

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

## Current challenges and opportunities for reform

**Wednesday, 22 April 2015**

**Panel from 10h45 to 12h15, followed by lunch from 12h15 to 13h30**

**Australian Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva**

**Chemin des Fins 2, Petit-Saconnex**

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'. His 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 also documents ways in which 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 launch a major new *Practical Guide on the UN Committee on NGOs* and discuss ways and opportunities to better enable civil society engagement at the UN.

### **OPENING REMARKS**

- **The Presidency of the Human Rights Council**

### **PANELISTS**

- **Marta Mauras**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN in Geneva
- **Rikke Nöhrind**, International Dalit Solidarity Network
- **Eleanor Openshaw**, International Service for Human Rights
- **Jean-Daniel Vigny**, international human rights expert and former Minister in the Swiss Missions to the UN in New York and Geneva

### **MODERATOR**

- **John Quinn**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN in Geneva

For those unable to attend, we invite you to follow the event on Twitter [@ISHRGlobal](https://twitter.com/ISHRGlobal), using the hashtag [#NGOaccess](https://twitter.com/NGOaccess)

**RSVP essential by 15 April to [events.geneva@dfat.gov.au](mailto:events.geneva@dfat.gov.au)**