**Independent Review Panel – Virtual Meeting 28-29 November
Letter to the Members in this Review Round**

Dear Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report to the Charter's Independent Review Panel for assessment. As in previous years we found that the quality of reports is generally improving, demonstrating greater institutional commitment and more evidence that mechanisms are working in practice. Before providing individual feedback on your organisation's report, allow us however to highlight three areas of general concern:

1.) *Embedding the Charter as a tool for organisational development (3.5)*
The disclosure profile 3.5 looks like a rather technical question on how the report is compiled and organisations tend to report accordingly. But it really asks for a process that is at the heart of what the Charter wishes to achieve: using the report as an opportunity for a cross functional systematic and critical reflection on how accountability is best implemented underpins the legitimacy and quality of your organisation's work. Accountability is all too often perceived as a defensive tool, when it is really a mechanism to pro-actively support organisational development. Please describe under 3.5 how you use the reporting process to embed accountability into your organisation. Against this background Members are also strongly encouraged to place the Charter logo prominently on their website and to further link to the Charter website, so that stakeholders know what to hold you accountable against.

2.) *Complaints Handling Mechanisms (NGO2)*
Having a fully functioning complaints handling mechanism in place is the only Minimum Standard for Charter Members so far. The Panel is very concerned about rather slow progress by many Charter Members to comply with this. We have therefore decided to ask the Charter Board to look into implementing a timeline and sanctions policy for compliance. In our view the leeway should be no longer than two to maximum three years after a Minimum Standard has been adopted. You find examples of well-functioning complaints handling mechanisms in the Good Practice document on the Charter website, capturing good examples from this and previous reporting rounds.

3.) *Succinctness and communication quality*
There is a danger that accountability standards develop a life of their own and become increasingly complex and detached. We have noted that Charter reports tend to get longer without necessarily providing more relevant information. It is important however to use these reports to actively communicate internally and externally how accountability is part of the DNA of your organisation and strengthens the quality of your work. In order for these reports to be read, we suggest that they should have a maximum of 40 pages. For each GRI indicator it is sufficient to report three things:
    a) Do you have policies and processes in place to address the issue?
    b) Do you have evidence that it is embedded in systematic practice?
    c) Is there evidence to show that this has led to improved quality of work?
Sometimes the Panel asks for more information. We are trying to do so only where it is necessary, and we encourage you to be as succinct as possible, and take the above three parameters as guidance. Also try to avoid repetition and where illustrations are given, please keep these brief. Organisations who wish to merge their accountability report with the annual report are encouraged to additionally provide a separate and more

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reflective addendum relating to the Charter if the annual reports do not embrace that due to a desire to be more promotional.

Organisation-specific feedback to CIVICUS:
*This is a very good report, providing relevant and informative data. The organisation is commended for **good practice** approaches to two indicators: Statement of the most senior decision maker for its clear commitment to accountability as a driver of quality (1.1) and strong accountability for advocacy (NGO5). CIVICUS is furthermore commended for a great gender and age diversity within its senior level of staff and for openly addressing challenges that the organisation is facing. In some parts the report would profit from more succinct and clear lay out of arguments and less doubling of information in different parts of the report. More evidence that policies are really implemented, work well and help to continuously improve the quality assurance of CIVICUS work are welcome for the next report. This also reduces annual repetition of policies and focusses on evidence of functioning in the reporting period. All Charter Members are asked to put the Charter logo on their website to demonstrate publically what the Members want to be held accountable against. Progress on commitments made in earlier reports has been noticed (see GAP Analysis Table at the end).*

Our intention is that this letter, and any response you may wish to provide, is made publicly available on the Charter website, along with your report. You can find the reports that were previously reviewed on the Charter website. However, should there be errors of fact in the feedback above or in the note below we would of course wish to correct these before publication. Please share these comments or corrections by 20 January 2014.

If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share with us by sending them to the Charter Secretariat. We would very much like to hear your views.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Hunt · Wambui Kimathi · Tony Tujan · Richard Manning · Louise James · Brendan Gormley

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**Review Round October 2013
Cover Note on Accountability Report
CIVICUS**

Reporting period: January 2012 – June 2013
(CIVICUS moved its fiscal year from calendar year to reporting period from July – June)

