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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Current Obstacles and Good practices to Strengthening and Protecting the Democratic Order

Introduction

In this statement submitted to Independent Expert on Promotion of a Democratic and Just International Order, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association discusses the current obstacles to strengthening and protecting the democratic order. The contribution also provides examples of good practices and opportunities for the Independent Expert to effectively promote progress. Additionally, it focuses on the main issues that should be prioritized in the next six years to achieve a more just and inclusive democratic order.

Obstacles to Implementing a Democratic and Just International Order

1. Wars and Civil Conflicts: Wars and their effects on the democratic process are among the most prominent obstacles to achieving a democratic and just international order. The escalation of wars in the world leads to negative repercussions at the national, regional, and international levels, whether these wars are between states or civil and tribal wars within a single state. For example, the ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip since October 2023, and its subsequent regional and international repercussions, are a prominent example of the negative effects that wars have on the democratic process. This war caused the Palestinian people to lose their right to life and self-determination, and its scope expanded to include a number of regional actors.

The region also witnessed clashes between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah, as Israeli bombing reached the suburbs of Beirut, threatening a comprehensive war that may extend into Lebanese territory.⁽¹⁾ In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran was directly and indirectly involved in this conflict, as Israel targeted the Iranian consulate in Damascus, and the Islamic Republic of Iran responded by launching an attack with drones and missiles on Israel.⁽²⁾

Regarding civil and tribal wars, most of which are centered in the African continent, the Sudan is a prominent example of the impact of civil war on the democratic process. This war has been ongoing since April 2023 between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, which has made the Sudan the largest displacement crisis in the world, with the number of internally displaced persons reaching 7,903,880, in addition to 2,274,435 who were able to cross the borders to neighboring countries. The worsening humanitarian crisis has left more than half of the Sudan's population, 25.6 million people, facing severe hunger, in addition to security concerns that hinder the process of establishing a democratic system without resolving the existing conflict.⁽³⁾

2. Foreign Interventions: The phenomenon of foreign interventions in the affairs of states in its various forms is one of the main factors that hinder the achievement of a just democratic international system. The support and backing provided by Western powers to Ukraine and Israel directly contributes to the continuation of wars and conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, which increases the complexity of the regional and international situation. In addition, these interventions play a pivotal role in fueling internal conflicts in many countries, as is the case in Libya, where foreign intervention has led to the fragmentation of the state and the failure of the democratic transition process and the holding of elections on time.⁽⁴⁾
3. Rise of Far Right in Europe: The rise of far-right movements in Europe poses a significant threat to the democratic values of pluralism and multiculturalism. These groups often employ hate speech and incite violence against refugees and immigrants, eroding social cohesion within European countries. This worrying trend not only impacts domestic social fabrics, but also jeopardizes the unity and stability of key European institutions, such as the European Union and Eurozone. The spread of internal divisions and erosion of the common foundations for European cooperation heighten the risk of fragmentation, which could severely weaken the continent's collective strength.⁽⁵⁾

4. **Climate Change and its Impact on the Democratic Process:** Environmental challenges and climate change have profound ramifications for democratic processes and electoral participation. Natural disasters driven by climate change can impede citizens' ability to effectively engage in elections. Famines, environmental threats, and population displacements stemming from climate change can disrupt voting and undermine fair representation. Moreover, extreme weather events like floods and heatwaves can lead to lower voter turnout, thereby compromising the integrity and effectiveness of democratic systems.⁽⁶⁾ For instance, there are growing concerns about the potential impact of wildfires in certain states of the United States of America on voter participation in the upcoming 2024 elections.⁽⁷⁾

Good Practices in Promoting and Protecting a Democratic and Just International System

1. **Recognition of the State of Palestine by European Countries:** The decisions by Norway, Ireland, Spain, and Slovenia to recognize the State of Palestine as a sovereign state represent a positive step towards supporting the two-state solution and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. This recognition signals a desire to work towards ending the conflict and strengthening the foundations for stability in the region.⁽⁸⁾
2. **Left-wing Wins Amid Rising Hate Speech:** Despite the alarming rise of hate speech and the growing popularity of far-right movements, left-wing and moderate parties have managed to gain traction across Europe. The victory of the French left-wing coalition against the far right is a noteworthy example, as it demonstrates their moderate positions on thorny issues such as migration.⁽⁹⁾
3. **Women Assuming Leadership Positions:** The election of women to prominent leadership roles represents a significant advancement in the democratic transformation and promotion of gender equality. A prime example is the historic victory of Claudia Sheinbaum as the first female president of Mexico.⁽¹⁰⁾

Opportunities to Enhance Implementation of a Democratic International System

Several key opportunities exist to strengthen the effectiveness of measures aimed at promoting and protecting a democratic and just international system:

1. **Strengthening Democratic Institutions:** Ensuring independence and effectiveness of judicial, media, and oversight institutions is crucial for upholding the rule of law.
2. **Fostering Effective Civic Participation:** Enhancing the participation of civil society is essential for strengthening the responsiveness of government institutions to the needs of citizens. This empowers civil society to better represent the people, contribute to decision-making, and drive sustainable development.
3. **Providing Technological Alternatives for Voting:** Countries can benefit from leveraging technology to conduct elections even in difficult circumstances, such as wars, natural disasters, and geographic barriers that hinder voter participation. One promising alternative is electronic voting systems.
4. **Integrating Refugees to Promote Democracy:** Integrating refugees into host communities can promote democracy and acceptance of diversity. This helps achieve internal cohesion and stability, while confronting incidents of violence and racism stemming from hate speech.

Key Issues to be Stressed

Independent Expert on a Democratic and Just International System should focus on several critical issues:

1. Supporting an End to Existing Conflicts: The escalating civil war in the Sudan, growing divisions in Libya, and ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine require international action. This includes efforts to end wars, support the right to self-determination, and ensure fair elections reflecting the will of the people.
2. Confronting Hate Speech and Racism: Given the spread of violence and racism fueled by hate speech from far-right sources, it is necessary to address this phenomenon to uphold democratic values and cultural pluralism.
3. Addressing Climate Change Impacts: It is important to prepare for natural disasters, especially during election periods. This includes developing emergency plans to ensure affected voters can reach polling stations, as well as improving digital infrastructure for remote voting to maintain electoral participation even in crises.

Recommendations

To overcome obstacles to promoting a democratic and just international order, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association recommends the following:

- Promote peaceful conflict resolution through constructive dialogue and initiatives that build trust and stability.
- Reduce external interference in local conflicts, which hinders achievement of lasting, peaceful solutions.
- Develop mechanisms to respond to crises and natural disasters, ensuring continuation of democratic processes even in emergencies.
- Support the right of all peoples to self-determination and full sovereignty over their territories, in accordance with UN Charter.
- Strengthen efforts to combat hate speech, enhance anti-discrimination and anti-racism laws, and support initiatives that encourage intercommunal dialogue and understanding.

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