



# HDP Leadership Forum

## Objective

Provide an opportunity for parliamentary leadership within member legislatures of the House Democracy Partnership to explore ways in which the partnership can better collaborate to promote democratic renewal in a world where voter expectations are increasingly demanding a more urgent legislative response, especially where democracy is in retreat. This forum will also allow leadership to work collaboratively to strengthen parliament's role in reversing such trends, while supporting the ability of parliamentary leaders across a diverse sphere to work together on ways to advance and uphold democratic principles and manage parliamentary security in the current political environment.

# Suggested topics/discussion points

The program agenda, and sessions within, will be designed to help meet the stated objectives. ***This exchange is intended to be an open forum for dialogue, and will aim to be conducted in a roundtable format to welcome and encourage contributions from all participants to emphasize a global perspective, and create a space for sharing of experience among all partner countries.*** Additionally, where possible, themes will be grounded in data and tangible examples, and may include the participation of high-level outside experts.

The following provides a brainstorm on suggested topics for discussion and meetings for the program. At this time, no speakers or engagements have been contacted or confirmed. We welcome all feedback on this brainstorm.

The Leadership Forum will be held over the course of two days, from July 16 to 17, 2019. We expect delegates to arrive by July 15th. July 18th will be set aside for side meetings at the delegates' choosing. We look forward to working with each country/regional team on an individual basis to arrange these side meetings.

## 1. HDP FORMAL OPENING AND WELCOME REMARKS

## 2. EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEGISLATURE

With increasing global threats to democracy on the rise in recent years, ensuring democratic norms and principles in even the most robust liberal democracies can falter without political activists championing for progress. The session speaker will discuss the current **state of democracy worldwide**, and the critical role of global legislatures to stand up to anti-democratic forces.

## 3. **COMBATTING POLARIZATION AND ENHANCING CROSS-PARTY COMMUNICATIONS**

Political polarization is a global challenge that can and has disrupted a legislature's ability to operate effectively, creating space for threatening actors to undermine democracy. As floor leaders of their parties, Rep. Hoyer and Rep. McCarthy (*engagement not confirmed*) will discuss how to seek opportunities for cross-party collaboration, in addition to their efforts to underscore unity on matters of national interest.

## 4. PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE FRONTLINES: MODERN THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

**Disinformation and anti-democratic propaganda** from both state and non-state actors have the potential to alter elections, widen societal cleavages, discredit political institutions and the media, and promulgate ethnic nationalism. As disinformation campaigns and cyber warfare tactics

continue to be used to spread anti-democratic messages and cause harm to citizens, legislatures have a key role in investigating and responding to these issues, through legislation, research and reporting.

## **5. LEGISLATIVE OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY TO INCREASE CITIZEN TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT**

In recent years, public trust in democracy has diminished, and as a result, parliaments globally continue to face an issue of increasing constituent distrust or declining engagement in the legislative process. This issue is compounded by the legislatures' inability to self-correct and adapt quickly. As one commentator noted, citizens are using 21st century tools to talk to their representatives - while their representatives are using 20th century tools to listen and 19th century tools to respond. Although a solution to this challenge is multi-faceted, strengthening rapid, two-way communications channels at all levels, especially from the district office, has the capacity to broaden transparency and create a more inclusive process for citizen engagement and effective governance. This discussion will focus on the importance of constantly connecting with constituents, sharing information with the public, and ensuring a diversity of perspective. It will also highlight the growing trend of youth movements and engagement in driving social reform across the world. In doing so, legislators have the ability to assuage skepticism in democratic values.

## **6. RESILIENT AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE: MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS**

A growing number of reports from around the world continue to indicate that as women step forward to participate in politics on the international stage, they are met with harassment, psychological abuse (both in person and online), or physical or sexual assault. This growing trend of violence against women in politics (VAW-P) is a global issue rooted in the historic and cultural status of women in countries around the world, and exacerbated more often when women enter a political spotlight. Manifesting as a significant barrier at the individual, institutional and socio-cultural level, this violence often discourages women's meaningful political participation. This in turn has serious repercussions for the achievement of inclusive and resilient democratic societies. In this session, participants will hear from U.S. congressional leaders working to address gender inequality and stop violence against women in the political sphere.

## **7. INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP**

Since HDP's inception, the program has worked across its member countries to build solutions for enhancing parliamentary capacity in a modern world. From developing stronger research and budget operations, to strengthening the professional capacity of expert parliamentary staff, and supporting techniques for strengthened oversight of the executive branch. In this session, participants will hear from a range of technical experts and senior staff on methods for enhanced parliamentary capacity and independence. Participants will also hear from HDP leadership on program highlights and methods for continued peer-to-peer engagement and success.

## **8. PARLIAMENTARY SOLIDARITY: HDP COMMUNITY FOR DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL**

Likely held at the end of the program, this session will synthesize the Leadership Forum and offer an opportunity for delegates to show solidarity and make a commitment towards democratic renewal. Building off of the Parliamentary Call for Global Democratic Renewal, supported by NDI, IRI, PGA, and APHR in coordination with the Forum 2000 Foundation and the International Coalition for Democratic Renewal, which outlines actions global parliamentarians can take to support the protection of democratic norms and human rights in their own legislatures and globally, members of the HDP leadership community will have an opportunity to build off of this document and develop concrete plans for action in their own legislatures for enhancing reform.