

## Concept Note and agenda

### Global Dialogue: Strategies to Strengthen Civic Space and the Civil Society Engagement in the HIV Response

*Virtual Meeting 3 – 4 November 2021*

---

#### Overview

The United Nations [UN] Secretary General's *Call to Action for Human Rights* on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations and his subsequent report, *Our Common Agenda* both recognise the importance of public participation and civic space to the pursuit of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>1,2</sup> The Secretary-General commits to increase the UN's support to empowering civil society, protecting civic space, encouraging participation by all groups in the democratic processes, and promoting enabling laws and policies.<sup>3</sup>

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 recognises that partnership with civil society and other stakeholders is critical to achieving effectiveness and impact, and to realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Strategic Plan also reiterates UNDP's commitment to strengthen local governance systems through broader based engagement including with civil society.<sup>4</sup>

The success achieved so far in the HIV response is an unparalleled example of the leadership and engagement of civil society organisation including communities of people living with HIV, women and key populations, and the vital role that civil society has played as advocates, watchdogs and providers of services in the four decades of the global response.<sup>5</sup> The advocacy of civil society has influenced global governance including ultimately the United Nations General Assembly Political Declarations on ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The meaningful engagement and participation of civil society remain critical to the fight to end AIDS.

In the *2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030*,<sup>6</sup> UN Member States committed to creating and maintaining a safe, open and enabling environment in which civil society can fully contribute to the implementation of the Political Declaration and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's target of ending the epidemic of AIDS. The new *Global AIDS Strategy 2021 – 2026: End Inequalities, End AIDS*<sup>7</sup> acknowledges the central role of civil society and particularly community-led organisations to the achievement of the SDG target of ending AIDS by 2030. The Strategy sets ambitious targets for 2025 in this respect including - 30% of testing and treatment services to be delivered by community-led organisations; 80% of the delivery of HIV prevention

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Highest Aspiration A Call To Action For Human Right English.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda" \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda" \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 | United Nations Development Programme](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Activism and AIDS: protect civil society's space to end the epidemic - Frontline AIDS : Frontline AIDS](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS : Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030 : \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 — End Inequalities. End AIDS. | UNAIDS](#)

programmes for key populations and women to be delivered by community-, key population- and women-led organisations; 60% of the programmes that support the achievement of societal enablers to be delivered by community-led organisations.

However, despite these ambitious targets and bold commitments, civil society around the world continues to be the target of restrictive national laws, policies and measures which severely limit their ability to operate safely and effectively. In 2019 anti-NGO laws were being implemented or in the pipeline in 50 countries, and between 2018 and 2019, 40 pieces of legislations designed to hamper the work of civil society organisation have been put in place or are being enacted around the world.<sup>8</sup> According to the International Centre for Non-Profit Law between 2020 – 2021, 149 countries adopted measures that affected the right to freedom of assembly; 109 countries adopted emergency declarations; 60 countries adopted measures that affected the right to privacy; and 57 countries adopted measures that affected freedom of expression.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has also noted the risks and opportunities presented by digital technologies for advancing democracy and civic space.<sup>11</sup>

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law, noting that civil society has been at the heart of the HIV response, highlighted the impact of restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations on the HIV response. According to the Global Commission –

*Shrinking civic space not only cripples groups defending human rights and civil liberties... new burdens imposed on civil society sometimes threatens health and life as well. The negative consequences of such [restrictive] laws extend to the beneficiaries of civil society groups who can end up without access to essential health information and services.<sup>12</sup>*

For example, discriminatory and punitive laws targeting people living with HIV and key populations create a high-risk climate for organisations that provide services to key populations. Similarly, policies that restrict the legal registration and sources of funding undermine the stability that CSOs need to build their institutional capacity.

The Global Commission made several recommendations to governments including –

- a. Governments must stop the use of laws restricting the registration and operation of civil society organisations or their sources of funding to curtail their activities. Where such laws have been enacted, countries must repeal, or refrain from enforcing them.
- b. Governments must enact laws that provide an enabling environment for civil society organisation to operate, including those providing services to populations living with or affected by HIV, TB or viral hepatitis.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> [Laws designed to silence: The global crackdown on civil society organizations | Amnesty International](#)

<sup>9</sup> [COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker \(icnl.org\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Civic Space on a Downward Spiral - Civicus Monitor 2020](#)

<sup>11</sup> [A/HRC/41/41 - E - A/HRC/41/41 -Desktop \(undocs.org\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [2018 Supplement – Global Commission on HIV and the Law \(hivlawcommission.org\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [2018 Supplement – Global Commission on HIV and the Law \(hivlawcommission.org\)](#)

## Event

UNDP will convene a Global Dialogue on strategies to strengthen civic space and civil society engagement in the HIV response. The event builds on UNDP's work on democratic governance, rule of law and inclusive institutions and the organisation's commitment to strengthening civic engagement. The event also builds on the work of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS and its partnerships with civil society and communities of people living with and affected by HIV.

## Objectives

The overall objective of the Global Dialogue is to provide a forum for governments, civil society organisations, communities of PLHIV and key populations and other partners to engage in constructive dialogue on strategies to strengthen civic space and the meaningful participation and engagement of civil society in the HIV response, including to deliver on the ambition of the goals in the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026.

The specific objectives of the Global Dialogue are –

- a. To discuss the impact of shrinking civic space and particularly restrictive laws, policies and other measures against civil society on the implementation of the [2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS](#) and the new [Global AIDS Strategy 2021 - 2026](#).
- b. To draw and share lessons from successful legal, political and advocacy strategies to advance open civic space,
- c. To catalyse and build cross-sectoral alliances and action on protecting and promoting civic space in the HIV response.

