2024

GDC Fora Report

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Introduction

The Global Democracy Coalition is a multi-stakeholder coalition of more than 130 democracy organizations from around the world that provides a unique space to share experiences and good practices in advancing and strengthening democracy worldwide. Its yearly Global Democracy Coalition Forum provides a valuable platform for GDC partners to meet, share experiences, and define join strategies. The Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 held in March 2024 brought together diverse stakeholders from around the world to engage in critical discussions about the state and future of democracy. This comprehensive report consolidates the insights and recommendations from five regional fora—the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe and a global forum. Each forum provided a platform for participating policymakers, members of civil society organizations (CSOs), democracy advocates and academics to share experiences, highlight challenges and propose actionable solutions for strengthening democratic governance.

The innovative structure of the Forum dedicated each day to a specific region, which allowed participants to delve deeply into the unique democratic challenges, achievements, opportunities and aspirations of each continent. This approach enabled a thorough examination of region-specific issues while also identifying common themes and universal democratic values.

Discussions across the fora were rich and varied, reflecting the diverse political, cultural and social contexts of each region. In the Americas, the forum highlighted the significant challenges faced by CSOs linked to restrictive measures and the militarized response to peaceful protest. Discussions emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces for youth participation and the role of digital platforms in enhancing civic education. A notable highlight was the call to address the influence of money in politics and ensure transparency in electoral processes.

The European forum focused on the need for substantial public funding for democracy-related projects and the need to foster innovation within public institutions. Participants stressed the importance of creating an environment where scepticism and scrutiny are encouraged in order to hold political institutions accountable. The forum also underscored the need for intergenerational dialogue and new models of public participation to foster inclusive governance.

In Africa, the discussions centred around enhancing women's participation in political processes and addressing violence against women in politics. The forum highlighted the demographic reality of a predominantly young population and the need to improve democratic engagement among youth. Other key topics included strategic advocacy to tackle misinformation and disinformation and the importance of coalition-building among CSOs.

The Asian forum focused on the historical context of democratic development in the region, emphasizing the need to remember and integrate these historical struggles into contemporary governance. Cultural pluralism and the challenges of authoritarianism were critical themes. The forum advocated for comprehensive civic education, robust democratic institutions and the involvement of marginalized voices in the democratic process.

The global forum synthesized regional insights, with a focus on leveraging technology for civic education and transparency, addressing gender gaps and promoting inclusive policymaking. Participants discussed the importance of altering the narrative around democracy, especially in regions that are experiencing democratic backsliding. The forum also emphasized the need for global collaboration among democracy defenders to counter autocratic regimes.

Despite regional differences, several common themes emerged. Across all regions, there was a unanimous recognition of the critical role that technology plays in engaging younger generations in political processes and the need for innovative approaches to combating disinformation. Each region showcased successful youth-led initiatives that leverage technology for democratic innovation and social change. The importance of civic education, transparency, accountability and inclusivity were emphasized as fundamental to strengthening democratic governance.

This report provides a detailed account of the key highlights of and recommendations from each regional forum, as well as a global perspective that ties these regional narratives into a comprehensive strategy for democratic renewal. The aim is to offer a roadmap for stakeholders at all levels on implementing these recommendations to foster a more resilient, inclusive and participatory democratic environment.

As the world faces increasing challenges to democratic norms and values, this report underlines the urgent need for collective action and international collaboration. By drawing on diverse experiences and expertise from around the globe, the Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 set the stage for meaningful progress in pursuit of democratic governance.

Americas Global Democracy Coalition Forum

The <u>Americas Global Democracy Coalition Forum</u> gathered diverse stakeholders to discuss the pressing issues and opportunities for democratic systems across the Americas. The discussions were comprehensive, touching on civic education, the use of technology in democratic processes, the challenges faced by civil society and the inclusion of marginalized groups. The forum provided a platform for sharing insights, developing strategies and fostering collaboration to strengthen democratic governance in the region.

Direct dialogue with representatives of civil society has become essential to address democratic erosion and promote human rights

Francisco Guerrero, OAS.

Highlights of the Forum

The forum underscored the significant challenges that CSOs face, due to restrictive measures imposed by authorities which limit access to funding and stifle their operations. This has led to the closure of many CSOs and increased repression of peaceful protest, which is often treated as a threat to national security. The use by states of digital technology to dismantle civil society and protest movements, through means such as facial recognition and espionage tools, was also highlighted.

A critical issue was the militarized response to peaceful protests and the excessive use of force, which in some cases has perpetuated a cycle of violence and human rights abuses. This was particularly evident in experiences shared from diverse countries such as Argentina, Guatemala, Chile, Nicaragua and El Salvador, where particularly in the latter two, state repression has had a significant impact on civil liberties and democratic participation.

Discussions on youth engagement emphasized the need to create spaces for young people to actively participate in shaping their futures. The forum highlighted the stereotyping of youth as problematic, as well as how their use of technology in protests often leads to increased scrutiny and discrimination. There was a call for states to facilitate environments where young people can freely express themselves, assemble peacefully and engage in public affairs.

The role of technology in democracy was another key focus. Discussions highlighted how technology can enhance civic education, transparency and accountability, but also pointed out the risks associated with disinformation and the misuse of social media. The forum called for better regulatory frameworks to address these issues and ensure that technology supports rather than undermines democratic processes.

It was emphasized that the inclusion of marginalized voices, particularly women and indigenous groups, is crucial for the success of democracy. The need for gender-sensitive policies and for the active involvement of such groups in democratic processes were highlighted as essential steps towards a more inclusive democracy.

