

# **SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY**

## **2021 SUBMISSION AND COMMITMENTS: CANADA**

The Summit for Democracy brings together governments from around the world to affirm our commitment to a form of government that recognises the inherent rights and dignity of every human being.

In the face of new and persistent threats, democracies need to stand together. We need to affirm our commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy. We need to renew dialogue within our countries to demonstrate that democracy remains the system best suited to serve all people, protect the most vulnerable and generate greater resilience. We need to strengthen cooperation between democratic governments and between those governments and the defenders of democracy – journalists, civil society advocates, academics, and others.

Canada remains committed to democracy, human rights, and rule of law. These issues matter deeply to Canadians, and they expect the Government of Canada to take action, at home and abroad, to demonstrate respect for these fundamental principles.

The Government of Canada is pleased to announce a series of commitments in alignment with the three key themes of the Summit. These commitments, which represent a broader resolve by Canada to strengthen democracy, will be implemented as part of a year of action in consultation with stakeholders, including civil society. We must seize this moment and stand with other countries to pave the way for democratic renewal and a strengthened global movement to advance democracy.

### **Advancing Democracy and Defending Against Authoritarianism**

Canada's conviction is that for democracy to prosper, it must be inclusive. Holding free and fair elections is an essential step, but it is only the first one. Democratic governments must take appropriate measures to ensure that everyone – including the most marginalized – can participate in decisions that affect them.

We must look constantly to maintain all of the rights, processes, and institutions that make up a healthy democracy – from a free press, to an independent judiciary, to the holding of free and fair elections. We must have the courage to confront exclusion within our own societies, to ensure a diversity of voices are heard. This is true in every democratic country, in every age. It is certainly true in Canada, not least in the context of our relationship with Indigenous peoples.

As we take steps to ensure that democracy works for all, we must consider the rapidly evolving opportunities and challenges presented by digital technology. While digital technologies represent critical tools for advancing human rights and empowering individuals and communities, they can also be used to control public discourse, undermine privacy and enable targeted manipulation through advertisement, censorship and unlawful surveillance, and the proliferation of disinformation and harmful content. This diminishes the diversity of voices that are crucial to an inclusive and democratic discourse. Ensuring that digital technology works in

the interest of democratic principles and not contrary to them will be a central question for our time. Democracies must also be firm in their resolve to defend against threats stemming from authoritarianism.

Canada has long striven to uphold and defend democratic principles in the international arena. In partnership with other countries and with democracy advocates, Canada has sought to strengthen respect for human rights internationally – the foundation of democracy. Canada has worked in solidarity with development cooperation partners to reinforce inclusive governance and democratic practice. Canada looks forward to lending its efforts to new initiatives that aim to bring democratic states together, in order to identify common solutions to the most pressing issues of our time.

To advance democracy and defend against authoritarianism, Canada commits to the following:

- Canada will continue to implement and to refine the Plan to Protect Canada’s Democracy, which is based on four pillars: Enhancing Citizen Preparedness; Improving Organizational Readiness; Combatting Foreign Interference; and Building a Healthy Information Ecosystem.
- Canada will establish a new centre to expand the availability of Canadian expertise and assistance to those seeking to build peace, advance justice, promote human rights, inclusion and democracy, and deliver good governance.
- Canada will expand fast and flexible support for fragile and emerging democracies with a view to extending the reach of our assistance and the impact of our diplomatic efforts; improving the timeliness of Canada’s response to sudden-onset democracy and human rights crises; and increasing Canada’s capacity for flexible and innovative responses to emerging challenges.
- Canada will continue to ensure young people across the country have a voice in decisions that affect them by supporting organizations, such as the Prime Minister’s Youth Council, that play a role in helping to influence government policy, increase youth knowledge and understanding of democratic processes and institutions in Canada, and increase their awareness of the importance of being active and engaged citizens.
- Canada will enhance likeminded collaboration to identify and respond to foreign threats to our democratic values, processes and institutions in the context of our leadership of the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM).
- Canada will further its global leadership to address arbitrary detention for diplomatic leverage, including by securing additional endorsements of the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations and working collaboratively with partners on the implementation of its associated Partnership Action Plan.

