The Belgrade Call to Action
A Civil Society Call to Stand Together to
Defend Peoples’ Voices for a Just and Sustainable World
Reverse the Closing and Shrinking Space for Civil Society
Stop the Increasing Attacks on Human Rights Defenders and the Undermining of Democratic Participation
Renew the Prospects for an Inclusive Agenda 2030 and the Full Realization of the SDGs

Launched in Belgrade, April 8, 2019

We, leaders from Global Civil Society, coming from civil society organizations, activists and campaigners from all parts of the World, on this day in Belgrade call on international and national civil society to stand together and declare aloud: Enough is enough! Stop the relentless attacks on civil society, social leaders and human rights defenders!

The global community is currently moving down a path that will leave hundreds of millions of people behind; real and transformative progress towards achieving the systemic changes for people and planet promised by Agenda 2030 will not be possible without a fully engaged civil society and people’s genuine participation through their organizations and communities.

It is deeply troubling that more than eighty percent (80%) of the world’s population - 6 billion people living in 111 countries - face a situation where either the conditions are closed for civil society (23 countries), or where civil society is highly repressed (35 countries), or where civil society faces substantial legal and political obstacles (53 countries). [CIVICUS Civil Society Monitor] In these countries there is little chance for a fully engaged and mobilized civil society, which is an essential foundation for democracy, human rights safeguards, and progress on the SDGs and for a transformative Agenda 2030.

We urge all Member States of the United Nations to take concrete urgent action to reverse these trends.

Despite rhetorical promises of action by many Member States to “reverse the trend of shrinking civic space wherever it is taking place,” attacks on CSOs, social leaders and human rights defenders continue unabated. [Nairobi Outcome Document, Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation]

Civic actors across many sectors are being threatened, persecuted and killed – including those supporting and representing rural communities, Indigenous peoples, journalists, trade unions, women’s rights activists, LGBTQ* activists, youth, people living with disabilities and environmentalists. They are being harassed through arbitrary arrest, detention, the targeted use of legal and regulatory measures and restrictions on CSO finances. Others are deliberately discredited as criminals or “foreign agents.” Civic leaders are being physically harmed, with women’s human rights defenders facing sexual harassment and abuse. All because they seek to protect peoples’ human rights, while promoting democratic participation on issues that affect their lives.

Real and transformative progress, leaving no one behind, in achieving core SDGs – including eradicating poverty (SDG1), eliminating hunger (SDG2), addressing gender and all forms of inequality (SDG5), reducing inequalities (SDG10), promoting decent work and sustainable livelihoods for all (SDG8), and taking action for climate justice and a just transition (SDG13) – will not be possible without a fully engaged civil society and
We call on all Member States, meeting in September 2019:

1. To take concrete steps to protect and enable space for civil society, including enabling laws and regulations, democratic accountability based on human rights norms and human rights standards, and the full protection of civil society under attack – such as social leaders, human rights defenders and gender equality activists.

2. To embed inclusion and meaningful accountability to people in development practices.

3. To implement and respect democratic country ownership of national development plans and implement transparency and accountability for inclusive SDG delivery.

4. To lead by example with concerted action to challenge major human rights violations, including deteriorating conditions facing peoples’ organizations, trade unions, women’s rights organizations, indigenous peoples, and community-based environmentalists, among many others.

5. To recognise the importance of the inter-connected themes in achieving Agenda 2030 — civil society voice, eradicating poverty, women’s empowerment, fighting inequality, decent work, climate action and environmental justice.

Implementing an Action Agenda based on these commitments will require robust, pro-active and collaborative political leadership on the part of all Member States, Development Stakeholders and Civil Society Organizations.

Civil Society is fully committed to the achievement of the SDGs. But our efforts will be in vain, if we cannot count on new measures and actions at the local, national, regional and global level to reverse the debilitating trends that are shrinking and closing civic space.

We commit to raise these urgent concerns and demand action at all inter-governmental and preparatory meetings as the international community reviews progress in Agenda 2030 in the coming months and years.

This Call to Action, with an accompanying Action Agenda, is being launched simultaneously in countries around the world to draw attention to its urgency.

