





Strategy 2018–2022

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

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Introduction



The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with a mandate to advance democracy worldwide. The objectives of International IDEA as set out in its Statutes are:

- to promote and advance sustainable democracy worldwide;
- to improve and consolidate democratic electoral processes worldwide;
- to broaden the understanding and promote the implementation and dissemination of the norms, rules and guidelines that apply to multi-party pluralism and democratic processes;
- to strengthen and support national capacity to develop the full range of democratic instruments;
- to provide a meeting place for exchanges between all those involved in electoral processes in the context of democratic institution-building;
- to increase knowledge and enhance learning about democratic electoral processes; and
- to promote transparency and accountability, professionalism and efficiency in the electoral process in the context of democratic development (1995: 2).

This document presents International IDEA's third institutional Strategy, which covers the five-year period from 2018 to 2022. The 2018–22 Strategy builds on International IDEA's strengths, comparative advantage and niche position in the democracy support field. It also seeks to address emerging and current opportunities as well as perceived threats in the democracy landscape. It provides a clear strategic focus and framework, with sufficient flexibility to enable the Institute to respond to emerging needs and challenges at the global, regional and country levels.

1. Vision



Our vision

A world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

1.1. International IDEA's understanding of democracy

International IDEA's vision of democracy is derived from the definition of democracy formulated in its State of Democracy (SoD) Assessment Framework (Beetham et al. 2008). This definition is based on two fundamental principles: *popular control* over decision-making and *political equality* among those exercising that control.

More concretely, these principles refer to 'popular control over elected rulers and public decision-making, equal rights and liberties, political freedom and freedom from want, the rule of law, justice and security' (Beetham et al. 2008: 17). Hence, for International IDEA democracy is, at its core, a system in which the government is controlled by the people and in which citizens are considered equals in the exercise of that control.

Moreover, International IDEA considers democracy essential for promoting and guaranteeing human rights, and believes that participation in political life, including government, is part of human rights, proclaimed and guaranteed by international treaties and declarations, as well as the Institute's Statutes (1995). For a full description of International IDEA's conceptual understanding of democracy, see *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide* (Beetham et al. 2008) and the Background Paper (Sisk 2017) issued in conjunction with *The Global State of Democracy: Exploring Democracy's Resilience* (International IDEA 2017).



For International IDEA, democracy can guarantee equality and basic freedoms; promote inclusive political processes; empower ordinary people; resolve disagreements through peaceful dialogue; respect differences; ensure legitimate and capable government and bring about political and social renewal without convulsions. Importantly, for International IDEA, democracy is not seen as being achieved through elections alone (Beetham et al. 2008: 17).

The fundamental attributes of democracy

Building on the SoD Assessment Framework, the conceptual framework of International IDEA's new biennial publication, *The Global State of Democracy*, assigns five fundamental attributes for the functioning of a healthy democracy (which are disaggregated into several subattributes), namely:

1. Representative government as basis for governing;
2. Guarantee and protection of fundamental rights;
3. Checks on government;
4. Impartial administration; and
5. Participatory engagement.

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

International IDEA's SoD Assessment Framework also identifies a set of mediating values—participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency and solidarity—that explain how the principles of popular control and political equality translate into a country's institutional arrangements and practice.

Furthermore, the principle of inclusive political participation (that is, the participation and inclusion of all groups in society, including women, minority groups, socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged groups and other marginalized groups) is seen as a basic right and an important dimension of democracy. International IDEA also believes that inclusive political participation can be an important means to prevent social unrest, instability and violent conflict (International IDEA 2017: 5). Annex A of this Strategy contains a more elaborate definition of International IDEA's vision of democracy.

Beyond the core principles, attributes and mediating values of democracy, International IDEA believes that democracy is a universal human aspiration and an experience that is pursued and lived in different ways around the world; that democracy comes in multiple forms; and that these forms are in constant evolution.



Hence, International IDEA recognizes that there is no single and universally applicable model of democracy, and that there is no end-point in the process of improving democracy (International IDEA 2012: 1). International IDEA also recognizes that the democratic ideals are easier to endorse in principle than to realize in practice: ‘There is no such thing as a perfect democracy. Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair, but rather a shifting continuum’ (Beetham et al. 2008: 17). Hence, International IDEA recognizes that democracy is a process, that can be subject to transition and consolidation processes that at times are fragile, reversible and perishable, and remain vulnerable to standstills, delays, setbacks and backsliding (International IDEA 2015).

International IDEA believes that the critical choices are best made, and the quality of democracy best gauged, by those directly concerned: citizens themselves. International IDEA views the local and national level as the starting point for democratic reform as democracy is seen as having to be home-grown and built from within societies, and cannot be prescribed, imported or exported (International IDEA 2012; Beetham et al. 2008). Finally, for International IDEA, strengthening democratic norms, processes and institutions and promoting active citizenship remain vital goals and key components of conflict prevention, peacebuilding efforts, respect for the rule of law and sustainable development (International IDEA 2015).

1.2. International IDEA’s vision and the 2030 Agenda

International IDEA’s vision is firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed unanimously by 193 United Nations Member States in September 2015. Indeed, International IDEA believes that democratic principles are core to and important enablers for the realization of the entire 2030 Agenda. Rule of law; access to justice; accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; and fundamental freedoms, are fundamental cornerstones for achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, failure to achieve progress on SDG 16 (see Box 1) is likely to affect progress on all the other SDGs. Hence, for International IDEA, democracy, while of intrinsic value, is also a key enabler for sustainable development and draws its sustainability and strength from its capacity to meet people’s expectations that it will deliver socially inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

While democracy is core to (and a wider enabler of) the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are of particular relevance to the mandate of International IDEA are SDG 16 (promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels); SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls); and SDG 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries).