PROFILE DISCLOSURE	
Profile	**Comments**
Strategy and Analysis	
1.1	*Fully addressed* A very good statement from the Secretary General shows commitment to accountability and the Charter in particular as a means for CIVICUS to underpin the organisation's legitimacy and continuously improve the quality of the organisation's work. This can be seen as a **good practice** example for other smaller organisations. More evidence how this has worked in practice is welcome for the next report, as well as a personal signature under the statement.
Organisational Profile	
2.1 – 2.4	*Fully addressed*
2.5.	*Partially addressed* Relevant information about the number of countries where CIVICUS operates is given. However, names of these countries are missing. Major offices were however named under indicator 2.3.
2.6	*Fully addressed*
2.7.	*Fully addressed* Relevant information about the target audience and affected stakeholders is given. More information on the strategic choice of stakeholders/ members to optimally fulfil CIVICUS' mission is welcome in the next report. Also an explanation of the various membership types – with and without voting rights – should be given.
2.8. – 2.10	*Fully addressed*
Report Parameters	
3.1 – 3.4	*Fully addressed*
3.5	*Fully addressed* Concerning the process for defining report content, more information on how the report's content is compiled, who contributes in which way and how the reporting process is used to critically reflect and fully embed accountability across all functions in the organisation is welcome in the next report.
3.6 – 3.7.	*Fully addressed*
3.8.	*Fully addressed* Regarding the basis for reporting on joint ventures etc., CIVICUS states to be only able to provide information about compliance with the Charter for the organisation's own operations and not for CIVICUS' members.
3.9. - 3.10	*Fully addressed*
Governance, Commitments, and Engagement	
4.1	*Fully addressed* A good overview of the governance structure is provided. Please capture the information about the Board, its committees etc. just here and not again in other places like 2.3. More information on where this governance model is challenging and where it optimally supports CIVICUS' effectiveness is welcome

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	in the next report.
4.2 – 4.4	*Fully addressed*
4.14	*Fully addressed* The answer provides a good overview on CIVICUS' stakeholders.
4.15	*Fully addressed* The answer gives information about the basis for identification and selection of stakeholders. More information would be welcome on the various membership types and the selection criteria for non NGOs – i.e. business associations and individuals.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Program Effectiveness

NGO1 – Stakeholder involvement
Fully addressed
CIVICUS defines its own membership as the primarily affected stakeholders. Viewed as such, it gives good examples of the organisation's involvement in key decision making processes. Some reflection on involvement of other affected stakeholders (e.g. governments, other CSOs etc.) is also welcome.

NGO2 – Mechanisms for feedback and complaints
Partially addressed
The organisation has a well-established living practice of receiving and dealing with feedback and complaints. Following the Panel's feedback on last years' report CIVICUS promises to draft a formal complaints handling policy as part of the revised Impact planning and Learning Framework in 2013. A formal complaints handling policy is mandatory for all Charter Members and the Panel will ask the Charter Board to look into a maximum timeline for its implementation if organisations do not have one yet.

NGO3 – Programme monitoring, evaluation and learning
Fully addressed
Biannual Progress Reports and six monthly evaluations have been in place. These are now incorporated into a revised Impact, Planning and Learning Framework (IPLF) which is again tied to the new strategy 2013-17. The whole paragraph would profit from more clarity starting with the strategy, its link to the IPLF and then the biannual reports. Evidence on how this new system (due to be implemented 2013) has improved the quality of CIVICUS' work is welcome for the next report.

NGO4 – Gender and diversity
Partially addressed
This indicator only asks for inclusion as a principle of CIVICUS' programmes not its staff. The latter should be dealt with under LA13 near the end of the report. Anecdotal evidence is provided with regard to CIVICUS' ambition to mainstream gender and diversity issues into its programmatic work. Particularly interesting is the acknowledgement that it is not sufficient to incorporate diverse voices but that it needs tailored and safe-guarded spaces to amplify marginalised voices. A link should be provided to CIVICUS' gender and diversity policy and evidence that it is working well.

NGO5 – Advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns
Partially addressed
CIVICUS reports on strong processes in place to ensure a sound evidence base of the organisation's advocacy positions, meaningful stakeholder consultation, management monitoring and an exit strategy. This can be seen as a **good practice** example for smaller organisations. The whole paragraph would profit from a more succinct and structured outline of the processes in place.

NGO6 – Coordination with other actors
Fully addressed

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As a network, effective co-operation with partners is at the heart of CIVICUS' success. The information given outlines convincingly that the organisation has clear criteria to choose partners. CIVICUS is careful not to compete, but rather to complement and strengthen local partners and see their specific added value in being able to bridge the sectors and geographies – also bringing local concerns to global fora. It is not clear however if this process is captured in a written policy and if there is evidence of its implementation and well-functioning. It is also not clear how CIVICUS supports local and national NGOs in the course of its global advocacy work.

Economic

NGO7 – Resource allocation
Fully addressed
The report outlines a robust resource allocation and monitoring system. More information on how this is linked to the achievement of strategic priorities and how it informs management decisions would be welcome in the next report.

NGO8 – Sources of funding
Fully addressed

EC7 – Local hiring
Fully addressed

Environmental

EN16 – Greenhouse gas emission by weight
Fully addressed
The organisation provides information on its greenhouse gas emissions and is open about the fact that these are much higher than in the previous year. However no indication is given that CIVICUS sets itself a reduction target for the coming year. A graphical presentation of the carbon footprint development over years would be welcome in the next report.

EN18 – Initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emission
Addressed
While it is accepted that CIVICUS' work will always necessitate traveling (leading to CO_2 emissions) to fulfil the organisation's mission, it is still recommended to think strongly about possibilities to reduce the relative output of CO_2 and set ambitious targets to deliver upon.

