

FORUM: Special Conference on Securing and Advancing Democracy

QUESTION OF: The role of civil society in advancing democracy

SUBMITTED BY: New Zealand

CO-SUBMITTERS: Afghanistan, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Columbia, ECE, Gambia, Ghana, Haiti, India, Mali, Norway, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Sudan, Thailand, Venezuela,

SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON SECURING AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY,

Reaffirming the definition of "Civil society" as the cooperation between two or more people in order to promote or resist change, on behalf of others, this could be in the form of a temporary or permanent, informal or formal arrangement, what makes it 'civil' is that they respect others, act without violence and that they are non-governmental, not limited to a family, and not-for-profit,

Bearing in mind that Civil society is the "third sector" of society, along with government and businesses, since it comprises civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations,

Further reaffirming that the UN recognizes the importance of partnering with civil society, since it advances the Organization's ideals, and helps support its work,

Approving that a civil society consists of citizens and groups in the public arena working outside the government such as NGOs, nonprofit groups and voluntary sectors,

Emphasizing that civil society aims to represent the interest of those who find it difficult to articulate and those whose voices are ignored and excluded, since The civil society gets involved in the sense that they either contest the power of the state or come up with alternate ways of policy formation and provision of service,

Recalling that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the United Nations' global development network, it advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life for themselves,

1. Encourages nations to ensure that civil societies are represented in their respective governments, which could be achieved through ways such as but not limited to:
 - a) providing certain Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) speaking rights in their country's highest legislature
 - b) providing CSOs representation in adequate government sub-committees, which could be achieved through ways such as:
 - i. providing environmental CSOs recognition in the department of environment
 - ii. providing labour unions representation in the department of labour
 - c) creating a sub committee of the government that recognises members from major civil societies in a nation with the aim of this committee is to acquire information on issues such as:
 - i. the implementation and effect of previous policies and regulations on civil societies
 - ii. experiences of the civil society reflecting the needs of the people and allowing them to bring forth topics of concern for the members in front of national parliaments
 - iii. seeking counsel from specialists in relevant fields and coordinating interests of multiple groups
 - d) allowing creation of labour unions for any professions, the role of these unions would be to:
 - i. inform the government about their demands and needs including issues such as wages, working conditions, employee rights

- ii. help the government in decision making by providing expertise for that topics;
2. Further encourages nations to raise awareness about the importance of civil society organisations in a democracy, which could be achieved through ways such as but not limited to:
 - a) educating their citizens about their civic duties as described in their country's constitution
 - b) allowing CSOs to raise awareness on the internet through sites like Twitter, Facebook and other local websites, unless in the case of a public order emergency or if the information being spread is considered to be harmful to the public sentiment
 - c) creating a campaign run by individual nations that would not only broadcast successful examples of civil society and its influence, but also inform the public about the importance of civil societies through ways such as but not limited to:
 - i. television broadcasts
 - ii. social media announcements
 - iii. presentations at schools
 - d) encouraging youth to participate in political groups/CSOs and share their opinions
 - e) developing and encouraging the use of free media that is not controlled by the government directly;
 3. Recommends the creation of the Transnational Organisation for Monitoring Civil Societies (TOMCS) to monitor the activity and presence of civil societies in different sectors of member nations, and the functions of this body could include but are not limited to:
 - a) entertaining concerns from member nations about another nation limiting the activity of a civil society in their borders, examples of this could include but are not limited to:
 - i. local governments curbing protests in their nations to silence dissent
 - ii. governments arresting civil society heads or other political figures to silence opposition
 - iii. using social media platforms to systematically spread hate or violence against certain communities based on their race, ethnicity, language, beliefs, religion
 - b) nations featuring the key advances and threats that various civil society organisations face
 - c) maintaining a list of the numerous civil society organisations operating in a country based on factors such as but not limited to:
 - i. number of members
 - ii. importance to their relevant nations
 - d) visiting countries with less powerful civil societies in order to help them improve;
 4. Calls for legislation regarding Civil Society Organizations (CSO), on issues such as but not limited to:
 - a) all citizens rightfully share the freedom of establishing and participating in CSOs
 - b) all CSO founders should register their organizations with specific government department or branch that is designated by the state
 - c) all registered CSOs are allowed to organize rallies, demonstrations, petitions, free of political intervention as long as the manifestation remains peaceful, otherwise, their legal identities should be cancelled;
 5. Further recommends that the United Nations help provide funds for notable civil society organisations in Less Economically Developed Countries to ensure they can raise awareness for their issues, this could be achieved through ways such as but not limited to:
 - a) providing direct payments to NGOs at the TOMCS in need of money given that the restricted goal for which the money will be used is specified
 - b) encouraging nations to make funds transferred to a TOMCS recognised civil society organisation tax free
 - c) making better use of the UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund) through ways such as but not limited to:
 - i. avoiding the overallocation of resources to any particular NGO

- ii. decreasing unnecessary expenses of the members of the UNDEF
 - iii. restricting funds given to any NGOs found to be corrupt or using the funds for illicit activities
 - d) Introducing methods to ensure that transactions made to and from the civil society organisations are legitimate, this could be ensured through ways such as but not limited to:
 - i. publicizing the annual budget for the major TOMCS recognized CSOs operating in a country
 - ii. providing the public access to information about the limited to the problem resolution progress, regional distribution of civil society, data collected by CSO verifying that, to a certain extent, the civil society actors represent interests and questions that matter to ordinary citizens, especially marginalized groups
 - e) Allowing willing member nations to contribute funds to Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) with NGOs looking to expand;
6. Solemnly affirms nations to provide designated area in a city as spots for crowds to assemble to protest in a safe and secure manner, this could be achieved through ways such as but not limited to:
- a) forbidding police to use water cannons or tear gas unless in the case of a public safety emergency
 - b) allowing protestors to assemble at these spots without restricting access through means of public transport or roadblocks
 - c) restricting police from arresting individuals who assemble to protest unless in case of crimes being committed by protestors;
 - d) Coordinating with the International Committee of the Red Cross on the usage of weapons and protocols in response to protests;
7. Suggests that member nations introduce regulation for dividing and processing petitions by size in order to improve the efficiency of the process, this could be achieved through the following method:
- a) setting several standards based on the scale of the petition and stipulating corresponding processing methods
 - b) when a proposal initiated by civil society reaches a certain number of petitioners, the government should react by, either replying on the official website or asking the director to meet the petition starter in person.
8. Further Designates the TOMCS to watch and update databases such as the integrated Civil Society Organization System (iCSO System) and CSO-Net in order to maintain an accurate base of active CSOs that is easy to navigate and change as necessary
9. Further requests Member States to prevent amnesty for abuses against civil society actors and human rights violations through integrating necessary policies that establish accountability and equal access to justice with the purpose of maintaining a secure environment in which members of civil society organizations can manage their individual duties free from any threats, abuses, or interferences and in accordance with the rule of law through means such as but not limited to;
- a) Ensuring that violators and perpetrators are brought to justice,
 - b) Strengthening laws and practical measures to ensure universal jurisdiction for crimes under international law,
 - i. Unless crimes by civil society actors have been committed in which case the law applies to those who have committed the crime;