



**Oral Statement
Adoption of the UPR report of the Republic of Serbia
Date 29 June 2018
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

Mr President,

The Human Rights House Belgrade (Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights, Belgrade Center for Human Rights, Civic Initiatives, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and Policy Center), and CIVICUS welcome the Government of Serbia's engagement with the UPR process. We also welcome the agreement signed between the Prosecutor's office, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and journalists' and media associations in December 2016 on cooperation and measures to improve the security of journalists.

However, in our joint UPR Submission, we also documented that since its last review, the Republic of Serbia has only fully implemented one recommendation of a total of 18 recommendations relating to civic space it accepted.

We are particularly alarmed by the intimidation, attacks and harassment of human rights defenders and journalists who report on sensitive issues, such as transitional justice, corruption or government accountability. According to the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), there were at least 231 assaults (physical attacks, attacks on property, threats, pressure and verbal attacks) on journalists since 2013, with at least 42 recorded physical attacks.

We are furthermore concerned about the vilification of and smear campaigns against human right defenders, CSOs, and independent media outlets, which has undermined their work.

Mr President, the Human Rights House and CIVICUS call on the Government of Serbia to take proactive measures to address these concerns and implement recommendations to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society.

We thank you.