



Summit for Democracy

Call to the Private Sector to Advance Democracy

On March 29-30, 2023, the United States, Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Zambia will assemble world leaders, civil society, and private sector partners to demonstrate how democracies deliver for their citizens and are the best at addressing the most pressing crises of our time. Building on the success of the first Summit in 2021, the second Summit will underscore the importance of democracy to unleash human potential and deliver security and prosperity for people.

Democracies built on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and rule of law help enable private sector growth. Democracy increases GDP, democratic governments pursue more economic reforms, reduce social unrest, and see higher business investment than non-democracies. Companies, therefore, have an incentive and a vital role to uphold and protect democratic norms, principles, and institutions. Private sector impacts can be felt far beyond employees, extending to customers, suppliers, partners, and local communities.

In advance of the Summit, the United States government invites private sector partners to join efforts to advance an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal and tackle the greatest threats faced by democracies today.



The private sector is encouraged to consider commitments in four areas aligned with the [Presidential Initiative on Democratic Renewal](#) and the Summit's objectives:

- 1. Countering the misuse of technology**
- 2. Fighting corruption**
- 3. Protecting civic space**
- 4. Advancing labor rights**

Ways To Get Involved:

Private Sector Roundtables:

Roundtables on each of the four priority areas will occur prior to the Summit and may continue post-Summit to create enduring partnerships. We encourage you to join a roundtable and share your expertise or ongoing work. Please express your interest at: SummitPrivateSector@state.gov

Highlight Your Commitments:

During the Summit for Democracy, we will feature commitments and successes taken by businesses in each thematic area. We encourage you to share updates with us to be considered for inclusion in our programming. Please share updates at: SummitPrivateSector@state.gov.

Private Sector Event:

We will host an official private-sector event where business leaders will share their work on democratic principles, governance, and institutions.

Commitment Areas

(1) Countering the Misuse of Technology

Digital technologies have strengthened democratic governance, fostered tremendous economic growth, and led to dramatic advances across various industry sectors. Yet these technologies – from machine learning models to surveillance technologies – have also been misused by various actors and abused by authoritarians to suppress critics, journalists, human rights defenders, and societies writ large. Digital technologies are also misused for harassment and abuse, to polarize and fragment democratic societies, and erode public trust in

democratic institutions. This is an opportunity for the private sector to renew commitments to democratic processes and accountability and to commit to using technology to strengthen respect for these values and rights, rather than undermine them.

Examples

- Commit to help advance the principles outlined in the [Declaration for the Future of Internet](#).
- Demonstrate human rights due diligence efforts in the design, development, deployment, funding, acquisition and use for technology products or services.
- Demonstrate human rights due diligence efforts for technology products or services with surveillance capabilities, in line with the [State Department's surveillance due diligence guidance](#).
- Develop and/or showcase grievance mechanisms for individuals to report misuse of a company's technology product or service, including on the grievance mechanisms' transparency, accessibility, and security.
- Increase transparency about a company's decisions regarding its online products or services impacting its users and creating strong protections to ensure algorithms do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Provide robust protections for users' privacy, especially strong protections for particularly sensitive data such as geolocation and health information, as well as special protections for children, who are especially vulnerable to harm.
- Develop and foster adoption of privacy-enhancing protocols and anti-censorship tools.
- For platform providers, develop coordinated approaches with industry and civil society to respond to government-imposed content restrictions that are unlawful and/or do not respect human rights.
- Commit to ensure algorithms do not undermine democratic institutions, including through content authentication technologies.

- Commit to strengthening platform responses to individuals reporting threats, violence, or other serious violations of companies' terms of service with risk of bodily harm, by implementing swift takedown requests while platforms assess or verify reports, and commit to transparency in the use of human versus AI mechanisms to respond to users.
- Advance rights-respecting use of and/or access to technology through local partnerships with governments and civil society.
- Commit to public private partnerships to advance an affirmative vision of digital democracy (e.g., through multi-stakeholder initiatives that foster rights-respecting digital ecosystems and digital inclusion).