## Approach

The Global Dialogue will take place virtually, over two days. It will consist of panel discussions, interventions by select participants, and interactive question-and-answer session with the audience. Participants will include representatives of PLHIV, key populations, delegation of UN Member States, government officials, multilateral organizations, civil society and academia.

## Logistics

- **Date/Time:** 3 - 4 November 2021, 8:00am – 10am EST / 2:00 – 4:00pm CET daily
- **Registration link:** <https://bit.ly/3yf62BP>
- **Meeting language and interpretation:** The meeting will be held in English with simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, French, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish
- **Facilitator and event contact person:** Kene Esom – [kenechukwu.esom@undp.org](mailto:kenechukwu.esom@undp.org)

## Agenda

DAY 1 – Wednesday, 3 November 2021		
Time	Activity	Speakers
08:00 – 08:05am	Moderator opening	<b>Ms. Femi Oke</b>
08:05 – 08:15am	Presentation of the background paper	<b>Kitty Grant</b>
08:15 – 08:50am	Panel One – Effective strategies for strengthening civic space and promoting civil society engagement	<b>Clement Voule</b> <i>UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Assembly and of Association</i>
		<b>Vivek Divan</b> <i>Coordinator</i> <i>Centre for Health Equity, Law and Policy</i>
		<b>Mary Ann Torres</b> <i>Executive Director</i> <i>ICASO</i>
		<b>Nicholas Miller</b> <i>Senior Legal Advisor</i> <i>International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law [ICNL]</i>
08:50 – 08:55 am	Poll	<i>Does your country have safe and open civic space?</i>
08:55 – 09:30am	Panel Two – ‘Safe, open and enabling environment’ for civil society in the context of HIV: what does/should this mean in practice?	<b>Jules Kim</b> <i>CEO</i> <i>Scarlet Alliance</i> <i>Australian Sex Workers Association</i>
		<b>Anatoli Leshanok</b> <i>Deputy Chair,</i> <i>Association People Plus, Belarus</i>
		<b>Cedric Nininahazwe</b> <i>Advocacy Manager</i> <i>Global Network of People Living with HIV [GNP+]</i>

		<b>Tatyana Sleiman</b> <i>Executive Director</i> <i>SKOUN Lebanon</i>
09:30 – 09:55am	Interventions by participants, questions and answer	<b>Dr. Aimé Mboyo</b> <i>Medical Director</i> <i>National AIDS Programme</i> <i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i>
		<b>Dr. Quaid Saeed</b> <i>Chief Executive Officer</i> <i>Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority</i> <i>Pakistan</i>
		<b>Judge Westmin James</b> <i>Judge</i> <i>Caribbean Community Administrative Tribunal</i>
		<b>Michael Liu</b> <i>Northeast Transgender Support Network, China</i>
		<b>Dr. Adrian Jjuuko</b> <i>Executive Director</i> <i>Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum,</i> <i>Uganda</i>
		<b>Irene Ogeta</b> <i>Associate Programme Officer: Young Women’s</i> <i>Advocacy</i> <i>ATHENA Network</i>
09:55 – 10:00am	End of Day 1	
<b>DAY 2 – Thursday, 4 November 2021</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
8:00 – 8:05am	Moderator opening	<b>Ms. Femi Oke</b>
8:05 – 8:45am	Panel Three – Protecting and promoting civic space: The role of the United Nations Member States, multilateral agencies,	<b>Juan Luis Bermúdez,</b> <i>Minister of Human Development and Social Inclusion</i> <i>Government of Costa Rica</i>

	private philanthropies, and other actors.	<p><b>Emily Christie</b> <i>Senior Advisor, Human Rights and Law UNAIDS</i></p> <p><b>Aljona Kurbatova</b> <i>Head of the Infectious Diseases and Drug Abuse Prevention Department, National Institute for Health Development, Estonia</i></p> <p><b>Erin Eckstein</b> <i>Director Key Populations, Human Rights and Community Engagement US Department of State</i></p> <p><b>Ruth Simister</b> <i>Senior Advisor: Programmes – Human Rights Response Frontline AIDS</i></p>
8:45-8:50am	Video intervention	<p><b>Video intervention:</b> <b>Dr. Maria Victoria Crespo</b> <i>Head of Department - Monitoring, Evaluation and Service Delivery, Ministry of Health, Panama</i></p>
8:50 - 9:40am	Interventions by participants, questions and answer	<p><b>Mandeep Tiwana</b> <i>Chief Programmes Officer/UN Advocacy Officer, CIVICUS</i></p> <p><b>Ed Ngoksin</b> <i>Technical Advisor, Key populations Global Fund</i></p> <p><b>Charles Chauvel</b> <i>Global Lead and Asia-Pacific Focal Point Inclusive Processes and Institutions, UNDP</i></p> <p><b>Paula Martins</b> <i>Human Rights Policy Advocacy Lead, Association for Progressive Communications [APC]</i></p>

		<p><b>Özgür Kahale</b>  <i>Pro bono Director, Europe</i>  <i>DLA Piper</i></p>
9:40–9:55 am	Closing remarks, reflections and next steps	<p><b>Ambassador Pascale Grotenhuis</b>  <i>Director, Social Development and Ambassador for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality</i>  <i>Government of the Netherlands.</i></p> <p><b>Mandeep Dhaliwal</b>  <i>Director</i>  <i>HIV, Health and Development Group,</i>  <i>UNDP</i></p>
9:55 – 10:00 am	Conclusion	<p><b>Ms. Femi Oke</b></p>