

DENMARK – Summit for Democracy – Written statement

1. Introduction

Denmark is one of the oldest democracies in the world. Protection and promotion of democracy and human rights is an underlying pillar of the way we organize our society. The Danish societal model is successfully founded on values such as freedom, equality, respect for human rights, gender equality, strong civil society, inclusive participation in decision-making, transparency, and low levels of corruption¹. This also translates into our work internationally – as a strong promoter of democracy and human rights through our foreign policy and development cooperation.

Therefore, Denmark welcomes the initiative by the United States to host a global Summit for Democracy. We stand ready to partner with both the United States and other countries to secure concrete action to further democratic values. Denmark remains committed to leading the way. Given the digital era that we live in, we will in the coming years increase our efforts to ensure that technological development will strengthen democracy, and not undermine it. We will do so both domestically and through our international engagements. In addition to the scaling-up of support to democracy and human rights and defending against authoritarianism, Denmark has launched a Tech for Democracy initiative as a flagship contribution to the US Summit for Democracy.

¹ [Corruption Perceptions Index 2020 - Transparency.org](#)
[WJP Rule of Law Index 2020 | World Justice Project](#)
[EM2030 SDG Gender Index, tracking gender equality progress](#)
[Countries and Territories | Freedom House](#)

This document provides an overview of Denmark's engagement and commitments to the US Summit for Democracy. The government is ready to provide further information on any of the initiatives mentioned.

2. International engagement

Protection and promotion of democracy and human rights and defending against authoritarianism are fundamental aspects of Danish foreign policy and development cooperation. Denmark firmly believes that an international rules-based order, international cooperation and multilateralism are key to upholding democracy and human rights. This informs our support and engagement with multilateral organizations, including the EU, the UN, and the World Bank. Globally, Denmark is a strong supporter of the implementation of SDG 16 with its focus on peace, justice and strong institutions. Good governance is a key component of all bilateral country programmes. Denmark is also supporting international advocacy efforts and country engagements through support to Danish organizations, such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Danish Ombudsman Institutions, and Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy.

Denmark stands committed to continuing our efforts to protect and promote democracy internationally; and examples of Danish contributions to defend against authoritarianism, fight corruption, and advance human rights are highlighted in annex 1.

Tech for Democracy – a multi-stakeholder commitment

To continue our international engagement to strengthen democracy and human rights more must be done to ensure that democratic institutions and processes are fit for purpose in today's world. Human rights must be promoted and protected both offline and online. Digital solutions can promote human rights, enhance people's engagement and fight authoritarianism, and make democratic institutions stronger and more transparent. Yet, at the same time, digital technologies are a severe threat to democracies globally and to our

democratic practices. We must harness the opportunities that digital technologies present to foster and widen democratic and inclusive societies. This calls for joint action.

As a response, Denmark has launched the Tech for Democracy Initiative. We want governments, multilateral organizations, tech companies, and civil society to renew our shared commitment to a responsible, democratic and safe technological development. We want to facilitate new partnerships to deliver concrete solutions, which ensure that digital technology supports democracy and human rights. We want to strengthen civil society's digital resilience and mobilization. A meaningful inclusion of civil society is vital to ensuring broad representation and a leave-no-one-behind agenda in the technological development.

The Tech for Democracy initiative aims to power up a multi-stakeholder push for protecting and promoting democracy and human rights in an era of rapid technological development. A key focus of the Tech for Democracy initiative is to include diverse voices and to include civil society, especially from the global south. Denmark has been working and consulting closely with civil society partners in both the development and implementation of Tech for Democracy. The focus is on leaving no one - and no voice - behind and on identifying people-centered solutions and ways to support local initiatives and agents of change, especially in the global south and in countries with challenged democratic practices.

3. National engagement and record

As one of the world's most digitized countries, Denmark has a strong foundation for engaging with technological development. Digitalization is a key priority for the current as well as previous Danish governments. Nationally, the Government has recently launched three central initiatives that support Democracy in a digital era, as described below:

- 1) The Government's White Paper on tech giants (“Towards a better society with tech giants”) from June 2021, which focuses on starting the debate on the role of tech giants, including, *inter alia*, the need for democratic control over these and the strengthening of democratic dialogue online;
- 2) A proposal from August 2021 on stricter requirements for the responsibilities of tech giants and social media;
- 3) The establishment of an inter-ministerial tech task force as well as an expert group.