- Canada will chair the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in 2022, and by doing so will support the organization's work on the advancement of democracy worldwide.
- Canada will advance digital inclusion to foster meaningful participation in society online and offline, at home and abroad, through continued implementation of our Digital Charter and international partnerships, including chairing the Freedom Online Coalition in 2022, with a focus on shaping global norms, empowering multistakeholder engagement and boosting communication and outreach.
- Canada will strengthen its role in advancing free, fair, and inclusive elections and provide increased support for election observation missions.
- Canada will promote the implementation of the framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace and continue to publicly call out and respond to malicious cyber activity carried out by authoritarian actors, including actions that undermine democracy or interfere in democratic processes.
- Canada will take further steps to address the gender dimensions of cyber security, notably by advocating that gender considerations be mainstreamed at ongoing and upcoming UN cyber processes.
- Canada will take additional steps to enable and protect civil society and continue our partnership with Canadian civil society interlocutors.
- Canada will sustain its support for women's leadership and political participation domestically and internationally through historic government funding to women's organizations and equality-seeking groups with a focus on vulnerable women, and provide a new contribution to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy with a focus on the ASEAN region.
- Canada will advance the recognition, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of Indigenous peoples through implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Canada will exercise leadership to promote open government nationally and internationally, including as a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Steering Committee until 2023 and through our continued support of the OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund.
- Canada will develop an initiative to underscore the importance of the Inter-American Democratic Charter two decades after it was adopted, to identify challenges and opportunities for the promotion of democracy in the hemisphere, and to build consensus in advance of the Summit of the Americas in 2022.

- Canada will launch a Call for Proposals under the Office of Human Rights Freedoms and Inclusion to support innovative approaches aimed at ensuring that technology supports democracy and open societies.

## **Addressing and Fighting Corruption**

Corruption is a challenge faced by every society in the world. Corruption is corrosive; it undermines public trust, democracy and the rule of law, contributes to inequality and organized crime, disproportionately affects women and marginalized populations, and hinders economic growth, sustainable development and good governance. Democracy – with its emphasis on transparency and accountability, equality and inclusion, and the rule of law – can be a powerful antidote to corruption.

Canada recognizes the critical role journalists and the media play in uncovering corruption and providing citizens with information that enables them to hold governments to account. In this regard, Canada is convinced that tackling corruption requires the active participation of all stakeholders in society. As such, we must ensure that anti-corruption efforts include the valuable perspectives of the private sector, academia, non-governmental and community based organizations, as well as journalists and the media. Canada further advocates for a gender sensitive-approach to anti-corruption and strongly supports and encourages work to better understand the differentiated impacts of corruption in order to identify more inclusive and effective ways to prevent and address corruption.

In today's interconnected world, corruption is a global issue and international collaboration is essential to our collective efforts. Canada is an active participant in efforts to prevent and combat corruption, including as a party to three international instruments addressing corruption. Through its Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (ACCBP), Canada provides support to reinforce the capacity of States to prevent and combat corruption and money laundering, including the effective implementation of international obligations and standards. The ACCBP works with trusted partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization to achieve this goal, and currently supports six capacity building projects in the Americas aiming to combat corruption. Through its international assistance programming, Canada is increasing accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services, this way increasing their accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of the poorest, most marginalized and vulnerable people, particularly women, children, and youth.

Canada is not immune to the scourge of corruption and although corruption levels in Canada are relatively low, strengthening our domestic frameworks will further improve the effectiveness of our efforts. Preventing and fighting corruption remains a critical component of democratic renewal and must feature prominently across our commitments in this regard.

