Forum:	**General Assembly 1st Committee**
Question of:	**Reacting to the shrinking democracy and encountering the growing number of authoritarian regimes**
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I. Description of the Issue

In the past years democracy has been facing a serious global decline. This trend is often referred to as "democratic backsliding" or "autocratization" which describes a gradual weakening of democratic institutions, civil rights and liberties, electoral integrity and checks on executive power. Recent V-Dem and Freedom House reports show that not only traditionally unstable regions are affected. V-Dem's 2026 Democracy Report states that almost one quarter of the world's nations are now on the list of autocratizers, while Freedom House claims that global freedom declined for the 20th year in a row. Therefore, the issue is not only about elections but also concerns freedom of speech, free media, the rule of law and the ability of society to operate without being intimidated. The committee should focus on how the international community can protect democratic governance without violating sovereignty, while at the same time also responding to authoritarian integration, repression and misinformation. Regions affected most mainly include parts of Easter Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East. V-Dem also states that even established democracies in Western Europe and North America are affected by weakening democracy. This causes the issue to be especially relevant to the United Nations and is why it should be discussed.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Democracy

A system of government in which power ultimately comes from the people and is exercised through free, fair and meaningful participation. The UN links democracy to rights such as freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Authoritarian regime

A political system in which the power lies solely in the hands of a singular leader or small elite, while opposition of the government, media, courts and civil liberties are often very harshly restricted.

Democratic backsliding / autocratization

A process in which democratic standards slowly diminish, through for example weakened courts, less media freedom, political repression or manipulation of elections.

Rule of Law

The principle that laws apply equally to all, including the government and that power is split between independent institutions.

Civil liberties

Basic freedoms such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion and association. Th UN considers these to be central to democratic participation.

Electoral Integrity

The degree to which elections are free, fair and competitive.

The United Nation Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

The UNDEF is a United Nations trust fund created in 2005 to support civil society and democratic participation projects.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR is the main UN entity promoting and protecting human rights. It is the global authority on human rights research, advocacy and education, ensuring international standards are enforced.

Democratic governance

A system of government where the public institutions are transparent, accountable and responsive to citizens.

III. Background information

The shrinking of democracy affects modern society on many levels. It weakens trust in institutions, reduces political participation and often leads to intimidation of journalists and opposition groups. It can turn elections into formalities that do not decide anything while real power stays with the same groups and often leads to corruption, less transparency and poor long term development outcomes. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) treats democratic governance as an essential part of inclusive and sustainable development.

A key problem is that Authoritarianism does not always arrive through a coup. It often slowly grows from the inside of democratic systems. Courts are packed, media is pressured electoral rules are slowly changed, opposition parties are harassed and civil liberties get increasingly restricted. This makes the problem much harder to detect and even harder to ever reverse. The 2026 report by V-Dem emphasises that autocratization can affect both large and small states and that democratic decline stemming from the population is now obvious in several large regions.

This issue matters internationally because the decline of democracy often has consequences across borders. Repression of people can trigger displacement, hurt regional stability, encourage transnational repression and heavily weaken cooperation in international institutions. For the UN this matters because democracy is directly tied to human rights, peacebuilding and legitimacy of multilateral decision making. The OHCHR states that democracy directly provides an environment in which the human rights can be protected.

The newest reports show that this is not just a one region issue and that even very long-established democracies are not immune to autocratization.

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

This issue does not involve specific countries but rather is a problem that affects all parts of the international community. Democratic decline and autocratization happen all around the world in countries including but not limited to the United States, Italy, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia, Türkiye, Tunisia and Libya.

The main organisations involved are **the UN**, **the OHCHR** and **the UNDEF**. The UN is built on the principles of democracy and international stability and therefore has a responsibility to combat the decline of democracy, the OHCHR's goal is to promote and protect the fundamental human rights which are often restricted in undemocratic regimes and the UNDEF funds civil society projects that strengthen political participation and accountability.

