CONCEPT NOTE

"Civil Society: Key to building stronger democracies post-pandemic"

Side event on the margins of the Fourth Session of the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law

Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva (and online)

24 November 2022

13:30-14:30 CET

Background

The Community of Democracies is an inter-governmental coalition of democratic states that seeks to influence the global democracy agenda through shared action. Since its establishment in 2000, the Community of Democracies (CoD) has been working to support democratic transition and consolidation worldwide. To help bridge the gap between the principles of democracy and universal human rights and practice, the CoD recognizes the importance of an enabled and empowered civil society and has consistently encouraged civil society participation in all its activities.

The relationship between democracy and civil society is one of deep-rooted synergy. The CoD acknowledged this in the Warsaw Declaration, its founding document, as well as in the various Declarations made at the Community's Ministerial meetings and further in the Civil Society Standards adopted in March 2016 by the Governing Council, reaffirming the vital role that civil society plays in all aspects of democratic governance.

The CoD continues to work closely with civil society through the Civil Society Pillar. The Pillar is an independent and affiliated network of civil society organizations that guide the Community's work and convey important views of civil society on democracy-related issues. The Pillar is led by the International Steering Committee (ISC).

During the pandemic, civil society served an essential role in raising awareness of challenges posed by the pandemic, holding institutions into account while promoting fundamental and universal values. A vibrant, autonomous, and dynamic civil society ensures resilient democracies. Only with access to a free and safe civic space can people communicate their interests, raise public concern about any abuses of power, exercise their rights, and fully participate in their countries' decision-making processes.

At a time when it is crucial to come together to strengthen democracies to build back better, the CoD will hold a side event in the margins of the Fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law Forum to discuss the critical role that civil society plays in helping to strengthen democracy and to enhance efforts to protect civic space.

Objectives

The side event will discuss the key role played by civil society in building more robust democracies post-pandemic, looking at both challenges and opportunities. The meeting will additionally aim to share good practices from civil society representatives.

Agenda

13:30 – 13:40	Opening remarks by Thomas E. Garrett, Secretary-General of the Community of Democracies
	Remarks by Enrique de Obarrio, ISC/Civil Society Pillar Chair and General Coordinator of Redlad (Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy)
13:40 – 14:10	Panel discussion on the vital role played by civil society in building stronger democracies post-pandemic

Speakers:

- **Dave Elseroad**, Head of Advocacy and Geneva Office, Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
- **Nicola Paccamiccio**, Geneva UN Advocacy Officer with CIVICUS

14:10 – 14:20	Q&A
14:30	Closing

How to join:

In-person: To request access to the Palais des Nations for in-person participation in the Fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, and the CoD side event, please register at:
https://indico.un.org/event/1001727/

Virtual participation: You can also join the CoD side-event online. To register please RSVP to events@community-democracies.org providing your name and organization by 22 November. We will provide the Webex link to registered participants prior to the event.