

## dar es salaam declaration

Generation Democracy is a global coalition of hundreds of youth-focused organizations and thousands of politically active young people that enables youth – across borders and political systems – to share ideas, experiences and best practices for building democracy in their home countries. Generation Democracy's objective is to ensure that young citizens have a stronger voice in, and are better served by, local and national institutions. At Generation Democracy's September 2016 East Africa conference in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, 40 young leaders from eight nations created this document. It memorializes their consensus to both the barriers and solutions to young people fully exercising their democratic rights.

As young leaders dedicated to advancing the voice of youth in the political process, we who are gathered in Dar Es Salaam agree as follows:

### These are threats to youth participation in politics:

- Nonexistent gender balance and effective affirmative action in political structures limits inclusion of all marginalized groups.
- Corruption and money influences the political process.
- Leaders do not live up to their country's constitution, especially on term limits and overstaying their time in office.
- Political parties' failure to achieve internal party democracy by removing roadblocks against marginalized groups.
- Leaders manipulate malleable political systems for their own political gain at the expense of citizens.
- Insufficient political and civic education for citizens to help them understand both their civic rights and responsibilities.
- A lack of leadership opportunities for young people in rural areas that prevents equal access to services and political opportunities for poorer citizens outside the capital.
- Political leaders relying upon personality and identity politics to motivate and divide citizens for their own gain.
- Insufficient use of available technology by governments to improve the governmental and electoral systems.
- The prevalence of political violence and electoral conflict.
- Failure by active citizens to develop effective strategies that tailor activities to achieve specific objectives and realistic goals (not every problem requires a full demonstration).
- Economic marginalization of citizens preventing equal participation of citizens regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical (dis)ability, or social standing.

### To help overcome these challenges, we, as members of Generation Democracy, pledge:

- We will utilize the Generation Democracy youth network to engage in international dialogue and share our experiences building democracy in our home countries so that we can all learn from each other and our struggles.
- We will use resources provided by Generation Democracy to share lessons via the internet with those living in political exile as a result of their activism, but who are still striving to foster positive change at home.
- We will be bold and claim space for free speech and political freedoms so we may speak for those who are not able to speak for themselves because of their country's political climate. We will advocate for our brothers and sisters in Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, and elsewhere who cannot speak against political oppression for fear of violent reprisals.
- We will uphold the principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, build a global coalition of human rights defenders to create a future that respects these principles, and advocate for legislation in our home countries that defends these rights.
- We will hold our leaders accountable for good governance and not accept democratic governance as the end goal of reforms. Our leaders must provide us with justice, equality, fairness, peace, and accountability, not only elections.
- We will commit ourselves to tolerance and listen to the views of others, even if we disagree with what they are saying, without silencing their message or responding violently. We believe true progress comes from discourse, not force.
- We will collaborate with fellow civil society organizations to advocate for our shared youth goals so our message of inclusion for marginalized groups is amplified by our unified voice. We will rally other African youth groups to our cause.
- We will educate ourselves on policy so that we may claim an equal space for youth in the political sphere.
- We will hold our leaders accountable for their failures to uphold the tenets of our national constitutions.
- We will be agents of change and accountability for governments by developing careful, non-violent strategies for engagement.
- We will meet with civil society leaders, youth in political parties, and national leaders to claim space in political negotiation to defend the rights of youth and share our message of inclusion regardless of race, gender, religion, or social standing.
- We will define the future of democracy in Africa to be more inclusive, accountable, and citizen-centered than ever before.