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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

16 May 2022

Dear Civil Society Representatives,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2022, and for sharing your concerns regarding the access of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the United Nations building. Engaging civil society in the work of the United Nations is a top priority for the Secretary-General. He has repeatedly called for inclusive multilateralism and made specific recommendations to increase civil society participation in his report on “*Our Common Agenda*”.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations has been actively promoting the continuing participation of NGOs in its various meetings and processes through diverse means and within the limits imposed by the local authorities and the health situation. We have used new information technology platforms and systems, which have allowed us to increase the number of civil society participants in virtual and hybrid meetings.

The United Nations has continuously adjusted its policies in keeping with the evolving local health conditions and the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local authorities, as well as the recommendation of the United Nations interdepartmental committee on Occupational Safety and Health issues. Following improvements in the local health situation earlier this year, we have worked to support a phased return to the pre-COVID situation regarding access of NGOs to the building. This has included resuming the issuance of grounds passes for three representatives for each NGO in January 2022, in preparation for the reopening of the building for these representatives, which happened on 14 March 2022.

We have also ensured the resumption of in-person participation of NGOs at the General Assembly and at other United Nations high-level events at United Nations Headquarters, as soon as intergovernmental meetings restarted. This was done through the issuance of Special Event Tickets, without restriction on the numbers of participants.

Representatives of Civil Society
Organizations

I wish to inform you that, upon the recommendation of the United Nations interdepartmental committee on Occupational Safety and Health issues, we have decided to restore the number of grounds passes for NGOs to its pre-pandemic level. This new policy will be communicated to NGOs shortly. We hope that the evolution of the health situation in New York will not necessitate a revision of those arrangements in the future.

Again, we value and appreciate your outreach as we are dedicated to ensuring a broad and meaningful civil society participation at the United Nations.

I thank you for your understanding and collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Rattray", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

E. Courtenay Rattray
Chef de Cabinet