International IDEA and the Sustainable Development Goals

The following Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are particularly relevant to the mandate of International IDEA:

- SDG 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
- SDG 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.
- SDG 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- SDG 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- SDG 5.9: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Note: for SDGs 16.6 and 16.7, in addition to the indicators defined by the 2030 Agenda, the Community of Democracies (CoD) has also developed a set of supplemental indicators to monitor progress in achieving these targets (CoD 2017).

2. Mission statement



Based on International IDEA's vision, mandate and comparative advantage, and current threats to democracy, International IDEA's mission is as follows.

Our mission

International IDEA advances democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and an enabler of sustainable development, through support to the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels.

International IDEA's mission has been revised to consider the current democracy context and the present threats to it, in the form of democratic backsliding in some parts of the world. The new mission statement therefore emphasizes the importance of advancing and safeguarding democracy (to counteract reversals).

The concept of 'supporting democracy', however, remains key to International IDEA's approach, whereby it views itself as a partner to country-owned reform processes. The revised mission statement also emphasizes the role of International IDEA's engagement in different contexts—at the global level, and at the country level, in contexts where democracy and democratic institutions and processes are being built, where they need strengthening and where democracy needs safeguarding.

The mission statement thus sets the frame for more context-specific modalities of engagement designed to enhance International IDEA's effectiveness and impact. It also underlines International IDEA's vision of democracy as an end goal, a universal human aspiration and an enabler of sustainable development. It should also be noted that the reference to 'democratic political institutions' in the mission statement refers implicitly to the mediating values explained in Section 1. These are not repeated in the mission statement to ensure that it remains succinct.

3. Context analysis



The democracy landscape in 2017 presents an ambivalent picture, with significant advances in democratic progress in some areas, coupled with persisting and emerging challenges, in new and established democracies alike. This section presents a brief overview of some of the main advances, opportunities and challenges to democracy in 2017.

3.1. Advances and opportunities for democracy

Among the advances and opportunities for democracy is the sustained growth in the number of democracies worldwide over the last 40 years. Advances have also been seen in the increase in political representation of women. People's increasing knowledge and utilization of new information and communications technologies (ICTs), including social media, has facilitated a global spread of information—particularly among young people—that makes it easier for people to make their voices heard. It has also transformed citizens' engagement in political life, beyond the realm of electoral participation, and enabled democracy innovations. Advances have also been made in enhancing government transparency and access to information.

Another positive trend is the advance in decentralization around the world, which has increased the number of decentralized forms of government at the local level. Significant progress has also been made in the past two decades in aggregate measures of human development and service provision. At the global level, the endorsement of the SDGs in 2015 as a global commitment to tackle global development and governance challenges over the next 15 years represents a significant advance for development and good governance.

3.2. Challenges to democracy

Despite these positive trends, several serious challenges and threats to democracy remain. New challenges are also emerging, which may endanger gains in new democracies and corrode democratic principles and practice in established



democracies. While some scholars have identified significant declines in democracy for more than a decade, International IDEA takes a more nuanced stance, arguing that the historical advances in democracy building show consistent gains, and recognizing that democracy presents both signs of resilience as well as cyclical downturns and democratic breakdowns that, if not counteracted, could potentially break the upward historical trend.

A remaining challenge is the persistence of autocratic rule in some parts of the world. Moreover, a number of countries that transitioned to democracy during the so-called third wave of democracy are seeing challenges to their democratic gains. While electoral advances have been made globally, many countries around the world suffer from problems of electoral integrity, exacerbated by weak systems of electoral justice.

A number of countries are also witnessing democratic ‘backsliding’, in the form of extensions of constitutional term limits for political leaders; increased concentration of power in executive branches; undermining of the autonomy of the judiciary; blurred boundaries between powers; abuse of state-of-emergency powers; limitations on political freedoms; restrictions on the media; and, in some countries, the tight control of democratic competition and restriction of opposition parties. Attempts to curb civil society action have led to a shrinking space for civil society in a number of countries. A rollback of rights and freedoms is sometimes justified by promises for order and security, as some regions experience growing levels of crime and violence, as well as increasing vulnerability to terrorist attacks, a phenomenon now extending to established democracies as well.

Another negative trend discernible in transitional democracies across all regions of the world is the combination of elements of authoritarianism with democracy, in so-called hybrid regimes. These often adopt the formal characteristics of democracy (while allowing little real competition for power) with weak respect for basic political and civil rights. In some of the established democracies of the West, governments stemming from new populist movements with authoritarian tendencies also threaten to roll back human rights, especially for political opposition, minorities and vulnerable populations such as migrants.

A number of countries, particularly in Africa and West Asia, are still exposed to deep and intense conflict or civil war, which contributes to the weakening of democratic institutions as well as social structures, and negatively affects the prospects for democratization in those and neighbouring countries. These conflicts have led to massive internal displacement and refugee movements into neighbouring countries and regions, including Europe which has had political implications, boosting anti-immigration and populist parties and their candidates. Populism and nationalism is on the rise, in both new and established democracies, which risks corroding democracy from within.



State capture, corruption, and the unchecked infusion of money in politics increases the undemocratic influence of powerful elites, both in new and established democracies, and contributes to the undermining of trust in democracy, as well as its legitimacy. Moreover, while transparency legislation may be in place, implementation practice and oversight are often lacking.

Both old and new democracies face challenges in the form widespread discontent with politics, low levels of public trust in traditional democratic institutions (including political parties), increased disengagement on the part of the electorate (particularly young people) with regard to political institutions, dissatisfaction with the ability of democracy to deliver economic well-being and equality, and support for undemocratic forms of government and anti-establishment political parties. Moreover, cyber insecurity has increasingly become a threat, including to electoral processes, that needs concerted action by both established and new democracies.

Moreover, while progress has been achieved in the political representation of women, considerable representational deficits remain, particularly in formal political structures.