White Paper: “Towards a Better Society with Tech Giants”, June 2021

Big tech companies have become world-dominant, based on a new economy – the platform economy, which is built on data-driven, algorithmic business models. An economy in which corporate business models increasingly consume our time and manage our data, without regulations keeping pace. This poses challenges to our democracy and national interests. Challenges within the areas of health, law, media, democratic debate and participation, the labour market, taxation and competition, and consumer protection that need to be addressed. The white paper sets out nine principles for a more responsible and just society with ‘big tech’, each dealing with an area in which the Danish Government perceives a significant challenge to society. The principles and the White Paper are not exhaustive, but should be seen as first steps towards a common direction for Denmark and the international community. A common direction where technology, accountability, and social responsibility go together.

Proposals on stricter requirements for the responsibilities of tech giants and social media, August 2021

With the proposals on tech giants and social media, the Danish Government wants to take a step in the direction of making the digital platforms take greater responsibility and be subject to rules for the benefit of both companies and consumers. At the same time, the government wants to prevent the tech giants from abusing their position to distort competition. The government's proposal on big tech companies contains 22 initiatives that aim to ensure:

- better conditions of competition;
- safe online-shopping for consumers, and
- responsible use of data and algorithms.

The government's proposal on social media contains 13 initiatives, which aim at the following:

- obliging social media platforms to take greater responsibility to prevent illegal content online:
- ensuring better protection of the users on social media, and
- strengthening the general digital education among children and young people.

The Danish Government will in the near future put forward a legislative proposal to deal with illegal content on social media platforms. This includes social media platforms having to establish effective and transparent procedures for the removal of illegal content.

Inter-ministerial task force and expert group on big tech

The Danish Government will establish an external group of experts to support the government's work on this agenda while the inter-ministerial task force will be established to contribute and coordinate the government's work.

4. Commitments: Synergy with and contributions to the US Summit

Domestically, the Danish government will present a policy proposal ensuring trustworthy news in every part of Denmark and protecting the integrity of the

democratic dialogue by holding digital platforms accountable and by supporting digital literacy.

Internationally, Denmark will continue to support and strengthen the rules-based international order and effective multilateral cooperation that uphold and promote democracy and human rights. We will continue to contribute substantially to e.g. the UN's efforts to promote democratic governance, the mainstreaming of human rights across UN efforts, and advance inclusion of civil society in multilateral forums. Denmark will continue to be a voice of the marginalized and voiceless and counter the current pressure on democracy and fundamental human rights.

Denmark supports the EU in its efforts to promote democracy. Denmark is actively engaged in the preparation of the Team Europe Democracy Initiative to build a strong European response to defend democracy around the world, by bringing together Member States to enhance support for democracy. Denmark is also supporting the new Alliance for the Future of the Internet, led by the US, to work towards global rules for surveillance and disinformation.

Denmark will support the US initiatives on:

- Defending against Digital Authoritarianism. To reduce the potential for human rights abuses enabled by some dual-use technologies, the U.S. Government is launching an Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative, in which participating governments will work together to determine how export control tools could better monitor and, as appropriate, restrict the proliferation of such technologies.
- The Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse dedicated to improving the response to technology-facilitated gender-based violence and promoting effective prevention strategies.

- Principles to illustrate the responsible government use of surveillance technology in line with our shared democratic values and respect for human rights.

