

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Equal rights - Equal responsibilities



ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

Droits égaux - Responsabilités égales

DECLARATION

Fighting inequalities, in particular gender inequalities by resisting the shrinking space of civil society.

In a growing number of countries people and their organizations face severe restrictions and are deprived of their rights to participate in shaping their societies not just in countries with repressive or autocratic governments but also in democracies.

Since March 2016, physical access to UN Headquarters by some women's NGO's has come under attack.

Shrinking civil society space at the UN is symptomatic of increasing threats to civic participation in democratic spaces across the world.

CSO's are key players for holding governments to account and to ensure their role as duty bearers for the fulfillment of human rights. At the same time, CSO's empower societies and people to claim their rights as rights holders.

The factors contributing to the shrinking space of civil society are: The post 9/11 era and the spill over effect of counter terrorism and a global society with highly-developed information and communication technologies.

Governments according to many research reports are seen to be the main offenders behind the suppression of civil society space followed by business actors and extremist groups.

Governments increasingly fear for their privileges and power since protests against arbitrary governance, corruption and oppression have increased over the last decades.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes strong commitments to the role of civil society in terms of implementation and partnership.

In identifying progress made so far on these commitments the 2018 SDG's progress report of the UN Secretary General paints alarming statistics.

The data we have indicate that the world is not on track to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Member states neglect to take concrete steps towards reducing inequalities by ending all forms of discrimination and ensuring access to services and opportunities.

The UN Women report "Turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" underlines that progress towards meeting the Sustainable goals for women and girls is unacceptably slow.

Unless progress on gender equality is significantly accelerated the global community will not be able to keep its promise.

There is lack of political will from the part of member countries to make the SDG's meaningful.

While it has been assumed that civil society was set to play an integral role in achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the extent to which this sector is under threat in a large number of countries suggests, that this is not the case nowadays.

Defamation laws, criminalization of previously permitted activities, bans on organizations funded by foreign sources, branding civil society organizations as foreign agents are among some of the legal measures that limit or in some cases entirely suppress civil society

IAW calls on its members to lobby governments:

To work against over regulation of civil society organizations putting in place restrictions in their funding, taxing, membership, registration and thus their functioning.

To strengthen and institutionalize channels of dialogue between state authorities and civil society (including Human Rights Defenders and women's groups) so as to ensure that the latter concerns are heard and addressed. Civil society should be involved in law and policy making on a regular basis acting as state's partner.

To respect international human rights law which places an obligation on states to promote rights and freedoms that are indispensable for civil society to develop and operate.

To work for the reform of the UN system so as to ensure that civil society can meaningfully engage with UN processes.

To work for the effective involvement of NGO's in the consultation process concerning new legislation that concerns them and other issues of particular importance to society such as the protection of human rights.

To ensure the adoption by them of specific measures and practices to create an environment conducive to the work of Human Rights Defenders including awarding HR prizes, implementing protection mechanisms and addressing of proper investigations into attacks on HRD's.

To work for the revision of the UN High Level Political Forum in sustainable development (HLPF) in particular its format in order to enable civil society's meaningful participation in it. The UN should provide a mechanism to involve civil society reports in the formal review process of HLPF.

To work for holding the private sector accountable for rising inequalities, environmental degradation and more instead of having the UN invite private sector organizations to present their achievements at the HLPF in New York with little or no scrutiny.

To ensure that they stop using symbolic policies and practices with limited impacts as a substitute for the real political and economic commitments that are needed to overcome the structural barriers

to women's and girl's realization of human rights, empowerment and gender equality.

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