

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

15 September 2015

Civil society is the oxygen of democracy.

We see this clearly in the world's most vibrant and stable democracies, where Government and civil society work together for common goals. Civil society acts as a catalyst for social progress and economic growth. It plays a critical role in keeping Government accountable, and helps represent the diverse interests of the population, including its most vulnerable groups.

The role of civil society has never been more important. Soon we will start to implement an inspiring new development agenda, agreed by all the world's Governments.

Yet, for civil society, freedom to operate is diminishing — or even disappearing.

An alarming number of Governments have adopted restrictions that limit the ability of NGOs to work, or to receive funding, or both.

That is why the theme of this year's International Day of Democracy is space for civil society.

On this Day, let us recall that progress and civic participation go hand in hand.

A confident nation gives citizens a say and a role in the development of their country.

As the United Nations continues to work towards a democratic, pluralistic future for all, the State and civil society can and should be partners in building the future people want.

Thank you.