



Parliamentary Forum for Democracy

Statement of Purpose

The *Parliamentary Forum for Democracy* (PFD) is a geographically and politically diverse coalition of like-minded parliamentarians who have come together to promote democratic principles; strengthen democratic institutions, in particular, democratic parliaments; and advance international norms that support the right of people everywhere to work peacefully to protect and advance democracy.

The membership of the PFD's General Assembly is open to current or senior former legislators who are committed to democracy and human rights, and who seek to work together to advance democracy around the world. The PFD's rotating governing structure consists of a Chair, four Vice Chairs, and a Governing Council of 29 members that is geographically and politically balanced. When fully organized, its day-to-day operations will be overseen by a Secretary-General, to be based in Vilnius, Lithuania, where the PFD has been incorporated. The Secretary-General will be responsible for working closely with the Chair, Vice Chairs, and Governing Council to implement its agenda.

The major priorities of the PFD are:

- to stand in solidarity with democrats struggling for freedom around the world;
- to strengthen democratic parliaments, particularly in new and emerging democracies; and
- to advocate in legislatures and other national and regional bodies for greater and more effective democracy assistance.

While the PFD rejects the idea that there is a single democratic model, there nonetheless are a number of common elements that are fundamental to any genuine democracy, among them respect for the inalienable rights of individuals and minorities; free and fair elections; a parliament able to fulfill its representative role and balance the power of the executive; representative and accountable political parties; broad citizen participation in the political process; institutional pluralism; independent media; and an independent judiciary that protects human rights and fosters adherence to the rule of law. The PFD regards political democracy as vital in promoting economic growth, equality of opportunity, political stability, and international peace and security.

The PFD will use its good offices and that of its members to call attention to undemocratic practices, political repression, and human rights abuses in non-democratic countries, and to serve as a solidarity network that provides political support for those who seek to bring democracy's benefits to their countries. It will encourage its members to conduct hearings, host delegations of civil society activists, and mobilize colleagues on democracy and human rights issues both at home and abroad, including by sharing experiences with parliamentarians in developing democracies. It will defend duly elected parliamentarians facing attacks and denied their right to perform their legislative function. It will advance and strengthen international norms recognized by the United Nations and multilateral bodies that uphold the right of all citizens to associate and assemble freely, to conduct activities peacefully, and to receive international support. And it will strengthen efforts to promote democratization and good governance as the best means of furthering both economic growth and social justice, including poverty reduction, sustainable development, and gender equality.

Combining their experiences and practical knowledge with an unyielding commitment to the ideals of democracy, the members of the PFD will cooperate in strengthening democratic institutions, especially parliaments, in transitional emerging and nascent democracies, including enhancing the ability of a loyal democratic opposition within parliaments to present alternative views and policies.

The PFD will cooperate with the working groups and other components of the Community of Democracies (CoD), as well as with the national parliaments of CoD countries; with regional parliamentary assemblies; international parliamentary associations devoted to advancing specific democracy issues and causes; and networks and democracy activists associated with the World Movement for Democracy. Through such collaboration, it will support democracy-building efforts, advocate for the increased allocation of resources to bolster democracy abroad, and work to bolster and defend democracy advocates and NGOs that have come under increasing threat in recent years in countries where democracy has not been firmly established. It will work with other parliamentary networks that have been established to defend human rights in repressive situations.

The PFD's Governing Council will meet at least annually to oversee the work of the Forum, to share ideas and experiences, and to develop and approve action plans and statements. The Forum's General Assembly will meet during the biennial meetings of the Community of Democracies, the biennial Assemblies of the World Movement for Democracy, or at any other times as needed.