Tech for Democracy:

Denmark regards the Tech for Democracy initiative as a stepping stone to the US Summits for Democracy. During the first Summit in 2021, Denmark stands ready to announce its commitment to lead on the Tech for Democracy Year of Action and to be able to report on specific results during the US Summit in 2022. More specifically, Denmark commits to the following:

- hosting a **virtual conference on 18 November 2021** to kick-off a multi-stakeholder dialogue and launch a year of action;
- launching a **political commitment** (the Copenhagen Pledge on Tech for Democracy) to be signed by governments, multilateral organizations, tech industry and civil society to make technology work for –and not against - democracy and human rights. Throughout 2022, Tech for Democracy and all involved partners will identify solutions to deliver on the Pledge. The US summit, would be an opportunity to build upon the pledge, by bringing together countries for conversations on the democracy and tech agenda and for involved parties to commit to further joint action;
- initiating multi-stakeholder **action coalitions** to deliver solutions in line with the Pledge. The focus will be on facilitation of partnerships between governments, multilateral organizations, tech companies, and civil society to deliver concrete action. A number of action coalitions will be launched during the year of action to exemplify how change can be promoted using technology for democracy and to inspire additional ac-

tion and commitments. The US Summit for Democracy is an opportunity to provide a platform for such action coalitions to announce/present their work or discuss ideas for new action coalitions;

- finding new ways to **empower civil society, independent media, and democracy defenders**; and include diverse voices, especially from the global south. Building on our strong partnerships with civil society globally, Denmark is working closely with civil society partners in both the development and implementation of Tech for Democracy. Building on existing initiatives, Denmark is ready to explore new funding mechanisms or opportunities in this connection.

- In collaboration with civil society organizations and UNDP, Denmark is **gathering experience and perspectives from a range of stakeholders in the global south, including young people**. Throughout the year of action, country initiatives will be supported to explore how digital technologies can further enhance democratic institutions, processes, and practice.

- Following a global consultation process, **civil society will deliver on a Tech for Democracy Action Programme** that details how civil society envisions the relation between technology, democracy, and human rights and that sets out a clear path for actions needed. As an input to the US Democracy Summit, the Action Programme provides a strong and global civil society advocacy document presenting tangible recommendations that decision makers and the private sector can consider for technology to truly become a democratic enabler.

- At the end of 2022, Denmark will take stock of the progress made in the year of action and provide a platform for raising commitments to strengthening digital democracy as a lead-up to the US Democracy Summit in 2022/2023.

Annex 1:

Defending against authoritarianism

Denmark has a strong tradition for supporting an active, diverse, and independent civil society – in Denmark as well as internationally. A diverse and independent civil society, popular movements, political parties, and free media can hold those in power to account.

In our international partnerships, we focus on the state's responsibility to respect and promote freedom of association, assembly, faith, religion, and expression. We also focus on providing space for political participation and reasonable conditions for running associations and media outlets. Denmark will continue to support the safety and capacity building of journalists and free media in contexts where accurate and accessible information is limited yet crucial - and where journalists and free media face severe challenges.

Denmark is a member of the Freedom Online Coalition and funds its grant mechanism – 'the Digital Defenders Partnership' - providing emergency response to reduce the impact of digital attacks against human rights defenders. Denmark also supports international NGOs, such as AccessNow, ICNL, Frontline Defenders, and WITNESS; organizations that work to strengthen civic space and to document human rights abuses. Through a newly established mechanism for support to human rights defenders – 'Claim your Space' – Denmark actively works against the shrinking space of civil society. Denmark has also co-led the Unmuted civil society initiative to strengthen civil society participation at the United Nations.

The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) constitutes a framework for dialogue and cooperation between Denmark and four countries in the MENA region (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan). DAPP supports cooperation between Danish civil society and civil society in the region aimed at promoting

good governance, including human rights and free media, especially for young people and women in the region. With civil society partnerships at the core and a focus on reform and dialogue between partners in Denmark and the region, the programme has a long track record of contributing to positive changes in the region. A new phase of the programme for 2022-2027 is currently being planned. The partnership model will be maintained with an even stronger emphasis on creating better lives and opportunities for youth.