Democracy's resilience is being tested daily, across the world. Hence, democracy cannot be taken for granted, and further measures to safeguard democracy through innovative, flexible and adaptive approaches are urgently required.

4. Lessons from the 2012–17 Strategy cycle



International IDEA has taken a number of lessons from the implementation of its 2012–17 Strategy, and these have helped inform the choice of new strategic directions for the 2018–22 Strategy.

An institutional evaluation of International IDEA's 2012–17 Strategy found that one of the Institute's main strengths and comparative advantages is its 'think-and-do-tank' identity, which combines global, policy-relevant research and international comparative knowledge production with country-level technical assistance on democratic reform, informing each other in a virtuous circle. In the 2018–22 Strategy period, International IDEA will therefore further build and capitalize on this strength, filling a key niche in the democracy support field. In this vein, and responding to current threats to democracy (even in established democracies), the 2018–22 Strategy features an increased focus on the analysis of democratic trends, challenges and opportunities at the global and regional levels. This will enable International IDEA to contribute not just as a technical knowledge provider on specific issues, but also to help inform and facilitate global and regional policy debates on democracy more broadly.

International IDEA will scale up its work on issues which have become even more relevant to the prevailing democracy landscape, including subnational democracy, parliamentary strengthening, ICTs and democracy, and citizen engagement and social movement participation in democratic processes.

To ensure that the work of International IDEA supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the SDG framework will provide the basis for International IDEA's strategy and all of the Institute's activities will also be designed and implemented with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in mind.

In its 2018–22 Strategy, International IDEA will continue to prioritize the strengthening of new and young democracies while also, cautiously, continuing to



engage in countries with authoritarian or hybrid regimes. For these countries, International IDEA will conduct thorough risk assessments prior to engagement and seek to mitigate risks as far as possible. Moreover, the main focus in these contexts will be on impartial engagement with a diversity of non-state actors, rather than dealing solely with state representatives.

Also, considering the malaise of democracy experienced in some more established democracies, International IDEA will continue to engage (as initiated during the 2012–17 Strategy) in such contexts. Engagement in this context is likely to involve knowledge production that seeks to extract lessons from democracy building, analysis of democratic trends and outreach.

While International IDEA recognizes the important linkages between democracy and development, one of the lessons from the 2012–17 Strategy is that the broad nature of this impact area and the wide range of themes it encompasses—some of which International IDEA does not currently address in terms of comprehensive programming—makes it more suitable to implement as a cross-cutting theme, rather than as a standalone impact area. This is also, in part, a consequence of a shrinking resource base, which forces International IDEA to focus and prioritize its activities on those issues where it possesses a comparative advantage and established niche.

International IDEA has traditionally focused on formal democratic institutions and processes, and as an IGO it is viewed as having a comparative advantage in this area. However, in the 2018–22 Strategy, International IDEA will scale up its work to more explicitly explore the role of citizen participation and social movements in the democratic process. The rationale for this recognizes, on one hand, the role of citizens in the democratic equation and, on the other, the increasing prominence of citizen movements in the democracy landscape.

The institutional evaluation also highlighted the need to better document International IDEA's impact and ensure a greater focus on evaluating the results of its programmes and learning from past experiences. Consequently, the 2018–22 Strategy will ensure a greater focus on the measurement of results and impact orientation with mechanisms of internal and external evaluation and stocktaking.

An important lesson from the 2012–17 Strategy relates to the need for greater outreach to ensure policy relevance and influence. Better communication and active dissemination of International IDEA's work and knowledge production (including through web-based, social and traditional media) is essential and will be a clear focus of efforts in the 2018–22 Strategy. Until 2016, International IDEA's knowledge products were primarily issued in the form of hard-copy printed publications. In order to adapt to an increasingly digitalized world, the 2018–22 Strategy will emphasize adapting the formats and outreach of International IDEA's knowledge products to the digital needs of its target audiences.

5. International IDEA's added value and comparative advantage



The current democracy-building landscape is marked by advances and opportunities, as shown by citizens' increasing demands for participation. However, it is also characterized by several challenges to democracy, in both established and new democracies. In this complex context, International IDEA fills a key niche as a 'think-and-do-tank'. It combines the role of an impartial global knowledge provider on democracy with country- and region-specific technical assistance and advisory support to assess best-fit options, facilitate dialogue and strengthen capacities to negotiate and implement democratic reforms at national and subnational levels. While other organizations may focus on these functions, few, if any, consistently combine them by producing global knowledge and practical tools, based on comparative experience-sharing across regions, while advocating for a democracy-building perspective in multilateral policy forums.

International IDEA is the only intergovernmental organization (IGO) with an exclusive mandate to support democracy worldwide. The consolidation over more than 20 years of comparative knowledge and experience on the practice of democratic processes, institutions and reforms positions the organization as a leading and credible voice on democracy worldwide, as well as more specifically on issues such as electoral processes, electoral system design, the role of money in politics, gender equality and constitution-building.

International IDEA's membership includes democracies from all continents of the world, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of its action. Its IGO status, coupled with an impartial and non-prescriptive approach, provides it with access to policymakers that other international actors may not have, or may be prevented from having. In addition, International IDEA's partnerships with local organizations, and civil society make it an impartial bridge-builder between state and non-state actors in the countries in which it works.



Finally, International IDEA’s catalytic role in democracy building, especially through its strategic partnerships with the United Nations and regional organizations, enhances the effectiveness of international support to national efforts aimed at strengthening democracy and democratic institutions.

6. Strategic objective



To achieve International IDEA's mission, and in pursuit of its vision, International IDEA will, under the 2018–22 Strategy, *stimulate and contribute to the public debate on democracy and assist in strengthening processes, reforms, institutions and actors that build, advance and safeguard democracy*, with a specific focus on three impact areas:

1. electoral processes;
2. constitution-building processes; and
3. political participation and representation.

