

Geneva, 06 February 2024

**His Excellency, Mr António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations**

**Her Excellency, Ms Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UN Geneva)**

**His Excellency, Ambassador Omar Zniber, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations Office in Geneva and President of the Human Rights Council**

**cc: His Excellency, Mr Mahamane Cissé-Gouro, Director of the Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

**Re: Ensuring live online modalities of participation for UN human rights bodies and mechanisms**

Excellencies,

The undersigned civil society organisations are writing to express our great concern regarding issues of access and participation at the UN Human Rights Council, Treaty Bodies and related mechanisms. We recall the [letter](#) signed by 40 civil society organisations on 23 June 2023 welcoming the agreement between the Secretary-General and the President of the Human Rights Council for the 17th cycle to maintain hybrid modalities of participation throughout 2023 and urging the competent bodies to create a mandate that would allow for the consolidation of said modalities.

We deeply regret, however, that the 5th Committee of the General Assembly and its relevant subsidiary bodies in New York failed to provide the required mandate and legislative framework upon which such modalities could have been permanently adopted for 2024. We regret further that, in the recent UPR 45th session, the United Nations Offices at Geneva (UNOG) [did not provide](#) modalities for live online participation, as it maintained that it has no mandate for providing hybrid services. Similarly, we are extremely concerned by the negative impact that these measures are having on the functioning of those Treaty Bodies that are currently in session or that will soon begin their sessions, as the online participation of numerous civil society representatives that were scheduled to interact with Treaty Bodies have been cancelled, while hybrid and online meetings are still allowed for States upon request.

We join [States](#) in Geneva in expressing our deep concern about the significant negative impact of the lack of provision for live online participation tools on the inclusivity and universality of all UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, UPR and Treaty Bodies. Civil society organisations have long demanded effective means for remote participation, due to the glaring obstacles faced by rights holders and victims and survivors of violations, as well as people from marginalised and vulnerable communities, in accessing multilateral spaces, including, but not limited to, denial of visas,

resource challenges, travel costs, environmental considerations, security concerns and accessibility for people with disabilities.

For the past four years, the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms in Geneva have set an excellent example for the UN-wide system and strengthened their work through live online interventions and pre-recorded videos, coupled with in-person interventions. These interventions have improved diversity and accessibility and brought defenders and victims of violations closer to the UN human rights system, in turn making the UN more relevant to rights holders. It is disheartening that we now face discontinuation of best practices rather than adoption across the UN mechanisms.

As illustrated by the High Commissioner's landmark report [A/HRC/51/13](#), "the recipe for effective crisis response and for trust and resilience is a more systematic investment in meaningful, safe and inclusive participation at all levels, coupled with effective measures to protect access to information and an enabling environment for debate as well as the security and holistic protection of those who speak up".

Additionally, as we have emphasised on different occasions, Geneva is the central hub for human rights conferences at the UN level, and urgent action should be taken to mitigate its contributions to the climate crisis. While in-person meetings are necessary, the possibility of intervention through online participation allows the UN to align its practices with the urgency of reducing carbon emissions. With the HRC sessions getting longer, and the unmitigated planetary crisis, sustainability must be a priority. Ensuring modalities for remote participation also contributes to building greater engagement and ownership of norms and standards.

The undersigned organisations respectfully urge you to:

- Similarly to 2023, ensure that the necessary provisional arrangements are put in place to allow the UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms as well as the Treaty Bodies and other mechanisms, to continue to make live online participation available through Zoom, WebEx or other tools in all in-person meetings, both formal and informal, in all its sessions throughout 2024, until mandated otherwise, following the good practices consolidated during the business continuity scheme and the previous arrangements between the Council's Presidency and the Secretary-General.
- Ensure that UNOG and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have the budget and mandate to provide all stakeholders engaging with the UN human rights bodies, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, as well as the Treaty Bodies and other mechanisms, with the necessary channels to participate in meetings via Zoom, WebEx or other relevant platforms.
- Insofar as is necessary and appropriate, address these challenges with the 5th Committee and relevant subsidiary bodies to ensure that the framework and technical requirements for hybrid and virtual services are put in place permanently for the effective participation of all stakeholders, in particular the beneficiaries of the UN system, including human rights defenders, and civil society organisations.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of our highest consideration.

