



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي



National Assembly
of Belize

42ND ANNUAL FORUM OF PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION (PGA)



DAY 1:
16 DECEMBER 2021

The Antidote to
Authoritarianism:
Parliamentarians
as champions of
democratic principles
and institutions



8 AM – 11:30 AM (EST)



ONLINE EVENT
CO-HOSTED BY THE
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DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL
AND HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

The years 2020 and 2021 have been characterized by the global crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Governments have taken emergency measures in the name of curtailing the spread of the virus. Concomitantly, civilians worldwide have dealt with violations of their fundamental human rights including civil and political rights – which resulted in further discrimination and oppression of vulnerable populations – and witnessed the erosion of democratic principles and institutions and the rise of authoritarianism.

Globally, democracy is in decline. This trend is aggravated by the dangerous rise in disinformation, the dismantling of protections for press freedom, including the weaponization of the media to attack individuals or groups perceived as a threat, and the decreasing independence of the judiciary. In certain regions, authoritarian regimes have gained momentum in the political arena by leading their populations with fear, which has contributed to the radicalization of the political landscape. Social media has modified the nature of the public discourse and the way information is shared between the citizenry and their government; authoritarian governments have also capitalized on the use of social media platforms to spread misinformation and propaganda. Media freedom has become increasingly important to ensure that populations are informed and consequently can act to protect fundamental as well as civil and political rights.

Despite numerous setbacks, parliamentarians play a key role in protecting democracy and human rights. As representatives of the democratic branch closest to citizens, legislators can resist attacks on democracy, shape national agendas, resist executive incursions, and work with civil society to preserve the civic and political spaces, even if increasingly, they themselves are at risk in contexts of democratic backsliding. Democracy is a resilient form of governance and is to be supported by all.

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DAY I - 16 DECEMBER 2021



8:00-8:15 – OPENING SESSION

HON. VALERIE WOODS

Speaker of the House of Representatives of Belize

**MS. MARGARETA CEDERFELT
MP (SWEDEN)**

President of PGA; President, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly



8:15-8:25 - KEYNOTE REMARKS

PROF. THOMAS CAROTHERS

Harvey V. Fineberg Chair for Democratic Studies, Senior Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Outcome of the U.S. Summit for Democracy and the role of gender representation to prevent the repression of women and girls



8.25-8.30 - VIRTUAL GROUP PHOTOGRAPH

8:30-9:40 - PANEL I. COVID-19 AND THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIANISM WORLDWIDE

CHAIRPERSON: HON. KASTHURI PATTO, MP (MALAYSIA)

Distinguished Panel:

MR. CLÉMENT NYALETSSOSSI VOULE

*Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR);
Researcher, Geneva Academy of International Law;
Senior Advisor, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)*

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Violations of civil and political rights:

What has the UN system done to raise awareness and curtail their effect on democracy and vulnerable populations?

HON. ESTHER CUESTA, MP (ECUADOR)

*President, Parliamentary Group for the Rights of People in Human Mobility of the National Assembly;
Chairperson, PGA Ecuador National Group*

Testimony on the situation in Ecuador and the attacks against women parliamentarians and women rights defenders

DR. TOM DALY

*Deputy Director, University of Melbourne School of Government,
Director, Democratic Decay & Renewal (DEM-DEC) and COVID-DEM*

Has the recession of American and European leadership weakened democracies and emboldened "autocratic" regimes?

**HON. ANITA VANDENBELD,
MP (CANADA)**

*Member of the House of Commons,
Founding Member of the PGA Parliamentary Response Team (PARRT)*

Social media platforms have become a tool for governments, interest groups and individuals to disseminate propaganda and incite to violence, and compromise the integrity of electoral processes. What is the impact on established liberal democracies and on regimes charting a path toward democracy? What are the tools available to prevent and limit damages?



