
Recommendation of the Conference of INGOs to the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe convened in Reykjavik on 16 and 17 May 2023

Adopted by the General Assembly on 26 April 2023

CONF/AG(2023)REC1

Preamble

Recalling that the Conference of INGOs is the voice of organised civil society within the Council of Europe as:

- a body whose mandate is recognized by the Council of Europe "as the entity representing all INGOs enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe," (Committee of Ministers [Resolution CM/Res\(2016\)3](#));
- a body reflecting the broadest civil society in Europe whose members have a variety of skills and field experience in the different Member States of the Council of Europe;

Recalling the Declaration of the Conference of INGOs on the place and role of civil society in safeguarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law, adopted on 16 December 2020 ([CONF/PLE\(2020\)DEC1](#));

Recalling the Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform

Reaffirming its commitment to and strong support for the founding values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

Underlining the commitment of the Member States to respect the principles and standards defined by the Council of Europe which aim to implement these values;

Noting that the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine constitutes a denial of these fundamental values, which consequently calls for a determined reaction from the institutions of the Council of Europe, the member States and all actors of civil society;

Considering that the Reykjavík Summit is a unique opportunity to decide on a common commitment for the future of the Council of Europe based on a common vision, effective policies, strategies and organizational methods, as well as the needed increase of contributions to meet the current and future challenges facing Europe:

The Conference of INGOs recommends to the Heads of State and Government meeting at the 4th Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik to:

1. Strengthen the European system of guaranteeing all human rights

- The European Convention on Human Rights

- Reaffirm the central role of the European Convention for the protection of human rights, for the development of democracy and the respect of the rule of law in Europe;
- Strengthen the mechanism for monitoring the execution of the Court's judgments in order to combat systematic non-compliance with these judgments and provide the necessary resources to the Registry;
- Facilitate and support the role of independent actors at the national level such as non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions for effective implementation on the ground;
- Complete the process of accession by the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights.

- The European Social Charter

- Implement in practice and ensure the effective guarantee of social rights which are human rights recognized as indivisible and interdependent by the international community;
- Encourage the ratification by all Member States of the European Social Charter in its entirety and the acceptance of the collective complaints procedure;
- Continue the process of reforming the European Social Charter in order to strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of the protection system with the participation of civil society;
- Initiate the process of accession of the European Union to the European Social Charter.

2. Develop treaty and monitoring mechanisms to

- Encourage all Member States to ratify the thematic conventions, in particular: the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention);

- Strengthen the mandate of the Commissioner for Human Rights, in particular for a rapid reaction, facilitated access to all the territories of the member states of the Council of Europe and in particular to territories affected by armed conflicts;
- Transform the current status of the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees in order to increase his/her authority and political competence and to respond to current challenges in the field of human rights and international solidarity.
- Transform the current status of the Special Representative on anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes and all forms of religious intolerance in order to increase his or her political authority to respond to current challenges.

3. Strengthen the Good Democratic Governance in Member States to

- Increase implementation and follow up of the existing instruments on good democratic governance and envisage to develop them into a convention for democracy;
- Amend Article 3 of Protocol 1 of the Human Rights Convention to ensure that free and fair elections are protected as a fundamental human right;
- Develop resources for lifelong education and training in citizenship and human rights in cooperation with civil society actors, such as NGOs and NHRIs;
- Fight by all appropriate means, against speeches and acts that aim to reduce or destroy democracy and human rights, both within States and at the European level.

4. Increasing the place and role of civil society to

- Fight in a concrete and effective way against the shrinking space of civil society in the member States as part of improving their good democratic governance;
- Guarantee the existence of the Conference of INGOs within the Council of Europe by granting it a permanent and strong status with adequate means;
- Grant the Conference of INGOs a lasting status to participate in all major organs of the Council of Europe;
- Strengthen the continuous cooperation with civil society actors:
 - in the Member States of the Council of Europe,

- in the neighbouring States (Russian and Belarusian as well as Kosovo¹ civil society),
- in the framework of the North-South Center and the European Youth Center.

5. Fight against impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity to

- Support and contribute to the activities of the International Criminal Court and other international institutions to investigate and prosecute under criminal responsibility individuals allegedly responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the war of aggression against Ukraine;
- Create without delay a register of victimization and damages as a basis for holding the perpetrators to account as a condition for a just peace.
- Support trials of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Western Balkan countries and prioritise on activities that are contributing to transitional justice on the local and regional level.

6. To recognize and protect the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a Human Right to

- Commit to the negotiation and adaptation to the ECHR to protect this human right as requirement for justice;
- Take into account the intergenerational dimension of this right as a requirement for justice.

7. To provide the necessary resources to the Council of Europe to

- Increase substantially the contributions of Member States to the Council of Europe in order to ensure adequate funding to enable the Council of Europe to carry out all its missions which are essential for the future of the continent.

¹ All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.