



Open Societies Statement 2022

The C7 proposes the following key issues for discussion and integration in a renewed G7 Open Societies statement. These were developed by the Working Group on Open Societies in consultation with various coalitions and organisations working on the topics below.

On participatory multilateral order

Civil society space in multilateral forums is shrinking. This hampers the ability of civic activists to express opinion and bring expertise to the decision-making process.

- Commit to facilitate and guarantee meaningful participation of individuals and representatives from international and national CSOs in all multilateral forums.
- Ensure through diplomacy and participation in UN bodies that engagement of civil society is consistent with and benchmarked against the UN system-wide strategy on civic space and guidance set out in the Secretary-General's Call to Action.

On the use of technology and human rights (digital order)

Technology is developed and used in a way that generally supports civil society work. However, recent reports show that it can also be weaponised to harm civil society, defenders and marginalized groups.

- Commit to make evidence-based risk and human rights impact assessments of new technologies for national security purposes a prerequisite for their development, deployment and use.
- Establish a moratorium on the use, export, sale and transfer of surveillance technology, including facial recognition and spyware technology in international standards and national laws, until the authorities and companies responsible can demonstrate compliance with privacy and other human rights and absence of the discriminatory impact on civil society.
- Commit to ensure unrestricted and secure access to the internet and telecommunications, especially during peaceful protests and elections.
- Commit to adopt robust due diligence human rights legal frameworks. All G7 members should follow OECD's guidelines on business and human rights.

On freedom of assembly

Several states have adopted restrictive laws or used force to stifle down protests. In addition, crowd-control weapons are used by law enforcement, resulting in injuries, disabilities and deaths of activists.

- Limit the use of force, including by military, against protesters by outlining clear and transparent protocols around force and by banning the use of lethal and "less-lethal" weapons against peaceful protesters.
- Restrict the trade, export and sale of these weapons to countries with poor human rights records.

On transparency and anti-corruption

We welcome the initiative of the G7 governments to create a transatlantic taskforce with the initial aim to target the assets of Russian officials and oligarchs close to the Russian government in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Sanctioning kleptocrats that have propped up a repressive, authoritarian and belligerent government that undermines democracy and human rights both at home and abroad sets a historical precedent. This is an important first step towards making our democracies more resilient and less permeable to corruption. Further, global standards on beneficial ownership are necessary to enable and encourage civil

society participation in the global effort against authoritarianism, corruption and money laundering.

- Establish a permanent international body to coordinate efforts and share intelligence information among member states in the investigation of cross-border corruption, money laundering and financial crime.
- Define and commit to global standards on beneficial ownership transparency, i.e. the disclosure of the ultimate owners of an entity in a central, public registry with free and open data, and international cooperation among law enforcement. Such standards should be drafted also in consideration of the specific characteristics of non-profit entities and public benefit foundations to ensure that they do not disrupt their legitimate activities.

On security and civic space

As documented by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms national counterterrorism laws and policies or other broadly defined security-related measures are routinely used to limit work of civil society organisations and criminalize activists. This undermines efforts to deepen democracy and development.

This situation is perpetuated by the lack of an agreed international definition of terrorism.

- Ensure that safeguards are in place to trigger immediate review and as appropriate, suspension or adjustment of counterterrorism and security assistance where credible allegations are raised on grave violations on individuals and civil society organizations and until such allegations are disproven or underlying actions have been remediated. These safeguards should apply to bilateral counterterrorism assistance and to assistance provided via the United Nations and other multilateral bodies.
- Support the development of a definition of terrorism by the UN in consultation with member states and civil society.
- Commit to coordinated use of existing or new targeted human rights sanctions regulations (aka “Magnitsky laws”) against officials involved in orchestrating gross human rights violations of internationally protected human rights, including the right to life and the freedoms of association, assembly, participation, and expression.

On human rights in emergency responses

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, countries have resorted to emergency executive powers for pandemic control. While some restrictions were justifiable, many were unnecessary, disproportionate contrary to international human rights law, lacking in transparency, accountability, and participation.

- Commit to ensuring all measures taken in response to emergency situations (e.g. pandemics, refugee influx) comply with states' international law obligations, in particular those relating to human rights and the rule of law. While states enjoy discretion on how to respond to emergencies, they must do so consistently with all human rights and prevent negative impacts on, amongst others, political participation, assembly, association, expression and privacy.
- Commit to ensuring that the proposed International Pandemic Treaty is drafted in wide and meaningful consultation of civil society and ensures the harmonization of States' international law obligations, including in terms of international human rights law and global health law.

On human rights defenders and media

Human rights defenders, including journalists, who play an important role in bringing human rights violations to public attention and fighting against corruption, are increasingly under threat. Although the media are a key component of exchange and communication in society, we assist to a rise in press freedom violations in many countries.

- Adopt a G7 Action Plan to protect human rights defenders worldwide with the aim to create measures for a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and improve accountability of decision-makers. The action plan should also ensure financial support and judicial protection for defenders.
- Commit to defend and guarantee press freedom and expand protection for journalists.
- Commit to strengthen media literacy through education and programs to enable citizens to classify information and participate in media. Media organizations should be encouraged to develop educational and participatory tools. As media is a growing battlefield dividing society, it is especially important to support programs that fight against fake news and support not-for-profit journalism.

On gender rights and protections

Gender equality is not yet achieved and women's, LGBTIQ-persons' rights and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are still infringed in many countries worldwide. No country is immune these days from backlash against some fundamental rights, such as abortion rights.

- Commit to adequate, long-term, flexible and easily accessible funding for civil society organizations and their networks working on gender justice and women's and LGBTIQ rights, the protection of human rights defenders in all contexts with emphasis on gender justice, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and bodily autonomy.

On children's rights and protections

Children are most vulnerable to the devastating consequences of current global challenges. Yet children's voices are hardly heard. G7 leaders need to acknowledge the long-term severe impacts of global challenges on the next generation and commit to protect children and implement their rights as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the respective protocols to achieve a sustainable future. G7 must acknowledge that children are vulnerable to violence offline and online.

- Commit to pay special attention to and ensure access to their rights for the most vulnerable children, such as children growing up in conflict and crises, refugee children, children with disabilities, and girls.
- Foster meaningful participation of children and youth in decision-making processes that affects them and their future.
- Acknowledge education as cross-cutting issue and key to economic recovery, a sustainable future and peaceful societies. The G7 ODA to education must be increased and at least 10% of humanitarian funding allocated to education.
- Invest in strong holistic child protection mechanisms to keep children safe from any form of violence, also in the digital environment.

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Publisher

C7 Secretariat, Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (VENRO)

Berlin, April 2022

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Disclaimer

This publication was developed as part of the C7 Project. It is funded by GIZ on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.