



**Kofi Annan**  
Foundation

**Costa Rica**  
MISION PERMANENTE EN GINEBRA



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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## Multilateralism, democracy and human rights

### Strengthening democratic resilience around the world by leveraging engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms

Policy Dialogue ahead of the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council

**14 May 2025**

**15:00 – 17:30**

**Palais des Nations, room XXIV**

*Drinks and refreshments will be served from 14:45*

#### CONCEPT NOTE

#### PROGRAMME

14h45 - 15h00: **Arrival, drinks and refreshments**

15h00 - 15h20: **Welcome and opening remarks**

- **Ms Corinne Momal-Vanian**, Executive Director, Kofi Annan Foundation (Moderator)
- **H.E. Mr Christian Guillermet Fernandez**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations in Geneva
- **H.E. Mr Jürg Lauber**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva

15h20 - 15h25 **Setting the scene**

- **Ms Christine Lutringer**, Executive Director, Graduate Institute Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy

15h25 – 15h50 **PART 1: Case studies from four countries**

*Country case studies illustrating how States can successfully leverage their international human rights obligations and commitments, to drive democratic progress, overcome challenges, and build democratic resilience.*

- **H.E. Mr. Yerlan ALIMBAYEV**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan
- **H.E. Mr. Muhammadou M.O. KAH**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of The Gambia
- **Mr Mauricio Artiñano Guzman**, Coordinator, Multiparty Ethical Pact, Costa Rica
- **Representative of Switzerland** [name TBC]



Permanent Mission of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva



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15h50 – 16h15

**Q & A on case studies**

16h15

Change of panel on the podium

16h20 – 16h50:

**PART 2: The mutually reinforcing links between the multilateral system, human rights protection and democratic governance**

*How can the multilateral system, especially the human rights mechanisms, be better mobilised to address ‘resilience weak spots’ across all UN member States, and extend recommendations to address those weak spots and strengthen democratic health?*

- **H.E. Ms Patricia Ann Hermanns**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Bahamas
- **Mr Dimiter Chalev**, Chief, Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Unit, OHCHR
- **Ms Nathalie Rondeux**, Coordinator Committee of Special Procedures, OHCHR
- **Mr Marc Limon**, Executive Director, Universal Rights Group

16h50 – 17h15

**Q & A on the multilateral system and democratic governance**

17h15 – 17h30

**Concluding remarks and next steps**

- H.E. Mr Ambassador Christian Guillermet Fernandez
- Ms Corinne Momal-Vanian

**BACKGROUND**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulates a solemn truth:

That all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that the will of the people shall be the sole basis of the authority of government and the legitimacy of sovereign States – and, by extension, the legitimacy of the United Nations as a whole.

It is clear from the Universal Declaration, the human rights treaties, and other core UN documents<sup>1</sup> that democratic forms of governance, based upon the unfettered will of the people, provides the strongest foundation for long-term peace and security, sustainable development ‘leaving no one behind,’ and the full enjoyment of human rights.

On the other hand, it is also true that respect for, and the promotion and protection of, human rights provide the bedrock upon which democracy is built. All the key pillars that support democratic governance – including equality and non-discrimination, the right to vote in free and fair elections, respect for the rule of law, transparency and accountability in public administration, freedom of thought and conscience, an independent and pluralistic media, freedom of assembly and of association, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to work, and the right to education – are grounded in international human rights law.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that ‘democracy, good governance and the rule of law, as well as an enabling environment at national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development.’ See also the UDHR (article 22), ICCPR (article 25), CERD (article 5), etc.





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As such, democracy and human rights are interdependent and mutually-reinforcing. Where rights are respected, promoted, and protected, democracy can flourish. Where fundamental rights are eroded then it undermines the very edifice of democracy itself, even in long-established democratic societies.

According to International IDEA's 'Global State of Democracy Report 2024,' nearly half of all democratic governments around the world are in decline, undermined by challenges including a refusal of losing candidates to accept election results; restrictions on civil society and on the rights to freedoms of expression, association and assembly; the misuse of new technologies to manipulate elections; the spread of disinformation and foment distrust in poll results; unequal access to essential public services and democratic life; and grand corruption.

From the foregoing, it is clear that this democratic crisis is, at its heart, a human rights crisis, and if we are to reverse these trends, we must mobilise the international human rights system, including this Council, its mechanisms (the UPR and the Special Procedures), the Treaty Bodies, and OHCHR.

A key dimension of such an approach should be to encourage the mechanisms to focus more on the democratic health of States, and extend recommendations aimed at strengthening democratic resilience, and building stable, inclusive, and vibrant democratic societies. The UN, including this Council under its agenda item 10, as well as OHCHR, and UN Country Teams, should also provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to States, upon their request and with their full involvement, to implement those recommendations.

All democracies, irrespective of how long-established they may be, have room for improvement, and that is why the universal, multilateral UN human rights system must place itself in the vanguard of the global reinvigoration of democratic society.

The policy dialogue to be held on 14 May 2025 will provide a platform for States, civil society organisations, UN experts, and members of human rights treaties and Special Procedures, to consider, empirically, the argument that all the key pillars or tenets of democracy are built upon the foundation of international human rights obligations and commitments; to consider practical State case studies showing how progress with the implementation of relevant UN human rights recommendations by extension serves to strengthen democratic resilience and the democratic health of societies; and to share ideas and proposals for how, building upon this understanding, the multilateral system, especially the main human rights mechanisms, can be better mobilised to address 'resilience weak spots' across all UN member States, and extend recommendations to address those issues and strengthen democratic health.



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