

4 May 2019

H.E. Burhan Gafoor

Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations
Co-facilitator on preparations for the UN's 75th anniversary commemoration

H.E. Bergdís Ellertsdóttir

Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations
Co-facilitator on preparations for the UN's 75th anniversary commemoration

cc. H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the United Nations General Assembly

REF. COMMEMORATION OF THE UN'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2020

Excellencies,

We write to you in your capacity as co-facilitators on preparations for the UN's 75 anniversary to express our deep concern that nascent plans for the commemorative plenary are not suitably inclusive of civil society.

The anniversary presents a vital opportunity to consider how the Organization must adapt to cope with the global threats facing humanity. As the President of the General Assembly said recently: *"it is a chance to make the UN more effective, more transparent, more accountable and more relevant to 'we the peoples.'"*¹

We are, therefore, alarmed to learn that the zero draft resolution for the commemoration does not envision a meaningful role for civil society. It appears to exclude civil society from the intergovernmental preparatory work, from consultations on any outcomes that may be adopted – and even from the commemorative event itself. This would represent a missed opportunity to ensure the inclusion of a diversity of voices, especially those of the most marginalized, through civil society participation.

Global civil society has been a committed and determined ally of the UN since its inception in 1945 – when delegations worked together with NGO representatives on the text of the Charter. Today, that partnership is even more important – as civil society supports delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, and plays a key role in policy formulation, innovation and communication of progress to the broader public.

Encouraged by your stated "deep commitment to an open, transparent and inclusive process"² – that reinforces the President of the General Assembly's emphasis on "making the UN relevant to all people" – we call on you to champion the voices of "we the peoples", and to ensure that meaningful participation from civil society is included at every step of the way towards the 75th anniversary of the UN.

In this vein, we ask that you consider engaging civil society in the process you are leading, for example, through an informal hearing with civil society, by inviting civil society representatives to present at the next suitable meeting, or by organizing a civil society briefing.

We thank you for your efforts to date, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the 75th anniversary is a meaningful event with lasting impact.

Yours sincerely,

Association of World Citizens

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Democracy Without Borders

¹ President of the General Assembly statement, 8 April 2019: <https://www.un.org/pga/73/2019/04/08/commemoration-of-the-seventy-fifth-anniversary-of-the-creation-of-the-united-nations/>

² Co-facilitators joint letter, 29 April 2019: <https://www.un.org/pga/73/2019/04/29/commemoration-of-the-75th-anniversary-of-the-united-nations/>

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Office

Global Voice

Nigeria Network of NGOs

Soroptimist International

The Stimson Center (Just Security 2020 Program)

Together First

United Nations Association – UK

UN2020 Initiative

Workable World Trust

World Democratic Governance project Association – WDGpa

World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy