



**Statement by
Marc Jourdan – GFDD UN Representative**

**Side event organized by GFDD and CoNGO:
Honouring the United Nations on its 70th anniversary**

**Thursday, May 7 2015
10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Conference room 11**

Mr. Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO,

President Sajdik,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much to CoNGO for inviting GFDD here today to address the audience during this special event which seeks to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

I wish to congratulate everyone present here, in particular civil society representatives and all the committees of the conference of NGOs, for their tireless work seeking to uphold the principles and the purpose of the UN, while highlighting public opinion on key issues such as climate change, financing for development, sustainable development and human rights more generally. Their efforts and their interventions at the UN have ensured that the international community does not deviate from the key purpose of the UN which are: to maintain international peace and security, promote equal rights and attain international cooperation on all matters, be they economic, social, cultural or of humanitarian character.

The Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the advancement of global collaboration and exchange relevant to Dominican professionals, general audiences and institutions in the Dominican Republic and abroad. The Foundation conducts research, enhances public understanding, designs public policies, devises strategies, and offers capacity building in areas crucial to social, economic, democratic and cultural sustainable development of the Dominican Republic.

As an accredited nonprofit organization with ECOSOC, UNEP, UN DPI, UNCTAD and applicant for accreditation with the UNFCCC, GFDD is a prominent voice for civil society within the UN system. Through its accreditations, the foundation attends the public sessions of inter-governmental meetings and conferences connected to each agency, makes oral statements, and circulates written material seeking to inform intergovernmental discussions on wide range of issues, from environmental protection to the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Our foundation's active engagement within the UN system can be explained by taking a step back in history to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, where representatives of 1,200 voluntary civil society organizations were present and were instrumental in drafting the first seven words of the UN Charter: "We the peoples of the United Nations...". These representatives laid the foundations for the role that civil society plays today at the United Nations, namely awareness raising and transmission of the public conscience on a given issue of debate, something the foundation continues to do today through its side event, statements and collaboration with the UN's CSO network.

Current Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson stressed in a 2010 publication that: *"The CSO community is not the deus ex machina that will solve all problems associated with global governance, yet it demonstrates time and again that things can be done differently. It thus has the potential to become a catalyst for change and to contribute to the evolution of more inclusive and effective forms of shared global governance."*

Whether we are talking about issues such as climate change or gender equality the voice of civil society has never been more present than it is today. Indeed, on the eve of the Climate Summit of September 2014, the People's Climate March saw hundreds of thousands (including thousands of CSOs) in more than 156 countries take to the streets to demand action on climate change, while the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March broke records as over 11,000 people gathered at the UN to discuss the issue of gender equality: the largest gathering of women at the UN on record.

This impetus behind civil society's involvement may be explained by the fact that 2015 will be a major year for the United Nations. In September, the international community will agree on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals – or SDGs – which will replace the Millennium Development Goals when they expire in December. The new vision promises to be much more ambitious as governments will pledge to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, take action to curb climate change and protect key ecosystems, as well as build peaceful societies and eliminate gender inequality. In July, governments will meet in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to discuss how to implement and finance the SDGs.

Much is at stake, and we need to ensure that Civil Society remains involved in these intergovernmental discussions to reach a comprehensive new development agenda that leaves no one behind. For this reason our foundation has repeatedly taken the floor at the United Nations to call for greater involvement of people and communities, and led the calls for a new development agenda, where public participation of communities is enhanced and

economic decisions are complemented by social and environmental outcomes.

As we look to the future we would therefore point to several key needs for civil society to continue in its important work:

- Need for improved coherence between processes at the national, regional and global levels to enable full engagement of CSOs at the national and regional levels.
- Greater commitment on the part of the UN to seriously and meaningfully engage Major Groups and civil society, including through improved funding.
- For Member States to engage meaningfully with CSOs, to listen to and debate with all relevant stakeholders and engage them in deliberative and decision-making processes.
- Further engagement by key stakeholders must go beyond formal consultation to active participation in the deliberative process (and in this way take stock of the further opportunities for engagement of civil society as laid out in paragraph 44 of the outcome document of Rio+20).

We remain inspired by the work of civil society and the growing number of CSO networks such as CoNGO that are actively engaged in policy discussions at the UN, and seek to uphold the principles and the purpose of the UN. 2015 is indeed an important year for these networks to ensure the new UN development agenda takes shape while reflecting global realities. But our work will not stop there, it will remain our responsibility to hold governments to account over the next 15 years for the commitments they make this year, this

is particularly so if we are to realize the transformative development agenda laid out in Rio in 2012.