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Thanks for giving me the floor. It is really quite an honor.

This question we are talking about here is absolutely critical. What is the relationship between democracy principles and economic development? Since we are at the Community of Democracies, let me say it plainly from my perspective: No government ever woke up one morning and decided, “Let’s create a more fair economy today.” Markets don’t magically create fair, shared prosperity, either. It is the agency of individual citizens coming together collectively—the trade unions, small business groups, NGOs—that push governments and corporations to make changes to the way our economies work that make them more fair. And then when governments deliver for citizens, our faith in the system strengthens. Trust in the system is directly related to belief in democracy.

But this requires good governance—and civic space above all. And right now, these fundamental democratic rights are under attack north to south, precisely at the time we are witnessing rising inequality and need it most.

1. Literally half the world’s states have implemented controls that affect tens of thousands of citizen-led organizations, like restrictive NGO laws we all know about. And the stakes are high:

- 150 human rights defenders were killed in 2015, half in the Americas
- In 2016, the number of countries that deny or constrain free speech and freedom of assembly increased from 41 to 50, with Poland and the United States added to that list.

2. Labor rights globally are often the most frequently violated set of human rights. For example:

- 82 countries exclude workers from labor law, including freedom of association protections

- More than half of all countries deny some or all workers collective bargaining
- Unionists have been murdered in 11 countries—Chile, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Mexico, Peru, South Africa and Turkey. In Guatemala, trade unionists were murdered, over the last 9 years, at a rate of every four to six weeks, and murder with total impunity.

3. Seven out of 10 people live in a country that has seen a rise in inequality in the last 30 years.

- And it is worse for women. Globally, women earn 30 percent of what men earn for equal work. It will take 170 years for women to be paid the same as men at this rate. Women earn only 10 percent of income and own 1 percent of property.

And studies show that unequal economies reinforce distrust in government, and threaten democracy.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

The reason American children don't have to work, and the reason you can refuse unsafe work or have the right to a weekend with your family is because American workers organized and the result was a trade union movement that demanded change and improved the lives of millions. It allowed our kids to go to school and advanced this nation. Freedom of association in America gave us the 8-hour workday and retirement protection. Citizens coming together pushed government to pass those laws. *That is what **democracy** looks like.*

Of the dozens of survivors we spoke to immediately after the Rana Plaza factory collapsed in Bangladesh, killing more than 1,100 people, we heard repeatedly that they knew the building was unsafe. But they went in anyway because their boss told them if they didn't, they would lose a month's wages. And no one making \$68 a month can risk losing a month of wages. They couldn't refuse unsafe work because they had no freedom of association and so no voice. They walked into that building and died that day.

But a year later I met a young woman worker in a garment factory who became a union organizer. She told me that now she can sit across the table and negotiate

wages and working conditions with that same kind of boss. He can no longer threaten her with rape if she asks that her overtime be paid, because she now is his equal. Freedom of association in Bangladesh—embattled and under attack though it is—gave that woman dignity and power. *That is what **democracy** looks like.*

And this is what democracy and human rights, like freedom of association, do. They create equality in front of power, even the playing field and unleash the innovation of citizens that governments need to govern well.

In the past 50 years, so many major transitions to democracy have had social movements front and center. South African unions helped end apartheid. Workers in Brazil brought about democratic transition after a dictator. And for the role they played in transforming Tunisia, the labor movement there won the Nobel prize. Freedom of association is what revives and builds democracies, and gives us all a chance to promote economic and political rights simultaneously.

But governments are standing in the way of citizens coming together in too many countries. So, in this room, we need to keep asking if democratic governments are doing enough at home to make sure they stay democracies; and if they are using available levers of power they have, as democracies, to convince others. Right now, the answer is no. But it doesn't have to be this way.

People help make economies more fair. We need to be able to join together and advocate, and these rights help us do that. So we need governments to:

- Promote civic space more assertively and share best practices with others
- Governments must promote and advance labor rights as core to achieving equitable and sustainable development. 100 years of human history in the advancement of human rights has established one set of fundamental rights for workers, and that is freedom of association and collective bargaining.

There is really no alternative. It is time to stand up. And this is what democracy looks like.

Thank you!