

GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

Recognizing that CSOs are essential to the development and success of free societies and that they play a vital role in ensuring accountable, democratic government,

And recalling the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association enshrined in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,

The U.S. government pledges its commitment to the following principles and its determination to work for their full implementation throughout the world:

-- Individuals should be permitted to form, join, and participate in CSOs of their choosing in the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

-- Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise by members of CSOs of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association must be consistent with international legal obligations.

-- CSOs should be permitted to carry out their peaceful work in a hospitable environment free from fear of harassment, reprisal, intimidation, and discrimination.

-- Acknowledging governments' authority to regulate entities within their territory to promote the public welfare, such laws and administrative measures should protect -- not impede -- the peaceful operation of CSOs and be enforced in an apolitical, fair, transparent, and consistent manner.

-- Criminal and civil legal actions brought by governments against CSOs, like those brought against all individuals and organizations, should be based on tenets of due process and equality before the law.

-- CSOs should be permitted to seek, receive, manage, and administer for their peaceful activities financial support from domestic, foreign, and international entities.

-- CSOs should be free to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas, including advocating their opinions to governments and the public within and outside the countries in which they are based.

-- Governments should not interfere with CSOs' access to domestic- and foreign-based media.

-- CSOs should be free to maintain contact and cooperate with their own members and other elements of civil society within and outside the countries in which they are based, as well as with governments and international bodies.