

Secretary-General's Message; International Day of Democracy 2016

A year ago, the world's Governments agreed on an ambitious sustainable development agenda for the next 15 years. They recognized that what people want is not so complicated -- but that it does require a transformation of how our economies and societies work.

People want food and shelter; education and health care and more economic opportunity. They want to live without fear. They want to be able to trust their Governments and global, national and local institutions. They want full respect for their human rights and they are rightly demanding a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Each of the Sustainable Development Goals on its own reflects fundamental desires shared by people everywhere. Together, the 17 Goals make up an intricate tapestry of challenges, choices and opportunities that people encounter in their everyday lives. Delivering a better tomorrow will require integrated responses to interconnected challenges.

Democratic principles run through the Agenda like a golden thread, from universal access to public goods, health care and education, as well as safe places to live and decent work opportunities for all. Goal 16 addresses democracy directly: it calls for inclusive societies and accountable institutions.

The Goals demonstrate an important dynamic: effective democratic governance enhances quality of life for all people; and human development is more likely to take hold if people are given a real say in their own governance, and a chance to share in the fruits of progress.

Our new Agenda aims to leave no one behind, which means we must reach those who are rarely seen or heard, and who have no voice or group to speak on their behalf. The implementation of the Goals must be underpinned by a strong and active civil society that includes the weak and the marginalized. We must defend civil society's freedom to operate and do this essential job.

On this International Day of Democracy, let us rededicate ourselves to democracy and dignity for all.

Ban Ki-moon