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CSOs call for action for inclusive Sustainable Development process at Civil Society Summit in Belgrade

5 April 2019, Belgrade, Serbia – Civil society organisation (CSO) representatives, development workers, activists, and campaigners from all over the world are gathering in Belgrade, Serbia on April 8, 2019 for the Civil Society Summit as part of International Civil Society Week.

The Civil Society Summit 2019 aims to leverage the energy and commitment of civic leaders representing thousands of CSOs, and human rights and climate activists around the world to demand that governments, parliamentarians, businesses, inter-governmental bodies, and citizens take action in promoting people's participation in building a sustainable world.

"Threats to civil society around the world are challenging global efforts in the quest to create just, equal and sustainable societies," said Lysa John, Secretary-General of CIVICUS. "As global civil society we remain committed to pushing back against actions that prevent people from exercising their democratic rights. With over six billion people living in countries where there are serious constraints on civic space, the Civil Society Summit is a critical moment for civic leaders around the world to show resolve and take the fight for civic freedoms to the next level."

"At the Summit, civic leaders will demand action for a robust civic space for democratic participation, ending the persecution of human rights defenders, promotion of access to governance and opportunities for development, and delivery on the commitment to inclusive participation in realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," shared CPDE Co-Chair Beverly Longid.

Foremost at the Summit is the adoption of the Belgrade Call to Action, a Civil Society Call to Stand Together to Defend People's Voices for a Just and Sustainable World, which asks United Nations Member States to act to reverse the closing and shrinking space for civil society, to stop the attacks on human rights defenders and the undermining of democratic participation, and to renew the prospects for an inclusive agenda 2030, and the full realisation of the SDGs.

“We urge the leadership of all like-minded CSOs to sign onto the Belgrade Call to Action, and commit to promoting this Call through their own initiatives at the global, regional and national levels, especially to amplify our messages before the UN High-Level Political Forum in July and the UN Special Session in September 2019,” said CPDE Co-Chair Justin Kilcullen.

“The SDGs are part of an agenda for transformation of our societies and economies towards a more just and sustainable world by 2030, but sadly civil society groups are regularly excluded from decision-making. It is essential that these voices and insights can be heard to guarantee the promise to ‘leave no one behind’,” said Action for Sustainable Development Facilitation Group member from Slovenia, Robert Križanič.

“Let us all meet in Belgrade to join with other civic leaders and activists from across the globe to talk about ways to achieve our vision of a better world,” added Vitalice Meja, Non-Executive Co-chair of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

The Summit will feature a panel discussion on the harms of closing civic spaces and attacks on human rights defenders, a solemn remembrance for civil society leaders, human rights defenders, environmentalists, and journalists murdered in the past year, and workshops on promoting and engaging the Belgrade Call to Action.

Organised by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), and Civic Initiatives (Gradjanske Inicijative), the Summit is part of the CIVICUS’ International Civil Society Week 2019 on April 8 to 11.

For updates about the Summit, follow #CivilSocietySummit2019 #CSOPartnership #StandTogether on Twitter and Facebook, or visit the following sites:

CPDE: CSOPartnership.org, Twitter: @CSOPartnership_, Facebook: @CSOPartnerships

CIVICUS: CIVICUS.org, Twitter: @CIVICUSalliance, Facebook: @CIVICUS

A4SD: Action4SD.org, Twitter: @Action4SD

BCSDN: balkancsd.net, Twitter: @BCSDN, Facebook: @balkancsd.net

Civic Initiatives: gradjanske.org/en/; Twitter: @gradjanske, Facebook: @GradjanskeInicijative