

FORUS VIRTUAL FORUM: SESSION 4 CONCEPT NOTE

Shifts in civic space, digital access and rights, and the erosion of democratic values. *Regional perspectives on these intersecting challenges.*

Date of the session: **TUESDAY 28 JUNE**

Duration: **2 hours**

Time: **15:00 - 17:00 GMT**

ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85272497490>

The session will be **simultaneously interpreted** in English, French and Spanish.

Local times of speakers & moderators: (in order of participation of speakers/moderators)

- 20:30 - 22:30 **New Delhi**
- 12:00 - 14:00 **Sao Paulo**
- 18:00 - 20:00 **Kampala**
- 20:45 - 22:45 **Kathmandu**
- 17:00 - 19:00 **Budapest**
- 20:00 - 22:00 **Islamabad**
- 11:00 - 13:00 **Sucre**
- 00:00 - 02:00 **Seoul** (+1 Wednesday 29 June)
- 17:00 - 19:00 **Copenhagen**
- 22:00 - 00:00 **Jakarta**

Objectives of the session:

Promote dialogue & exchange of experience among Forus members on the topic of **shrinking civic space around the world**. **Learn from the experience of external experts** working on the impacts on civic space of digitalization, Covid-19 and alternative narrative building by civil society. **Identify the advocacy & capacity development needs** of Forus members **linked to shrinking civic space**. **Share the key conclusions & recommendations of the new Forus Advocacy Report on Civic Space and CSO Alternative Narrative Building** with Forus members, in advance of its launch at the 2022 UN HLPF.

Description of the session:

Around the globe, restrictions on freedoms of speech, assembly, and association are shrinking and transforming the space for CSOs. Shrinking civic spaces and limited civil society influence have **serious consequences for effective governance**. SDG16 of the Agenda 2030 commits governments to the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms linked to civic space. However, research has demonstrated that **most governments avoid reporting on civic space** in the VNRs submitted to the UN HLPF. In recent years, **several key issues** have **further impacted civic space** across different regions and countries of the world – these include the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the **accelerating process of digitalization**, both of which have rapidly transformed civic space across diverse national and regional contexts.

In this session, you will hear from Forus members working on civic space issues, and we will share some of the key findings of the new Forus report “Enabling Stories: How civil society can build new narratives in a world transformed by Digitalization and the Covid-19 Pandemic”. We will also focus on key CSO approaches and strategies in pushing back against shrinking civic space, online and offline.

DETAILED AGENDA

Moderation:

- **Jyotsna Mohan Singh** (Regional Coordinator, **ADA, Asia**) – *Introduction and 1st. Round of discussions.*
- **Deirdre de Burca** (Advocacy Coordinator, **Forus**) – *2nd. Round of discussions and Conclusion.*
- Overall Technical support: **Arturo & Thomas** (Forus)

Speakers: (in order of participation)

- **Pedro Bocca** (International Advocacy Advisor, **Abong, Brazil**) – *1st. Round of discussions*
- **Moses Isooba** (Executive Director, **UNNGOF, Uganda**) – *1st. Round of discussions*
- **Hum Bhandari** (Executive Director, **NFN, Nepal**) – *1st. Round of discussions*
- **Balint Hamvas** (Director, **HAND, Hungary**) – *1st. Round of discussions*
- **Zia-ur-Rehman** (National Chair, **PDA, Pakistan**) – *1st. Round of discussions*
- **Susana Eróstegui** (Director, **Red UNITAS, Bolivia**) – *2nd. Round of discussions*
- **Jaeun SHIN** (Director Policy & Education Center, **KCOG, South Korea**) – *2nd. Round of discussions*
- **Sara Brandt** (Policy Advisor & Coordinator, **Global Focus, Denmark**) – *2nd. Round of discussions*
- **Rizka Antika** (Program Officer, **INFID, Indonesia**) – *2nd. Round of discussions*

IMPORTANT:

- We recommend not using slides/PowerPoint presentations (all speakers & moderators)

Run of event:

