**28TH meeting of Treaty Body Chairpersons**

**30 May - 3 June 2016, UN HQ**

**Civil society cooperation with UN Human Rights treaty bodies**

**2 June 2016**

Thank you,

As an international alliance dedicated to strengthening civil society and citizen participation across the world, CIVICUS greatly welcomes this important opportunity to address the chairs of the treaty bodies and lauds your stalwart commitment to direct consultation with civil society.

We would like to express our strong support for the joint written submission led by the Center for Civil and Political Rights, the International Service for Human Rights and Amnesty international, which CIVICUS also endorses. We fully comport with the positions presented by this coalition and would especially encourage the treaty bodies to take all effective measures to prevent and investigate cases of reprisals against individuals and members of civil society groups for engaging with treaty bodies.

We would also like to reiterate the recommendations put forward in Agenda Item 7: Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 68/268. Principally, we believe the treaties bodies, where appropriate, should consider adopting joint general comments on issues of cross cutting relevance.

Specifically, we encourage relevant treaty bodies to consider developing general comments on the rights to freedom of association and assembly. Both rights are either explicitly or implicitly referenced in nearly all core human rights treaties. Moreover, fulfillment of these rights is imperative to the realization of all human rights. As facilitating rights, limitations on association and assembly greatly impairs the ability of individuals, groups, states and other stakeholders to pursue and claim a wide range of other rights.

In light of the integrality of these rights and their cross cutting nature, we urge the treaty bodies to operationalize Agenda Item 7 through a joint general comment on rights to association and assembly. During a period of shrinking space for civil society across the globe, the treaties bodies’ commitment to developing and elucidating the parameters of these rights will endow human rights defenders and civil society with a potent tool to address unwarranted restrictions on the ground and support the implementation of all human rights treaties.

Thank you for your consideration.