

April 17, 2020

To the President of the Security Council
For the month of April 2020
H.E. Mr. José Singer Weisinger
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations
144 East 44th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Excellency,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, write to you as human rights, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations that actively and regularly contribute to the work of the UN Security Council. We write to you at this time to raise concerns around the transparency of the work of the Security Council and obstacles to the effective participation of civil society in its work due to recent changes to the working methods of the Council in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agreement by Council members on procedures for its meetings and adoptions during China's presidency in March was a vital step forward to ensure the work of the Security Council continued in an unprecedented and challenging time. We welcome further efforts by the Dominican Republic, as President of the Council in April, to increase transparency including through the practice of publishing the Informal Plan of VTC of the Security Council, allowing a live webcast of the relevant briefers moderated by the President of the Council during "Open VTCs", and of striving to publish press elements following Council sessions.

However, there continue to be significant challenges to ensuring transparency and meaningful participation of civil society in the Council's work. We were disappointed, for example, that it took nearly a month following the WHO's declaration of a pandemic for the Security Council to invite the Secretary General to brief and that it was decided that the briefing would be held behind closed doors, despite requests from other Member States to keep it open. Civil society access to the Council has also considerably shrunk as a result of the new working methods.

As civil society organisations working on every area on the Security Council's agenda, we bring dedicated expertise and experience that we believe is vital to complement the work of States and UN agencies, and critical to ensuring a more effective and accountable Security Council. This is particularly crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic affects every person in the world in distinct ways.

As organisations working at global, national and local levels often in partnership with grassroots organisations and with communities affected by many of the situations and issues on the Council's agenda, it is critical that the voices of those we serve and whose rights we fight for, including women, girls and boys, persons with disabilities, the displaced, and those most marginalised, are elevated and heard at the global level, particularly during these trying times.

We thus urge the Council to implement, urgently and as a minimum standard, the following steps:

- Find a solution to broadcast Open VTCs live as a matter of urgency.
- As an interim measure, while a live broadcast is not possible for technical reasons, effectively publish online the statements of all Council members and briefers for all open meetings.

- Ensure closed meetings are reserved for closed consultations or meetings that would have otherwise been held in private and not used arbitrarily to reduce the transparency or visibility of the Council's work.
- Actively invite civil society organisations to brief during Open VTCs, fulfilling the Council's expressed commitment in line with numerous Resolutions like UNSCR 2242 (2015), and take all necessary steps to enable their safe and meaningful participation while temporary working methods are in place.
- Actively and meaningfully consult with civil society on any further decisions regarding working methods of the Security Council.

We offer you our full support and cooperation in seeking to address these issues and efforts to increase transparency during your Presidency in the month of April.

Sincerely,

ACT Alliance
 Action Against Hunger (ACF)
 Amnesty International
 CARE International
 Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
 ChildFund
 Concern Worldwide US
 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)
 Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
 Human Rights Watch (HRW)
 Humanity & Inclusion (HI)
 International Rescue Committee (IRC)
 International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
 Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
 Lutheran World Federation
 Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
 NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
 Oxfam
 PAX
 Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 Save the Children
 The Global Justice Center (GJC)
 Unitarian Universalist Association
 United Methodist Women
 War Child
 Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
 Women's Refugee Commission
 World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)
 World Vision