Time	Duration	Presentation / Section	Speaker / Moderator
15:00 - 15:07	7 min	Technical instructions (interpretation, chat box)	Thomas (Forus)
15:08 - 15:10	2 min	Introduction to the session and to the 1st. Round of discussions. Brief introduction of the first speaker.	Jyotsna Mohan Singh (Regional Coordinator, ADA, Asia)
15:10 – 16:00	50 min	1st. Round of discussions: Exchanging experiences on the impacts of digitalization, COVID-19 and shrinking civic space on CSOs around the	

		world	
15:10 - 15:20	10 min	Key findings from Abong's report on the criminalization of civil society in Brazil under the Bolsonaro presidency.	Pedro Bocca (International Advocacy Advisor, Abong, Brazil)
15:20 - 15:24	4 min	Introducing the round of discussion: LIVE POLL 1 Asking a guiding question to participants & the panel: Do you consider that your government criminalizes civil society in your country? Y/N (Only if you are comfortable) If so, give 1 short example	Jyotsna Mohan Singh (Regional Coordinator, ADA, Asia) + Arturo showing / explaining results (live poll 1)
15:24 - 15:27	3 min	Key message from UNNGOF and 1 practical example from their national context	Moses Isooba (Executive Director, UNNGOF, Uganda)
15:27 - 15:30	3 min	Key message from NFN and 1 practical example from their national context	Hum Bhandari (Executive Director, NFN, Nepal)
15:30 - 15:33	3 min	Key message from HAND and 1 practical example from their national context	Balint Hamvas (Director, HAND, Hungary)
15:33 - 15:36	3 min	Key message from PDA and 1 practical example from their national context	Zia-ur-Rehman (National Chair, PDA, Pakistan)
15:36 - 16:00	24 min	General discussion & Q&A: Tell us about your national/regional experience!	Jyotsna Mohan Singh (Regional Coordinator, ADA, Asia)
16:00 - 16:45	45 min	2nd. Round of discussions: Responding to growing threats and restrictions: How CSOs can strategize and push back at regional and national levels to defend civic space	
16:00 - 16:02	2 min	Introduction to Second Round. Brief introduction of the next speaker.	Deirdre de Burca (Advocacy Coordinator, Forus)
16:02 - 16:12	10 min	The role of the UNITAS Observatory in supporting civil society to push back against shrinking civic space	Susana Eróstegui (Director, Red UNITAS, Bolivia)
16:12 - 16:14	2 min	Introducing the round of discussion: LIVE POLL 2 Asking 2 guiding questions to participants & the panel: 1. Has your organization been involved in developing alternative CSOs narratives? 2. If YES, how effective have these narratives been in pushing back against the criminalization of civil society? ○ Not effective at all ○ Somewhat effective ○ Very effective	Deirdre de Burca (Advocacy Coordinator, Forus) + Arturo showing / explaining results (live poll 2)
16:14 - 16:17	3 min	Key message from KCOC and 1 practical example of how civil society is defending &	Jaeun SHIN (Director Policy & Education)

		strengthening civic space in the country	Center, KCOC , <i>South Korea</i>)
16:17 - 16:20	3 min	Key message from Global Focus and 1 practical example of how civil society is defending & strengthening civic space in the country	Sara Brandt (Policy Advisor and Coordinator, Global Focus , <i>Denmark</i>)
16:20 - 16:23	3 min	Key message from INFID and 1 practical example of how civil society is defending & strengthening civic space in the country	Rizka Antika (Program Officer, INFID , <i>Indonesia</i>)
16:23 – 16:45	22 min	General discussion & Q&A: Examples on how civil society is fighting back!	Deirdre de Burca (Advocacy Coordinator, Forus)
16:45 - 16:50	5 min	Key conclusions & recommendations of the new Forus Advocacy Report on Civic Space and CSO Alternative Narrative Building.	Deirdre de Burca (Advocacy Coordinator, Forus)
16:50 – 16:52	2 min	Sharing satisfaction & feedback micro-survey with participants	Arturo (Forus)
16:52 – 17:00	8 min	<i>Closing remarks.</i> Sarah, Forus.	Sarah Strack (Director, Forus)

Back-up questions (for moderators)

- How can civil society better use the SDG framework to highlight issues of shrinking civic space and to advocate for governments, international donors and others to support its efforts to strengthen civic space in countries across the world?
- Are there any allies that civil society can reach out to and involve in its efforts to protect and expand civic space?
- How can civil society more effectively monitor civic space and better use this data to highlight worrying trends including closing civic space?
- How can the general public be encouraged to play a much greater role in protecting and strengthening civic space in different countries?