> **Young people need to recognize themselves as key actors in the building of our countries and shaping processes.**
>
> *Adela Lemus, CECADE*

Recomendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the insights from the Americas Global Democracy Coalition Forum:

Theme	Recomendations
Protect and support civil society organizations	Governments should ensure that CSOs have access to adequate funding and can operate without undue restrictions. This means safeguarding the rights to peaceful assembly and association.
Address repression and human rights abuses	Immediate measures should be taken to address and rectify human rights abuses, such as the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters. States must comply with international human rights standards and ensure accountability for any violations.
Enhance youth engagement in democratic processes	Safe spaces must be created and maintained for youth to participate in the public discourse and decision-making processes. This requires civic education that emphasizes the importance of democratic participation and leadership from a young age.
Leverage technology for civic education and transparency	Digital platforms should be used to provide civic education and promote transparency and accountability in governance. Initiatives that fact check information and combat disinformation should be supported.
Promote gender inclusion and support for marginalized groups	Implement policies that ensure the representation and active participation of women and marginalized groups in democratic processes. Gender-sensitive approaches should be integrated into all aspects of policymaking and governance.

Theme	Recomendations
Strengthen regulatory frameworks for technology	Develop robust regulation to prevent the misuse of technology, such as deepfakes and other forms of digital manipulation, that can undermine democratic principles. Encourage the use of technology in ways that support democracy and protect human rights.
Foster collaboration among stakeholders	Encourage collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations to address the challenges facing democracy. Help to form coalitions and networks that support grassroots human rights defenders and promote inclusive governance.
Combat disinformation through strategic advocacy and education	Advocate for open government practices that enhance public involvement in decision-making and ensure accountability among public officials. Strengthen anti-corruption measures to build trust in democratic institutions.
Promote open government and anti-corruption measures	Advocate for open government practices that enhance public involvement in decision-making and ensure accountability among public officials. Strengthen anti-corruption measures to build trust in democratic institutions.
Ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are aligned with democratic principles	Integrate democratic principles within the framework of the SDGs to ensure that efforts to advance democracy are aligned with global development objectives.

Europe Global Democracy Coalition Forum

The [Europe Global Democracy Coalition Forum](#) convened to discuss the current state of and future prospects for democracy in Europe. The forum brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, policymakers, CSO representatives and democracy advocates. The discussions focused on public institutions, deliberation and collaboration, technology and the importance of fostering an inclusive democratic environment. The forum provided a platform for sharing experiences and best practices in order to strengthen democratic processes across the region.

Young people are not a homogenous group; there are different demographics within youth, and we must ensure their representation.

Ismael Páez,
Europe Youth Organization

Highlights of the Forum

The forum emphasized the need for increased public funding for democracy-related projects. Participants noted that relying solely on market-driven development often prioritizes profit over the public interest. Substantial public funding is essential to support projects that promote democracy and ensure that they align with the common good. There was a strong call for innovation within public institutions to modernize and improve their ability to support democratic processes and technologies. Such an internal transformation is required to ensure the long-term success of democratic initiatives.

The forum illustrated the importance of allowing scepticism and scrutiny within democracies. Scepticism is seen as an integral part of democratic systems, and as necessary for holding political institutions accountable. Creating spaces where it is safe to express criticism and channel this into constructive action is essential for a healthy democracy.

Effective communication of results and the actions of democratic institutions was highlighted as critical to maintaining public enthusiasm for and trust in democracy. Demonstrating tangible outcomes and effectively communicating these to the public can counteract populist messages and reinforce democratic values.

Deliberation and collaboration were also central themes. The forum underscored the importance of intergenerational dialogue, creating platforms for young people to interact with governmental leaders and ensuring that youth perspectives are included in decision-making processes. Exploring and implementing new models of participation, such as deliberative assemblies for young people, was seen as vital for fostering inclusive and responsive governance.

The role of technology in enhancing democracy was extensively discussed. Enhancing digital literacy across all age groups and involving citizens in the design of technology aimed at enhancing democratic governance were identified as key strategies. The importance of ensuring that technological initiatives are sustainable and have a long-term impact was also emphasized.

> **We are facing a context of political disaffection, mistrust in politicians, extreme polarization, disinformation, and rising inequality and racism. We must tackle these together to protect and strengthen democracy in Europe.**
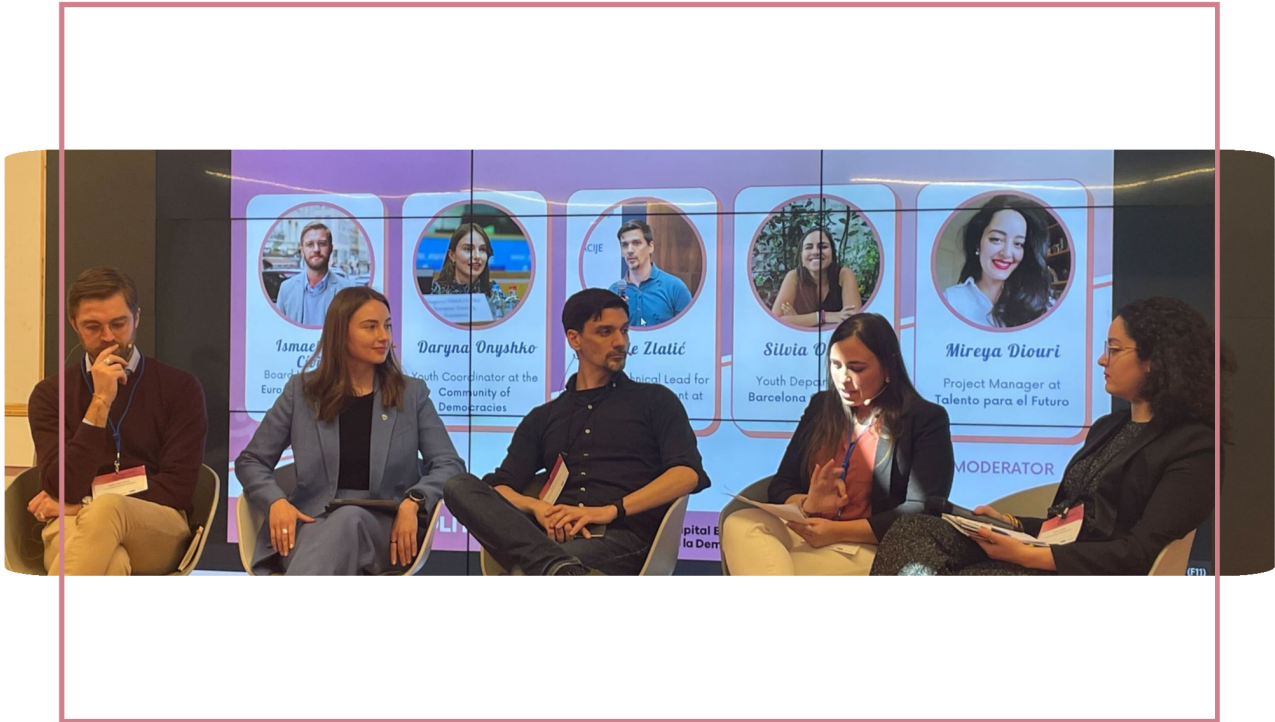>
> *Thai Jungpanich,*
> *Political Watch*

Recomendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the insights from the Europe Global Democracy Coalition Forum:

Theme	Recommendations
Increase public funding for democracy-related projects	Ensure the availability of substantial public funding for democratic innovations. Aligning projects with the common good rather than profit.
Foster innovation within public institutions	Encourage the integration of new ideas and technologies into public institutions to better meet the needs of citizens and respond to emerging challenges.
Create acceptance for scepticism and scrutiny	Promote an environment where a healthy level of scepticism and scrutiny is encouraged. Provide safe spaces to express criticism and channel this into constructive action.
Communicate results and actions effectively	Improve the communication of tangible outcomes achieved by democratic institutions in order to build public trust and counter populist messages.
Enhance intergenerational dialogue	Safeguard and expand platforms where youth can discuss issues with state representatives, thereby bridging generational gaps and ensuring that youth perspectives are included in decision making.

Theme	Recomendations
Explore new models of participation	Implement new participation models, such as deliberative assemblies for young people, to foster inclusive and responsive governance.
Enhance digital literacy	Develop strategies to enhance critical thinking and digital literacy across all demographics with approaches tailored to different media platforms and age groups.
Involve citizens in technology design	Ensure citizen involvement in the design of technological solutions aimed at enhancing democratic governance.
Ensure the sustainability of technological initiatives	Focus on the long-term sustainability of technological projects to ensure lasting impact and effectiveness.

Africa Global Democracy Coalition Forum

The <u>Africa Global Democracy Coalition Forum</u> brought together a diverse range of participants, from democracy advocates to policymakers and civil society representatives. The forum discussed the key issues affecting democracy in Africa in order to develop actionable recommendations on strengthening democratic governance across the continent. The discussions covered women's participation in politics, youth engagement, violence against women in politics, transparency and accountability, support for grassroots human rights defenders and using strategic advocacy to combat misinformation and disinformation.

We must not lie to ourselves as Africans that we are here to have a conversation about protecting democracy or advancing it. Because the reality is that in a lot of places on our continent, democracy does not exist.

McDonald Lewanika,
Accountability Lab

Highlights of the Forum

The forum underscored the fundamental need for the greater inclusion of women, especially young women, in political processes. Political parties were urged to prioritize women on candidate lists and to ensure that they are placed in electable positions on such lists. There was a strong call for policies on women's participation in decision-making roles within parties to move beyond symbolic inclusion and enable women to make meaningful contributions. This need was highlighted by concerns over the aging population of women in leadership positions and the lack of younger women prepared to step into these roles. In Zambia, for instance, efforts to pass a political parties bill and amend the constitution were cited as measures to compel political parties to adopt more women candidates.

Youth participation and representation were also major topics of discussion. In Malawi, young people have mobilized to create a youth manifesto to influence political leaders and hold them accountable. The forum recommended the development and endorsement of national youth manifestos, and advocated the implementation of policies such as a national youth policy and a Gender Equality Act, which in Malawi mandates a 30% threshold for representation of both youth and women. The discussions highlighted the demographic reality that Africa has a predominantly young population, which necessitates that democracy must be built on the active participation of youth. Evolving technology and social media platforms were seen as opportunities for youth across different countries to learn from each other and build a unified narrative.

Violence against women in politics was identified as a significant barrier to political participation that must be addressed. The forum emphasized the importance of documenting and researching incidents of violence to understand their nature and prevalence. The inclusion of provisions in electoral law and bills that address violence against women was seen as essential. Collaboration with women parliamentarians and gender champions was recommended to push for the necessary legislative changes. Examples from Tanzania showed how violence against women in politics can be recognized as an electoral offence, in an illustration of the impact of sustained advocacy by women's rights organizations.

> *We've identified coalition building and network building as a best practice to boost inclusion of human rights defenders, especially at grassroots level.*
>
> *Eddie D. Jarwolo, YPLS Africa*

Transparency and accountability were highlighted as essential components of a healthy democracy. CSOs were called on to take a leadership role in observing elections and reporting irregularities. Developing systems for independent election monitoring and educating citizens on their electoral rights were seen as critical steps. The forum stressed that democracy is not only about elections, but also about ensuring ongoing accountability, transparency, participation and the protection of rights. The experiences of local CSOs in observing elections and highlighting discrepancies demonstrated the importance of their role.

