

## **Opening remarks by Ambassador Siri Beate Barry**

[Prime Minister/ Ministers], Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to open this Policy Forum on Anti-Corruption, Democratic Resilience and Economic Security. I would like to extend a special thank you to the Center for the Study of Democracy for hosting the event and for the invitation.

I am both pleased and proud that the EEA and Norway Grants can help foster this exchange of views between experts and policymakers.

A main aim of the Grants is to contribute to more social and economic equality in Europe, both within and among countries. Equality, economic growth, and good governance go hand in hand. Strong and resilient societies are dependent on government institutions that are accountable and transparent, as well as effective and efficient. These are crucial tools for preventing and addressing corruption. True democratic resilience and economic resilience necessitate meaningful anti-corruption efforts.

This is a timely event as we recently marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The fight against corruption has been important in Norwegian foreign policy as long as I have been employed in the foreign service. Unfortunately, it is a topic that never runs out of fashion, one that comes in different shapes and forms, and that can impact every aspect of society.

Under Sustainable Development Goal 16, all states are committed to building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This requires a strengthening of international norms, standards, and operational measures to prevent and combat corruption, bribery, tax evasion, money laundering, and related illegal capital flows. Corruption is an abuse of power which diverts funds, reduces trust, and hampers democracy and economic development. Financial transparency, accountability and integrity are necessary to promote inclusive social change and increased mobilization of resources for sustainable development.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as the known cases of interferences with elections in democratic societies has raised our awareness of the importance of democratic resilience.

Today's forum will debate how we can build resilience through policy and action. How our policies are shaped is paramount, but policies alone do not build resilient democratic societies. This requires more than the engagement of academia and policymakers. All stakeholders, including national and local authorities, academics, researchers, private sector actors, civil societies and more must be involved. I am therefore pleased that the Regional Good Governance Public-Private Partnership, in short, the R2G4P initiative, includes regional training and a focus on implementation.

Furthermore, the fundamentals for democratic and prosperous societies are shaped through our everyday actions. Experience shows that it takes time, patience, and consistent work to shape resilient democracies. How each one of us acts and reacts in our daily lives is part of this. Nevertheless, governments have a duty to be at the forefront and to remain steadfast in upholding fair and democratic values. Building and maintaining trust in decision makers is about building people's trust in democracy.

I am convinced that the different segments of today's event will provide important insights into how we can best continue working to promote anti-corruption, democratic resilience, and economic security.

Thank you so much for your attention.