

UK NGO CSW Alliance

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The Right Hon. Baroness Northover,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for International
Development

Dear Lindsay,

Zarin and I are grateful for your response received last week to our letter, written on behalf of the UK NGO CSW Alliance, about the involvement of civil society in the post-2015 process. It has been widely shared on our list-serve.

Since then, the Co-chairs have sent their ‘food for thought’ letter setting out the programme envisaged. I am sure you will have received it but for ease of reference we attach it here.

We have two main concerns that we wish to share with you:

First, as you are aware, the negotiations for final meetings of the Open Working Group (OWG) were held in informal sessions. Indeed the UK was one of the countries calling for the ‘informals’, which enabled some countries to stop ‘grandstanding’ to the cameras, undoubtedly contributing to more frank and open interchange of ideas and ultimately to the successful outcome of the work of the OWG. The informals, however, meant that there was no formal procedure for the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and as such they were only allowed in the room because the Co-chairs allowed them to be there. Indeed, at one point Ambassador Kamau deliberately went to talk with them to demonstrate to the security that he knew they were there and that he didn’t want them thrown out.

Reading the ‘food for thought’ document and taking into account statements by Member States, including the UK, it would appear that the process for the negotiations going forward will allow for CSO participation along the lines of that used for the OWG. We are, however, aware that some countries, including China, India and Iran, expressed concern that such participation should be within the General Assembly rules of procedure. This could seriously affect CSOs in informal sessions.

The UN Deputy Secretary General, Jan Eliasson, at a UNA meeting that was co-chaired recently by Sir Jeremy Greenstock in Westminster, commented that when he used to chair UN meetings he alternately invited state and

non-state actors to speak. UNA-UK is seeking clarification from his office as to which meetings these were. It could clearly offer an important precedent. But we have noticed a pulling back by too many governments from engaging with NGOs at the UN. I myself recall being present in informals during CSW. Now, we are sometimes not allowed in the main negotiating chamber.

We appreciate the efforts and support that we receive from David Hallam and DFID during the Post-2015 process, as well as from the UK UN Mission in New York and we are reassured by the role that HMG is playing to ensure that the concerns of women's groups in particular are being fully addressed in the process as the vital work continues of developing a transformative Post-2015 agenda with a stand-alone gender equality goal mainstreamed across other goals. We would, however, request that HMG stands ready to ensure the strongest possible civil society participation in informal as well as open sessions of the negotiations.

Secondly, we see from the time-table proposed by the Co-chairs, that one meeting overlaps with the first week of CSW/Beijing+20. Given the importance of both processes, we see this as being seriously problematic and we would appreciate HMG recommending to the Co-chairs, should there be the opportunity that the dates for the overlapping session of the post-2015 process be changed.

Thank you and we look forward to your reply,

Best wishes,



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Co-chair, UK NGO CSW Alliance



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