



Programme

Civil Society/Human Rights Defender space in the Commonwealth: A dialogue to share lessons learnt and good practice

3 – 4 June 2019

Conference Hall, 2nd Floor, Commonwealth Small States Office, Rue du Pré-de-la-Bichette 1, Geneva 1202

Day 1: 3 June 2019

| Time and Session | Facilitator | Overview | Expected outcomes |
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| Session 1: Opening segment 10:00 - 10:30 | <p>Ms. Gayethri Pillay, Counsellor/Charge d’Affaires, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Seychelles</p> <p>H.E. Ambassador Sumbue Antas, Permanent Representative, Republic of Vanuatu</p> <p>Mr. Charles Kent, Human Rights Officer, Permanent Mission of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</p> <p>Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika, International Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)</p> <p>Mr. Tony Sisule, Human Rights Adviser, Commonwealth Secretariat</p> | Welcome and opening remarks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the scene for seminar |
| Session 2: Introduction, objectives and expectations 10:30 - 10:45 | Mr. Yashasvi Nain, Human Rights Officer, Commonwealth Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of delegates and facilitators Objectives of the seminar Pre-seminar evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductions done and objectives of the seminar are clear Pre-seminar evaluation |
| Refreshments 10:45 - 11.00 | | | |
| Session 3: Normative framework as it pertains to civil society and human rights defender space 11:00 - 11:30 | Mr. Iniyen Ilango, Independent Human Rights Expert | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norms on civil participation and protection of human rights State of civil society space across the globe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normative framework understood |

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| Session 4: Commonwealth framework and challenges faced by civil society 11:30 - 12:00 | Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika, International Director, CHRI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth commitments to promote and protect civil society space • Examples of violations that erode civil society space • Responsibilities of states and civil society to maintain respectful communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of Commonwealth commitments and erosion of civil society space |
| Session 5: Best practice in state and civil society collaboration in global advocacy for climate action 12:00 - 12:30 | H.E. Ambassador Sumbue Antas, Permanent Representative, Republic of Vanuatu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study Vanuatu: Best practices in state and civil society collaboration on global advocacy for climate action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of best practices in collaboration on climate action |
| Session 6: Best practice in state and civil society collaboration 12:30 - 13:00 | Ms. Gayethri Pillay, Counsellor/Charge d’Affaires, Permanent Mission of Republic of Seychelles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study Seychelles: Best practices in state and civil society collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of best practices in state and civil society collaboration |
| Lunch 13:00 - 14:00 | | | |
| Session 7: Best practices in state and media engagement for national development 14:00 - 15:30 | H.E. Ambassador Penda Andreas Naanda, Permanent Representative, Republic of Namibia Mr. Joseph Ailonga, Chairperson, Editors’ Forum of Namibia - VIA SKYPE LINK Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika, International Director, CHRI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of media freedom in state building and national development: Case study Namibia • Media freedom in Namibia: Successes and challenges • Media solidarity in engagement with states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of good practice in promoting and protecting media freedom and safety of journalists |
| Refreshments 15.30 - 15.45 | | | |
| Session 8: Group discussions | Group work Reports to plenary | Guiding questions: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer discussions in small groups to encourage better practice |

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| 15:45 - 17:00 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it necessary to create and increase space for civil society participation? • What are the drivers of conflict between governments and civil society? • How can effective collaboration between civil society and governments be sustained? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating champions for advocacy |
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Day 2: 4 June 2019

| Time and Session | Facilitator | Overview | Expected outcomes |
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| Session 9: Role of parliament and parliamentarians in sustaining civil society space 10:00 - 11:00 | Hon. Kenneth Okoth, Member of Parliament, Kibra Constituency, Republic of Kenya Hon. Lenny Lebon, Former Member of Parliament, Republic of Seychelles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of parliament and parliamentarians in protecting the space for civil society and human rights defenders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of the role of parliament in promoting and protecting civil society/human rights defender space |
| Refreshments 11:00 - 11:15 | | | |
| Session 10: Role of national human rights institutions in protection of civil society space 11:15 - 12:15 | Advocate John R. Walters, Ombudsman, Republic of Namibia Mr. George Morara, Commissioner and Vice-Chairperson, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in promoting and protecting the space for civil society and human rights defenders • NHRI as a bridge between government and civil society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of the role of NHRIs compliant with the Paris Principles |
| Session 11: Best practice in state and civil society collaboration 12:15 - 12:45 | Ms. Esther Ahulu, RTI Project Officer, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Africa Office, Ghana | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study Ghana: Collaboration for protection of right to information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice in promotion and protection of right to information understood |
| Session 12: Best practice from outside of the Commonwealth of effective relationships between civil society and governments 12:45 - 13:15 | Mr. Iniyan Ilango, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies from outside the Commonwealth on building effective relationships between governments and civil society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice from outside the Commonwealth understood |
| Lunch 13:15 - 14:15 | | | |

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| Session 13: Group discussions 14:15 - 15:45 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work • Reports to plenary | Guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we move from conflictual to collaborative engagements between states and civil society? • What ingredients are vital for resolving differences when they arise and sustaining collaboration? • What platforms have proven to be useful in maintaining respectful relationships? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer discussions in small groups to encourage better practice • Generating champions for advocacy |
| Refreshments 15:45 - 16:00 | | | |
| Session 14: Concluding segment 16:00 - 16:30 | Tony Sisule Ms. Gayethri Pillay H.E. Ambassador Sumbue Antas Mr. Charles Kent Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main recommendations • Evaluation tool administered • Final remarks and potential next steps and ways to champion the promotion and protection of civil society/human rights defenders space in the Commonwealth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations and next steps are outlined |