Emanating from the institution-wide strategic objective above, each impact area and programme (i.e. Global Programme and each of the four Regional Programmes) have defined their context-specific strategic objectives. Strategic objectives have also been defined for International IDEA's support functions, to ensure that these are aligned with and help achieve the institute-wide strategic objective. These are summarized in Annex B.

7. Impact areas



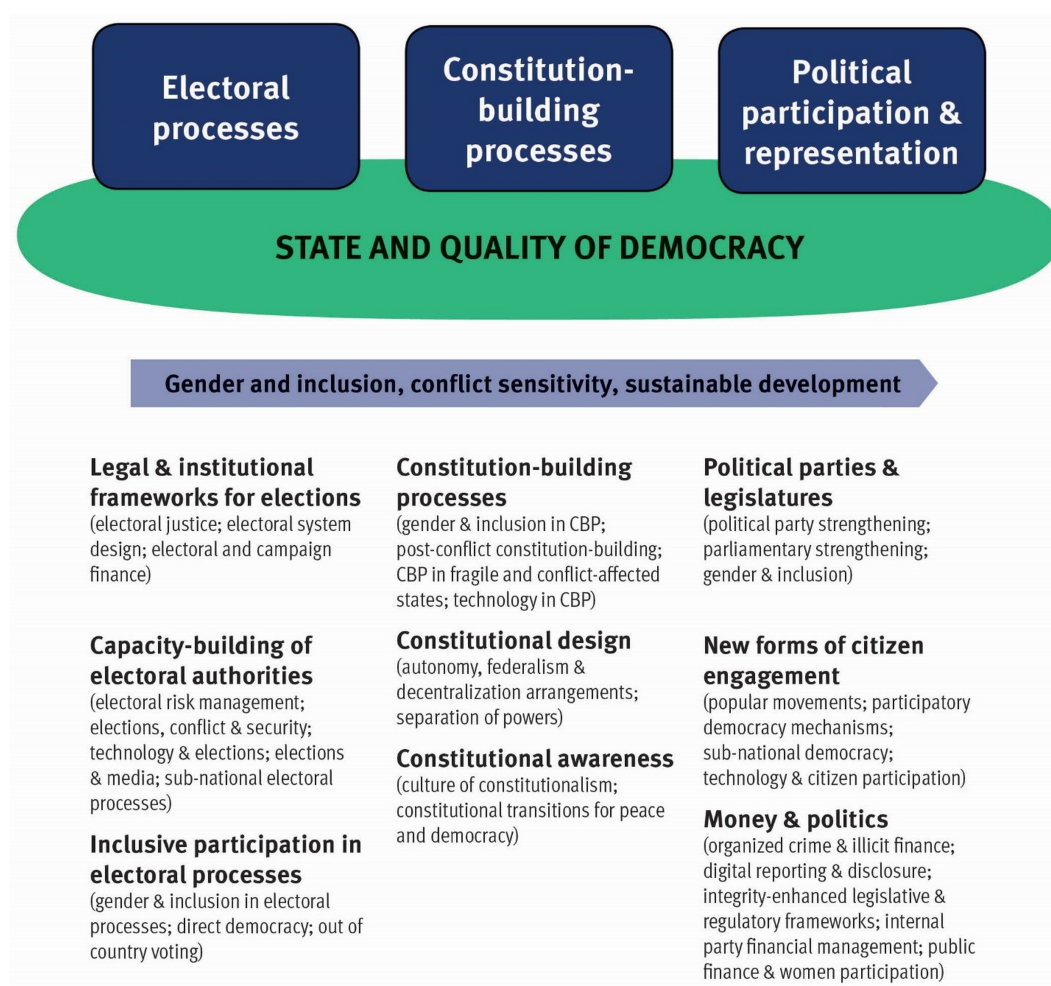
Based on the context analysis, its comparative advantage and niche, supported by a body of knowledge resources and expertise that sets a good foundation for the Institute to build on its track record of designing and strengthening inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes, International IDEA is convinced that three of the four impact areas outlined in the 2012–17 Strategy (Electoral Processes, Constitution-Building Processes, and Political Participation and Representation) remain relevant (as stand-alone impact areas) and responsive to contemporary challenges and threats to democracy.

Given the varied and fast-changing contexts within which this Strategy will be implemented, support will range from design and installation of formal institutions (e.g. in transitional contexts) to contributing to the strengthening of the qualitative and substantive aspects of democracy (e.g. strengthening mechanisms for inclusion, democratic accountability in service delivery, and respect for constitutionalism).

In the new Strategy period, International IDEA will contribute to advancing democracy through assessment and analysis of democratic trends at the regional and global levels. This work will be operationalized through International IDEA's biennial publication, *The Global State of Democracy*, which will be the 'glue' that binds together all of the Institute's impact areas and cross-cutting themes. As such, it will not be operationalized as a separate impact area, but will be integrated as an institution-wide initiative at the global and regional levels.

Thus, based on the current context for democracy, International IDEA's comparative advantage and the lessons from its 2012–17 Strategy (see Annex A), in the 2018–22 Strategy period, International IDEA will aim to stimulate and contribute to the public debate on democracy—through its expertise, analysis and knowledge—and to assist in strengthening processes, reforms, institutions and actors that build, advance and safeguard democracy through three main impact areas: Electoral Processes, Constitution-Building Processes, and Political Participation and Representation.

Impact areas and thematic scope of International IDEA's 2018–22 Strategy



Within the framework of International IDEA's mandate and mission, as well as the impact areas and themes of the 2018–22 Strategy, the Institute will position itself to be able to respond rapidly to changing circumstances in the democracy landscape, and to diverse regional contexts.

7.1. Impact areas and thematic scope

Electoral Processes

Through the **Electoral Processes** impact area, International IDEA will support the integrity of electoral institutions and processes. The focus will be on (a) the quality of the legal and institutional framework for elections; (b) the capacity of electoral authorities to implement their mandate; and (c) inclusive participation in electoral processes.



