69th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Parallel Event
presented by
The League of Women Voters of the United States
and the Global NGO Executive Committee



Democracy at Risk: Reactions to Voter Decline Globally

12 March 2025
12:30pm to 2:00pm Eastern Time (New York)

Please register in advance to join our Zoom Webinar

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DMzrMAb7RD-IDyjpGyAhdQ
(After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.)

With the global decline in voter participation, democracy is at risk. There is a pressing need to revitalize voter engagement, particularly among women and marginalized communities. Our panelists will examine critical issues affecting voter participation including youth disengagement, institutional challenges, civic mistrust, and cultural barriers and highlight policy innovations that can foster democratic resilience. In this discussion, panelists will present actionable strategies to engage citizens and revitalize democratic processes worldwide.

Our Panel of Expert Speakers:

Dr. Seema Shah, Head of International IDEA's Democracy Assessment Unit

Celina Stewart, Chief Executive Officer of the League of Women Voters of the United States

Maria Isabel Aninat Sahli, Dean of Faculty of Law at the Universidad Adolfo Ibañez in Chile

Idrissa Mamoud Tarawallie, Head of Programme Sierra Leone for the International IDEA

Stuti Bhakat, International Legal Studies, LLM Candidate, NYU School of Law

Speaker Bios:



Dr. Seema Shah is the Head of International IDEA's Democracy Assessment (DA) Unit that produces an annual Global State of Democracy report. She previously served as the research and strategy lead for the International Rescue Committee's humanitarian innovation department in the Middle East region. As the Director of Research, she managed a team of data analysts in the development of evidence-based advocacy reports for national election reform campaigns and for Supreme Court cases challenging the credibility of the 2013 and 2017 Kenyan elections. Seema has also worked on election violence, media development, campaign finance reform, human rights research and advocacy, and standard-setting for electoral integrity with civil society organizations in DRC, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and the U.S. She holds a PhD in Political Science from UCLA and a MSt from the University of Oxford in International Human Rights Law.



Celina Stewart is the Chief Executive Officer of the League of Women Voters of the United States. In this role, she is charged with executing the mission to empower voters and defend democracy and managing the 104-year-old voting rights organization's operations and resources. Celina first joined the League in 2018 as Director of Advocacy and Litigation. She was promoted to Senior Director in April 2019 and to Chief Counsel in July 2020. Prior to joining the League, she was acting Chief Operating Officer and Director of Philanthropy at an electoral reform nonprofit. She served as a litigation consultant to several Am 100 law firms, as a legislative aide at the Michigan legislature, and as Legal Counsel to the Minority Leader Stacey Abrams at the Georgia House of Representatives. Celina earned her JD from Western Michigan University Law School and her BA in Sociology from Spelman College.



Maria Isabel Aninat Sahli is Dean of Faculty of Law at the Universidad Adolfo Ibañez in Chile and Vice Chair of the Board of Advisors, International IDEA. Between 2010 and 2012, Isabel worked as a presidential advisor on human rights, labor law, minorities and indigenous peoples. Between 2014 and 2020, she worked as a researcher at the Center for Public Studies (CEP). She has edited several books on various public policy issues. In 2019, Aninat was a member of the commission that drafted the constitutional reform proposal for the constituent process in Chile. She holds a Master of Laws from Columbia University and a Bachelor in Law from Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, and serves in various boards of Chilean and international not for profit entities.



Idrissa Mamoud Tarawallie is the Head of Programme Sierra Leone for the International IDEA. He is an international development management specialist, a program manager, a researcher and an educator with more than 15 years' progressive experience in strengthening governance systems and managing election and capacity development interventions for national agencies and civil society organizations in the West African sub-region. His career path has combined international development and program management with higher education teaching and research, public sector governance reform, and behavior change communication in developing and fragile contexts. Idrissa holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA, honors) in Political Science from the University of Sierra Leone, Master of Arts (MA) in Politics and Governance from the Institute of Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester, and a PhD in Development Studies from SOAS – University of London.



Stuti Bhakat is a legal professional with a robust background in international law and a commitment to human rights and social justice, particularly concerning marginalized communities. Admitted to practice in India, she brings practical legal experience and academic insights to the discussion. Stuti is currently a candidate for an LL.M. in International Legal Studies at New York University School of Law (expected May 2025)
Stuti's diverse experiences, from working on the ground with refugees to analyzing the impact of technology on law, position her to offer valuable perspectives on the challenges facing democracy, the state of women, and marginalized communities in the context of international law and global affairs. Her involvement in organizations like NYU Law Women further underscores her commitment to gender equality and professional development in the legal field.

Moderator:



Connie Sobon Sensor is a former Assistant Professor at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA. She is the chief NGO representative to the United Nations for the League of Women Voters of the United States (www.lwv.org) & past-President of the Northeast Chapter of the Transcultural Nursing Society. She serves as an elected Vice-President on the Board of the Global NGO Executive Committee(www.gnec.ngo). Dr. Sensor earned a PhD from Seton Hall University, a Masters in Nursing Management from Kean University, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from New Jersey City University She has presented locally, nationally and internationally about the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Leadership in Global Health, and her research about health-related beliefs, practices and experiences of migrant populations.