1. ABC Nepal (Agro- Forestry Basic Health and cooperative Nepal)
2. ABC TAMIL OLI
3. Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
4. ACTION SRI LANKA
5. ADALAH- The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
6. AJIS Association Jeunesse Insertion Solidarite
7. Akahata - Equipo de trabajo en sexualidades y géneros
8. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
9. Albinism Society of Eswatini ASESWA
10. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man
11. All Survivors Project
12. Amnesty International
13. Anti-Slavery International
14. APLE Cambodia
15. Aquarius Supervivientes
16. ARARTEKO. OMBUDS OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY
17. Arisa
18. ASSOCIATION BHARATHI CENTRE CULTUREL FRANCO-TAMOUL
19. Association caritative étudiante pour la jeunesse
20. ASSOCIATION CULTURELLE DES TAMOULS EN France
21. Association de Défense et de Promotion des Droits de l'Homme (ADEAGE)
22. Association de Developpement et de la promotion de Droit de l'Homme
23. Association des étudiants tamouls de France
24. ASSOCIATION DROIT ET TALENTS DE FEMMES
25. Association for emancipation solidarity and equality of women - ESE
26. Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
27. Association Humaniste de France
28. ASSOCIATION LUTTE CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES
29. Association Pour La Diffusion Des Droits De L'homme Dans L'universite De Lyon
30. Association Pour la Solidarité Internationale
31. Association pour le Droit de l'Homme et Le Développement Durable
32. ASSOCIATION POUR LE DROIT DE L'HOMME ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE
33. ASSOCIATION THENDRAL
34. AsylEx
35. ATD Fourth World
36. Austrian League for Human Rights
37. AYTAÇ VISUAL IMPAIRED VILLAGE
38. Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine Association (BIMBA)
39. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
40. Caribbean Association for Youth Development (CAYD)
41. Center for Migration, Gender, and Justice
42. Central Union for Child Welfare, Finland
43. Centre for Child Law
44. Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR-Centre)
45. Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD)
46. Centre for Human Rights and Development

47. Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia)
48. Child Rights Connect
49. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
50. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town
51. CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality
52. CIVICUS
53. Civil Liberties Union for Europe
54. CNAPE
55. Colectivo Artesana
56. Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Defense des Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda "CLADHO"
57. Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP)
58. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
59. Conectas Direitos Humanos
60. Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI)
61. Convention Against Enforced Disappearances Initiative (CEDI)
62. Corporación Programa La Caleta
63. Defence for Children International
64. Défenseurs plus
65. Derechos Digitales · América Latina
66. Državljan D / Citizen D
67. Edmund Rice International
68. Enfants Solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde (ESAM)
69. Equipo Decenio Afrodescendiente- España
70. ETUDIANTS POUR UNE SOCIETE DURABLE PARIS
71. European Network on Statelessness
72. EuSouEu A Ferrugem
73. FEED
74. FIAN International
75. FIAN Norway
76. FIDH
77. Fondation « Zanmi Timoun
78. Freer Press Unlimited
79. Fundación Cónclave Investigativo de las Ciencias Jurídicas Y Sociales (CIJYS)
80. Fundacion Nuevas Bandas
81. Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra
82. Global Alliance against Traffic in Women
83. Global Detention Project
84. Globe International Center
85. Greek Helsinki Monitor
86. Haïti débout pour les droits des enfants
87. Hivos
88. "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center
89. Hochstrittig.org
90. Human Rights Center for Citizens of Mongolia, NGO
91. Human Rights Watch
92. Humanists International
93. Hungarian Helsinki Committee
94. IFEX

95. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
96. ILGA World
97. IMPETUS
98. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
99. International Catholic Child Bureau
100. International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents
101. International Commission of Jurists
102. International Disability Alliance
103. International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights
104. International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)
105. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
106. International Social Service - General Secretariat
107. International Tibet Network
108. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP AP)
109. Irish Council for Civil Liberties
110. JEUNESSE ETUDIANTE TAMOULE
111. Justiça Global
112. Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children
113. LE CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL POUR LES DROITS DE L'HOMME
114. LE PONT
115. Les Caribous Libérés
116. LGBT CENTRE MONGOLIA
117. Make Mothers Matter (MMM)
118. Methoria
119. Molo Songololo
120. Mongolian Women's Employment Supporting Federation NGO
121. MOSCTHA
122. MOVIMIENTO MOVILIZANDONOS por una cultura de DERECHOS DE NIÑOS, NIÑAS Y ADOLESCENTES EN CHILE
123. National Secular Society
124. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
125. NGO for Children Confederation
126. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
127. Norwegian Peoples Aid
128. Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund - SAIH
129. Oyu Tolgoi Watch
130. Paradigm Initiative
131. Peace Brigades International
132. People Forum for Human Rights (people Forum)
133. Plan International
134. Plataforma de Infancia
135. Polish Foster Care Coalition (in Polish: Koalicja na rzecz Rodzinnej Opieki Zastępczej)
136. POURAKHI Nepal
137. Privacy International
138. QADER for Community Development
139. Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice
140. Red para la Infancia y la Familia - Peru
141. REDE DE MULHERES NEGRAS DE PRNAMBUCO

142. Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation et le Suivi des Elections en Guinée - ROSE
143. Rivers without Boundaries Coalition
144. Rural Reconstruction Nepal
145. SAMAAP
146. Save the Children
147. Sexual Rights Initiative
148. Shakti Samuha
149. Sisters Trust
150. Steps Without Borders NGO
151. StopIGM.org / Zwischengeschlecht.org
152. TAMIL UZHAGAM
153. Tamil-Style
154. Tanzania Child Rights Forum
155. TB-Net
156. Terre des Hommes International Federation
157. The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
158. The Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment (ForUM Norway)
159. The Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara
160. Tibet Justice Center
161. TURNER LA PAGE
162. Transbantu Association Zambia
163. Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University
164. UN Program, Occidental College
165. UNICEF Ireland
166. Vicaría de Derechos Humanos de la Arquidiócesis de Caracas
167. WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform
168. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
169. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
170. World Uyghur Congress