Examples of themes within this impact area include: electoral justice; elections, conflict and security; electoral risk management; elections and the media; electoral system design; gender and inclusion in electoral processes (with women and youth as special attention groups); technology and elections; electoral campaign finance; direct democracy; and subnational electoral processes.

The factors that constitute current challenges to democracy—including growing authoritarian populism; declining voter turnout; the undermining of constitutionalism by the ruling elite (in some countries and regions) to protect their personal interests; the use and abuse of referendums and plebiscites to legitimize autocratic tendencies in some countries; the new phenomena of foreign forces ‘hacking’ election systems in order to manipulate the outcome of an election; deliberate misinformation (i.e. the ‘fake news’ phenomenon); the negative influence of money in elections (including illicit and criminal money); and election-related violence—bring into question the ability, credibility and meaningfulness of electoral processes as effective mechanisms through which citizens can choose their representatives and periodically ‘reward’ and ‘punish’ them for good or bad performance as appropriate.

Electoral integrity is challenged and needs to be restored as elections are foundational to democratic governance and political stability. Electoral institutions with integrity are those that enjoy legitimacy and high levels of trust among citizens. Electoral processes with integrity will be those that are anchored ‘on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements, and is professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle’ (Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012).

Constitution-Building Processes

Through the **Constitution-Building Processes** impact area, International IDEA will support inclusive democratic constitution building processes and respect for constitutionalism. The focus will be on (a) constitution-building processes; (b) constitutional design; and (c) contributing to constitutional awareness. Examples of themes within this impact area include decentralization arrangements in constitutional design; separation of powers; constitution-building in post-conflict settings; ICTs and constitution-building; and gender and inclusion in constitution-building processes.

Constitutions and constitutional change are central to democracy, peace, stability and development. Given that modern large-scale conflicts are increasingly intra- rather than inter-state, countries emerging from conflict often have to reframe political settlements among diverse societal groups as part of conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In this regard, constitutions concretize new political settlements regarding access to public power and increasingly affirm issues of



nationality and identity in their definition and elaboration of the political community. In countries subject to democratic backsliding, the constitution is usually one of the first institutions to be attacked. In a context where the risks and legitimacy costs of suspending or overthrowing a constitution are now considered too high, would-be autocrats have instead resorted to manipulating constitutional rules to use as weapons for aggrandizement, rather than as constraints on their power. Therefore, while support to constitution-building processes in transitional and post-conflict contexts will remain a key component of International IDEA's support to constitution-building processes, emphasis will also be placed on supporting respect for constitutionalism.

International IDEA envisions an inclusive constitution-building process as one that enjoys broad support and legitimacy from a diversity of societal groups and ensures equitable representation of such groups in the constitution-building process, while respect for constitutionalism is characterized by respect for the constraints of the law by those in power.

Political Participation and Representation

Through the **Political Participation and Representation** impact area, International IDEA will support the integrity of institutions and processes of political participation and representation. The focus will be on (a) the integrity of political parties and legislatures (inclusive, responsive, accountable political parties and legislatures); (b) new forms of citizen engagement in public decision-making; and (c) the influence of money in politics. Examples of themes within this impact area include political parties; money in politics (including from illicit and criminal sources); gender and inclusion in political participation and representation (with a special focus on women and youth); political participation and ICTs; parliamentary strengthening; citizen participation, including through supporting reform-oriented citizen-led assessments of democracy at the national and local levels; and democratic accountability in service delivery, which will contribute to create an enabling environment for the SDGs.

The establishment of, and increase in, formal freedoms to participate and access representation in recent decades has not effectively translated into an increase in responsiveness and accountability to citizens by formal democratic institutions (including political parties, legislatures and governments) and a number of factors have coalesced to entrench distrust of and scepticism towards them.

The analysis of the current democracy landscape paints a picture of decay of traditional political parties; the rise of authoritarian populism; and a highly active citizenry that supports democracy but which is nonetheless disconnected from formal democratic institutions, processes and political leaders, preferring instead to participate through alternative avenues of engagement such as social media platforms, protests and popular movements.



This disconnect is attributed to a range of factors, including the perceived or real capture of democratic institutions and processes by ‘monied’ interests; the dominant role of a particular socio-economic and political class in political processes, at the exclusion of others; persistent gender inequalities and underrepresentation of marginalized groups in legislatures; poor service delivery; rising levels of unemployment and inequality, especially among young people; a weak respect for constitutionalism in some regions; a fear of active citizen participation by political elites, resulting in deliberate efforts to constrain the civic and political space; and a widespread lack of trust in political institutions and processes, and political elites.

In sum, the prevailing scenario of an active citizen who still supports democracy, but distrusts and is sceptical of formal democratic institutions such as political parties and legislatures, places pressure on democracy’s resilience.

In 2018–22, International IDEA will focus on supporting the integrity of processes and institutions of political participation and representation through strengthening the capacity of formal institutions of political participation and representation (e.g. political parties and legislatures); and seeking to better understand the role of citizen and social movements in the democratic process (e.g. the role of protest in democratic processes and the emergence of citizen movements and their conversion into political parties). Institutions and processes of political participation and representation with integrity are inclusive, equitable, accountable, responsive and able to deliver on public goods. Such institutions and processes are also most likely to be resilient to democratic backsliding; and enable countries to pursue and attain sustainable development goals.

7.2. Cross-cutting themes

In addition to the three impact areas outlined above, International IDEA will mainstream the three cross-cutting themes of (a) **gender and inclusion**; (b) **conflict sensitivity** and (c) **sustainable development** across all its areas of work. As noted, other themes are present across one or several impact areas. These include money in politics; the role of ICTs; conflict, peacebuilding and security; citizen participation; and democracy at the subnational level.

