

## 2017 Johannesburg Declaration

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With an unprecedented global population of 1.8 billion people between 15 and 30 years old, engaging young people in the political process is more important than ever. Imbued with passion, dynamism and optimism, this generation is poised to become the agents of democratic change around the world.

Generation Democracy facilitates positive youth political and civic participation by educating and connecting young leaders around the world. This global network is comprised of more than 400 youth organizations from 75 countries united in the desire to amplify the voices of young people and ensure that they are better served by local and national institutions. To this end, 34 young leaders from seven countries across southern Africa came together at the May 2017 Youth Leadership Academy in Johannesburg, South Africa. Following an inspirational visit to Liliesleaf Farm—the convening site for Nelson Mandela and the leaders of South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement—this diverse group recommended the following actions to promote democratic engagement by youth in the region.

**We, youth leaders from seven countries across southern Africa, who are dedicated to advancing the voices of youth in civic and political processes, have gathered together to:**

- Express concern about escalating human rights violations and the suppression of freedom of association, assembly and expression;
- Recognize the lack of economic opportunities and skills-training available to young people, resulting in high rates of youth unemployment and leaving young people susceptible to recruitment by violent extremist groups;
- Condemn corruption and the culture of clientelism perpetuated by too many politicians to remain in power and buy votes;
- Acknowledge the myriad issues on the African continent that hinder youth civic education and access to spaces of democratic engagement; and
- Note that many young people shun politics due to a culture of youth apathy toward political participation.

**We resolve to collectively create, build and safeguard democratic space in our countries. Further, we pledge to:**

- Promote, protect and ensure the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We collectively resolve to accelerate our united efforts in challenging all forms of oppression and impunity that inhibit young people from fully enjoying human rights and freedoms;
- Work in solidarity with other like-minded young people to promote citizen-centered, democratic governments;
- Call for unconditional respect for the rule of law in order to promote equitable spaces for youth political participation;
- Fulfill our generational responsibility to promote, protect and respect socio-economic and civil-political rights and freedoms;
- Urge government leaders to lobby for robust civic education curricula in schools;
- Facilitate consultation between young people and government to address youth unemployment;
- Encourage public-private partnerships that equip young people with the experience and skills needed to thrive in the global marketplace;
- Demand that government officials be held to the highest standards of transparency and accountability;
- Commit to engage young people in conducting audits of elected officials to help improve accountability and effective service delivery;
- Build the capacity of young people who aspire to run for public office;
- Increase the number of young people who exercise their right to vote and participate in democratic processes; and
- Utilize our youth community-based organizations and political groups to create spaces for engagement and foster inclusive youth civic engagement.