To: President of the General Assembly

Cc: Permanent Representatives of the Permanent Missions of Argentina, Italy and Norway to the United Nations

 19th November, 2018

Excellency,

We are writing to you in regard to the General Assembly high-level plenary meeting on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on human rights defenders, scheduled for the 18th December.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of your office and those of co-facilitators, Argentina, Italy and Norway in leading the process to define modalities for the event.

We consider civil society participation to be integral to this meeting. A high-level event on the right to defend human rights, that did not include civil society participation from the floor, as well as on panels, would provide a very unhelpful signal to the outside world about the importance the UN places on the views of human rights defenders.

In recent times, high-level events on a range of topics have included civil society participation. Last year’s high level debate marking the tenth anniversary of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, is one such example. At this event NGOs made statements from the floor following interventions by States delegates, as well as participating on panels.

Participation in these events was significant, and its attainment hard-fought. We would be very concerned if such modalities were not followed at the high-level plenary meeting next month. That would be a step back in overall efforts to promote civil society participation at the UN.

Sincerely,