



## INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK 2016

### INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, global leaders agreed on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals and in December 2015 targets for climate change reduction were decided. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the Colombian Confederation of NGOs (CCONG) have partnered to convene civil society organisations, academia, governments, donors, and other stakeholders to discuss roles and responsibilities in their implementation and accountability mechanisms. Without the engagement of local citizenry and civil society, these new goals and targets will remain an empty promise. Under the banner of “*Active Citizens, Accountable Actions*”, CIVICUS and CCONG will co-organise the next International Civil Society Week from 25-28 April 2016 in Bogotá, Colombia.

International Civil Society Week (ICSW) 2016 will be a week-long series of events led and organised by partner organisations and will bring together concerned citizens from different sectors, thematic interests, regions and backgrounds. CIVICUS and CCONG are pleased to co-host ICSW 2016 in Bogotá and hence provide a space for dialogue to promote social, professional, and cultural exchanges, as well as to encourage and strengthen links between the international delegates and local civil society, in particular in relation to peace.

Despite limitations on fundamental freedoms such as rights of assembly, participation and expression, Colombia's vibrant civil society has played a vital role in strengthening democracy, encouraging peace, protecting human rights and fostering anti-corruption and innovative development initiatives. For example, since conversations between the national government and FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) started in 2013 to seek a solution to put an end to more than 50 years of armed conflict, local CSOs have supported a dialogued exit and have managed spaces for reflection and analysis to contribute to an agreement.

The Colombian Government, following recommendations made by civil society organisations, has also undertaken important work aimed at aligning the country's 2014-2018 development plan with the core elements of the recently launched Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, it established a high-level inter-institutional commission for the preparation and effective implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. This is expected to enhance dialogue between government, civil society and other stakeholders, in order to tackle the new development agenda challenges in a more participatory way.

### BACKGROUND

International Civil Society Week (ICSW) is a key global gathering for inspired thinkers, innovation leaders and influential organisations to engage constructively in finding common solutions to global challenges.



International Civil Society Week (<http://civicus.org/ICSW/>) follows a different approach to conferencing; it celebrates innovation and relies on multiple partnerships with local, international, and multi-sectoral organisations who pool their resources together to convene a diverse international group of leaders in civil society issues. ICSW seeks to promote collaboration and the cross-pollination of ideas between participants, leverage resources and enhance ecological and social sustainability, and bridge the gap between the conference rooms and local environment. This new partnership model was first tested in 2013 and successfully executed for [ICSW 2014](#), bringing together over 600 delegates in Johannesburg.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the International Civil Society Week 2016 are to:

- **Connect** the different sources and forces of citizen action, empowering civil society to be more robust and effective, ensuring diversity and multi-stakeholder engagement, and encouraging both formal and informal networking.
- **Share** tools and experiences for enhancing citizen action, facilitating capacity building trainings and activities, amplifying citizen voice through social media & technology, and building awareness of the importance of a vibrant civic space, with the special focus on how to enhance national and global monitoring and accountability.
- **Celebrate** the power of innovation to affect social change, enhancing citizen participation and promoting sustainability, highlighting innovative leaders and stories of change.

## PROGRAMME

International Civil Society Week 2016 will provide an open space for CIVICUS, CCONG and partner organisations to deliver a series of conferences, workshops, training sessions, volunteer initiatives and cultural experiences related to the overarching theme “Active Citizens, Accountable Actions”. CIVICUS and CCONG will use their national, regional and international outreach to bring a number of local and international partners together to co-convene a diversity of civil society actors from around the world.

The Week will commence with the opening ceremony, followed by a [3 day programme](#) of nearly 30 partner-led events. The Week will conclude with the CIVICUS World Assembly, a flagship event celebrating inspiring examples in citizen action from around the globe. Throughout the Week the Citizen’s Café will be open to all delegates and participants - a space for networking, exhibitions and information booths.

In addition to plenary sessions, workshops and meetings, innovative experiential activities will take place in the run-up and throughout the Week. These will include site visits to local projects, volunteer opportunities, documentary screenings, arts exhibitions and tours to places of historical significance. The experiential component of the programme will allow participants to reflect on Colombia’s past and present struggles and how these relate to their own struggles to realise greater social justice and more peaceful societies at home.

## Theme: Active Citizens, Accountable Actions

Civil society needs to demand its rights, and also exercise its responsibilities in promoting positive social change, while pushing other actors to do the same. ICSW 2016 partner-led events will fall under the following programme tracks which will seek to explore the different barriers and opportunities to achieving active citizens and accountable actions.