It is important to note the difference between the cross-cutting themes and the themes that are present across all or some impact areas. Cross-cutting themes are those that International IDEA regards as intersecting with all three impact areas, and which will therefore be an integral part of the conceptualization, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all activities within these impact areas.

In the 2018–22 Strategy, gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are cross-cutting themes because the Institute is convinced that inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes are only possible if



(a) gender equality and inclusion of marginalized groups in democratic institutions and processes is attained; and (b) the Institute not only contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding but also respects and observes the ‘do no harm’ principle. International IDEA’s conflict sensitivity mainstreaming policy and plan of action will be important in guiding the Institute in this area; and (c) the work of International IDEA effectively contributes to the design and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes that are responsive, accountable and deliver public goods to citizens.

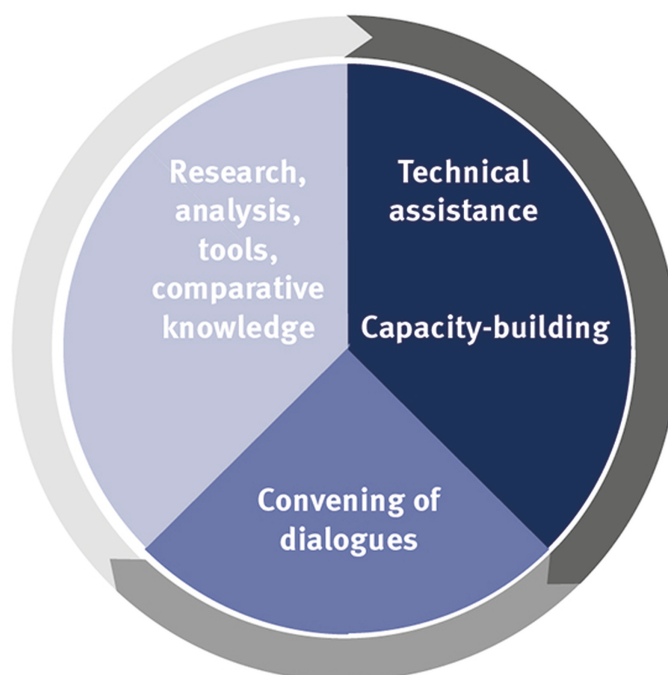
These three cross-cutting themes will be operationalized through a **mainstreaming approach** and will have dedicated cross-functional teams constituted by focal persons from each Programme. Such teams will be critical for ensuring institute-wide ownership, knowledge and skills transfer, while also providing the platforms and spaces required for the sharing of lessons across programmes and impact areas.

The themes that are present across all or some impact areas—money in politics; the role of ICTs; conflict, peacebuilding and security; citizen participation; and democracy at the subnational level—will be relevant in and implemented by more than one impact area but, unlike cross-cutting themes, their integration in all impact areas will not be mandatory. To promote coordination and increase resource efficiencies, cross-functional task teams will be established for the implementation of these themes.

8. Modalities of engagement

In its 2018–22 Strategy, International IDEA will retain its approach as a ‘think-and-do-tank’ in the field of democracy assistance. The Institute views its knowledge production, technical assistance and convening of dialogues as highly complementary, creating a virtuous cycle in which comparative knowledge forms the basis for technical assistance, which enables lessons from policy and practice to be captured in knowledge production. All of International IDEA’s modalities of engagement will be pursued adopting gender and inclusion, conflict-sensitive and sustainable-development lenses.

International IDEA's modalities of engagement





During the 2018–22 Strategy period, International IDEA will work through the following modalities of engagement.

8.1. Analysis and knowledge

International IDEA will produce and actively disseminate high-quality, policy-relevant analysis and global comparative knowledge, including analytical tools and data on democracy, democracy building and democratic reform processes, as well as on democratic good practices and innovations.

In addition to the analysis, knowledge and tool production in its three impact areas, the 2018–22 Strategy places emphasis on the production of policy-relevant research and technical and political analysis of the democracy landscape at the global, regional and country levels to contribute to the public debate on democracy and better inform democratic reform processes. At the global level, International IDEA's biennial report, *The Global State of Democracy*, initiated during the 2012–17 Strategy period, will become the key institutional knowledge resource for this type of analysis.

International IDEA's policy research, analysis and knowledge production will take the form of in-depth, medium-term, policy-oriented research on specific topics; development of analytical tools; management of databases on democracy; and short-term, quick turn-around pieces that analyse and explain current events in the democracy landscape, based on International IDEA's core areas of expertise.

In the 2018–22 Strategy, great emphasis will be placed on actively disseminating its analysis and knowledge products—through a variety of channels, including the institutional website, social media and traditional media—to relevant stakeholders and target audiences in order to inform and contribute to democratic reform processes at all levels. The format and dissemination channels for each knowledge product will be tailored to the needs of the target audiences it seeks to reach.

International IDEA conducts its analysis and knowledge production at all levels in which it engages—that is, at the global, regional and country levels. International IDEA's global and regional analysis and knowledge production focuses on analysing trends in the democracy landscape, signalling new or emerging issues in the democracy agenda and documenting international and regional good practices and experiences in democracy building. International IDEA's analysis and knowledge production at the country level focuses on country-specific analysis and knowledge tools that build on its global comparative knowledge.

International IDEA's comparative knowledge, analysis and data will continue to form the basis for International IDEA's global and regional agenda-setting and agenda-influencing work (referred to as 'global advocacy' in the 2012–17 Strategy).



8.2. Technical assistance and capacity-building

International IDEA will continue to provide high-quality and policy-relevant technical assistance, capacity-building and training on democracy building and democratic reform processes in its three impact areas. This will take the form of expert-based technical assistance, face-to-face or online training, mentoring, fellowships and facilitation of South–South and peer exchanges.

