



**19th session of the
Human Rights Council**

Item 2

**Annual Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Interactive Debate 2 March 2012**

Thank you Mr President,

Madame High Commissioner, CIVICUS welcomes your annual report. Once again we laud your audacity to speak up whenever gross abuses of Human Rights occur and capacity to stand by those who are in the frontline of engagement. We share your deep concern over the degrading security situation of Human Rights defenders and civil society activists in countries where violence remains the norm. We thus applaud your swift response in sending specifically mandated missions to Tunisia and Egypt, Yemen, Afghanistan and Sudan and we commend your sustained efforts to fight impunity and promote accountability, strengthen UN Human Rights mechanisms and treaty bodies.

We commend further your Office's endeavors towards protecting civilians and addressing the reasons for violence targeting civilians such as your human rights defenders campaign in Mexico and advocacy work to adopt a "comprehensive approach to look at the root causes of crime and violence". We were encouraged by your ongoing and robust efforts aimed at resolving the crisis in Syria and for emphasizing the need to protect the Syrian civil society now at the forefront of the protest movement. We support your call to the Security Council for referral of those who have committed crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court.

Syria is however just one among many instances of state-led oppression, intimidation and violent crackdowns on civilians, they unfortunately remain a widespread phenomenon worldwide. We praise the courage of people fighting for more freedom and democratic rule. CIVICUS firmly believes that people in all regions of the world should see their fundamental rights, in particular freedoms of expression, opinion and assembly, respected and promoted, as they deserve a government ready to involve them in policy and decision making.

Finally, we hail your continued combat against extreme poverty and inequalities fought with diligence and a human rights perspective. The way you seek to integrate human rights into the fight against poverty should provide space for civil society organizations and grassroots efforts to step in the process of reaching the MDGs.

Madam High Commissioner, CIVICUS stands ready to join you in your efforts and we hope to see you at our next World Assembly. Thank you for your attention.