

**FORUM:** Special Conference on Securing and Advancing Democracy; Sub-Commission 1

**QUESTION OF:** Promoting trust in democratic institutions to prevent democratic erosion

**SUBMITTED BY:** Sri Lanka

**CO-SUBMITTERS:** Switzerland, France, ECE, Argentina, Canada, Kenya, Austria, Italy, Rwanda, Finland, Mauritius, Bulgaria, Somalia, Luxembourg, Trinidad & Tobago, Mozambique, Tanzania, Georgia, Turkey, Bahrain

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON ADVANCING AND SECURING DEMOCRACY,

*Defining* democratic erosion, also known as democratic backsliding or de-democratization, as a gradual decline in the quality of democracy,

*Bearing in mind* the democratic principles of consent, freedom of speech and assembly, equality, public education, voting and free press, providing the basis for democratic institutions and truth as a democratic core value that is essential to promote trust in the bond between the government and the governed,

*Concerned* that half of the world's democracies of higher and lower ranking in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index analyzed by 60 indicators outlined in the categories electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture, experience challenges such as populism while democratic erosion is on the rise,

*Supports* the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) of the United Nations that supervises elections and moreover aims to promote public confidence in electoral processes, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who all express efforts to improve democracies,

*Guided by* the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #16 "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions",

*Viewing* with appreciation the achievements of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an Inter-Governmental Organisation (IGO) which helps the advancement of democracy worldwide, as an 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,

*Congratulating* the efforts of the Together Against Corruption 2020 Strategy launched by Transparency International,

1. Draws the attention on the importance of strengthening the participation of the citizens by helping them have a bigger say in the decision making of the country and strengthening citizens' democratic trust, enforced through methods including but not limited to:
  - a) offering free messages or email election reminder services for citizens about upcoming State and local elections and by-election funded by the UNDEF
  - b) conferring an option to select "none of the above" for voters who do not favor any of the candidates thus allowing a blank vote
  - c) automatic or same-day voter registration
  - d) pooling together election dates
  - e) standards set by the United Nations Committee for the Advancement of Democracy (UNCAD) to ensure all polling places have sufficient voting booths, poll workers and other resources to prevent long lines on election
  - f) launching a campaign that offers factual and generally understandable information about issues on the agenda to brief the electorate on an upcoming vote/election by providing

leaflets containing:

- i. various opinions on the issue to vote in a referendum or popular petition
  - ii. an introduction to the positions of different political parties including a detailed description of the objectives, the purpose and its impact on the community
  - iii. the total costs and the percentage of tax to government funds used;
2. Recommends that governments cooperate with IGOs such as IDEA in order to carry out studies and surveys that will serve as indicators of the levels of abstention, apathy, and lack of trust on the state and its governmental institutions with a view to adopt corrective measures by:
  - a) running and explicitly sharing with the citizens these findings to create the aforementioned studies and surveys
  - b) transparency and coincidentally harbor trust to strengthen democratic institutions
  - c) examining the health of democracies on a country by country basis and advising using IDEA's democracy tool and subsequently advise them on targets to meet in order to improve their democratic processes;
3. Calls for the establishment of an UN Sub-Agency for combating corruption that will primarily work and oversee nations to prevent issues such as bribery or clientelism by, but not limited to:
  - a) working closely with those entities promoting trade and investment internationally to encourage anti-corruption methods and promoting educational and awareness campaigns
  - b) filing an annual report concerning the aforementioned issues, to be reviewed by independent NGOs taking the role of unbiased observers that will review the content of those endeavors and suggest corrective measures working towards eliminating corruption and promoting transparency
  - c) using the results of these reports which may lead in the prosecutions in the international court of justice of those individuals or businesses that have been involved in corrupt practices or offenses within the jurisdiction;
4. Requests that Member States support popular participation in order to promote diversity between voters, collective deliberation and political equality, which are essential to democracy, and should be realized through a framework and structure of accessible, representative, transparent and accountable institutions subject to periodic change or renewal in ways such as but not limited to:
  - a) providing assistance to electoral processes and the conduct of elections by
    - i. supporting independent institutions or mechanisms entrusted with managing elections
    - ii. allowing national election observation and monitoring processes
  - b) installing referendums at local and national levels funded by the UNDEF
  - c) allowing popular petitions at local and national levels
  - d) handing over, wherever possible, more power to local and regional governments making the changes and benefits through clear and transparent political decisions and, therefore, fostering the identification of residents with politics;
5. Recommends the creation of the (UNCAD) which can be funded through the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), and will comprise of a variety of scholars ranging from political scientists specializing in the democratic theory to information technology experts who will work in accordance with NGOs such as Transparency International and IGOs like the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in order to encourage democratic education in schools through:
  - a) creating a model in accordance with UN resolution "Education for Democracy" implemented into the schools' curriculum that addresses the basic principles of democracy informing the youth about matters such as, but not limited to, freedom of belief, conscience, and expression, the threat of democratic erosion, and the role of the media in a democratic state
  - b) an array of support activities, including civic and voter education, training, and technical

and other support for media and political outreach initiatives;

6. Endorses politics to become more transparent in terms of ongoing procedures, especially those of financial importance to prevent corruption by keeping the public informed about the resources and expenses taking measures such as, but not limited to:
  - a) publishing annual reports on the budget
  - b) publishing recent enactments at local, national and international levels
  - c) making these measures accessible to everyone interested by:
    - i. launching a website and an application that involves the electorate in the process of decision-making
    - ii. approving an official gazette
    - iii. using social media channels to reach younger citizens and interest them in the politics of their nation by motivating them into voting procedures, demonstrating the advantages of a democratic government and convincing them that the government acts for their goodwill
  - d) establishing a website and an application with the assistance of UNCAD that is:
    - i. showing the current status of past, current and prospective proposals allowing eligible citizens to vote on the presented issue
    - ii. publishing the results of the online poll
    - iii. monitoring how the parties and specific politicians voted on an issue
    - iv. determining which parties and politicians correspond to the voting behavior of the individual user to create a greater party affiliation;
7. Encourages the integration of technology into the democratic election process with the collaboration of the UNCAD in order to modernize, improve efficiency and further enhance the inclusion of the wider public into vital decision making procedures through ways such as but not limited to:
  - a) utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to conduct boundary delimitation and establish the location of polling stations
  - b) use sophisticated databases maintain the voter registers
  - c) adopt mobile technology for the transmission of election results through apps developed through intergovernmental bodies such as IDEA
  - d) provide training regarding the use of technology to the elderly population through publicly available classes in order to help them adapt to the advancement and digitalization of the democratic process
  - e) inform the public about the algorithms used for selecting the information shown on news websites and social media in order to remove any bias;
8. Further Encourages collaboration among the Member States in an attempt to promote and adapt the principles of transparency and work with Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) such as Transparency International to adopt their principles to strengthen the trust between citizens and their government, by measures such as, but not limited to:
  - a) working to achieve Strategy 2020 and to encourage all countries to work with Transparency International who should
  - b) preparing to protect against internal and external interference in elections through investing, with the assistance of UNDEF funds, in the people and systems necessary for the technological security of vote counting, voter registration machines and political campaign networks
  - c) regulating the role of money in politics to retain trust in the democratic system, through the creation of such mechanisms as:
    - i. public financing of campaigns
    - ii. disclosure requirements for donations
    - iii. limits on the amount of campaign donations;
9. Trusts that Member States will remain actively seized of the matter in order to prevent any further

democratic back-sliding hence ensure the fundamental rights of their citizens and integrate the significant value of democracy into their societies.