



36th session of the
Human Rights Council
Item6

UPR Outcomes: Poland
22 September 2017
Delivered by Renate Bloem

Thank you, Mr President,

CIVICUS welcomes Poland's commitment to engage with the UPR process and its acceptance of recommendations related to the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, in its recent response to the Report of the Working Group.

As outlined in our joint submission to this review, CIVICUS and the Committee for the Defense of Democracy (KOD) remain seriously concerned by the government's control over state institutions and the media through weakened rule of law and undermined respect for fundamental freedoms.

With particular reference to media freedom, we welcome the Government of Poland's commitment to ensure that national legislation is made consistent with European Union Law. We remain concerned however at the Government's assertion that laws enacted in 2015 "do not restrict media freedom and pluralism". CIVICUS and KOD believe there is still an urgent need to revisit changes made to the Broadcasting Act in January 2016, to prevent the kind of political interference which saw the dismissal of dozens of journalists from the public broadcaster.

We also welcome Poland's acceptance of the recommendation to guarantee the freedom of assembly, but urge the Government to reconsider its rejection of the recommendation to "Repeal the restrictive amendments on the Law on Assemblies". These amendments are inconsistent with Poland's international obligations, because they give undue priority to public authorities, and seriously undermine the protest rights of all Polish citizens, including those that oppose the government.

Finally, we welcome the Government of Poland's acceptance of recommendations related to the freedom of association. We however urge the Government to ensure that these guarantees are applied equally to all, including groups promoting the rights of LGBTI people. We also urge the Government to ensure that Poland's new counter-terrorism legislation is not used as a pretext for the erosion of the rights of minority groups, particularly those promoting the rights of Muslims.

Thank you, Mr President.