Voters turn out to cast their ballot in Timor-Leste’s parliamentary elections (2012). Photo: UN Photo/Martine Perret

15 September 2016— “Democratic principles run through the Agenda like a golden thread, from universal access to public goods, health care and education, as well as safe places to live and decent work opportunities for all.” - Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

Democracy can be defined as “a form of government in which people choose leaders by voting.”

All of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals speak to democracy, most prominently in Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda, which addresses democracy directly by calling for inclusive and participatory societies and institutions on all levels.

In order to achieve peace, justice and strong institutions for all, states must work in close partnership with civil society to implement and monitor all 17 Goals. Parliaments in particular
have a critical role in translating the sustainable development agenda into concrete action through passing legislation, making budget allocations and holding governments accountable.

The European Parliament is the only EU institution elected directly by the citizens of the Union, and is strongly committed to promoting sustainable democracies across the world.

According to the current legislative term, the Parliament has so far sent delegations to observe elections in Ukraine, Egypt, Tunisia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Haiti, Tanzania, Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Peru.

The Parliament implements the Sustainable Development Goals through its work to strengthen the legitimacy of national electoral processes and to increase public confidence in the protection of elections and human rights.

A voter casting her ballot at a polling station in Kyiv during Ukraine's early parliamentary elections on 26 October 2014. Photo: OSCE/Thomas Rymer
“People want food and shelter; education and health care and more economic opportunity. They want to live without fear. They want to be able to trust their Governments and global, national and local institutions. They want full respect for their human rights and they are rightly demanding a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives,” says Ban Ki-moon.

Each of the Sustainable Development Goals on its own reflects fundamental desires shared by people everywhere. Together, the 17 Goals make up an intricate tapestry of challenges, choices and opportunities that people encounter in their everyday lives. Delivering a better tomorrow will require integrated responses to interconnected challenges, amongst countries, within countries, and most importantly from the people.

On this International Day of Democracy, Ban Ki-moon reminds us to rededicate ourselves to democracy and dignity for all.