



#UNmute: Ensure Meaningful Civil Society Participation in the 2020 Virtual HLPF

- Due to COVID-19, most of the participation at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be virtual this year and the risk of civil society being "muted" is high, despite being a key partner in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Launch of the #UNmute campaign on social media
- In a joint letter Forus & other international CSOs urge the UN and its Member States to take measures to ensure inclusive modalities to facilitate the extensive virtual participation of Civil Society.
- Launch of 2 new reports on Civil Society and its role in the effective implementation of the SDGs.

Paris – July 06, 2020 - The COVID-19 pandemic has had immense consequences for societies across the world. Currently, there is a danger that the pandemic might result in the “muting” of civil society actors at this year’s virtual UN HLPF meeting. The active participation of civil society in UN forums is crucial. Thus, **460 civil society organisations from 115 countries** have signed [a joint letter](#), launched by Globalt Fokus & FINGO (Danish & Swedish members of the global Forus network), calling on UN Member States to ensure meaningful participation of civil society at the UN.

“It is of vital importance that the diverse voices of civil society are represented in the virtual spaces that have been created in response to the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Digital spaces present similar challenges and opportunities to civil society as the ‘analog’ world, let’s continue to adapt to this new environment and seize the opportunity for expanded engagement,” says Forus’ Director Sarah Strack. “We will remain vigilant to ensure that the space for expression of our voices will not be curtailed. Together, civil society will work to expand this space and ensure that demands are heard and acted upon.”

The threat of civil society being muted due to the COVID-19 pandemic

For this year’s virtual HLPF, civil society has proposed mitigating against any potential “muting” of its voice through the introduction of key measures such as **adequate representation of national, regional and international civil society organisations in the virtual HLPF**, the official publication of all civil society shadow reports on the UN’s official HLPF website and ensuring that side events are inclusive of diverse stakeholder participation (cf. joint letter).

“We are very excited that 460 civil society organisations from all around the world and 50 governments are committed to ensuring civil society participation at this year’s HLPF. This is

an important milestone and learning experience for how civil society will not be muted during the virtual UN meetings. Their voices are more important than ever," says Sara Brandt, Political Advisor, Globalt Fokus.

Forus and its members have launched their [#UNmute campaign](#) on social media, calling for a robust virtual civil society participation, during and after the main HLPF sessions.

Launch of two new reports on Civil Society and its role in the effective implementation of the SDGs

During the HLPF, Forus and its partners [will launch two new reports](#), analysing the challenges and opportunities for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the effective implementation of the SDGs.

The first report, based on the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted by Member States to the UN, highlights the inaction of many governments in capacity development. It calls for greater political attention to be paid to strengthening and properly resourcing civil society organisations so that they can work for sustainable development.

The report titled *“Are governments delivering on the capacity development of civil society to ensure a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda”* will be launched at a UN HLPF side event on July 14.

The second report, prepared in collaboration with the Asia Development Alliance (ADA), looks at the growing international trend of shrinking civic space, and the many restrictions faced by civil society organisations in terms of their participation in civic life.

“In today’s context, we need to address threats to the operating environments of civil society around the world by encouraging joint capacity development and the creation of official regional and international forums for innovative peer exchange and learning between CSOs,” says Iara Pietricovsky, Forus’ Chair.

The report *“Realising the promise of Goal 16 of the SDGs to protect and promote civic space globally”* will be launched at a virtual side event on July 15.

The aim of the virtual HLPF 2020 side events being organised by Forus and its members is to shed light on important issues relating to civil society and its role in SDGs implementation. For a list of Forus HLPF side events please keep an eye on our [website](#) and our social media pages.

For interview requests or additional info, please contact:

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About Forus

Forus, previously known as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP/FIP), is a member-led network of 69 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from all continents representing over 22,000 NGOs active locally and internationally on development, human rights and environmental issues.

<http://forus-international.org>

About the HLPF

The 2020 **High Level Political Forum (HLPF)** will be held virtually from Tuesday, 7 July, to Thursday, 16 July 2020, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. This virtual edition is a first since its creation, due to exceptional circumstances linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The HLPF has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs at the global level. The Forum facilitates the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up. It promotes system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

For Forus' advocacy activities, the HLPF represents an opportunity to advocate for CSOs and CSO platforms and to highlight their participation in decision-making, policy coherence and the development of strategies for sustainability.

About the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

The HLPF involves the presentation of the **Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)** that have been submitted by Member States to the UN on their progress to date in implementing the 2030 Agenda at national level. In 2020 26 countries will be presenting their VNRs for the first time and 23 countries which are presenting VRNs for the second time.

Below the list of Forus members based on countries presenting VNRs for the first time:

Bolivia: **Unitas La Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social**

Burundi: **ADIR - Action Développement et Intégration Régionale**

Democratic Republic of the Congo: **CCOD - Conseil de Concertation des ONG de développement**

Gambia: **Tango The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations**

Mozambique: **Joint - League For NGOs in Mozambique**

Seychelles: **CEPS: Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles**

Zambia: **ZCSD: Zambia Council for Social Development**

List of Forus members based on countries presenting VNRs for the second time:

Argentina: **EENGD - Red Encuentro**

Finland: **FINGO - Finnish NGO Platform**

Honduras: **ASONOG - Asociacion De Organismos No Gubernamentales**

India: **VANI - Voluntary Action Network India**

Morocco: **Espace Associatif**

Nepal : **NFN - NGO Federation of Nepal**

Nigeria: **NNNGO - Nigeria Network of NGOs**

Peru: **ANC - Asociación Nacional de Centros**

Slovenia: **SLOGA - Slovenian Global Action**

Uganda : **UNNGOF - Uganda National NGO Forum**