



Statement during the Session of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization

Working Group on Ways and Means of Improving Methods of Work

February 23rd, 2024

(check against delivery)

- I thank the proponents for the working paper, which brings some accurate diagnoses on the current shortcomings in the engagement of civil society with the UN.
- It rightly points out the imbalance in the ability of civil society organizations from the developing world to participate in the activities of the UN on an equal footing with those of developed countries. We also agree that the insufficient diversity of geographical representation prevents the UN from unlocking the full potential of civil society participation.
- This is not only because the civil society organizations from the developing world lack the resources at the disposal of their counterparts in richer countries.
- Other factors play a role in this asymmetry. For example, language barriers. Not to mention the considerable difficulties faced by organizations from countries whose

languages are not among the official ones of the United Nations, even members of organizations with a command of Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish languages may be affected. It is common for meetings at the UN which allow civil society participation to be English-only, without translation services.

- It is also true that donors of civil society organizations, especially powerful ones, may exert an influence on the choice of interests and causes these organizations will promote.
- At the same time, it may be unfair to dismiss a priori the validity and legitimacy of causes promoted by those organizations, solely on the basis of their country of origin and its sources of financing, without a proper analysis of their possible merits.
- Although we agree with some of the facts referred to in the proposal, we have a different view on how to approach these challenges. The solution is not to discourage increased participation of CSOs in UN discussions. On the contrary, we should incentivize it, by enabling the engagement of a wider array of CSOs, by devising solutions for removing the obstacles to a better representation by organizations from the developing world.
- The UN is and must remain an intergovernmental organization. States are more representative of their peoples in their entirety. Civil society organizations are not meant to replace them. However, sometimes governments may be far from their constituencies, or citizens may face hurdles in having their voices heard. CSOs may be a useful instrument of dialogue between governments and their citizens. They

may also help bring important matters to the attention of governments, which, with their limited resources, may be busy with other pressing topics.

- Thank you.