Support for grassroots human rights defenders was another key theme. The forum highlighted the importance of forming coalitions and networks to provide support for and inclusion of grassroots defenders. Strategies must address the needs and participation of such defenders, and address language barriers and other key challenges. Coalition building and networking were identified as best practices to boost the inclusion of human rights defenders at the grassroots level.

Strategic advocacy to combat misinformation and disinformation was discussed as an important tool for protecting democratic processes and public trust in institutions. The forum recommended use of strategic action to amend legal frameworks that fail to address disinformation effectively. Enhancing the capacity of media practitioners through training programmes focused on fact checking and ethical reporting was also emphasized. Public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the dangers of misinformation and disinformation, while also fostering partnerships with international bodies to advocate for appropriate laws and policies were identified as essential strategies.The influence of money in politics was an important discussion.

> *It´s not democracy that has failed, it is the people in power.*
>
> *Cynthia Mbamalu, Yiaga Africa*

Financial influence, including from illicit sources such as drug dealers, was highlighted as a threat to fair political competition. The forum stressed the need for legal reforms to limit the influence of money in politics and ensure equitable access to political opportunities for all citizens.

The education and empowerment of citizens were identified as fundamental to informed participation in democratic processes. Higher levels of education were linked to better decision making and increased accountability. The forum called for investment in educational initiatives that inform citizens about their rights and the democratic process.

Protecting digital rights and privacy emerged as a significant concern linked to the increasing role of technology in democratic procedures and campaigning. The forum emphasized the need for strategies to protect digital rights, ensure privacy and support activists facing threats related to online activism.

Recomendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the insights from the Africa Global Democracy Coalition Forum:

Theme	Recomendations
Enhance women's participation in political processes	Political parties should prioritize women on candidate lists, ensuring they are given a fair chance to hold electable positions on such lists, and establish policies on women's participation in decision-making roles. There must be a move beyond symbolic inclusion to ensure women can make meaningful contributions.
Increase youth participation and representation	Develop and endorse national youth manifestos that include specific demands for youth and women's representation. Advocate for the implementation of existing policies such as a national youth policy and the Gender Equality Act, which mandate 30% representation for youth and women.
Address violence against women in politics	Document and research incidents of violence against women in elections to understand their nature and prevalence. Advocate the inclusion of provisions in electoral law and bills that address violence against women. Collaborate with women parliamentarians and gender champions to push for legislative change.
Address the influence of money in politics	Reform legal frameworks to limit the influence of money in politics and ensure fair and equitable access to political opportunities for all citizens.
Protect digital rights and privacy	Develop strategies to protect digital rights, ensure privacy and support activists facing sanctions related to online activism.

Theme	Recommendations
Combat misinformation and disinformation through strategic advocacy	Use strategic advocacy to challenge and amend existing legal frameworks that fail to address misinformation and disinformation. Enhance the capacity of media practitioners through training programmes focused on fact checking, investigative journalism and ethical reporting. Implement public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the dangers of disinformation and how to critically evaluate information sources. Foster partnerships with international human rights agencies and other regional organizations to advocate for laws and policies that curb misinformation while protecting freedom of expression.
Enhance the education and empowerment of citizens	Invest in educational initiatives that inform citizens about their rights and the democratic process, to ensure that justice is served when legal provisions are violated.
Enhance transparency and accountability	CSOs should take a leadership role in observing elections and reporting irregularities. Develop systems such as independent election monitoring to ensure transparency in the electoral process. Educate citizens on their electoral rights and the importance of accountability.
Support grassroots human rights defenders	Form coalitions and networks to provide support for and inclusion of grassroots human rights defenders. Ensure that strategies address the needs and participation of grassroots defenders. Address language barriers and other challenges to grassroots advocacy.

Asia Global Democracy Coalition Forum

The <u>Asia Global Democracy Coalition Forum</u> brought together a wide array of stakeholders to address the current state and future of democracy in the region. The discussions were rich and varied, touching on the historical narratives of independence, the importance of cultural diversity, the challenges of authoritarianism and the essential role of civic education. The forum also explored strategic approaches to improving transparency, accountability and inclusion in democratic processes.

Asia indeed plays a critical role in the international community, and its interaction can significantly impact the promotion of democratic values and human rights.

Dr. Elise Pham

Highlights of the Forum

The forum highlighted the historical context of Asian countries, emphasizing how the struggle for independence from colonial powers has deeply influenced contemporary democratic values and governance structures. The narratives of democracy in the region are significantly shaped by these past struggles, which suggests a strong need to remember and incorporate these historical contexts when considering democratic developments today. This emphasis on historical memory is seen as a way to foster a sense of national identity that supports and strengthens democratic institutions.

Cultural pluralism and diversity were also central themes, reflecting Asia's rich mosaic of cultures, languages and traditions. The discussions highlighted that embracing this diversity is not only a cultural imperative, but also a political necessity for fostering unity within plurality. The forum advocated policies that celebrate cultural diversity and educational programmes that highlight the importance of pluralism in democratic societies.

The recent trend towards authoritarianism and democratic backsliding in some parts of Asia was critically examined. The forum stressed the importance of strengthening democratic institutions to resist authoritarian tendencies and of engaging with civil society to monitor and advocate for democratic norms. Transparency and accountability in governance were identified as fundamental to building public trust and ensuring the integrity of democratic processes.

Civic education was identified as a cornerstone of fostering democratic values. Comprehensive civic education curricula in schools and support for NGOs to provide civic education to the wider public were seen as crucial for ensuring that democratic ideals are both understood and practiced. The forum also highlighted the need for community programmes and awareness campaigns to encourage public participation in democratic processes.

The need for transparency and accountability was a recurring theme. There were calls for stringent measures to ensure government transparency, such as mandatory public disclosure and the establishment of independent watchdog organizations. Such measures are vital for maintaining the health and integrity of democratic systems.

