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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 July 2025

59/10. Civil society space

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Guided also by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the International Covenants on Human Rights and all other relevant instruments,

Reaffirming the importance of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, encouraging States to uphold the purposes, principles and provisions of the Declaration in the context of its implementation, and noting civil society initiatives to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary, in particular Declaration +25,

Recalling Human Rights Council resolutions 24/21 of 27 September 2013, entitled “Civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment”, 27/31 of 26 September 2014 and 32/31 of 1 July 2016, entitled “Civil society space”, 38/12 of 6 July 2018, entitled “Civil society space: engagement with international and regional organizations”, 47/3 of 26 July 2021, entitled “Civil society space: COVID-19 – the road to recovery and the essential role of civil society”, and 53/13 of 21 July 2023, entitled “civil society space”,

Recalling also all other Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions relevant to creating and maintaining civil society space, inter alia, those addressing freedom of opinion and expression; the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; protecting human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders; equal participation in political and public affairs; cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights; the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests; the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet; the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies; and the safety of journalists,

Reiterating that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and should be promoted and implemented in a fair and equitable manner, without prejudice to the implementation of each of those rights and freedoms,



Recognizing that States have the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights, including through the prevention and prompt, effective and impartial investigation of human rights violations and abuses and ensuring access to effective remedies, and welcoming the contribution of civil society in this regard,

Recognizing also the important role of civil society at the local, national, regional and international levels, that civil society facilitates the achievement of the purposes and principles of the Charter, the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and other relevant human rights instruments, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future, and that the undue restriction of civil society space therefore has a negative impact upon their achievement,

Underscoring that the legal framework within which civil society operates is that of national legislation consistent with the Charter and international human rights law,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996 and the need to take into account the full diversity of non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels while acknowledging their expertise and their capacity to support the work of the United Nations,

Welcoming the recognition, within the 2030 Agenda, of the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Welcoming also the commitment in the Pact for the Future to protect individuals and civil society institutions engaged in the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in accordance with national legislation consistent with the Charter and international human rights law, from any form of intimidation and reprisals, both online and offline,

Recognizing the contribution of and important and legitimate role played by civil society locally, nationally, regionally and internationally in the promotion and protection of human rights, the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, the promotion of accountability, the rule of law and good governance and the prevention of conflicts, including through monitoring and documenting, advocacy and awareness-raising, sharing expertise and knowledge and engaging in decision-making processes and conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes,

Recognizing also, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the importance of promoting a safe and enabling environment for women's, young women's, girls', grass-roots and community-based organizations, rural, Indigenous and feminist groups, women of African descent, women journalists and media professionals and trade unions, for the defence, protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that preventing discrimination, violations and abuses against these actors can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Mindful that domestic law and administrative provisions and their application should not hinder but enable the work of civil society, including by avoiding any criminalization, stigmatization, impediments, discrimination, obstructions or restrictions thereof contrary to the obligations and commitments of States under international law, including human rights law,

Deeply concerned about all attempts to silence or harass civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists and other media workers, including by the misuse of legislation, including overbroad or vague laws, to criminalize them or repress their activities, such as defamation and libel laws, laws on misinformation and disinformation, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism legislation, cybercrime legislation and foreign funding laws and measures to protect democratic institutions from covert political interference, when not in conformity with international human rights standards, as well as extraterritorial attempts to silence and intimidate civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists and other media workers, among other rights holders,

Expressing serious concern about the rise of strategic lawsuits against public participation, including those brought by business entities, to exercise pressure on, intimidate or exhaust the resources and morale of civil society, human rights defenders and journalists and other media workers, among other rights holders, and thereby impede them in the performance of their work, including on matters of public interest,

Underscoring the responsibility of all business enterprises, both transnational and others, as set out in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to comply with all applicable laws and respect all human rights, including the rights to life, liberty and security of person of civil society actors and their exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and participation in public affairs, which are essential for the promotion and protection of all human rights,