**9:20-9:30 – BRIEF COMMENTARIES, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
MODERATED BY HON. KASTHURI PATTO**

**9:40-11:00 - PANEL II. THE ROLE OF LEGISLATORS IN RECLAIMING THEIR DEMOCRATIC SPACE AS
THE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTING THE PEOPLES**

- *The Global Parliamentary Code of Democratic Conduct*
- *PGA's Parliamentary Toolkit For Democratic Renewal (Relevant Drafting-Process Is Currently In Progress)*
- *Examples Of Legislative Reforms That Can Inject Strength And Resilience in the Independent Functioning of Judicial And Prosecutorial Authorities to Ensure That the Rule of Law Is The Most Solid Defence Against Attacks on Democracy*

**CHAIRPERSON: HON. ROZAINA ADAM, MP (MALDIVES);
FOUNDING MEMBER, PGA PARLIAMENTARY RAPID RESPONSE TEAM (PARRT)**

Presentation of PGA's Global Parliamentary Code of Democratic Conduct and invitation to all MPs to (i) individually sign it and (ii) make use of it inviting other MPs and candidates to sign it

Distinguished Panel:

PROF. IRWIN COTLER

*Chairperson, Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR);
Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism;
Member, High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom;
Former MP and Minister of Justice/Attorney General of Canada*

*What has been done internationally to support countries civilians in repressive regimes?
And how can parliamentarians further amplify the actions of the international community?
What can legislators do to strengthen the independence of the Judiciary?*

PROF. STAFFAN I. LINDBERG

Director, V-Dem Institute

What does the data say about the current state of democracy worldwide? What indicators should legislators consider when drafting legislation related to their democratic processes and institutions?

HON. LAURA BOLDRINI, MP (ITALY)

*Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee,
Former Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies*

*Using internet and social media to undermine Democracy.
The role of Parliamentarians in legislating on social media abuse.*

**HON. MARCELO COSSAR, MP
(ARGENTINA)**

Provincial Legislator, President of the JUNTOS UCR Block - Legislature of Córdoba. Former Secretary of Modernization, Communication and Strategic Development.

*Manipulating Information and Communication Technology (ICT):
Safeguarding the right to privacy and freedom of expression in democratic systems.*

MS. SANDRA PEPERA

*Senior Associate and Director for Gender, Women and Democracy,
National Democratic Institute (NDI)*

*What can legislators do to support the fundamental human rights
of women and girls in a difficult and repressive context?*



10:45-11:15 – COMMENTARIES AND TESTIMONIES, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Voices of Parliamentarians from the PGA global network from all regions of the world including:

Afghanistan

Burundi

Central African Republic

El Salvador

Somalia

The Philippines

Tunisia

Venezuela

Zimbabwe



**11:15-11:25 – SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS AND OPERATIONAL COMMENTARIES BY THE
RAPPORTEURS DR. DAVID DONAT-CATTIN (SECRETARY-GENERAL, PGA) AND MS. MELISSA VERPILE
(DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL & HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, PGA)**



**11:25-11:30 – CONCLUDING REMARKS BY HON. NAVEED QAMAR, MP (PAKISTAN); CHAIRPERSON OF
THE PGA INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL**

ABOUT PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is the largest non-governmental, cross-party, international network of individual legislators with over 1,200 members in 132 countries around the world.

PGA mobilizes parliamentarians as champions committed to promoting the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination, inclusion, and gender equality. By using a peer-to-peer methodology and country-specific strategies, PGA educates, sensitizes, and builds the technical capacity of parliamentarians to take concrete initiatives and legislative actions to achieve results on campaign objectives.

PGA supports individual parliamentarians in their national contexts and parliaments, and leverages that capacity with international networking to support democracy, human rights, and peace. The organization's vision is to contribute to the creation of a rules-based international order for a more equitable, safe, and democratic world.

PGA is in general consultative status with the United Nations with headquarters in New York. Its office in The Hague, Netherlands, fosters cooperation with The Hague-based International Organizations. PGA is represented at the country level by National Groups in parliaments, which creates sustainability and ownership of issues.