Belgrade
April 8, 2019
**Endorsing Organizations**

*The Belgrade Call to Action* is currently endorsed by 160 civil society organizations from more than 60 countries worldwide. These organizations include major International NGOs, Regional and National CSOs from many diverse sectors – education, human rights, health, social development, climate and environment, among others.

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Civil Society Partnership for Effective Development
Civil Society Reference Group
Comhlámh
Confederación Colombiana de ONG (CCONG)
Constitution and Reform Education Consortium
Corruption Brakes Crusade (COBRA)
Center for Promotion of Civil Society (CPCD)
Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC)
Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity
CSYM HUDUMA- Christian Spiritual Youth Ministry
Defend Defenders
Development Wheel (DEW)
Diakonia
Dóchas
Dr.Br. Ambedkar Secondary School
Dynamics OSCAF
Dytech
Ethiopia Civil Society Forum
European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW)
European Partnership for Democracy
European Women's Lobby
femLINKpacific
FemPlatz
FOND
Fondation Bill Clinton Pour la Paix FBCP
Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan
Forus
Foundation Caucasus Environment
Foundation Open Society Macedonia
Freedom House
Front Line Defenders
Fundacion Cambia tu Calle
Geospatial Tanzania
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
Global Campaign for Education
Global Peace Chain Mauritius
Global Responsibility
Globalt Fokus
Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS)
Grate ne Sherbim Publik (WPS Albania)
Greenpeace
Group Come Out
Human Rights Sanrakshan Sansthaa
Hui E! Community Aotearoa
IBON Foundation
Igarape

Philippines
Kenya
Ireland
Colombia
Kenya
Uganda
Bosnia And Herzegovina
Romania
Kenya
Tanzania
Switzerland
Bangladesh
Sweden
Ireland
India
Tanzania
Francophone Africa
Zambia
Ethiopia
Europe
Europe
Europe
Pacific
Serbia
Romania
DRC
Kyrgyzstan
Global
Georgia
Macedonia
United States
Ireland
Chile
Tanzania
Global
Global
Mauritius
Austria
Denmark
India
Albania
Global
Serbia
India
New Zealand
Philippines
Brazil
Impulse Center
Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self Determination & Liberation
Individuell Mannskohja
Indus Future Foundation
Instituto de Communicacion y Desarrollo
Inter Pares
Interaction
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network
International Women's Alliance
International Youth Alliance
INTRAC
Iraq Al-Amal Association
Just Associates
Just Forests
Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights
Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF)
Kenya Community Development Foundation
Light for the World
Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)
Michael Imodu National Institute for Labour Studies
Movement towards education and youth empowerment
MPAP
Multipolar
National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations of Liberia (NACCSOL)
New Vision
NGO Collective for Food Security and Rural Development (COSADER)
NGO Federation of Nepal
NGO Nash Vek
Nigeria Network of NGOs
Norwegian Peoples Aid
Olive Charitable Trust
ONGD-España
l'ONG Femmes et Enfants en Détresse (FEED-NIGER)
PAO
Partners Albania
PASCiB
Peoples Coalition on Food Sovereignty
PHE Ethiopia Consortium
PIANGO
PLAN International
Platforme des Femmes Leaders du Mali
Poverty Eradication Network
Promo-Lex Association
Public Space Network
Queer Cypress Association
RACI

Azerbaijan
Global
Sweden
Pakistan
Uruguay
Canada
United States
Europe
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Mali
Kenya
Moldova
Kenya
Cypress
Argentina
Reality of Aid Africa
Rivers without Boundaries Coalition – Mongolia
SPEDYA-Africa
Strategies for Peace, Education, Research & Development
Struggle to Economize Future Environment (SEFE)
Success Capital Organisation
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation/ SSNC
TAG-A-LIFE International
TECHO
The Danish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
The East African Sexual Health & Rights Initiative (UHAI)
The IREDE Foundation
Together First
Trócaire
Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development
Uganda Debt Network
Uganda National NGO forum
Volunteer Activists
Warande Advisory
West Africa Civil Society Institute
Women's Counselling and information Center
Womenkind Worldwide
World Council of Churches
World Movement of Democracies
World Vision Albania
World Wide Fund for Nature/WWF
WWF Adria
YUVA

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