Expressing its grave concern about repressive activities conducted by States, or actors under their effective control, to harm, silence and intimidate civil society actors abroad through digital, physical and other means, including through the misuse of spyware and other intrusive surveillance software, and the targeting of their family members, representatives or associates,

Gravely concerned that, in many countries, including in situations of armed conflict and occupation, persons and organizations engaged in promoting and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms frequently face stigmatization and smear campaigns, threats, harassment, discrimination, attacks and unlawful or arbitrary surveillance, both online and offline, as well as gender-based violence, including gender-based violence that is facilitated or amplified by the use of digital technologies, and suffer insecurity as a result of those activities, including through restrictions on freedom of association or expression or the right to peaceful assembly, arbitrary arrests and detention, abuse of criminal or civil proceedings or deplorable acts of intimidation and reprisal intended to hinder and prevent their cooperation with the United Nations and other international and regional bodies in the field of human rights, and strongly condemning all such violations and abuses,

Stressing the importance of effective measures to create and protect, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society and access to information, for effective crisis response, for building trust and resilience and for promoting human rights, peace and security and sustainable development,

Reaffirming the importance of adopting and implementing non-discriminatory measures to assist in the strengthening of a diverse and pluralistic civil society, and stressing that civil society, including underrepresented and excluded groups, should be consulted to facilitate meaningful, safe, inclusive and diverse participation, including in decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels,

Recognizing that digital technologies have expanded the capacities of individuals and civil society groups to conduct their work, to advance human rights and to enable diverse and inclusive engagement, and recognizing also that violence that is facilitated or amplified by the use of digital technologies, the misuse of digital technologies to incite violence or hatred or spread disinformation, digital divides, digital surveillance and undue restrictions, such as Internet shutdowns and online censorship, are not conducive to a safe and enabling space for civil society,

Stressing that the ability to seek, secure and use resources, including resources from abroad, is essential to the existence and sustainable operation of a diverse, independent and pluralistic civil society, that undue restrictions on funding to civil society actors undermine a safe and enabling environment for civil society, the rights to freedom of association and the ability to participate effectively and meaningfully in national, regional and international organizations, that foreign funding laws and measures to protect democratic institutions from covert political interference should be proportionate and that such laws and measures must be assessed in the light of their purpose, legal safeguards and consistency with States' international human rights obligations and not result in organizations being labelled and stigmatized or have a negative effect on civil society,

Stressing also the importance of monitoring and meaningfully assessing trends related to civil society space and that information and data gathered in relation to civil society space

can serve as early warning signs of a deteriorating human rights situation or serious human rights challenges, and recognizing the vital contributions of those assessing civil society space on the ground,

1. *Reaffirms* that creating and maintaining a safe and enabling environment, both online and offline, in which civil society can operate free from hindrance and insecurity, assists States in fulfilling their existing international human rights obligations and commitments, without which equality, accountability and the rule of law are severely weakened, with implications at the national, regional and international levels;

2. *Commends* the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and protect civil society space, both online and offline, including its work on widening the democratic space and on the United Nations Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space, and invites it to continue its efforts in this regard;

3. *Recognizes* the valuable contribution of national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and bodies, including the universal periodic review, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies and national human rights institutions, to the promotion and protection of civil society space;

4. *Emphasizes* the essential contribution that civil society makes to regional and international organizations, including through advocacy and awareness-raising, participating in conferences, sharing expertise and knowledge and engaging in decision-making processes and implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes, once again unequivocally reaffirms the right of everyone, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with regional and international bodies and their representatives and mechanisms, and urges States to refrain from practices that prevent or hinder such access and communication;

5. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled “Civil society space”,¹ in which the High Commissioner identified challenges and best practices for regularly assessing civic space trends, and calls upon States to consider the recommendations therein;

