

As Civil Society Development Center (STGM), we would like to contribute to the agenda of the incoming Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, which will be held on 24 - 25 November 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland.

STGM has aspired to strengthen civil society, freedom of association, and civil society participation in decision-making processes in Turkey since 2004 (For more info: <https://www.stgm.org.tr/en/about-stgm>). We have been closely following up on the developments, especially the accelerated narrowing of civic spaces, in Turkey and Europe. The results of our monitoring activities confirm international reports.

Many international and regional mechanisms have adopted numerous documents reaffirming the role of civil society in protecting and promoting human rights, the rule of law, and democracy since the adoption of the United Nations Charter in 1945. These documents emphasise the responsibility of States to **promote, protect, respect and fulfil** human rights in relation to democracy and the rule of law.

Nevertheless, the recent reports of prominent international non-governmental organisations such as CIVICUS, HRW, and Amnesty International, indicate a downward trend. Even states that call themselves "democratic" have deprived citizens of their freedom. Many states have been restricting freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and civil society participation in decision-making processes. In more than half the world, civic spaces are highly restricted or closed. This situation is a major obstacle to protecting and developing human rights, the rule of law, and democracy.

Therefore, in our view, the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law should prioritise strengthening civil society and international cooperation between civil society actors in the post-pandemic world. The topics to be discussed in the forum should include:

- The role of civil society in countering post-truth.
- The role of civil society in empowering active citizenship for rebuilding democracy.
- The positive impacts of immigration on democracy around the world
- Innovative citizen participation models in the decision-making processes
- Strengthening international mechanisms to promote the right to participation
- Gender equality and the role of civil society.

We want to express that we will actively participate in the forum.

Kind regards,

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