been at least one private sector participant in each. The cohort specified that deliverables should be kept to a minimum number of concrete items. The aims of the cohort were to derive practical outputs focused on real world applications and to provide possible solutions to shared challenges.

The cohort has been very active in creating space for inclusive discussion and participatory solution building. The time between the cohort's first meeting and its launch was used to great effect. Over 90 participants attended the 28 July 2022 plenary meeting. Ideas were collected to inform the operation of Working Groups, give examples of existing initiatives to channel its work and, most importantly, ensure that the cohort's work will continue into 2023 and beyond the Second Summit. Consideration was given early on in the process to how cohort work could be communicated to wider audiences and partners, helping to generate wider awareness and buy-in of its work and increase the chances of lasting efforts. August 2022 saw opportunities for feedback and specific proposals, when the Working Groups held their first meetings. A second plenary meeting was held in September. These inputs and discussions contributed to the cohort's launch, at which over 32 countries were represented. Voices from the Global South were also incorporated. The cohort used the Internet Governance Forum held in Ethiopia on 28 November to 2 December 2022 as another opportunity to collaborate.

Table 6. **Technology for Democracy cohort Working Groups**

Working Group	Objective
Technology to support open and secure access to the internet	This Working Group aims to support people in retaining free and open access to the Internet, enabling inclusive online participation, promoting online enjoyment of human rights and pushing back against the increasing phenomenon of politically motivated government-imposed blackouts and restrictions. The principles outlined in the Declaration on the Future of the Internet will guide its work, which will build on existing work by CSOs, private sector industry, and existing international groups such as the Freedom Online Coalition.
Harnessing the potential of technology/data for the benefit of open, democratic societies	This Working Group will engage in activities to help implement core shared rights and principles to ensure free, responsible, inclusive, secure and resilient development and deployment of technologies. Key to this process will be ensuring democratic participation and careful consideration of how technologies could be employed for malign purposes, including necessary solutions and safeguards. The Working Group will support the development of guidelines for responsible use of privacy-enhancing technologies.
Technology for good governance	This Working Group will focus on the solutions offered by digital technologies for more efficient, innovative, open and inclusive governance. Knowledge sharing on how countries can develop open and interoperable digital governance that maintains respect for human rights and the inclusion of marginalized people will be central to its activities. The Working Group will also help to connect the design and development of these tools with civil society and to incorporate risk analysis and due diligence into the process.

Source: Summit for Democracy, 'Tech for Democracy cohort meeting notes and concept', [n.d.], <https://summit4democracy. org/tech-for-democracy-cohort-meeting-notes-and-concept>, accessed 15 March 2023

The Working Groups identified practical solutions to work towards early on in the process and at the 10 October 2022 meeting, and these ideas have directly informed the cohort's outputs as of 23 February 2023 (Access Now 2023). Potential future actions to support an open and secure Internet include a portal to track Internet shutdowns in real time, harnessing reporting from civil society and other existing initiatives, and communicating the economic impact of shutdowns; building on Access Now's #KeepItOn coalition to widely communicate the stories of those most impacted by Internet shutdowns; and an election watch to track shutdowns and their impact during elections. On top of the boost the cohort gave to the visibility of Access Now's campaign, it also made contributions to the expansion and improvement of the Internet Society's Pulse Project, which also works to document and publicize Internet shutdowns and their impact globally.

Suggestions for future action in the Working Group on harnessing the potential of technology for open societies included supporting increased algorithmic transparency, better application and enforcement of data privacy standards and using online solutions to help people better participate in civil society, especially during elections. Activities by this Working Group include: a stakeholder dialogue on developing a shared understanding of privacy-enhancing technologies and guidelines for responsible development and

deployment, facilitated by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative; and engagement with civil society, governments and tech companies to develop recommendations using technology to help people with disabilities fully participate in elections, facilitated by the German Marshall Fund.

The technology for good governance Working Group proposed supporting transparent and digital public infrastructure, secure and trustworthy connectivity, and maintaining inclusive technology that minimizes, rather than exacerbates, existing inequalities. The main activity of this Working Group is a digital public infrastructure project to enhance government transparency, which will showcase examples of open and secure digital infrastructure targeted at government stakeholders.

When considering the summit process and beyond, the Technology for Democracy cohort is a useful example of how cohort activities can feed into existing campaign efforts by co-leads and/or participants. Notably, the cohort made it a priority from its inception to plug cohort activities into relevant ongoing discussions or existing initiatives, such as Denmark's Tech for Democracy, the OECD Global Forum on Building Trust and Reforming Democracy, and the Alliance for Democracies. Possible synergies between the cohort and other Democracy Cohorts were identified early on involving coordination with, for example, the Information Integrity, Media Freedom and Elections Integrity cohorts marked as a high priority to ensure efficient workstreams with no duplication of effort.

The Working Group on technology to support open and secure access to the Internet built on this dynamic. The goal for its work established early in the process was for it to be channelled to harness existing mechanisms and initiatives, instead of creating new ones. The Access Now #KeepItOn campaign, a global network created in 2016 to fight against Internet shutdowns with the Shutdown Impact Stories Project, has promoted its activities through the cohort and helped to publicize and emphasize the economic and human impact of shutdowns. This effort helped CSOs among the cohort members and beyond document Internet shutdowns and their impact through the personal stories of individuals affected, providing a personal perspective on the statistics on increasing numbers of Internet shutdowns globally (Access Now 2022).

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This paper provides an overview of the purpose, work and outputs of the 16 Democracy Cohorts established or announced by February 2023 in the context of the Summit for Democracy organized by the US Government.

The main contribution of the Democracy Cohorts to the Summit for Democracy process is as key drivers of change by following up on and scaling up existing commitments, and establishing a vision for democratic renewal beyond the Second Summit.

The information contained in this paper was last updated on 1 March 2023 and contains updates on cohort activities up to and including this date.

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