International IDEA dispatches technical assistance and provides capacity-building through a multi-layered system of global, regional and country-level expertise, to optimize the synergies between global thematic and technical knowledge, regional expertise and in-depth country-level knowledge. There is a close synergy between International IDEA's global knowledge production and its country-level technical assistance. The global knowledge (including knowledge on democratic good practices and analytical tools) informs the country-level technical assistance, adapting it to the specificities of each context. The lessons learned from policy practice at the country level are then fed back into global knowledge production.

Based on International IDEA's vision of democracy and its status as an IGO, in the 2018–22 Strategy, all of International IDEA's work will continue to be characterized by a non-prescriptive, non-partisan, collaborative, demand-driven and holistic approach to democracy cooperation. International IDEA believes that this approach lays a solid basis for acting as a trusted partner to those leading democratic change at the country level.

8.3. Convening of dialogues

Building on its convening capacity and reputation as an impartial expert on democratic reform, International IDEA will convene and facilitate global, regional and national dialogues on democratic reform processes across its three impact areas, as well as on broader issues of democracy building and democratic trends around the world. International IDEA may also facilitate dialogues with a focus on conflict mediation in the case of an explicit request, in order to capitalize on its credibility as an impartial IGO.

Examples of dialogues that International IDEA could facilitate include high-level dialogues at the global or regional level to discuss specific issues or trends in the global or regional democracy landscape; dialogues among experts and practitioners on democratic reform which enable participants to share experiences and knowledge; multiparty dialogues, providing politically neutral spaces for representatives from different political parties to share their views; dialogues to engage civil society in democratic processes; and conflict-mediation dialogues.

9. Theory of change



International IDEA's 2018–22 Strategy will, for the first time, be grounded in explicit theories of change (although this does not preclude the Institute from also using logframes at the project level). The adoption of theories of change responds to demands from member states and donors, and from the recommendations of an external evaluation of International IDEA's 2012–17 Strategy.

A theory of change is a comprehensive description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur. International IDEA believes that such theories of change will enable the Institute to more effectively target its interventions by guiding its work and enhancing its policy impact.

These theories of change have to be viewed as context-adapted strategic guidance to International IDEA's work and not as binding frames, and efforts will be placed on ensuring flexibility and adaptability rather than rigidity. Operational programmes attached to the strategy will develop indicators linked to the theories of change and periodic reviews will be conducted to evaluate the progress of strategy implementation and of the continued validity of the theories of change, as part of International IDEA's new monitoring and evaluation system, geared to better capture results and impact.

International IDEA has developed an overarching theory of change, which provides a generic frame for the more context- and programme-specific theories of change developed for the different type of countries and levels at which International IDEA engages. These various theories of change can be found in Section 2 of Annex B.

10. Global and regional priorities



This section presents a summary of International IDEA's global and regional priorities. More information on these priorities can be found in Annex C.

10.1. Overview of Global Programme priorities

In implementing the 2018–22 Strategy, International IDEA's Global Programme (GP) will build on the successes of its collaborative work with the Regional Programmes (RPs) to consolidate its role in the organization as (a) a producer of relevant global comparative knowledge resources and practical tools; (b) a provider of technical support to regional programmes; and (c) an active contributor to agenda-setting and influencing at the global level through democracy assessment, political analysis and activities across the Institute's three impact areas.

The GP exists to support and complement RPs through the roles defined above. In this regard, GP's programmatic and analytic work is designed and defined in close consultation with RPs in order to ensure its relevance and inbuilt synergies with RPs. The GP will implement all of the three impact areas and their thematic scope, as well as the three cross-cutting themes. It will also conduct democracy assessments and political analysis, complementing the impact areas, while feeding into the Institute's agenda-setting and influencing objectives.

10.2. Overview of Regional Programme and country-level priorities

Diversity of country contexts

The modalities of engagement adopted by International IDEA will depend on where the demand for the Institute's support comes from, and on the context in which this support is provided. International IDEA's vision of democracy recognizes that democracy comes in different shapes and forms, which makes the categorization of democracy types difficult. However, to more strategically guide International IDEA's work at the country level, a broad categorization has been made of different types of country contexts in which International IDEA engages. This categorization aims to



enable International IDEA to develop more coherent theories of change to guide its interventions. However, International IDEA recognizes that countries' democratic progress fluctuates, with both advances and reversals, and that movement between categories is a recurring phenomenon.

International IDEA refers to three types of democracies in its work: (a) new and young democracies, (b) hybrid democracies or authoritarian regimes, and (c) established democracies. The terms 'new and young democracies' and 'established democracies' may not accurately capture the state and quality of these democracies. Indeed, while new or young democracies may be more vulnerable to democratic backsliding, established democracies can also suffer from democratic deficits. The Institute will engage in these three types of country contexts in the following way:

1. As a first priority, International IDEA seeks to engage in **new or young democracies**—that is, those recently transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy as well as those having undergone democratic transitions and seeking to strengthen and consolidate their democratic practices, and who seek International IDEA's support in this process. In those contexts, International IDEA can provide support through all its modalities of engagement (analysis and knowledge; technical assistance and capacity-building and convening of dialogues).
2. As a secondary priority, International IDEA can engage in **hybrid or authoritarian** regimes, if there is a specific demand from pro-democracy actors outside the state. In those contexts, collaboration with non-state actors (e.g. research and academic institutions) may provide an avenue for initial dialogue on democracy-(re)building. However, International IDEA's engagement in such contexts will be carefully weighed prior to intervention, based on balanced political analysis of the country context and a thorough risk assessment. In these contexts, the modalities of engagement will be restricted to analysis and sometimes to convening of dialogue. Technical assistance can be considered only when relevant, and if not implying major political risks.
3. As a third priority, International IDEA can also engage in **established democracies**. A distinction is made between established democracies (e.g. India) that qualify for overseas development assistance (ODA) and newer democracies in Wider Europe that qualify for ODA funding (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). In both contexts, all of the Institute's modalities of engagement can be considered, provided there is demand for support. Given the ODA-nature of International IDEA's core funding, the Institute's engagement in established democracies in non-ODA eligible countries will focus on enhancing public awareness in Member States about International IDEA's worldwide work, through outreach (e.g. op-eds in the media), stimulation of the public debate on democracy (e.g. public seminars, book



launches) and facilitation of peer and knowledge exchanges on democracy, as well as occasional and limited expert advice on specific topics.

