



**25th session of the
Human Rights Council**

Item 2

Annual Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

ID 6 March 2014

Delivered by Renate Bloem

Thank you Mr. President,
Madame High Commissioner,

CIVICUS welcomes your last annual report and wishes to pay tribute to your tenure, to your and your Office' overall success and leadership in mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN system and beyond, so exemplarily underscored by the SG's most recent initiative and plan of action "Rights Up Front". You combated courageously human rights violations wherever they occurred, becoming the voice of victims and a beam of hope. We laud your smiling diplomacy which so effectively withstood every attempt to undermine or control your independence. CIVICUS shares your outspoken concerns about Sri Lanka's ongoing harassment and intimidation targeting human rights defenders, activists, lawyers and journalists, and we just signed a call from Desmond Tutu for an international investigation. We are equally appalled by DPRK's human rights violations "without any parallel in the contemporary world".

CIVICUS also sees your and your Office involvement in the Post -2015 framework as a guaranty to bring the universality of human rights into a people centered development agenda, which links development and the enjoyment of all human rights. CIVICUS sees the **Freedom from Fear and Want**, the legacy of the Vienna Declaration on which you have built the 20th anniversary of your Office, as a basis of a social contract between Governments and Citizens.

Madame High Commissioner,

In your first intervention in 2009 you alerted the Council on shrinking space of and discriminatory and restrictive laws against civil society. Since then you have not stopped to claim and underscore that **Civil Society is crucial to the framework of human rights and vital to the healthy functioning of democracy**, and you have warned governments of real setbacks to human rights protection when civil society is threatened. And while we see with great concern attacks, reprisals, imprisonment on and of activists, regressive laws and funding cuts to civil society still ongoing, we look forward during this Council session to the first high-level Panel on Civil Society Space. We hope it will bring forward – also in this Council – the necessary recognition of civil society as an indispensable partner in the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening of democracy. Thank you Mr. President