

UNDEF

The United Nations
Democracy Fund



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Fonds des Nations Unies
pour la démocratie

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**Opening Remarks: 'What Is Democracy':
UNDEF Side Event During the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
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Thank you all for being here. I am Annika Savill, Executive Head of the UN Democracy Fund. And the time has come to talk about democracy.

At the outset, let me thank the Deputy Secretary-General. Not only for being our keynote speaker today. Even more, for encouraging the idea of this discussion, and anchoring it in the momentum around Goal 16.

Let me welcome Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and our distinguished panellists.

We are excited to see so many parliamentarians. And Member States where the UN Democracy Fund has projects.

A special shout-out to India and the United States, in effect founding mothers of the UN Democracy Fund 15 years ago. You sowed the seeds that led to Kofi Annan's establishing the Fund in 2005. Thank you for still being with us after so many years.

Same to all other donor Governments here. Many of you are on our Advisory Board. I hope yet more Governments will join as donors in the future.

As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres puts it, democracy means an ongoing dialogue between political society and civil society. One where civil society has true voice and influence.

That is what the UN Democracy Fund does.

For those of you who do not yet know us, the Fund is the only UN entity with the word democracy in its name. As you know, the word "democracy" does not appear in the UN Charter.

Most important, we are the only entity with the primary mandate to support democracy through civil society. As the past week's discussion has reminded us, we will achieve Goal 16 only if civil society is front and center of our efforts.

This makes our Fund a unique model in the UN family, working to do transformative things with grants in relatively small amounts, using direct support to create enabling environments for civil society around the world.

That goes for all that is crucial on our way to 2030. Youth, gender equality, rule of law, media freedom, electoral support.

Today, we will hear more from experts on the question of what is democracy.

First, our torchbearer on the road to 2030, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed.

Madam DSG, you have the floor.