

15 September 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
on the International Day of Democracy**

On this International Day of Democracy, I encourage the United Nations family to promote the engagement of young people and to support universal values based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population. Nevertheless, recent studies underscore declining rates in youth participation in politics, particularly in developing countries where levels of participation have decreased in elections, political parties and traditional social organizations. Yet at the same time, youth-led movements for democratic change are on the rise in a number of places – including states affected by violent conflict. Using the latest technology and mobile and interactive communication tools, young people are striving hard to make their voices heard at the local, national, regional and international levels.

We must work to ensure that young people's human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, promoted and fulfilled and that future generations have a say in the decisions that will affect their lives and the lives of their children. Good governance creates a sustainable environment for inclusive and responsive political processes, greater participation, equality, security and human development.

I call on Member States, civil society and other stakeholders to work together to strengthen national programmes devoted to fostering voices of the young in all democratic processes.