Labor

LA1 – Total workforce
Fully addressed

LA4 – Collective bargaining agreements
Fully addressed

LA10 – Workforce training
Fully addressed
Relevant information is provided on the training areas that were identified, the training units which were implemented and the evaluation of participating staff. Again the report would benefit from being more succinct. More information on how the Culture of Learning (CoL) programme has improved the quality of CIVICUS' work is welcome in the next report.

LA12 – Performance and career development reviews
Fully addressed
CIVICUS is commended for giving all staff regular performance reviews. More information would be welcome on how this is linked to achieving the strategic priorities of the organisation and whether it follows an overall management development plan for the entire organisation.

LA13 – Composition of workforce and governance bodies
Fully addressed
CIVICUS is commended for an outstanding gender and age diversity at the senior level.

Society

SO1 – Impact of operations on communities
Fully addressed

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SO3 – Anti-corruption training
Partially addressed
CIVICUS is asked to provide information on the percentages of employees who have received anti-corruption training during the reporting period. It is commended that CIVICUS has adopted a Fraud Prevention policy in 2012. A link to the policy would be welcome. Evidence that the mechanisms in place have helped to improve the resilience of CIVCUS with regard to fraud and corruption are welcome in the next report.
Product Responsibility
PR6 – Ethical fundraising and marketing communications
Fully addressed
CIVICUS has a Resource Mobilisation Policy in place with guidelines for ethical fundraising. A link to the policy would be welcome. CIVICUS also adheres to national laws and received no complaints in this regard during the reporting period.

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CIVICUS
Gap Analysis Table – Areas of Commitments and Progress achieved

Accountability is a process of continuous improvement. Each year Charter Members in their accountability reports identify and prioritise areas for improvement and corrective actions they plan to take. As of reports submitted in 2014, Members are asked to capture these commitments in this Gap Analysis Table. The Independent Review Panel may suggest the Member to add further issues when reviewing the Member's report. Each year following, the table shall be submitted along with the accountability report and will then be used as a basis to demonstrate progress. The table will be published on the website along with the accountability report and the feedback from the Panel. Please note that the rows where commitments cannot be identified can be deleted from the table.

GRI - Performance Indicators	2011	2012	2013	2014
General				
-				
Program Effectiveness				
NGO1: Involvement of affected stakeholder groups	**In report covering 2011**:*"CIVICUS is careful to provide continuous such opportunities for input, and in 2012 will launch a Strategy and Leadership Survey to choose the criteria for a new Secretary General, as well as a broader global consultation to set the new 2013-2017 Strategic Directions."*	**In report covering 2012**: *"(…) in 2012 CIVICUS conducted a Strategy and Leadership Survey to choose the criteria for recruiting the new Secretary General, and ensured that the search consultants employed to identify possible candidates spoke to a significant number of members (…)."*		
NGO2: Mechanisms for feedback and complaints	**In report covering 2011**: *"In 2012, CIVICUS plans to improve its ways of capturing qualitative and quantitative feedback, and is developing simple, light and cost-effective ways of taking the pulse of how its constituents experience CIVICUS as an organisation."*	**In report covering 2012**: *"In 2013, CIVICUS' Impact Planning and Learning Framework (IPLF) will be reviewed to improve all aspects of CIVICUS' reporting, planning and evaluation mechanisms. (…) this review will include the development of a complaints policy and procedure."*		
NGO4: Measures to	**In report covering 2011**: *"CIVICUS*	**In report covering 2012**: *"In terms of*		

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integrate gender and diversity into program.	*(…) is looking forward in 2012 to strengthening its annual Youth Assembly, with the possible development of a youth initiative emerging from the 2012 Assembly which will encourage better inclusion and mainstreaming of youth in CIVICUS programming."*	*diversity issues, a CIVICUS Youth Advisory Group began work in January 2013 to mainstream youth participation issues across CIVICUS (…)."*		
Economic				
-				
Environmental				
EN18	**In report covering 2011**: *"CIVICUS hopes in the coming months to develop an approach for reducing its emissions as well as monitoring them."*	**In report covering 2012**: Little progress reported.		
Labor				
LA10: Average hours of training per year per employee by employment category.	**In report covering 2011**: *"In 2012, CIVICUS will implement across the organisation (…) the Culture of Learning strategy, which will develop new ways for staff to learn from each other (…). This should also enable better reporting for 2012 on the average hours of training per staff."*	**In report covering 2012**: *"CIVICUS will be refining the tools of its Impact Planning and Learning Framework in late 2013 to align them with the new 2013-2017 Operational Plan."*		
Society				
SO3: Percentage of employees trained in organization's anti-corruption policies and procedures.	**In report covering 2011:** No anti-corruption policy in place but planned.	**In report covering 2012**: *"(…) CIVICUS adopted and briefed staff on a Fraud Prevention policy, and also drafted an Information Privacy policy."*		
Product Responsibility				
-				