To address and fight corruption, Canada commits to the following:

- Canada will continue to support collective efforts to tackle corruption internationally by supporting capacity-building initiatives enhancing the ability of foreign states to prevent and respond to this phenomenon and other security threats such as money laundering.
- Canada will convene a national high level, multi-sectoral roundtable to explore options to strengthen the international legal framework and architecture to combat corruption globally.
- Canada will support the implementation of a publicly accessible corporate beneficial ownership registry by 2025 with a view to providing safeguards against money laundering, terrorist financing, tax evasion and tax avoidance, while ensuring it remains easy to do business in Canada.
- Canada will strengthen federal procurement and contracting policies by placing Human Rights, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, as well as climate change, at the heart of our procurement processes.
- Canada will support open and transparent governments and natural resources governance in developing countries.
- Canada will increase the information that government entities proactively publish on contracts to the public so that Canadians are better able to hold their government to account.

## **Advancing Respect for Human Rights**

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential element of democracy. Rights help ensure some of the prerequisites to meaningful democratic governance, from equal participation in public affairs to access to information.

Canada continues to stand up for human rights at home and abroad as a core component of our efforts to help build a safer, more just and inclusive world. In 2022, Canada will mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canada is proud of the Charter's transformative change and influence. As a founding member of the United Nations and a party to seven principal United Nations human rights treaties, Canada considers the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be foundational to its engagement in the world.

Canadians call on their governments to respect and advance human rights at home and abroad. Sadly, human rights remain under threat. Transgressors – both states and non-state actors – are behaving more boldly, and with increasing impunity. They are seeking to undermine the agreements and principles that underpin the international human rights system.

While we provide support abroad, we must also account for our actions within our country to identify strengths and areas where improvements are needed. Extensive efforts have been undertaken domestically to improve the situation of human rights in Canada, including by renewing efforts toward reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples, by considering new legislation and by ratifying international instruments.

To advance respect for human rights, Canada commits to the following:

- Canada will support a people-centred approach to justice to advance equality, legal empowerment, and a better understanding of the legal needs of all the people of Canada, including Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, and other traditionally underserved populations.
- Canada will take additional steps to combat racism, racial discrimination, and all other forms of social injustices in Canada, including through a National Action Plan on Combatting Hate.
- Canada will take further action to combat and eradicate systemic racism against Indigenous peoples, especially in the health care system, through the co-development of distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation and mental health and wellness strategy.
- Canada will provide \$5 million in additional funding to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2021.
- Canada will take steps to develop its first-ever federal LGBTQ2 Action Plan with a view to advance the health, social and economic outcomes of LGBTQ2 people in Canada and the human rights of LGBTQ2 individuals internationally.
- Canada will increase support for the right to freedom of expression, public interest media, and the safety of journalists, building on its role as co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition, a partnership of 49 countries focused on enhancing diplomatic coordination to defend media freedom.
- Canada will increase support for emergency assistance programs focused on protecting LGBTQ2 persons, religious minorities, and civil society organizations through contributions to the Global Equality Fund, the International Religious Freedom Fund and the Lifeline Embattled CSO Fund.
- Canada will continue to implement and expand a new refugee stream for human rights defenders at risk, including people at heightened risk, such as women, journalists and LGBTQ2 human rights defenders.
- Canada will advance responsible business conduct (RBC) for Canadian companies operating abroad through a renewed five-year Responsible Business Conduct Strategy.

- Canada will continue to be a global leader in providing safe haven to the world's most vulnerable by resettling 36,000 refugees in 2022 and 2023 through our resettlement programs, and an additional commitment to offer protection to 40,000 vulnerable Afghan nationals over the next several years.
- Canada will continue to be a leader in refugee solutions by taking steps to increase the number of resettlement spaces and complementary pathways globally, by playing a leadership role on the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, and the Global Taskforce for Refugee Labour Mobility.
- Building on Canada's implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty human rights commitments, Canada will work with the United States and other like-minded countries to establish a voluntary written code of conduct to prevent the misuse of software and other technologies that can facilitate serious human rights violations.