

QUESTIONNAIRE

ON

ISSUE OF PARTICIPATION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SPACES

This email and its questionnaire are sent on behalf of the office of Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order. Deadline of 23 May 2019.

For the purpose of developing my 2019 reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, I will be examining the **issue of participation and decision-making in global governance spaces**, which have increasingly emerged as forums for international debate and where international priorities are set. These intergovernmental, multisectoral and private groupings, such as the Group of Seven (G7), the Group of 20 (G20), the group of Brazil, Russian Federation, India, People's Republic of China and South Africa (BRICS), the Group of 77 (G77, including the Group of 24 on International Monetary Affairs and Development), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the World Economic Forum (WEF), and the Bilderberg Meeting (BM), play a role in developing the framework and function of the international order. Moreover, these groupings will have added importance in the coming years given the increasingly cross-border nature of the world's political and economic challenges.

Given this background, I intend to **look at the extent to which such international groupings and spaces are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the voices of people and groups previously excluded from international decision-making bodies, but whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by the decisions taken**. In his assessment, he will be guided, inter alia, by the [guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs](#) presented by the Human Rights Council to Member States in September 2018 (see Council resolution [39/11](#)).

I will pay particular attention to those belonging to underrepresented parts of society, including women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to ethnic, religious, national, linguistic and racial minorities, migrants, refugees, and others, and also including indigenous peoples and others not associated with or organized in non-governmental organizations (as listed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 38/12 on civic society space: engagement with international and regional organizations). I deem important to add to the list victims of discrimination and

marginalization because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as social movements.

To inform his reporting on this issue, I welcome contributions to the below questionnaire in English, French or Spanish by **23 May 2019**, at the following email address: ie-internationalorder@ohchr.org.

Unless otherwise requested, all contributions received will be uploaded on my website:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/IEInternationalorderIndex.aspx>.

Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana

Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Please share your experience in exercising, or seeking to exercise, your right to participate in public affairs in one or several of the following global governance groupings/spaces: G7, G20, G77/G24, NAM, BRICS, WEF and BM in terms of:***

We are completing this questionnaire on behalf of persons with disabilities. These forums are meant only for top level bureaucrats, senior ministers or concerned ministers such as finance minister or permanent mission of India to UN in New York or Prime Minister Him/Herself. There is no invitation or opportunity for civil society agencies or individuals including persons with disabilities to participate in these forums and voice their concerns or issues.

a. Access;

There may be physical access since this kind of meetings are organised in accessible infrastructure with universal design features but there is no access to participation in the forum or meetings makes the physical access pointless or useless.

b. Inclusivity; and

There is no question of inclusivity since the meetings are conducted or forums are attended by bureaucrats, senior ministers, concerned ministers, prime minister, finance minister or the UN permanent mission of India in New York and there is no space for civil society to participate and raise their voice and concerns about growing problems and issues of huge displacement, loss of livelihoods, climate change and its impact on deprived sections of the society and quality of nutrition due to aggressive use of chemicals in agriculture.

c. Influencing the decision-making process.

There are attempts where civil society agencies, confederations and networks hold side line events to influence the decision makers of the above stated group of countries. The side-line influencing by the civil society agencies will not have greater impact on the decision making process. They may consider or not consider the suggestions and advice given by the civil society agencies or organisations.

2. What were the main structural and/or practical obstacles you or your colleagues encountered when participating, or seeking to participate, prior to, during and after decision-making (for instance in terms of shaping the agenda of decision-making processes, participation at an early stage when all options are still open, accreditation, physical and/or online access to forums, issuance of visas, availability of funds, access to information relevant to decision-making processes, etc..)?

The key problems faced by our colleagues to participate in these forums are summarised below:

- A. Access to information about the event;
- B. There is no formal invitation for the civil society representatives by the main organisers of G-Economic groups and countries;
- C. There is no access to discussion hall and meetings;
- D. Financial constraint since no agency would like sponsor this kind of activities;
- E. Even though there is opportunity to participate in the side-line event only finger counting delegates delegates are interested who participate;
- F. There is no assurance that the suggestions and advice is taken on board in their main agenda;
- G. Short notice due to delayed access to information creates problems for accessing Visa;

3. Which improvements do you see as key to secure genuine and meaningful participation in decision-making processes of the aforementioned groupings/spaces, including by the underrepresented parts of society as mentioned above, victims of discrimination and marginalization because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as social movements?

The groups and forums shall undertake following measures to ensure effective and meaningful participation and involvement of underrepresented sections of the society in the process. In the first place the group has not even involved the larger civil society representatives. UN human rights council shall undertake systematic and conscious attempts to ensure:

- A. Participation of civil society representatives in the discussions and decision making processes which affect their lives;
- B. Create adequate space to voice their concerns and issues about the current issues;
- C. To create democratic space in order to express their views freely without favour or fear;
- D. Support to attend meetings;
- E. Specific strategies and encouragement for the promotion of most deprived and underrepresented sections of the society such as persons with disabilities, trans gender, gender, ethnic groups most excluded and poorest of the poor sections of the society;
- F. The side-line event shall be given importance by ensuring the participation of more and more delegates;
- G. Assurance to include the suggestions and advice in the larger agenda of the group;

4. What has been your experience exercising, or seeking to exercise, your rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in the holding of meetings of one or several of the aforementioned groupings/spaces and in the margins thereof?

The overall feeling is that the larger civil society has been side-lined. There is no effective participation or exercise of rights enshrined by UN instruments.

5. Have you or your colleagues been the subject of reprisal because of your participation, or attempt to participate, in a meeting or activity of one or several of the aforementioned groupings/spaces? If so, please provide information on the type of reprisal, the perpetrator(s), whether you reported the case to the organizers and the relevant authorities, and which action they took to address the situation and prevent reoccurrences (if any).

No, not applicable.

6. In your view, what is the overall impact of the economic and financial policies of the aforementioned groupings/spaces on a democratic and equitable international order?

The economic policies are framed and dominated by these groups according to their convenience without considering the issues of backward or least develop countries. Since these groups do not operate on the basis of democratic voting process, the decision is based on the proportion of shares of each country has. This is a dangerous development since the gap between rich and poor countries and also individuals has been widening day by day. If this trend continues equality and equity become a myth in the human society. The groups shall make systematic, serious, sincere, conscious and additional attempt to equitable distribution of productive wealth among all countries or at least enable least developed countries or most backward countries to have adequate resources to satisfy their citizens.

7. More broadly, in what way(s) do you see a lack of genuine and meaningful participation and lack of influencing of decision-making process by the public in

global governance grouping/spaces in general hampering the realization of a democratic and equitable international order?

The civil society movement to influence the economic policies should begin at the national government level. There is a great need to build a strong civil society movement in order to intensify civic engagement with the government to improve governance and enable civil society participation in the economic matters which affect their lives. This national movement should emerge at the global according to the group economic countries in order to influence their economic policy decisions which affect the lives of civil society particularly those who are deprived sections of the society and underrepresented. Civil society movement has to be more active and critically engage the appropriate influencing agency so that decisions are made at least in favour of civil society at large.

For more details contact:

Mr. Mahantesh G.K.

Chair-Founder Trustee, Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled,

#39, 15th Cross, 16 Main, Sector-4 HSR Layout, Bengaluru-560102, Karnataka, India.

Mobile: +919480809595

Email: mgk@samarthanam.org