

October 19, 2010

The Honorable Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

and

The Honorable Mr. Joseph Deiss  
President  
65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

Cc:

Ms. Elisa Peter  
Officer-in-Charge and Chief of the New York Office  
UN-NGLS  
DC1-1106, United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

and

Mr. Andrei Abramov  
Chief  
NGO Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
DC1-1480, United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

We, the undersigned representatives of nongovernmental organisations, respectfully register our concern over the constricted space for civil society participation at the 2010 Summit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Civil society, through contributing human and technical expertise, delivering innovative development programmes, reaching hard-to-reach groups, and holding governments accountable to their commitments, plays a critical role in the achievement of the MDGs and development more broadly.

We acknowledge the efforts of some UN agencies, including UNDESA and UN NGLS to facilitate civil society participation in the 2010 MDG Summit, including through the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector in June and the allotment of four seats for civil society in each of the Summit Roundtables. We also note with appreciation the openness to civil society input of the honorable Summit co-facilitators (Denmark and Senegal) and hope that facilitators of future UN GA processes will take a similar approach.

These above opportunities for civil society participation in the MDG Review process, however, have proven very limited.

In principle, the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector were a good initiative. However, we note with disappointment the very poor turnout and participation in the hearings of Member States. Hearings can only be successful if an active audience of decision-makers is present.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of people who attended the Hearings were representatives from civil society and NGOs.

While we appreciate the opportunity for NGOs to contribute to the planning of the Hearings through the Task Force established by the President of the General Assembly, we are disappointed by the limited scope of the Task Force's role and the lack of influence they had over decisions regarding the Hearings.

During the Summit of 20 – 22 Sept, we were very disheartened by the lack of opportunity for meaningful civil society participation. Several civil society participants at the thematic roundtables were not given the opportunity to speak, while others were asked to confine their interventions to only 1 minute. In addition, the 25 observer passes for civil society did not do justice to the diverse and critical roles of civil society organisations in the global partnership for development.

We therefore urge for changes in UN meeting modalities to allow for more democratic spaces for civil society engagement, in particular, for the 2011 UNGASS on HIV/AIDS. We call for the following:

1. Increased participation of NGOs in UN processes, even those not holding ECOSOC consultative status, including by instituting mechanisms in which:
  - a. Member States are encouraged to include members of civil society on country delegations.
  - b. A more democratic, inclusive and transparent process of selecting civil society and government members of country delegations is enabled.
  - c. A much greater number of civil society seats at roundtables and high level discussions are guaranteed, especially for representatives from the South. The exact number should be agreed in collaboration with civil society organizations.
  - d. Civil society organisations and Member States co-host side events with civil society.
  - e. Improving access of civil society to official side events.
2. Civil Society taskforces should be established for all UN Commission and GA meetings. For such taskforces and for Civil Society Hearings, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure:
  - a. a good turnout and active participation of Member States in the civil society hearings.
  - b. that the outcomes of any civil society hearings have an influence on the proceedings, negotiations and outcomes of high level meetings.
  - c. an expanded role of civil society task forces to effectively influence the plans for the civil society hearings as well as civil society participation in actual high-level meetings.
3. Strengthened channels of communication between the UN GA and NGOs, by, among others:
  - a. Re-instating an NGO liaison officer to coordinate NGO participation and consultation with the UN GA.
  - b. Reinforcing the mandate of UN-NGLS.

We appreciate your commitment to government-civil society partnerships. Many thanks in advance for hearing our concerns and considering our recommendations. We look forward to your response, which can be sent to Mirellise Vazquez at [mvazquez@ippfwhr.org](mailto:mvazquez@ippfwhr.org) on behalf of the undersigned organisations.

Sincerely,

Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)  
Americans for UNFPA  
Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO)  
Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)  
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)  
Centre for Health Policy and Innovation  
CHETNA  
CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality  
Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat)  
Family Care International (FCI)  
Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)  
Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work, and Family, Mexico  
German Foundation for World Population (DSW)  
Gestos  
Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)  
Imphilo Isachubeka Shiselweni Organization (IISO)  
International AIDS Women's Caucus (IAWC)  
International Network of Women Who Use Drugs (INWUD)  
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)  
International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)  
Ipas  
Management Sciences for Health  
Mosaic Training, Service and Healing for Women  
National Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (NACWOLA), Uganda  
National Forum for Women and Population Policy, Mexico  
Networking HIV/AIDS Community of South Africa (NACOSA)  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)  
Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, Pakistan  
Spanish Federation of Family Planning (FPFE)  
The Danish Family Planning Association  
The Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago  
The International Community of Women Living with HIV  
The Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS)  
The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)  
The Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights  
Women and Children of Hope Nigeria  
Women Deliver  
World AIDS Campaign  
World Population Foundation, Pakistan  
World Population Foundation, the Netherlands  
World YWCA  
YouAct  
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YC)