> *Many of the Asian countries have experienced colonial rule, and consequently their narratives of democracy are deeply intertwined with the struggle for independence.*
>
> *Maj Gen Anil Verma*

The inclusion of marginalized voices, notably women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups, was emphasized as critical for the success of democracy. Policies that guarantee representation and provide necessary support for these groups were identified as key to achieving a truly inclusive democratic process.

Strategic advocacy to tackle misinformation and disinformation was discussed as a crucial tool for protecting democracy. Supportive legal frameworks that allow for such litigation, collaboration with international organizations on best practices and educating the public on media literacy were all highlighted as essential strategies.

The importance of prioritizing the national interest over personal or political gain to strengthen democratic governance was also a focus. Encouraging a culture of integrity and service in public administration, and engaging with civil society to advocate for policies that serve the broader public good were proposed as ways to ensure that governance truly reflects the will and needs of the people.

Strengthening institutions and systems was deemed essential for the effective functioning of democracy. Investing in robust governmental and judicial institutions that can withstand political pressure, ensuring the independence of critical institutions and promoting inter-institutional cooperation to address governance challenges were all discussed.

Recomendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the insights from the Asia Global Democracy Coalition Forum:

Theme	Recomendations
Emphasize historical struggles in shaping democratic values	Encourage a deeper understanding and integration of historical contexts when shaping national identity and democratic institutions.
Promote cultural pluralism and diversity	Implement policies and educational programmes that celebrate cultural diversity and emphasize its importance in society.
Strengthen democratic institutions to resist authoritarianism	Enhance the resilience of democratic institutions through civil society engagement and improved transparency and accountability.
Develop comprehensive civic education	Support initiatives that provide civic education across all levels of society to build a well-informed population capable of meaningful participation in democracy.
Ensure transparency and accountability in governance	Implement measures on greater transparency and establish independent bodies to monitor government actions and hold governmental entities accountable.
Enhance the inclusion of marginalized voices	Enact and enforce policies that ensure the representation and active participation of all societal groups in the political process.
Invest in strengthening institutions and systems	Build and maintain strong, independent institutions that can effectively support the functions of a democratic state.

Theme	Recomendations
Combat disinformation through strategic advocacy and education	Support legal and educational efforts to address the challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation in the digital age.
Prioritize the national interest in governance	Foster a culture of integrity and service among political leaders to ensure that policies and actions reflect the broader public good.

Global Democracy Coalition Forum

The **Global Democracy Coalition Forum** 2024 convened stakeholders from around the world to address pressing challenges and opportunities in the global democratic landscape. The discussions spanned a range of topics from civic education to inclusion, gender issues and the intersection between democracy and technology. The forum served as a critical platform for shaping a cohesive strategy on enhancing democratic practices globally.

If I were to doubt about the state of democracy or about where democracy is headed, today listening to this impressive range of speakers from different backgrounds from different parts of the world, my fears would have been alleviated.

H.E. Jacques Flies,
Amb. of Luxembourg to RoK

Highlights of the Forum

The forum underscored the importance of civic education in fostering democratic values, particularly among youth. Participants highlighted the potential for leveraging digital platforms to enhance civic education and engagement. Technology was seen as a crucial tool for promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Examples included the use of civic tech to educate young people about election observation and developing platforms to monitor government procurement and highlight irregularities.

The need for inclusion was another central theme. Discussions focused on involving young people in policymaking to ensure that their voices are heard and their issues addressed. The forum emphasized the importance of gender inclusion and the challenges women face in participating in democratic processes linked to cultural and societal norms. The creation of intergenerational and intersectional dialogue spaces was seen as essential to fostering a more inclusive democratic environment.

Participants stressed that technology is both a driver of democratic change and a potential threat if misused. The forum discussed the need to regulate emerging technologies to prevent them from undermining democratic principles. Ensuring that technological initiatives are sustainable was highlighted as crucial if there is to be long-term impact.

Another key focus was the narrative surrounding democracy. Participants discussed the need to alter the democracy narrative in regions such as Asia by promoting civil society partnerships, running campaigns adapted to local contexts and emphasizing the benefits of civic engagement. Language that emphasizes freedom and dignity was seen as powerful in countering authoritarian claims about democracy.

The forum also addressed the challenge of transforming public discontent into positive political action. It was deemed vital to encourage environments where scepticism and scrutiny of the authorities are acceptable and channelled into constructive action. In addition, the importance of global advocacy and collaboration among democracy defenders was emphasized as a counter to the united front presented by autocratic regimes.

> *It is crucial for us freedom fighters, civil society leaders, and democracy experts from around the globe to come together, talk to each other, and remain united in the struggle for democracy and against tyranny.*
>
> *Elizaveta Volkova, YLC*

Recomendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the insights from the Global Democracy Coalition Forum:

Theme	Recomendations
Promote youth engagement via civic education	Leverage digital platforms to enhance civic education among youth, teaching democratic practices and principles.
Use civic technology for civic education	Foster civic education through technology to improve understanding of democratic processes and their benefits.
Invest in citizen education	Prioritize civic education to resonate democratic values among young people and the general public.
Leverage technology for transparency and accountability	Develop platforms to monitor government activities, ensuring transparency and accountability.
Involve young people in policymaking	Ensure youth are actively involved in policy discussions to address their concerns effectively.
Address gender gaps	Implement policies using a gender lens to ensure women can influence official conversations and participate meaningfully.
Regulate emerging technologies	Implement regulations to prevent the misuse of technology that could undermine democracy.