6. *Urges* States to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment, online and offline, in which civil society can operate independently and free from hindrance, insecurity and reprisals, including by putting in place relevant legislation, policies and practices and ensuring that existing or proposed legislation, policies and practices do not undermine the capacity of civil society to operate independently and free from hindrance, and also urges States to ensure that such measures are gender-, disability- and age-responsive, address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and take into account the needs of different groups and the online dimension of threats and attacks;

7. *Also urges* States to recognize and promote the important role of a diverse and pluralistic civil society and to acknowledge the important contribution of civil society, including grass-roots organizations, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers and academia and academic institutions, to the promotion of human rights, including the principle of non-discrimination, and encourages States to take every opportunity to support diversity in civil society participation, with particular emphasis on underrepresented parts of civil society;

8. *Calls upon* States and encourages relevant international and regional organizations to review, and update as appropriate, their frameworks for engagement with civil society and ensure that those frameworks reflect and respond to the challenges faced, including by taking measures to tackle barriers to participation, including by underrepresented parts of civil society, and also calls upon States and encourages relevant international and regional organizations to enable and institutionalize meaningful online participation in hybrid meetings;

¹ A/HRC/57/31.

9. *Also calls upon* States to ensure that provisions on funding to civil society actors are in compliance with their international human rights obligations and commitments and are not misused to stigmatize or hinder the work or endanger the safety of civil society actors, and underlines the importance of the ability to solicit, receive and utilize resources for their work in a sustainable and predictable manner;

10. *Encourages* business enterprises, both transnational and others, including media and technology companies, in line with their responsibilities as set out in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to exercise human rights due diligence and to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse human rights impacts related to their business activities, such as those related to the spread of disinformation and hate speech targeting civil society and its work;

11. *Encourages* States and regional and international organizations to put in place transparent, fair and gender-responsive accreditation processes that deliver prompt decisions, respect human rights and safeguard the meaningful, safe, diverse and inclusive participation of civil society, including by establishing grievance mechanisms for redress, and to address any erroneous accreditation decisions;

12. *Calls upon* States to establish or enhance information-gathering and monitoring mechanisms, such as databases, including by benefiting from data collected by civil society and the media, to facilitate the collection, analysis and reporting of concrete quantitative and qualitative disaggregated data on threats, attacks or violence against civil society, including human rights defenders, journalists and media workers and academia and academic institutions, to consider methodologies to monitor online civil society space trends and online threats and attacks and to do their utmost to make data available to relevant entities, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner;

13. *Urges* States to ensure that the issue of the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society is addressed in the context of the universal periodic review, and encourages States in that regard to consult civil society in the preparation of their national reports, to consider including in their national reports information on relevant domestic provisions and steps, to consider making relevant recommendations to States under review and to assist States in the implementation of relevant recommendations through, inter alia, the sharing of experiences, good practices and expertise and offering technical assistance on the basis of requests and with the consent of the States concerned, and to conduct broad consultations with civil society in the follow-up to their review, in compliance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 of 18 June 2007 and 16/21 of 25 March 2011;

14. *Also urges* States to take all steps necessary to prevent killings, threats, attacks, discrimination, arbitrary arrests and detention or other forms of harassment, stigmatization and smear campaigns, reprisals and acts of intimidation against civil society actors, including human rights defenders, online and offline, including those carried out by States and actors under their effective control with impact abroad, to investigate any such alleged acts, to ensure access to justice and accountability and to end impunity where such violations and abuses have occurred;

15. *Requests* the High Commissioner to prepare a thematic report in follow-up to the report containing practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned,² submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-second session, to review progress against the recommendations contained therein, to identify new and emerging trends concerning civil society space, including through an analysis of the specific contribution and risks faced by underrepresented parts of civil society, and to provide an updated set of recommendations in the light of those trends, and also requests the High Commissioner, in the preparation of the report, to draw on the views of States, civil society, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and other relevant stakeholders, including

² A/HRC/32/20.

special procedure mandate holders, and to present the report to the Council at its sixty-third session;

16. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*31st meeting
7 July 2025*

[Adopted without a vote.]
