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Submission by the NGO Liaison Unit at UNOG to OHCHR report on “Civil society space in multilateral institutions” pursuant to the Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/32/31:

CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA (UNOG)

The present input is submitted pursuant to the request from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which called for input from United Nations bodies, agencies, funds and programmes for OHCHR report in accordance with the Human Rights Council resolution 32/31.

The present input outlines the practices of UNOG’s engagement with civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

UNOG¹ serves as the representative office of the Secretary-General at Geneva. As the biggest duty stations outside United Nations headquarters in New York and the important operational hub of the international system, UNOG provides key infrastructure and support as well as representation and liaison functions to advance UN goals and objectives. UNOG fosters partnerships and cooperation among diverse actors, including with civil society and NGOs.

The Director-General of UNOG, Mr. Michael Møller, maintains close relations with civil society and NGOs, including:

- **Meeting twice a year with the broad Geneva NGO community** to engage in discussions on the UN’s agenda and priorities. In 2017, 300 NGO representatives took part in these dialogues, up from 75 in 2014; 168 in 2015; and 290 in 2016. The Director-General’s statements are published online. He also meets regularly NGO and civil society representatives bilaterally on various issues. The Director-General publicly expressed on various occasions his personal commitment to strengthen civil society space at the Palais des Nations.
- **Participating in events organized by NGOs and civil society actors in Geneva**, including at the Palais des Nations. For example, in 2017, the Director-General opened the 18th Edition of Geneva International Model United Nations Annual Conference organized by the Geneva International Model United Nations (GIMUN). His designated representative intervened in the discussion on ensuring women’s meaningful participation for peace and strengthening multilateralism, organized by Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The Director-General spoke at the “Pre-Human Rights Council Youth Forum: The Intergenerational Dialogue” organized by World Young Women’s Christian Association. He also participated in the launch of the World Vision International’s global campaign “It takes a world to end violence against children”. These are just a few examples of his speaking engagements in 2017. The Director-General’s statements made at these events are published online.

¹ www.unog.ch

- **Launching initiatives with active NGO engagement:**

1. The International Geneva Perception Change Project² was launched by the Director-General in early 2014. It aims at highlighting the impact of the work done by the UN and international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other institutions based in Geneva and beyond.
2. International Gender Champions³, launched in June 2015, is a network of senior leaders, including from the NGO community, working to advance gender equality in their institutions and their programmatic work through concrete and measurable commitments.
3. The SDG Lab⁴ is a multi-stakeholder initiative that contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by supporting Geneva-based actors in further leveraging expertise and knowledge into policy, practice and action. The SDG Lab comprises United Nations staff as well as representatives of Member States and civil society.

In addition, through the NGO Liaison Unit⁵ the Director-General maintains liaison with NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and facilitates their participation in United Nations activities in accordance with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1996/31 that sets out the arrangements for consultation with NGOs. The NGO Liaison Unit facilitates NGO participation in United Nations activities as follows:

- **Accreditation for NGO representatives** on annual and temporary basis for access to UNOG premises. With more NGOs receiving consultative status every year, the number of accredited NGOs at UNOG continues to grow: there was 9.5% increase from 2015 to 2016. In 2016, UNOG processed accreditations for 4,277 NGO representatives from 864 NGOs.
- **Outreach and information sharing.** In 2016, the Unit updated and enhanced its mailing list, which now consists of over 1500 NGO contacts. About 70 information messages were dispatched to NGOs in 2016 to inform them about events, resources or opportunities for engagement.
- **Briefing sessions for NGOs** on priority issues throughout the year. Selected examples include the briefing in April 2016 with the then Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, David Nabarro, or a briefing in September 2017 with Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, on the issue of intimidation and reprisals against those who engage with the UN system on human rights.
- **Facilitating NGO events** at the Palais des Nations. Some 70-80 conferences, panel discussions, seminars and workshops take place throughout the year, in addition to joint events organized by NGOs in partnership with UN Member States or UN system.
- **Providing space for NGOs to meet and work** at the NGO Resources Center, which comprises of a cyberspace (computers with Internet connection, Wi-Fi and printer), a reading area and a meeting area for small groups.

29 November 2017

² More information about the Perception Change Project is available at www.unog.ch/perception

³ More information about the International Gender Champions is available at www.genderchampions.com

⁴ More information about the SDGLab is available at www.sdglab.ch

⁵ More information about the NGO Liaison Unit is available at www.unog.ch/ngo