



NORWAY – Summit for Democracy – Written Statement

Norway firmly believes that democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality are essential for all people to be able to shape their own lives. A true democracy nurtures a vibrant civil society and successfully safeguards minority rights, even in the face of pressure from authoritarian tendencies.

The pandemic has underscored the importance of trust and trust-building through combining leadership with transparency, and cooperation between national and local government institutions as well as with other stakeholders. Similarly, the challenge posed by climate change and the transition to a low emission economy require both leadership and legitimate institutions and processes that bring everyone along. Only democracy can ensure this.

Norway also remains convinced that these interdependent factors are preconditions for lasting peace and stability, not just within but also between states. International cooperation is crucial. The Norwegian Government is ready to support and cooperate with states, regional and global organizations, with the United Nations at the core of the multilateral system, as well as stakeholders from civil society, academia, media, the business sector and the labor movement to promote the development of sustainable democracies.

As we look ahead to the second Democracy Summit, Norway believes that policies and initiatives in a broad set of areas are of particular relevance in our joint effort to strengthen democracy, defend against authoritarianism, fight corruption and promote respect for human rights.

Fighting Corruption

Beyond any doubt, corruption feeds inequality, erodes trust and destabilises societies. Anti-corruption is a key factor in the social contract between governments and citizens. Fighting corruption strengthens our national resilience and protects our democracies. Corruption feeds global instability. The fight against corruption is a core national security interest. It is so in terms of both protecting our own societies and supporting global peace and stability. Authoritarian states have also proved willing and able to use corruption as a tool for influencing and undermining other states.

At the **national level**, Norway has in place legislation, regulations, institutions, tools, ethical guidelines, supervision, and control mechanisms, based on international obligations, commitments, and standards. The Norwegian National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime (ØKOKRIM) plays a key role in enforcement.

Norway has also adopted The Beneficial Ownership Registry Act which has partly entered into force. When fully in force, it will require all relevant legal entities to register information on their beneficial ownership. The register shall be available online, and discrepancy reporting will contribute to the accuracy and verification.



As a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), Norway is also committed to the European Union's fourth and fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directives, giving competent authorities access to information about real estate ownership. Norway is a party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. Norway's Penal Code provides for extraterritorial jurisdiction in cases of corruption.

Data on Norwegian official development assistance (ODA) is publicly available and easily accessible. Anti-corruption is a cross-cutting requirement, and Norway strictly enforces a zero tolerance for corruption in development cooperation. Norway's regulations on Public Procurement are detailed and contain several provisions to prevent corruption.

Norway will:

- Remain fully committed to preventing, detecting, and prosecuting corruption in the private and the public sectors.

At the **international level**, Norway is firmly committed to strengthening international norms, standards, and operative measures – and their implementation – to prevent and combat corruption, in particular large-scale corruption in the top tiers of the public and private sectors and involving multiple jurisdictions. Financial transparency, accountability and integrity must be effectively implemented internationally as well as nationally.

Norway engages actively in all relevant fora such as the UN General Assembly, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Political Declaration from The UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Anti-Corruption in June 2021 is an important reference document in our national and international anti-corruption efforts.

Norway welcomes the USAID's "Combating Transnational Corruption Grand Challenge" and looks forward to further exploring the "All hands on deck" approach which will include "businesses, associations and alliances, technologists and innovators, philanthropists, governments and donors, civil society organisations, media in the fight against globalized corruption".

Norway will:

- Continue to promote the full and effective implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), other legal instruments and the commitments in the UNGASS Political Declaration.
- Remain committed to engaging actively in the process before, during and after the Ninth UNCAC Conference of States Parties in December 2021. Norway supports the US offer to host the Tenth Conference of the States Parties.
- Strongly support the commitment to identify and address any gaps and challenges within the international anti-corruption framework, such as safe havens, insufficient beneficial ownership transparency, persistent impunity and insufficient asset recovery and return.



Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Remain committed to ensuring a viable space for and active involvement of civil society, academia, media and the private sector in the fight against corruption.
- Continue to provide financial support to partners such as UNODC, UNDP, The International Centre for Asset Recovery at the Basel Institute on Governance, the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, The Corruption Hunters' network, and the UNCAC Coalition.
- Continue to push for a reinforced approach to counter tax avoidance, corruption and illicit financial flows, in addition to a stronger emphasis on equitable taxation, in the World Bank and regional development banks.
- Continue to lead NATO's Building Integrity Programme promoting anti-corruption in the defence and related security sectors and work with allies and partners to raise the strategic significance of the fight against corruption, including in the run-up to the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid.