- **Peace:** creating positive pathways to affect durable and non-violent social change, and upholding universal human rights commitments;

This track will discuss strategies to:

- Explore the processes of building and maintaining sustainable peace developed at local, national and global levels.
- Create enabling environments for responsible social and political dialogue, overcome confrontation and build shared vision towards sustainable and lasting peace.
- Promote, support and advocate for conditions that enable sustainable peace, reconciliation, and participatory decision-making while strengthening democracy in post-conflict environments.

- **Enabling Environment:** protecting the right to come together, take action and speak out, while acknowledging our responsibilities and enhancing our effectiveness;

This track will discuss strategies to:

- Promote the role of civil society in development processes, recognizing its value and learning from successful tactics to make its voice and inputs heard.
- Collectively build enabling environments with legal, institutional and financial conditions that favor civil society's participation, sustainability and the durability of its actions.
- Promote scenarios of plural participation and respectful dialogue to enhance the legitimacy of civil society.

- **Inclusion:** Embracing multiple voices and exercising principled courage in addressing controversial issues for true representation and legitimate actions;

This track will discuss strategies to:

- Counter marginalisation, challenge exclusion and power dynamics, uphold human rights and freedoms.
- Promote instances, spaces and moments for dialogue based on respect and dignity.
- Reach out to others, actively promote acceptance and diversity, embrace differences within our organisations and partnerships.

- **Participation:** creating opportunities for meaningful civil society engagement in governance and decision-making processes, and holding power-bearers to account.

This track will discuss strategies to:

- Reflect, build and consolidate on processes for participation, engagement and ways of relating so as to guarantee rights and democracy.
- Promote and advocate for transparent and accountable practices and institutions allowing space for civil society and citizens' voices to be heard within governance processes.



## CIVICUS World Assembly

Since 1995, the CIVICUS World Assembly (<http://civicus.org/worldassembly/>) has been a key international gathering for civil society, governments, donors and other stakeholders to engage constructively in finding common solutions to global challenges. The new format and approach of International Civil Society Week is an exciting opportunity for CIVICUS to reflect, research and brainstorm with others on how to make the World Assembly more innovative and meaningful.

The CIVICUS World Assembly will take place on the final day of ICSW 2016 (28 April) and serve as the flagship event of the Week. The World Assembly will employ three event formats:

- **My Stories:** [CIVICUS Nelson Mandela – Graca Machel Innovation Awards winners](#) (video and Q&A session).
- **In Conversations:** Prominent figures engaging civil society (interviews and Q&A session).
- **Panels Discussions:** Topical dialogues with excellent moderators. Potential topics of discussion would address issues of *Inclusion*, *Civic Space*, *Peace* and *Global Governance* (subject to speaker confirmations).

## CIVICUS Youth Assembly

The CIVICUS Youth Assembly exists to promote, strengthen and advance youth civic engagement and youth civic space. CIVICUS Youth Assemblies have been held in 2008 (Glasgow), 2010, 2011, 2012 (Montreal), and 2014 (Johannesburg). The Youth Assembly is now an established and globally recognised space for strengthening youth participation in civil society discussions.

CIVICUS Youth Assembly 2016 will take place on the 24<sup>th</sup> April. The Youth Assembly will provide youth and youth organisations with an opportunity to exchange best practices for high-impact civic engagement, fortify collaboration, forge new partnerships, and build strategic and technical capacity.

## ICSWlocal

ICSW 2016 will feature a new and exciting initiative seeking to broaden the Week's reach and constructively engage and partner with CSOs in under-represented regions, which due to financial and other constraints would not be in a position to come to Bogota otherwise.

Through ICSWlocal CIVICUS and CCONG will support partners to hold national and/or sub-national events in their own countries as part of ICSW 2016 programme and under its theme, and send some representatives to attend ICSW 2016. This initiative would further the objectives of ICSW by making it more global, diverse and sustainable.

## CO-HOSTS



### **CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation**

CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, we proudly promote marginalised voices, especially from the Global South, and have members in more than 160 countries throughout the world.

[www.civicus.org](http://www.civicus.org)



### **CCONG - Confederación Colombiana de ONGs**

CCONG is the national platform of NGOs in Colombia. Created in 1989, it brings together regional and departmental federations, associations, corporations and national foundations that are working for the common good. CCONG was created to link and strengthen non-profit organisations to play an active role in the development of Colombia, as well as to promote self-regulation in the sector and provide a collective voice on common issues that contribute to the visibility and the consolidation of the sector in the country. [www.ccong.org.co](http://www.ccong.org.co)