

## **Youth for Future: Meaningful Representation and Participation**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 11:30- 13:00**

**Venue: University of Nairobi: Institute of Diplomacy and  
International Studies**

### **Context**

Protecting and defending democracy is a shared responsibility that extends beyond governments to encompass civil society, political parties, the private sector, and the media. In the face of a rapidly changing world, a clear and shared strategy is essential for advancing democratic development amidst uncertainty and evolving demands. There is no perfect democracy, and all democratic societies are, by definition, subject to self-assessment and self-improvement.

As we enter 2024, a year marked by an unprecedented number of elections across 70 countries involving over half of the world's population, young individuals must embrace their pivotal role in shaping the future. This period presents an opportunity to challenge the prevailing narrative of youth political apathy. Despite facing unprecedented challenges, young people have been at the forefront, advocating for transformative changes on critical issues such as gender equality, mental health, and climate justice. [Research](#) indicates that young people are the most optimistic generation about the future2024 therefore emerges as a pivotal moment for democracy worldwide. However, our current systems and institutions have barely scratched the surface of the issue of youth representation and participation in decision-making spaces, including politics.

Promoting inclusivity is key. A lack of diverse youth representation in politics can cultivate distrust, fuel resentment, and perpetuate existing inequalities. The disillusionment of young people with formal political structures, resulting in lower voter turnout compared to older age groups, signifies a crucial moment in the ongoing struggle for democratic values. Rebuilding trust in institutions requires making decision-making processes more inclusive and effective, particularly at a time when the stakes for people and the planet have never been higher and social cohesion is under threat. This necessitates institutions to pursue structural and systemic changes, acknowledging that meaningful youth engagement is essential for building greater trust in public institutions.

At democracy's core is the fundamental principle that political structures should mirror the entirety of society, representing the legitimate aspirations

and best interests of every citizen. However, the current global political systems fall short in fulfilling this ideal vision. With over half of the world's population under 30, the voices of young people are among the least represented in the political institutions where decisions are made. Failure to include young people in decisions that profoundly impact their lives, and those of future generations, risks exacerbating the multidimensional challenges ahead.

With the recent appointment of the first UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs and the upcoming Summit for the Future, we are seeing some progress. However, the continued survival of democracy and the multilateral system requests young people's ideas and their support. We need more young people represented in all spheres of decision-making — within government, at the United Nations, in civil society, private sector and academia. And they must be taken seriously. To rebuild trust and restore hope, we need to see meaningful youth engagement become the norm at all levels, backed by dedicated resourcing everywhere around the world. [Club de Madrid](#) is committed to this task through specific programming. Now is the time for long-term thinking; we must deliver more for young people and future generations, better preparing ourselves for the challenges that lie ahead. The call to action is urgent, and the solutions are well within our reach.

### **Objective**

The aim of this session is to highlight the importance of engaging in democratic processes and defending democratic values in a polarized world with rising authoritarian tendencies. Building on the Global Democracy Coalition's work and in collaboration with Club de Madrid and its [WYDE Civic Engagement Network of Young Decision-Makers](#), composed of approximately thirty young decision-makers under 36 years of age, this session will bring together two of our young leaders, who are proof that youth political representation can be achieved, with our Member [Moussa Mara](#), former Prime Minister from Mali, who held office at a young age and is aware of the challenges young politicians experience when accessing decision making positions.

By showcasing their own struggles and successes to increase the levels of democracy and youth political engagement and representation in their respective countries, PM Mara and WYDE decision-makers will be able to communicate in an effective way to youth groups their role and responsibility in national and regional democratic processes.

Students who attend will have the opportunity to engage in an open discussion about their concerns regarding democracy and youth

representation and participation, which will be well noted as possible input to guide future action of [the Global Democracy Coalition](#).

## **Format and Methodology**

The moderator will give a **5-minute** introduction to the panel. Panelists will then have 7 **minutes** for some initial remarks. This will be followed by a **XX minute** Q&A/exchange with the students. The facilitator will wrap up the session with some final remarks and a summary of the main points discussed (**5 minutes**).

University of Nairobi to confirm if we can show the [video teaser](#) of the Global Democracy Coalition campaign. The duration of this teaser is less than one minute but confirm if they have a screen in the room where the session will be taking place.

## **Participants**

- **Moussa Mara**, Prime Minister de Mali (2014-2015) and Member of Club de Madrid
- **Nathaniel Mong'are**, The Speaker, Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA) and Advisor for Strategic Projects in the Office of the Prime Cabinet Secretary
- **Yvonne Wamucii**, Office of the Presidential Advisor on Digital Economy, Nairobi
- **Willice Onyango**, Executive Director, Youth Café

Facilitator: University of Nairobi representative tbc

## **Suggested questions:**

These questions will allow speakers to deliver some initial remarks before the exchange starts. They are meant to guide the conversation and include the main points of the discussion:

- As a former Prime Minister of Mali, what lessons did you learn from Mali's experiences in promoting youth engagement and participation in governance?
- What motivated you to consider a career in politics, and what impact do you hope to have on your community or society?
- Can you share any examples of young leaders or “not that young” who have inspired you with their contributions to politics or public service? What qualities do you admire in them, and how do you envision embodying those qualities in your own journey?

- What steps can be taken to create a more inclusive environment for young politicians and decision-makers, addressing the barriers they encounter in participating in political life and ensuring they are not only tokens?
- In what ways do you believe university education can prepare students for a career in politics or public service? How can students leverage their academic experiences and skills to make meaningful contributions in the political arena?
- Given that young people are often viewed as inexperienced or disruptive, how do you plan to challenge these stereotypes and demonstrate the value of youth participation in decision-making processes?
- In a system often designed by and for “seniors”, how would you ensure that youth perspectives and contributions are not only valued but actively pursued and integrated into policymaking?
- Overcoming Political Barriers: What specific measures would you propose to dismantle barriers such as nepotism, age restrictions, and financial limitations that hinder youth participation in politics?
- Recognizing the importance of quality civic education, what initiatives would you support to ensure that young people have the necessary skills and knowledge to engage meaningfully in public affairs?

## Agenda

Time	Agenda
tbc	Arrival CdM Delegation
tbc	Meeting between University of Nairobi Authorities and panelists
tbc	Session starts
tbc	Initial remarks
tbc	Q&A Exchange with students
tbc	Closing remarks

## Partners

- The **Global Democracy Coalition (GDC)** is a multi-stakeholder alliance of more than 90 democracy organizations from around the world

committed to advance and protect democracy worldwide and to influence the Summits for Democracy and the Year of Action.

- **Club de Madrid** is the world's largest forum of democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers, who leverage their individual and collective leadership experience and global reach to strengthen inclusive democratic practice and improve the well-being of people around the world.

As a non-partisan and international non-profit organisation, it counts on the hands-on governance experience of more than 100 Members from over 70 countries, along with a global network of advisers and partners across all sectors of society.

This unique alliance stimulates dialogue, builds bridges, and engages in advocacy efforts to strengthen public policies and effective leadership through recommendations that tackle challenges such as inclusion, sustainable development, and peace at the national and multilateral levels.

- **The WYDE Civic Engagement Network of Young Decision-Makers** brings together a group of exceptional young leaders under 36 years' old who are active in politics and in decision-making bodies and who have already reached positions of influence from which they can advocate for greater youth political participation.
- **University of Nairobi:** description to be added by the Department of International relations and Diplomacy.
- **Youth Café:** description to be added by Youth Café