



# Strengthening NGO participation and the right to freedom of association at the UN

## Current challenges and opportunities for reform

**Thursday, 28 May 2015**

**13.15 - 14.45**

**Venue: Australian Permanent Mission to the UN in New York**

**150 East 42nd Street, 33rd Floor**

*(light lunch will be served)*

In his most recent report to the General Assembly, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association, Maina Kiai said 'strong civil society participation is essential for multilateral institutions' effectiveness'. The report documents a range of ways in which the UN is falling short in this regard, including through an **accreditation process** for NGOs – overseen by the Committee on NGOs in New York – which is **'long, complex, costly, beyond the capability of many small civil society organisations**, and impossible to obtain for informal organisations and grass-roots networks'. The report documents how the accreditation process has resulted in the systematic exclusion of human rights NGOs, particularly those working on minority rights, women's rights, sexual orientation and gender identity.

This event will discuss the importance of civil society engagement and participation at the UN, particularly in the Human Rights Council, and the need to ensure accreditation processes are transparent, non-discriminatory, expeditious and compatible with the right to freedom of association. The event will also re-launch a major new *Practical Guide on the UN Committee on NGOs* in New York and discuss ways and opportunities to better enable civil society engagement at the UN.

### **OPENING REMARKS**

- TBC

### **PANELISTS**

- Mr Cristián Barros, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations
- Ms Rikke Nöhrind, International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)
- Ms Michelle Evans, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Ms Jessica Stern, Director of the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)

### **MODERATOR**

- Ms Gillian Bird, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

We invite you to follow the event on Twitter [@ISHRGlobal](#), using the hashtag [#NGOaccess](#)

Please RSVP by 27 May to [anna.kavanagh@dfat.gov.au](mailto:anna.kavanagh@dfat.gov.au)