



International Day of Democracy

Celebrated on September 15th annually, the International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. In simple terms, democracy focuses on how societies select those who will hold power. The values of freedom, respect for human rights and the principle of holding periodic and genuine elections, make democracy not only a process but a goal that needs to be achieved through the commitment of the government, civil society, international bodies and every citizen living in a democratic society.

The link between democracy and human rights is captured in article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: ***“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”***

The International Convention for Civil and Political Rights is also based on democratic principles to ensure the enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including those relating to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals is also geared towards the protection of democratic institutions with focus placed on promotion of the rule of law, reducing corruption, development of effective and transparent institutions at all levels; ensuring of responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; ensuring of public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. It is evident that democracy, the rule of law and human rights march hand in hand and as such, cannot be looked at separately by prioritizing one over the other.

This day however, should not be merely an opportunity to review democratic systems but also serve as a reminder that democracy is about people: human beings with rights, feelings, dreams and aspirations who deserve to be treated fairly under a system founded on justice, freedom, peace and equality for ALL (irrespective of gender, race, religion, place of origin and other status). As a young democracy, Seychelles has undergone several transitions since the colonial era. The Seychelles Human Rights Commission encourages the application of democratic principles through increased freedom of the press, ease of access to information and public consultation on national matters which impact on the lives of citizens. The Commission applauds the holding of free elections in 2020 which resulted in the peaceful handing over of power- a commendable act on the part of our leaders which has set Seychelles as an example on the world map.

As the National Human Rights Institution of Seychelles, the Commission is working towards the building, preservation and elevation of an evolved and developed democratic environment in which human rights and the fundamental freedoms are protected and promoted. We want to see a Seychelles in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised, where citizens actively participate in decision-making and hold relevant authorities accountable, and everyone enjoys their inalienable rights to the fullest without fear and discrimination.

Source: Seychelles Human Rights Commission (SHRC)