(2) Fighting Corruption

Corruption erodes trust in institutions and fosters unfair, arbitrary business environments that undermine regulatory institutions and governance. Corruption creates inefficiencies, distorts markets, impairs growth and productivity, reduces the profitability of investments, weakens the provision of essential government services, and contributes to cycles of poverty and violence. The private sector plays a critical role in combating corruption and supporting a rules-based transparent operating environment, which ensures that business compete on a level-playing field.

Examples

- Establish explicit senior management leadership on ethics compliance and intolerance of corruption, and strong internal processes to detect and prevent corruption.
- Promote approaches that build more effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (e.g., use of e-government solutions).
- Lend support to global efforts to tackle transnational corruption – including the co-option of legitimate supply chains – by championing key anti-corruption measures such as beneficial ownership and contract transparency.
- Support efforts to educate relevant stakeholders – including vendors and suppliers – on possible forms of bribery and corruption.

- Join multi-stakeholder initiatives and public private partnerships to address corruption (e.g., the Global Initiative to Galvanize the Private Sector as Partners in Combatting Corruption [GPS] leadership hub; Countering Transnational Corruption Grand Challenges; the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative; Countering Transnational Corruption Grand Challenge for Development).

(3) Protecting Civic Space and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

Civic space is foundational to good governance and the rule of law. It includes the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, and is inclusive and representative of all races, ethnicities, gender identities, and sexual orientations. It allows individuals to shape their governments' policies, vote for their political representatives, and press for transparency and accountability from governments. Business can make a range of commitments to help protect civic space.

Examples

- Engage (e.g., publicly, collectively, privately) with governments on human rights concerns or civic space restrictions (e.g., government limitations on free expression/association; government-imposed Internet restrictions; government targeting of activists for their work to promote human rights) and share best practices.
- Protect human rights defenders and/or organizations, including against transnational repression and technology-facilitated attacks (e.g., through public or private advocacy, and facilitating rapid support to human rights defenders under threat).
- In implementing human rights policies, include policies protecting human rights defenders, vulnerable groups (e.g., land, and Indigenous defenders and labor union leaders, women public figures), and civic space in consultation with impacted individuals and groups.
- Establish and implement policies that support democratic processes (e.g., encouraging employees to vote, respect and promote the peaceful transfer of power) and free and fair elections.

- Stand up for rule of law, accountable governance, and human rights (e.g., freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association).
- Conduct regular dialogue with local communities to address operational-level grievances and inform local, national and global policies and actions.
- Participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives (e.g., Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers Association, Global Network Initiative, Fair Labor Association).

(4) Respecting Labor Rights

Worker rights, including freedom of association, are essential for healthy, vibrant democracies and prosperous, inclusive economies. Trade unions provide workers a voice in the workplace and serve as a vehicle for democratic representation; employers who respect labor rights – including workers’ rights to form and join trade unions – have a competitive advantage in worker recruitment, retention, and productivity. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises recognize the importance of businesses’ respect for workers’ Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, specifically freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; the effective abolition of child labor; the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and a safe and healthy working environment.

Examples

- Engage in social dialogue with trade unions and governments to promote social justice, inclusive economic growth, improved wages and working conditions, and sustainable enterprises.
- Recognize, negotiate with, and engage in collective bargaining with trade unions where they exist and take action to ensure respect for workers’ right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- If labor issues are identified across global supply chains, work with impacted stakeholders on actions to remediate those problems.
- Publicly report on findings of supply chain links to forced labor to facilitate knowledge of supply chain risks across high-risk industries with related supply chains vulnerabilities.

- Support worker voice, including independent worker organizations, throughout operations and supply chains.
- Support free trade agreements that include strong labor rights and environmental commitments.
- Promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility within the work force, including through commitments to enhance anti-discrimination and harassment policies, and invest in prevention.