

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY? DEMOCRACY.

By Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States

Democracy is a tool that counters inefficiency, bad policies, and discrimination. It enables a peaceful transfer of power according to the will of the people. But, democracy is not perfect and it cannot flourish without active help and intervention.

In other words, the future of democracy depends on us. The intelligence of our politics will determine how we build social cohesion, how we can bolster our system of freedoms, how we can discourage hate speech, corruption, illegal activities, false narratives, fake news, and how we can have a meritocratic bureaucracy.

We can fight for it, or we can let it slip through our fingers. Totalitarian governments foster indifference. Democracy requires engagement, compromise, work, and participation. Are our new generations ready to take on this responsibility?

The needs of our society will only be resolved with more effective institutions and freer, more responsible citizens and societies that promote dialogue between political actors and the people whom they serve.

For democratic leaders, politics is a vocation of service. For dictators, politics is a charade used to maintain power. Look around the world and you will see dictators who try to mimic democratic ways even as they disdain democratic values. Dictators loathe the fundamental pillars of democratic societies that promote fairness, justice and the rule of law.

Dictators try to subdue their people with stories of scapegoats and a better future that is always just out of reach. They offer people a terrible bargain - swap freedom and justice for social stability. All unfree people know this is a bad trade. Tyranny only leads

to misery in the short-term and generations of misery ever after.

Democracy In the Americas is under persistent attack. Attacks on the electoral authorities and electoral processes. Attacks on the judiciary. Attacks on the freedom of expression. In the Americas more journalists are now killed than any other region in the world. When political leaders make these attacks, the international community must be there to denounce these actions and bring solutions.

If we believe that democracy can disappear in the house of our next-door neighbor, but that we will be able to preserve it in our own, we are wrong. We have to keep our moral force engaged in the defense of democracy anywhere in order to protect our future.

Democracies require a more efficient way. In the Americas, practically all countries were born as democracies or republics, and with the exception of most CARICOM states, these countries have been independent for close to 200 years. And yet, it is one of the the most unequal and violent regions in the world, unable to fix the most elemental patterns of a structural discrimination that persist in its societies. This should be unforgivable for democracies.

We need to be better citizens, to have better communities, and better societies. We need to understand that the leaders should reflect the best virtues and character of the people.

If our leaders let us down, we can change them through a time tested democratic process. That process takes its strength from an educated, engaged and imaginative population. Let us promote the kind of citizenship that ensures democracy will always prevail.