

Call for inputs from the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for his report to be presented at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément N. Voule, will dedicate his thematic report to be presented at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly to the exploration of the impact of social movements in achieving progress towards more equal and sustainable societies, and how threats and attacks to freedoms of peaceful assembly and association affect them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound political, economic, social and health consequences for all countries. It has inflicted enormous human suffering, brought about large-scale economic disruption, and intensified closure of civic space. Over the past two years, the pandemic has been connected to a reversal in progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has negatively impacted implementation of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is crucial in the wake of the pandemic that the international community, including States and other actors, make the commitments needed to ensure sustainable development and build durable and resilient political, economic, social and health systems.¹ For this to be possible, however, the world cannot simply return to ‘business as usual’.² A paradigm shift is required, one in which decision-makers come to be truly responsive to people’s wants, needs and rights.

To achieve this transformative change, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has called on States to harness the power of social movements and respond to popular calls for reforms.³ Whether fighting for climate justice, advancing gender, racial and economic equality, or protecting democratic freedoms, social movements around the world have shown the courage to challenge the status quo and to work towards a truly equitable and sustainable future. They have shown this courage despite facing increasing violence and repression, in particular as a result of their exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

For his report to the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association will explore the impact of social movements in achieving progress towards more equal and sustainable societies, and how threats and attacks to freedoms of peaceful assembly and association affect them. The report is intended to illustrate the value that social movements bring in efforts to building a more sustainable future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. It will provide recommendations to States and other actors on how to support social movements and integrate their efforts into build back better policy agendas.

¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29777HLPF_programme_concept_note.pdf

² <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/building-back-better-a-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-covid-19-52b869f5/>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2020/04/states-responses-covid-19-threat-should-not-halt-freedoms-assembly-and?LangID=E&NewsID=25788>

Submissions can be made to ohchr-freessembly@un.org by **10 June 2022** in English, French or Spanish. Kindly indicate in the subject of your email “Submission to 77th UNGA report”. All submissions will be published on the mandate webpage on the OHCHR website, unless otherwise indicated in your submission.

Questionnaire for Civil Society Organizations

1. How do you define social movements, what different valuable ends do you see social movements pursuing, and where do you see yourself and/or your organization or movement within this definition?
2. What positive contributions have social movements made to your country, region or the world? If applicable, please include examples from the following time periods:
 - a. the last five years;
 - b. the last fifteen years;
 - c. the last thirty-five years; and
 - d. the last eighty years?
3. What do you believe can be the contributions of social movements in your country, region or the world to Covid-19 recovery and build back better policies and plans? Please describe.
4. What should States do to create an enabling environment for social movements and promote their ability to achieve rights-based transformations? Please provide details.
5. What can other actors, such as businesses, donors, civil society, and multilateral organizations do to recognize and support social movements? Please provide details.