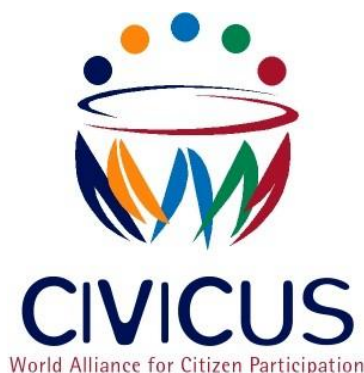




UN Human Rights Council
21st session
Item 6

Panel on Nelson Mandela Day
Statement delivered by Kevashinee Pillay, Intern at CIVICUS Geneva Office

Mr President, distinguished delegates, I thank you.

CIVICUS has been inspired by Nelson Mandela's vision of the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. CIVICUS has for a number of years offered a Nelson Mandela/Graca Machel award innovation in civil society.

Nelson Mandela's work towards reconciliation at the aftermath of the apartheid regime, serves as a positive example for many societies seeking to heal past injustices. He fought against the draconian system of apartheid based on segregation, discrimination and unequal treatment. As we have heard over the last few days, with reports of gross human rights violations presented to this Council, it is necessary and timely to reflect on this iconic figure's struggle for those fundamental rights and freedoms of equality and human dignity.

Discriminatory laws, the suppression of human rights defenders and the gross violations inflicted on women and children in armed conflict continue to scourge many societies.

We are here at the 21st session of the United Nations Human rights Council. Emphasis is placed on the words united and human rights. So let us stand united and affirm our commitment to the protection of human rights. Let us follow in the footsteps of this great man, whom after being released from prison after 27 years chose to forgive his perpetrators and engage in meaningful dialogue to create a new democratic order.

I conclude with a quote from Madiba himself:

"...As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself... Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty and humility...."

I thank you.