Theme	Recomendations
Encourage intergenerational and intersectional dialogue	Create spaces for diverse groups to discuss democratic renewal and innovation.
Use technology as a driver of democratic change	Promote the use of technology to engage young audiences and drive democratic change.
Ensure sustainability of technology initiatives	Develop long-term technology projects to ensure sustained impact.
Provide concrete role models for youth	Showcase stories of young political leaders to inspire youth engagement in politics.
Channel emotions into active political engagement	Create environments where public mistrust can be transformed into constructive political actions.
Unite in global advocacy and collaboration	Foster global collaboration among democracy defenders to counter autocratic regimes.
Utilize the SDG framework	Integrate Sustainable Development Goals into policies to advance long term democratic principles.

Similarities and differences between the regional forums

The regional forums of the Global Democracy Coalition explored both common and distinct challenges to democracy across various regions. This section highlights the similarities and differences in youth engagement with technology, efforts to combat disinformation, and regional approaches to democracy. By examining these aspects, we gain insights into how diverse contexts shape democratic practices and foster cross-regional collaboration.

Similarities and differences

Each regional forum delved into the unique challenges, achievements, opportunities and aspirations of democracy in their own contexts. This section highlights the similarities and differences observed across these regional dialogues, focusing on youth engagement with technology, innovative approaches to combating disinformation and lessons learned from youth-led initiatives. It also examines how regional conceptions of democracy and practice intersect with global perspectives.

While there are common threads in the way youth engage with technology, combat disinformation and lead democracy initiatives, each region brings its distinct perspectives and practices shaped by their historical, cultural and political contexts. By understanding these similarities and differences, the forum aims to foster cross-regional collaboration, enhance democratic values and address global challenges to democratic governance.

Similarities

Lessons from youth-led initiatives

Youth-led initiatives that leverage technology for democratic innovation were showcased across all the forums. These initiatives often involve creative and impactful approaches to promoting social change, democratic engagement and political participation. In Asia, for example, youth-led initiatives have been instrumental in promoting civic education and encouraging cultural pluralism. In Africa, young leaders are driving movements for political inclusion and on combating electoral violence. The Americas and Europe also provided examples of successful youth-led projects that use technology to enhance transparency and accountability in governance.

Common democratic values

Despite regional differences, there was a shared commitment to fundamental democratic values such as transparency, accountability, inclusivity and participation. Each region highlighted the importance of these values in strengthening democratic governance and fostering a more engaged and informed population. The emphasis on civic education and the role of technology in promoting democratic engagement were recurring themes that transcended regional boundaries.

Innovative approaches to combat disinformation

All regions acknowledged the pervasive threat of disinformation and the innovative strategies employed by youth to combat the problem. In the Americas, there was a focus on digital literacy programmes and fact checking initiatives to help young people navigate and counter disinformation. Europe and Asia highlighted the importance of strategic advocacy and regulatory frameworks to address disinformation, while Africa emphasized coalition-building and the use of technology to fact-check and reduce disinformation.

Youth engagement with technology

Across all regions, there was a unanimous recognition of the critical role that technology plays in engaging younger generations in political processes. Young people are increasingly using digital platforms to pursue their activism, civic participation and political engagement. This trend was evident in the Americas, where digital platforms are being used to enhance civic education and create spaces for youth participation. Similarly, in Africa, Asia and Europe, technology is seen as a tool for mobilizing youth, promoting democratic values and encouraging participation in governance.

Differences

Regional conceptions and practices of democracy

The forums revealed distinct regional conceptions and practices of democracy shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional factors. In the Americas, the discussions often centred around the challenges posed by restrictive measures on civil society and the militarized response to protests. In Europe, there was a significant focus on fostering innovation within public institutions and promoting intergenerational dialogue. Africa's discussions emphasized the need for enhancing women's participation in politics and addressing electoral violence, while Asia highlighted the importance of remembering historical struggles for independence and promoting cultural pluralism.

Inclusivity and participation

The focus on inclusivity and participation differed based on regional priorities and challenges. In the Africa forum, there was a strong emphasis on enhancing women's political participation and supporting grassroots human rights defenders. The Americas forum highlighted the importance of creating inclusive spaces for marginalized communities. The Europe and Asia forums focused on intergenerational and intersectional dialogue to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in democratic processes.

Combating disinformation

The strategies on combating disinformation varied across the regions. The Americas and Europe focused on digital literacy and fact-checking initiatives. Africa emphasized the role of CSOs in monitoring and countering disinformation, while Asia discussed the need for regulatory frameworks and strategic advocacy to address the issue. These regional variations reflect the different levels of technological development and access to digital resources, as well as the political environments in each region.

Approaches to youth engagement and technology

While all regions recognized the importance of technology in engaging youth, the approaches varied. In the Americas, there was a strong emphasis on using digital platforms for civic education and creating safe spaces for youth participation. Europe focused on fostering innovation within public institutions to better engage with young voices. Africa highlighted the need for strategic litigation and coalition-building to support youth engagement, while Asia emphasized the integration of historical and cultural contexts into civic education programs.

Gaps identified in the Global Democracy Coalition Fora

The Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 identified key gaps that need attention to enhance global democratic governance efforts. While the forum advanced many discussions, specific regional and cross-regional challenges remain. This section outlines these gaps and emphasizes the need for stronger collaboration, dialogue, and action to address them. Bridging these divides is essential for strengthening democratic systems and advancing the global democratic agenda.

Gaps identified

While the Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 successfully brought together diverse perspectives and generated comprehensive recommendations on strengthening democracy, several gaps were identified that warrant further attention and action. Addressing these gaps will be necessary to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives on democratic governance across the globe.

This will require concerted effort and collaboration among stakeholders at all levels and from all regions. By identifying and focusing on these areas, the Global Democracy Coalition can enhance its strategies and initiatives for building stronger, more resilient democratic systems worldwide. Continuous dialogue, research and practical action will be essential to bridge these gaps and advance the global democratic agenda.