Defending Against Authoritarianism

Norway views **inclusive democracy** based on representative participation as a key element in the defense against authoritarianism and popular support to politicians embracing "strong-man"-leadership. As one of the largest contributors to their core programme, Norway supports International IDEAs work to secure inclusive participation and integrity in electoral processes, and transparency and accountability in political finance.

Norway will:

- Continue our support to promoting inclusive constitution building processes based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, gender equality and civil society participation, i.a. through International IDEA's methodology.

The Norwegian Constitution guarantees the right to **freedom of expression** and access to information. A Freedom of Expression Commission was appointed in late 2020 to review the social, technological, legal and economic frameworks for freedom of expression in Norway. The report due in August 2022 will be relevant also for Norway's international cooperation. Norway is strongly committed to promoting independent, diverse and professional media outlets, as well as ensuring the safety of journalists.

A Government strategy forms the basis for Norway's promotion of freedom of expression in our foreign and development policy. It puts a strong focus on gender equality and freedom of expression in the digital sphere. This includes access to digital platforms and reliable information, digital skills and media and information literacy, and protection from hate speech and online violence. Human rights defenders are also emphasized in the strategy, including artists and cultural workers.



Norway will:

- Strengthen our efforts to promote freedom of expression and independent media internationally, including through financial support to UNESCO, media institutions and civil society organisations.
- Support international cooperation to promote respect by governments, intergovernmental organisations and digital platforms for human rights, including freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists.
- Strengthen our efforts to promote artistic freedom of expression and cultural rights and support cooperation to promote freedom of artistic expression and cultural rights.

The **space for civil society in Europe** is shrinking. Although Europe remains the home of many stable and flourishing democracies, the Norwegian Government notes with concern that four decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain progress towards a more democratic and prosperous Europe is threatened by rise of authoritarian leaders, lack of checks and balances and the harmful effect of disinformation and a challenged media landscape in some countries. Europe is now home to increasingly repressive non-democratic regimes. Even within the EU, democratic backsliding in some member states is of grave concern. The erosion of the Rule of law and lack of media freedom undermines fundamental democratic principles. Several countries have introduced undue legal restrictions to limit activities and funding possibilities.

Implementing the commitments made in the Council of Europe and OSCE are key to counteract the negative trend. Norway will continue to support the enforcement of these commitments through support to multilateral organisations, as well as supporting Norwegian and international civil society organisations. Through education programmes and awareness raising campaigns, also focusing on xenophobia and antisemitism, Norway will also contribute to increased capacity for civil society to prevent, counter and report hate speech and harassment online in Europe. This includes countering online harassment particularly towards LGBTIQ people, women and minorities.

Norway will:

- Deliver on commitments to continue and strengthen support to civil society – financially and politically – through EEA and Norway Grants.
- Continue its long-term support to civil society in the Western Balkans.

Norway is a co-founder of the Digital Public Goods Alliance and funds and manages a number of **digital public goods (DPGs)** of particular importance for countries with limited capacity and resources to build out digital public infrastructure like digital identity systems, payment platforms and data exchange systems. Such systems are vital for ensuring inclusion of marginalized groups and access to services, but they can also be abused for authoritarian purposes. Through their transparency and incorporation of measures for protecting privacy and user security, digital public goods can therefore strengthen the ability of democratic and human rights-based systems to deliver and provide an alternative to



technologies that may be opaque and undemocratic. Digital public goods can also be important for reducing and preventing other threats to democracy and human rights, such as online disinformation, information pollution and hate speech.

Norway will:

- Continue our support for the Digital Public Goods Alliance, in close cooperation with other members.
- Continue to work with the philanthropic community and bilateral donors to mobilize resources to help countries build [good digital public infrastructure](#).
- Be a predictable core funder of highly relevant digital public goods in areas such as digital identity, civil registration and vital statistics, and health and education management information systems.
- Strengthen efforts to reduce and prevent online disinformation, information pollution and hate speech through relevant digital public goods.

