

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT MEETING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Santiago, 28 February 2015

*Muy buenos días, distinguidos representantes de la sociedad civil.*

It is a great pleasure to be with you today. And it is deeply meaningful for us to meet together here at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights.

I want to thank the people of Chile for preserving the memories of the horrors and abuses that took place in this country not so long ago.

It is one thing to read about the dark days of dictatorship from a distance, but it is another to see the torture devices ... to read the words of victims ... to look upon the faces of so many whose songs ended in “silence and screams”, as Victor Jara wrote.

There is no better place to reaffirm our commitment to human rights and social justice.

In no small measure, the experiences of Chile and the wider region gave rise to the international human rights movement, as we know it today.

Thank you for raising your voices.

You represent Chile in all its diversity.

You represent women. You represent children and youth. You represent indigenous peoples, workers and trade unions.

You speak for local authorities and NGOs. You speak for business and industry. You speak for the scientific and technological community.

You work in the Atacama Desert, here in Santiago and in Patagonia. You come from rural areas as well as urban centers.

Chile has a history of a strong civil society which is on display at this museum.

Since the fall of the dictatorship, Chile has been an example of democratic development and citizen coexistence.

In today’s Chile, the voice of civil society remains as strong as ever. And it can be heard clearly in every aspect of public life.

Think tanks search for different recipes to tackle persisting inequality.

Student groups are calling for better access to education for all.

Business associations aim to ensure a good environment for their investments.

Indigenous peoples are making their voices heard.

Environmental groups are advocating for a better protection of Chile's unique natural heritage.

Every day, in the different parts of your large and diverse country, people have the courage to come together and contribute to society.

They know that if a few individuals join their efforts to reach a common goal, they can start to transform their neighborhoods, their villages, their cities, their country, their continent and ultimately, the planet.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Charter starts with three very significant words: "WE THE PEOPLES".

This conveys a fundamental truth.

Peace, development and human rights rely on a strong global civil society to help lead the way as agents for change.

That is why I will continue to stand up for the fundamental rights of civil society organizations.

We need to defend the rights of those who defend our rights.

Global civil society has never been more important or needed than today.

As the United Nations and as a planet, we face a truly decisive year. 2015 will help to set the course for human development for decades to come.

There are three major milestones that will mark the year we have just started.

In July, the Third Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Addis Ababa, will be an important moment for the credibility of what we are jointly striving to achieve.

In September, global leaders will gather in New York to agree on a ground-breaking, ambitious and transformational development agenda.

In December, during the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Paris, world leaders will aim for a meaningful and universal climate change agreement.

We need your commitment to ensure these agreements truly reflect the voice of the people.

We need your passion for these agreements to become more than just pieces of paper.

We need your ideas to set the pace for a better future for mankind.

In all your diversity - Thank you, once again, for everything you do to support your country and the United Nations.

Let us take strength from the memories, courage and inspiration preserved here at this museum.

Let us draw on the lessons of the past to build a better future for our world.

*Muchas gracias.*