



RESOLUTION ON THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

Proposed by the Writers for Peace Committee and seconded by Wales PEN Cymru, French PEN, Slovenian PEN, Independent Chinese PEN Centre, Finnish PEN and PEN Germany

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 85th annual Congress in Manila, Philippines, 1 to 5 October 2019,

Recalling the Charter's affirmation that members of PEN should at all times use what influence they have in favour of good understanding and mutual respect between nations and people;

Recalling that PEN stands for the principle of unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and between all nations; and,

Recalling that PEN for nearly a century has championed the ideal of one humanity living in peace and equality in one world;

Expresses its profound concern about the rise in exclusionary populist politics that erode the rule of law, the representative nature of elections and the protection of the rights of minorities. This increasingly distorts and threatens the foundations of democracy in many countries;

Observes with alarm that these exclusionary politics create and reinforce societal discord. They pit people against each other with narratives of fear and arbitrary scapegoating. They undermine the civility of relations between citizens, as open debate and dialogue take a back seat, and tolerance of opposing views and respect for the dignity of the other;

Rejects the tactics and mechanisms used to pursue such politics and to cement power. These include:

- Attacking journalists and other threats to the independence of the media;
- Undermining the independence of the judiciary and the separation of powers;
- Manipulating the electorate, often through social media;
- Distorting free and fair elections; and,
- Violating the right to freedom of expression of political opponents, including by hindering internet access.

In light of the above, the Assembly of PEN International:

- Urges politicians and political movements to refrain from exclusionary and divisive rhetoric;

- Urges Governments and their leaders to respect the rule of law and human rights. In particular:
 - Organise free and fair elections, respect the outcome and observe Constitutional term limits;
 - Never seek to retain office for life;
 - Respect the right to freedom of expression. This requires:
 - Respecting the right of all citizens, regardless of their political opinion, to criticise politicians, royalty or the military;
 - Allowing transparent journalism and the protection of all writers, broadcasters and artists; and,
 - Reinstating those who have been forced out of employment or had their professional status obstructed because of their political dissent;
- Calls on the writers of the world, and in particular the members of PEN, to unite behind a counter-vision based on equality, dialogue and respect for human dignity.