Norway has a strict and **comprehensive export control system**, based on law, regulations and Policy Guidelines for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when dealing with applications for export of arms and defense related goods and technologies. The assessment of license applications includes issues relating to democratic principles and respect for fundamental human rights as well as respect for international humanitarian law. On the basis of a careful assessment, Norway will deny an export license if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression or for serious violations of international humanitarian law. Norway shares the concern that surveillance technologies can be used in ways that are inconsistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and obligations under international human right laws and welcomes the US Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative.

Norway will:

- Continue to give high priority to maintaining and promoting a responsible and focused export control policy, ensuring that the license assessment takes into account relevant human rights instruments and international humanitarian law.
- Collaborate with partners to identify how export control tools can be used to prevent the risks to human rights posed by surveillance technologies

Though not having a tradition for imposing unilateral sanctions, Norway has implemented **restrictive measures** that correspond to The EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime. These are an important tool for targeting individuals responsible for or involved in serious human rights violations and abuses all over the world.

Advancing Human Rights

In our efforts to contribute to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, Norway works closely with a range of crucially important **UN agencies, funds and programs**.



Norway will:

- Continue to provide political as well as financial support to UN entities such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

For women and girls especially, a non-discriminatory society and bodily autonomy is a prerequisite for equality, equal opportunity, self-determination and empowerment. The Norwegian government pursues a **gender equality** policy that ensures that everyone is included in society, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. In national policy and foreign and development policy alike, Norway is focused on promoting women's rights, gender equality and improving anti-discrimination safeguards.

Norway will:

- Develop a new gender equality action plan to ensure a coherent foreign and development policy. The plan will include political and financial instruments, targeted efforts and strengthen the integration of a gender perspective throughout both our foreign and development policy.

Norway strongly upholds that everyone has the same rights, regardless of **sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression**. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people should be able to live openly. The Norwegian Government actively works to strengthen their rights and to counteract discrimination.

Norway will:

- Develop a new national action plan for LGBTI persons, focussing on ensuring their equal standard of living and psychological health and propose to prohibit so-called conversion therapy by law.
- Continue to promote decriminalization of same-sex relations, combat discrimination and support protection of LGBTI persons through the Equal Rights Coalition and increased support to the Global Equality Fund.

Ensuring **persons with disabilities** meaningful participation, the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions and enjoy the same services as persons without disability, is crucial for democracy. We need to break down the barriers that persons with disabilities face when trying to exercise their civic rights on an equal basis. The participation and engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations is an important aspect of Norway's approach.



Norway will:

- Develop a strategy on disability inclusive development, framing our efforts to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities and to fulfil the ambition to leave no one behind in our development cooperation.
- Co-host the second Global Disability Summit on 16-17 February 2022. Norway aims to present both national and international commitments during the Summit.

Norway remains committed to the **protection of human rights defenders** as a key priority. Human rights defenders play an important, positive, and legitimate role building inclusive, sustainable and democratic societies, and in realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Norway seeks to strengthen the normative framework for the protection of human rights defenders and promote broad support for their work across all regions. Under our leadership, the UN has adopted far-reaching resolutions to take a strong stand against violence, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders. A vast gap remains between what the UN member states have agreed and the reality experienced by human rights defenders. Norway also continues to support civil society partners who provide protection and security measures, as well as networking and capacity building, including the Lifeline embattled CSO fund.

Norway will:

- Continue our efforts to maintain and strengthen the normative framework for human rights defenders, including by presenting a resolution on human rights defenders in the upcoming session of the UN Human Rights Council.
- Continue to support civil society organisations working to support and protect human rights defenders politically and financially and increase our support to the Lifeline Embattled CSO Fund.

Norway is among the first countries to draw up **legislation on responsible business conduct**. The so-called Transparency Act is to be implemented by July 2022 and aims to promote enterprises' respect for fundamental human rights and decent working conditions related to the production of goods and services. It also aims to ensure that the general public has access to information regarding how enterprises address adverse impacts. The Act requires companies of a certain size to (inter alia) conduct human rights due diligence in accordance with OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. It obligates enterprises to publish reports with key findings from their due diligence processes, and to respond to specific enquiries. There is an expectation that risk reducing measures are implemented and documented.



Norway will:

- Continue to expect that all enterprises have knowledge of, and follow, OECD Guidelines for Multilateral Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Implement the recently adopted Transparency Act, obliging large and midsize companies to conduct human rights and decent work due diligence throughout all business relationships in their value chains.