

Roundtable Discussion with Dr. Bärbel Kofler
Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

Preserving Democratic Spaces: Overcoming Challenges to Civil Society Engagement
Thursday, July 20, 2023, 10:00-11:30 AM

New York, July 11, 2023

Dear colleagues,

Civil society engagement plays a crucial role at the United Nations (UN). By involving civil society actors, the UN gains valuable perspectives, expertise, and input from diverse stakeholders. And without meaningful engagement and a renewed commitment from governments and civil society alike, achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will remain out of reach.

Ongoing reform processes at the UN further underline the need for civil society participation and a people-centered approach. Key reports such as the UN Secretary-General's "[Our Common Agenda](#)" and the recent report by the High-Level Advisory Board for Effective Multilateralism ([HLAB](#)) highlight the vital role of civil society in strengthening multilateralism and addressing the world's most pressing challenges. During this year's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and upcoming UN summits in September, such as UNGA, the SDG Summit and the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development (FfD), civil society engagement will once again feature prominently on the agenda.

However, there is a concerning disconnect between efforts to integrate civil society at the United Nations and the shrinking spaces for civil society witnessed in many countries around the world. While the UN increasingly recognizes the importance of civil society participation, some governments are imposing restrictions, stifling dissent, and limiting the capacity of non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups and grassroots movements to hold governments accountable and drive positive change.

Against this backdrop, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in New York is honored to invite you to an upcoming roundtable discussion to reflect on these critical issues with Germany's Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Cooperation and Development, **Dr. Bärbel Kofler**, to be held Thursday, July 20, from 10:00 – 11:30 AM EDT at the FES New York office (747 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017).

To register, please email Lennart Inklaar (linklaar@fesny.org) by **Monday, July 17**. We thank you for your interest and look forward to this important exchange.

With kind regards,



Dr. Michael Bröning
Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York