Region-Specific Gaps

Americas
- Funding for CSOs: Despite recognizing the significant challenges faced by CSOs, there was a gap in detailed strategies for securing sustainable funding for these organizations, especially those operating under restrictive regimes.
- Systematic approach to youth engagement: While youth engagement was highlighted, there was a lack of comprehensive frameworks to systematically integrate youth into formal political and governance structures beyond digital platforms and protest.

Europe
- Innovation in public institutions: Although fostering innovation in public institutions was emphasized, specific mechanisms and best practices for implementing such innovation, particularly in traditionally bureaucratic environments, were not fully explored.
- Balancing scepticism and trust: The forum discussed the importance of scepticism and scrutiny but did not fully address how to balance these with fostering trust in democratic institutions, which is necessary for their stability and functioning.

Africa
- Implementation of gender policies: While the need to enhance women's participation was acknowledged, there was a lack of concrete implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms to ensure these policies translate into real-world impacts.
- Protection of human rights defenders: Strategies for protecting human rights defenders were discussed but detailed plans on how to counter state-sponsored repression and provide international support and protection were insufficiently developed.

Asia
- Historical integration in modern governance: The emphasis on historical context was significant but there was a gap in practical steps to integrate these historical narratives into modern governance frameworks in a way that might influence modern policymaking and civic education effectively.
- Combating authoritarianism: While the challenge of authoritarianism was highlighted, there was a lack of detailed strategies on how to effectively counter these regimes, particularly in contexts where they have strong control over state mechanisms and media

Cross-Regional Gaps

Technological Infrastructure and Access
- Digital divide: While the role of technology in promoting democracy was universally acknowledged, the discussions did not sufficiently address the digital divide that exists within and between regions, which affects equitable access to digital tools and platforms.
- Sustainability of tech initiatives: Although the need for sustainable tech initiatives was mentioned, there was a lack of detailed strategies on securing long-term funding, continuous innovation and the adaptability of these initiatives to changing technological landscapes.

Civic Education
- Standardization and adaptation: There was a recognition of the importance of civic education but gaps remained in the development of standardized but adaptable civic education curricula that can be customized to fit diverse regional contexts and needs.
- Engagement beyond youth: While youth engagement was a major focus, there was a lack of strategies for engaging with other demographics, such as older adults, minorities and marginalized communities, that also play crucial roles in democratic processes.

Inclusion and Representation
- Intersectionality: Discussions on inclusion often focused on individual aspects such as gender or youth but there was a gap in addressing intersectional approaches to overlapping identities and how they affect democratic participation.
- Monitoring and accountability: There was a lack of detailed mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of inclusion policies and holding institutions accountable for their commitments to diversity and representation.

Combating Disinformation
- Global coordination: While innovative approaches to combating disinformation were discussed, there was a gap in the strategies on global coordination and collaboration, particularly on developing unified standards and practices to address disinformation across borders.
- Regulation and free speech: It was acknowledged that balancing the need to regulate disinformation with protecting free speech presented genuine challenges but detailed frameworks for achieving this balance were not fully articulated.

Opportunities for Cross-Regional Collaboration within the GDC

The Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 highlighted numerous opportunities for cross-regional collaboration to strengthen democratic governance worldwide. This section explores how regions can work together to enhance civic education, leverage technology, combat disinformation, promote inclusivity, strengthen civil society, and counter authoritarianism. Cross-regional partnerships will be crucial for advancing the global democratic agenda through shared learning and coordinated action.

Opportunities for Cross-Regional Collaboration

The Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 not only highlighted regional-specific challenges and achievements but also underscored numerous areas where cross-regional collaboration could significantly strengthen global democratic governance. By leveraging the collective expertise, experience and innovation of different regions, the Coalition can work towards shared goals and address common challenges more effectively.

By working together, regions can enhance civic education, leverage technology for democratic innovation, combat disinformation, promote inclusivity, strengthen civil society and counter authoritarianism. These collaborative efforts, facilitated by the Global Democracy Coalition, can foster a more resilient, inclusive and participatory democratic landscape globally. Continuous engagement, shared learning and coordinated action will be key to securing these opportunities and advancing the global democratic agenda.

Cross-regional collaboration could be particularly impactful in a number of key areas.

Leveraging Technology for Democratic Innovation

Technology plays a pivotal role in modern democratic engagement and cross-regional collaboration can enhance the development and implementation of democratic tech initiatives. Regions could share knowledge on the use of technology to promote transparency, such as Europe's platforms for monitoring government activities and Africa's use of technology to fact check and reduce disinformation. Joint efforts could focus on bridging the digital divide by sharing technological resources and infrastructure, developing universally accessible digital tools and promoting digital literacy across different demographics. Creating a global repository for technological solutions and best practices could help regions to adopt and adapt successful innovations.

Enhancing Civic Education and Youth Engagement

Civic education emerged as a foundational element of fostering democratic values across all regions. There is a clear opportunity for regions to collaborate on developing standardized but adaptable civic education curricula that can be customized to fit diverse cultural and political contexts. Regions can share best practices and successful models of youth engagement, such as digital masterclasses on election observation in the Americas or youth-led civic education initiatives in Asia. Collaborative efforts could include joint educational campaigns, exchange programmes and the creation of a global civic education platform that provides resources and tools accessible to all.

Combating Disinformation

Disinformation is a global challenge that requires a coordinated response. Regions could collaborate on developing unified standards and practices to address disinformation and share strategies that have proved effective in various contexts. For instance, Europe's regulatory frameworks and strategic advocacy against disinformation could be paired with the Americas' digital literacy initiatives and Africa's coalition-building approaches. Establishing a global network of fact-checking organizations and enacting joint public awareness campaigns could amplify efforts to combat disinformation and promote media literacy.