Degrees of engagement at the country level

International IDEA engages with varying degrees of intervention at the country level, depending on the context. Broadly speaking, International IDEA can adopt three different intervention strategies at the country level.

1. *Country programmes.* As of the end of the 2012–17 Strategy period, International IDEA has eight country programmes with an office presence: Bolivia, Haiti, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Paraguay, Peru and Tunisia. In addition, at the end of 2017, decisions were made to open country programmes in Fiji and Mexico in 2018. International IDEA's country programmes are built on projects focusing on one or several of International IDEA's thematic priority areas. In the 2018–22 Strategy, flexible alternatives to office presence at the country level (along the lines of the current presence in Ukraine and, to some extent, Bhutan) will also be explored in countries where an office presence may not be feasible, including through the hiring of local consultants or secondments to government agencies.
2. *Regular or occasional in-country technical assistance.* International IDEA also provides technical assistance to countries, through global or regional experts, responding to specific demands from in-country actors. These interventions tend to be time-bound and technically focused on a specific reform issue, and in cases where global or regional expertise on that issue can provide a valuable contribution to a country-owned process. International IDEA believes that a dual strategy, involving in-country programme presence in priority countries combined with regular or occasional 'in-out' technical assistance (based on country demand) in countries where International IDEA does not have a permanent on-the-ground presence, maximizes International IDEA's opportunity for policy impact, given its small size and limited financial resources. However, 'in-out' technical assistance will become more strategically oriented to prioritize countries where there is potential for International IDEA to continue to provide on-going support, or for other organizations to carry that support forward, to ensure sustainability of the intervention.
3. *Capacity-building or convening of actors at regional events.* International IDEA also provides capacity-building or convenes actors from different countries in the form of regional events, at which country-level policymakers can benefit from the exchange with other actors, experts and peers from other countries.

Based on International IDEA's experience, the organization of capacity-building events or dialogues as well occasional technical assistance at the country level can often build a first basis for engagement in a country, providing an opportunity for International IDEA to build a track record, establish networks and build credibility,



which can then result in more fully-fledged country programming—if there is a clear demand from national actors and financial resources for implementation.

Criteria for country engagement and disengagement

International IDEA's criteria for country engagement will be guided by its regional strategic priorities. The following criteria will guide the establishment of country programmes:

- requests for support or advice from national or regional actors;
- sufficient political space to engage;
- International IDEA's available knowledge and practical tools can deliver on reform needs;
- programmatic impact is largest, relative to International IDEA's funds and capacity;
- countries with an important regional position, of which developments can also impact reforms in surrounding countries;
- countries where International IDEA can work in complementarity over several of its impact areas; and
- availability and potential for external funding.

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

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

Assessments will be conducted through different means to establish the need and opportunity for engagement and disengagement based on relevant criteria, including country context, potential impact at national and subnational levels, political will, country-specific needs, relevance of thematic areas and relationships with key stakeholders. The following criteria will guide country disengagement:

- closing down a country office when the government or independent bodies such as electoral management bodies no longer require full time support, but



occasional support can be channeled through other means in the regional context;

- when the political situation no longer allows for meaningful engagement; and
- when there is no longer funding available for programming.

International IDEA's country engagement in 2018–22

Guided by the above strategic criteria, International IDEA will seek to maintain its existing country presence across the four regions where it operates, provided the conditions above continue to prevail. Given the volatility of the current democracy and funding landscape, International IDEA will adopt a flexible response to country demands that arise in the next years, and new country programme presences will be weighed based on the criteria outlined above, with priority given to new and emerging democracies, countries with genuine open reform, priorities of International IDEA Member States, and contexts where the request matches International IDEA's expertise and internal resources.

Annexes



This Strategy document contains three Annexes (available to internal stakeholders).

Annex A provides details of the Strategy development process, including the process of consultation with key stakeholders. It also provides a more detailed explanation of International IDEA's definition of democracy; a brief overview of some of the main advances, opportunities and challenges to democracy in 2017; and a rundown of the lessons (both programmatic and institutional) from the 2012–17 Strategy cycle.

Annex B outlines the organizational implications of the 2018–22 Strategy, including information on International IDEA's stakeholders and target audiences; the organization's theories of change; its approach to democracy cooperation; its communications priorities; measurement of results; institutional partnerships; Member-State relations; the Board of Advisers; and financial resources.

Annex C includes detailed sections on International IDEA's regional and global thematic priorities for the 2018–22 Strategy cycle.

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About International IDEA



The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mandate to promote and advance democracy worldwide. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

Our mission is to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and an enabler of sustainable development, through support to the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels.

International IDEA advances its mission by providing analysis of global and regional democratic trends; producing comparative knowledge of good international democratic practices; offering technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convening dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

To achieve our mission, International IDEA contributes to the public debate on democracy and assists in strengthening processes, reforms, institutions and actors that build, advance and safeguard democracy, with a focus on three impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA works worldwide. Its headquarters are based in Stockholm and it has regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

<<http://idea.int>>

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with a mandate to advance democracy worldwide.

This document presents International IDEA's third institutional Strategy, which covers the five-year period from 2018 to 2022.

The 2018–22 Strategy builds on International IDEA's strengths, comparative advantage and niche position in the democracy support field. It also seeks to address emerging and current opportunities as well as perceived threats in the democracy landscape.

It provides a clear strategic focus and framework, with sufficient flexibility to enable the Institute to respond to emerging needs and challenges at the global, regional and country levels.