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*The Global State of Democracy:*  
*Exploring Democracy's Resilience*  
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Thank you distinguished speakers and colleagues for being here. A special pleasure to be here with my friend of 25 years, Jan Eliasson. Above all, thank you, International IDEA, for this impressive report. I am encouraged to read in it that current views of the global state of democracy are overly pessimistic. But neither is the report wildly optimistic. The non-binary tone of your report is especially welcome because here at the UN, working for democracy support is not always straightforward. You all know that democracy appears nowhere in the UN Charter, and that it far from espoused by all Member States.

Some even question whether democracy is compatible with the stability of nations.

But on that last point, let me refer you to the message of the UN Secretary- General on this year's International Day of Democracy. And I quote: "In some countries, a dangerous illusion has taken hold that democracy is in contradiction to stability or conflict prevention. Quite the contrary: by destroying democratic institutions, by suppressing civil society, by undermining the rule of law and human rights, authoritarian rule ... prevents societies from developing peaceful channels and effective instruments for resolution". End quote.

The IDEA report elaborates well on this. It notes:

That democracy helps manage conflict non-violently, and then extend and improve government services over time.

That democracy, peace and development work together over the long term to provide a virtuous cycle of progress.

That cross-cutting civil society engagement in democratic transitions leads to a reduced risk of terror attacks.

I would add a further fundamental point: that speaking the truth takes two: one to talk, the other to hear. My work with the UN Democracy Fund, UNDEF, has shown me that an open discussion among men and women sitting under a tree can do more for participatory democracy than all the government summits and cabinet meetings in the world. When grass-roots activists, community

organizers, labour mobilizers, youth and women leaders, come together at their own initiative, all with a stake in the outcome, they will persevere until all sides are represented. This inclusive discourse must never end.

As important, there must be someone in the capital listening. A confident nation gives citizens a say in the development of their country; the most effective, stable and successful democracies are in fact those where a strong civil society works in partnership with the state, while also holding it accountable.

One of the most heartening findings from this IDEA report is that civil society participation has increased significantly in several African and Asian states. But it also finds that other countries are going in the opposite direction.

UNDEF, which I head, is the only UN entity that exists to fund democracy through civil society. Since 2012, we have witnessed how more than 70 countries have introduced over 120 laws and other measures restricting civil society's freedom to operate. Many Governments copy each other. Rather than building on a community of good practices, they are creating a community of worst practices.

Why? Because civil society, when operating freely, succeeds in inspiring people: It mobilizes, organizes and holds governments to account. To have a strong State and a strong civil society at the same time is not only possible. It is both desirable and necessary. What do the stable and prosperous states of the world have in common? Usually, a combination of both.

Thank you.