



**27<sup>th</sup> session of the  
Human Rights Council**

**Item 2/3**

**General debate  
OHCHR summary report of the panel discussion on civil society space  
15 September 2014**

Joint Statement, delivered by Renate Bloem

Thank you Mr. President,

CIVICUS on behalf of the Civic Space Initiative welcomes OHCHR's Summary Report on the Civil Society Space Panel and we once again express our sincere thanks to the Panel's organizers.

We wish to reiterate the Report's clear message that civil society is an essential pillar of any democratic society and an indispensable partner of the Human Rights Council whose space needs to be both promoted and protected in accordance with international human rights law.

Yet as we speak today, this same space is being eroded and threatened. Despite firm protections at the national and international level, core civil society freedoms of expression, assembly and association are being chipped away across the globe. Even at the Council we continue to witness how human rights defenders are subject to reprisals for doing their legitimate work with UN mechanisms.

The Council must address the gap between international law and national implementation and ensure that civil society is provided a safe and enabling operating environment free from unwarranted restrictions. Many good practices and proposals have been put forward in the Report and we support a number of the measures recommended to States to protect civil society space. Principally, we believe that the time has come to clearly define some of the fundamental rights safeguarding this space. We therefore reiterate the recommendations set forth in the report and urge the Council to:

- Request the High Commissioner to prepare and submit in consultation with special procedures and the treaty bodies a compilation of practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society based on good practises and lessons learned and in this regard, to continue to engage with and seek the views of civil society and other stakeholders and to submit the compilation to the Human Rights Council at its 30<sup>th</sup> session

We also strongly urge all members of the Council to support the follow-up resolution on Civil Society Space.



Thank you, Mr. President

\* A group of civil society organisations forming the Civic Space Initiative consortium:

ARTICLE 19

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

World Movement for Democracy

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)