Promoting Inclusivity and Representation

Inclusive governance is crucial for the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic systems. Regions could learn from each other's strategies for enhancing the participation of marginalized groups. Africa's focus on women's political participation, Asia's emphasis on cultural pluralism and Europe's intergenerational dialogue initiatives could be integrated into a comprehensive global approach to inclusivity. Collaborative projects could include international forums on inclusive governance, exchange programmes for underrepresented groups and joint research initiatives on developing and establishing inclusive policymaking.

Addressing Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding

Regions experiencing democratic backsliding could benefit from shared strategies and coordinated efforts to counter authoritarian tendencies. Asia's focus on historical context and Africa's strategic advocacy to challenge repressive laws provide valuable lessons. Collaborative action could include global advocacy campaigns, sharing successful resistance strategies and providing international support for democratic movements in authoritarian contexts. Establishing a global coalition to monitor and respond to democratic backsliding could ensure a unified and effective response to emerging threats.

Strengthening Civil Society

Civil society organizations are vital for democratic resilience but they face significant challenges, such as funding constraints and government restrictions. Cross-regional collaboration can provide CSOs with the support they need to thrive. Sharing strategies on securing sustainable funding, such as Europe's emphasis on public funding for democratic projects, could help CSOs in other regions. Joint advocacy efforts, international solidarity campaigns and the creation of a global network of CSOs could enhance their capacity to operate effectively and safeguard democratic values.

Global Coordination and Advocacy

Global coordination is central to addressing systemic challenges and promoting democratic values worldwide. The Global Democracy Coalition is able to facilitate regular dialogues, joint research projects and coordinated advocacy efforts, and also provide safe spaces to share information and strategies, as well as host events, panels, and roundtables to ensure this knowledge is effectively exchanged. . By aligning regional initiatives with global goals, the coalition could create a unified front to advance democracy. Developing a global action plan that incorporates regional insights and leverages cross-regional strengths would provide a cohesive strategy for promoting democratic governance.

Conclusion

The Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 emphasized the critical need for collaborative action to safeguard and advance democratic governance worldwide. This report consolidates insights from both regional and global discussions, showcasing the unique challenges and opportunities each region faces while identifying common themes such as the role of technology, combating disinformation, and fostering inclusivity.

Conclusion

The Global Democracy Coalition provides a unique space for democracy organizations from around the world to share their experiences in advancing democracy and learn from each other. The yearly Global Democracy Coalition Forum provides a valuable platform for GDC partners to meet, share, and define join strategies. The Global Democracy Coalition 2024 provided a unique and invaluable platform for diverse stakeholders from around the world to come together to discuss the pressing challenges facing and opportunities for democracy today. This report synthesizes the insights and recommendations from the regional and global forums, highlighting the critical issues, common themes and unique perspectives that emerged from each discussion.

The regional forums underscored the importance of understanding and addressing the specific political, cultural and social contexts that shape democratic governance. From the Americas' focus on the challenges faced by CSOs and youth engagement, to Europe's emphasis on fostering innovation within public institutions, Africa's advocacy of enhanced women's participation and combating electoral violence, and Asia's integration of historical context and promotion of cultural pluralism, each region brought crucial insights and made actionable recommendations.

Despite the regional differences, several universal themes emerged. The critical role of technology in engaging younger generations and promoting transparency, the need to combat disinformation through innovative and coordinated approaches, and the importance of inclusivity and representation were consistently highlighted across all regions. These common themes emphasize the shared values and aspirations that unite democratic societies worldwide.

The global forum synthesized these regional insights to provide a comprehensive vision for advancing democracy globally. The discussions emphasized leveraging technology for civic education and transparency, addressing gender gaps, promoting inclusive policymaking and altering the narrative surrounding democracy to counter democratic backsliding. The forum also highlighted the importance of global collaboration among democracy defenders to counter autocratic regimes and promote democratic values.

Addressing the gaps identified during the discussions will be central to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of democratic initiatives. Sustainable funding for CSOs, comprehensive frameworks for youth engagement, specific mechanisms for fostering innovation and balancing scepticism with institutional trust are just some of the areas that require further attention. In addition, enhancing digital literacy, engaging with diverse demographics and developing intersectional approaches to inclusion will be vital for building resilient democratic systems.

Opportunities for cross-regional collaboration present a powerful avenue for addressing these challenges. By sharing best practices, leveraging collective strengths and coordinating efforts, regions can enhance civic education, combat disinformation, promote inclusivity, strengthen civil society and counter authoritarianism. The Global Democracy Coalition plans to facilitate these collaborative efforts by creating a unified front to advance democratic governance worldwide.

As the world faces increased challenges to democratic norms and values, this report substantiates the urgent need for collective action and international collaboration. By drawing on diverse experiences and expertise from around the globe, the Global Democracy Coalition Forum 2024 sets the stage for meaningful progress in the pursuit of democratic governance. The insights and recommendations presented in this report provide a roadmap for stakeholders at all levels to implement effective innovative strategies, foster inclusive and participatory democratic environments and uphold the fundamental principles of democracy.

As democratic norms and values face unprecedented challenges globally, the need for decisive, united action has never been more urgent. This report is not just a call for reflection but a rallying cry for stakeholders at all levels to take bold, coordinated steps in defence of democracy. The insights and recommendations outlined here offer a blueprint for transformative change—grounded in inclusivity, innovation, and resilience. By harnessing the collective strength of regional and global efforts, we have the opportunity to not only protect democratic systems but to reimagine and strengthen them for future generations. Now is the time to act with conviction, to champion the principles of freedom, equality, and justice, and to ensure that the foundations of democracy endure, adapt, and thrive in every corner of the world. The future of democracy depends on what we do next—together.