Through the Eastern Neighborhood Programme, Denmark has supported democratic development, human rights, and sustainable development since 2004. The programme objective is to contribute to the development of a stable and peaceful Europe by supporting the development of responsive authorities, active civil society, and free and well-functioning markets. The current phase of the programme amounts to 130 million USD over 5 years with Ukraine and Georgia as priority countries. In 2020, Denmark launched the “New Democracy Fund” to support civil society partnerships between organizations in Denmark and Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

In Belarus, Denmark has – in a joint effort with Germany and the UK – been a driving force behind the establishment of the first NGO-lead accountability mechanism. The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) is supported by 21 states, including the United States. The objective of the IAPB is to collect and preserve evidence of serious violations of international human rights law committed in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

Fighting corruption

Promoting the international anti-corruption agenda is a high-priority issue for Denmark, as also reflected in the Danish strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action: “The World We Share”. Denmark’s standing as one of the world’s least corrupt countries is used actively - also in Denmark’s development cooperation.

Denmark has supported anti-corruption and broader governance reforms through its bilateral engagements, multilateral partners, government-to-government engagement, and support to Danish and international NGOs, such as Transparency International (TI). Initiatives range from implementing the comprehensive Danish-EU anti-corruption programme in Ukraine (EUACI), supporting the Inspectorate of Government in Uganda, and the Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN) - a global business network working to free the maritime industry of corruption and enable fair trade. Together with other partners, including the United States, Denmark also supports global investigative journalism through the Global Anti-Corruption Consortium (GACC). Denmark has thus over the years become an important player in the anti-corruption arena.

In 2018, Denmark hosted the 18th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) and initiated a set of statements from national government and international organizations to make progress on anti-corruption. This resulted in more than 300 individual anti-corruption commitments. Progress on these commitments will be reviewed at the 20th IACC in 2022.

Advancing human rights

Denmark is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council until the end of 2021. During the membership, Denmark has worked to advance and strengthen the international efforts to end the use of torture, to advance gender equality and sexual reproductive health and rights, to protect indigenous peoples' rights, to promote freedom of religion or belief, and to safeguard civil society space. The priorities for our work in the HRC underline our respect for and promotion of human rights at home and abroad, our long-standing engagement in the UN, as well as our renowned development cooperation.

Denmark is campaigning for a non-permanent seat to the UN Security Council for the period of 2025-2026. The candidature is a natural extension of Den-

mark's strong and longstanding commitment to international rules-based cooperation based on respect for human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality.

Denmark has been the leading voice for the prohibition of torture at the international level for decades. Denmark leads the omnibus resolution against torture at the UN General Assembly, the thematic resolution at the UN Human Rights Council, and the periodic extension of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur. Denmark is one of the initiators of the Convention Against Torture Initiative (CTI), a cross-regional group of states actively promoting ratification and implementation of the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) by offering technical assistance to states. The Danish policy engagement is supported by collaboration with both national and international civil society partners – in particular, collaboration with DIGNITY, a Danish-based organization supporting partners in a number of countries in the fight against torture.

The rights of women and girls, gender equality, and especially sexual and reproductive health and rights are long-standing priorities for Denmark both in international negotiations and through our development cooperation. Our focus is to promote women and girls' equal participation and opportunities. Protection from gender-based violence (GBV) is another focus area. In 2021, Denmark took the leadership of the global initiative "Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies". A partnership with more than 95 partners, states, donors, UN organizations and civil society organizations that aims to transform the way gender-based violence is addressed in humanitarian action. The goal is to drive change and foster accountability so that every humanitarian effort integrates mitigation, prevention, and response to gender-based violence.

Over the last three years, Denmark has been actively engaged in promoting freedom of religion or belief globally. The Danish Government's approach is

firmly rooted in the individual's right to freedom of religion or belief, as stipulated in article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

This year, Denmark will renew its funding to the Global Equality Fund (GEF), which works to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons globally. Denmark has been a strong supporter of the GEF, and this will be the fourth grant to the fund. Denmark also hosted World Pride in Copenhagen this summer, along with events and conferences related to the human rights situation for LGBTI persons. Denmark will continue to work to promote the rights of LGBTI persons, and the close coordination with US State Department through the GEF.

As a member of the Equal Rights Coalition, Denmark was a co-signatory to the Coalition's statement on the nexus between democracy and the human rights of LGBTI persons on the occasion of the Summit for Democracy. A free and open society respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, no matter who they are or whom they love. Denmark will continue to promote rights, freedoms and democratic inclusion of LGBTI persons at home and abroad.