V. Timeline of events

Year	Event	Importance
1948	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	Fundamental rights and freedoms that form the basis of the modern democratic system are established.
1966	Adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Created legally binding obligations for many states regarding political participation, freedom of speech and fair electoral systems.
1993	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action	Officially reaffirmed that democracy, development and the human rights are interdependent and reinforce each other.
2001	UN General Assembly adopts Resolution A/RES/55/96 on Promoting	One of the UN's most important resolutions that directly addresses the

	and Consolidating Democracy	promotion of democracy.
2005	Establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)	The UN created a mechanism that supports democratic institutions and civil society organisations.
2007	UN establishes the International Day of Democracy with Resolution A/RES/62/7	Shows growing international commitment to protecting democratic values globally.
2015	Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 16	The SDGs heavily promote democracy, with Goal 16 specifically promoting peace, justice, accountability and inclusive governance.
2020	COVID-19 Pandemic leads to emergency measures worldwide	Concerns were raised that some governments and governmental agencies are using emergency measures to restrict civil liberties and consolidate power.
2021	First Summit for Democracy	This brought together governments to discuss the democratic decline, corruption and authoritarian challenges on a global scale.
2023	Freedom House reports the 18th consecutive year of global freedom decline	Demonstrated that measures to ensure democracy had not worked and that democratic backsliding has become a long-term global issue.
2025	Freedom House reports the	Highlighted the continued

	20th year in a row of declining global freedom	growth of authoritarian practices and weakened democratic governments worldwide.
2026	V-Dem Democracy Report identifies widespread autocratization affecting around one quarter of the Nations worldwide	Shows that democratic decline is still a very prominent issue within the international community and that it needs to be addressed immediately.

VI. Previous attempts to solve the issue and why they have failed

Human-rights treaties
The United Nations has tried to address this issue through human-rights treaties, democracy resolutions, technical support and funding for civil society and while these efforts can have an impact they rely on state cooperation.

Vienna Declaration
While the Vienna Declaration created strong norms, they don't stop governments from restricting basic human rights. States can formally be upholding human-rights while still undermining courts, media or opposition. Because of this democratic decline continues even though the Nation has signed relevant documents.

UNDEF Projects
While UNDEF projects help within the civilian life, they still cannot force compliance. Again, the effectivity relies on the host state cooperating. In highly authoritarian governments, civil society is often restricted so much that these projects also do not help.

VII. Possible solutions

Stronger international oversight

Implementing stronger international oversight like election observation, better judicial support and more effective protection of journalists and civil society could slow down democratic decline. However, keep in mind that this could be considered a very heavy violation of a nation's sovereignty.

Expanded support

Expanding support for anti-corruption measures, digital rights, media literacy and responses to disinformation could be a good step towards a solution since modern radical opinions are often spread through digital means.

Better cooperation

Establishing better and more targeted cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations or national governments could improve early warning systems of democratic decrease.

Concrete protection

Solution attempts should not focus on condemning authoritarian regimes but rather concrete protection of free elections, transparency and long-term democratic education.

VIII. How to prepare as a delegate

Delegates in this committee should research their country's position on democracy, human rights, election monitoring, internet regulation and possible sanctions against repressive or authoritarian governments. It is also beneficial to know if your country belongs to a democracy supporting bloc, is often cautious about other nations sovereignty or has been criticised before for democratic decline. Also research possible international agreements that have been signed or ratified in your country.

Every Delegate is obligated to write at least **one Draft Resolution** and a minimum of **two Position Papers** to cover all topics within the committee. The **deadline** for submissions is the 27th of August. Any documents submitted after the deadline will not be corrected by the Student Officers and will not be considered when deciding on awards. At the end of the conference the best delegate, the most distinguished delegate and the best first timer will receive an award which these documents count towards as well.

IX. UN resolutions

Resolution A/RES/55/96 (Promoting and consolidating democracy)

Resolution A/RES/62/7 (International Day of Democracy)

Resolution A/RES/67/175 (Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order)

X. Useful links

UN Democracy page: An overview of democracy as a global issue

OHCHR: About democracy and human rights

V-Dem Democracy Report 2026

Freedom House Freedom in the World Report 2025

Freedom House Freedom Map

XI. Sources

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

Freedom House