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The Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

20 July 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Creating an enabling environment for civil society in the UK**

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. You are joining the Department at a significant time for UK civil society. The Civil Society Strategy, which is due to be published later this summer, is an important opportunity for the Government to set out how it will improve the legislative and regulatory framework that governs civil society over the next decade.

We are writing to you, as organisations that work to maintain an open and enabling environment for civil society, to initiate what we hope will be a positive and productive relationship. We recognise that you will be receiving many invitations in your new role. We would, however, very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to promote civil society in the UK and create a regulatory framework that enables it to flourish.

A strong and vibrant civil society is one where organisations can speak up on behalf of the people they support and tackle the root causes of the problems they face. Through campaigning that raises public awareness, changes public attitudes and behaviour or improves policy and legislation, we seek to effect social and environmental change. In doing so, we aim to amplify the voices of marginalised groups, raise the profile of a broad range of social and environmental priorities, and support more effective and inclusive policy making with robust evidence and expert knowledge.

The introduction of measures such as the Transparency of Lobbying, Third Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act, and the use of anti-advocacy clauses in grant agreements, have made it harder for civil society to engage in the democratic process. Research recently conducted by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation has shown that these measures have reduced the ability of charity and voluntary sector organisations to represent the people and issues they support<sup>1</sup>. The result is that the voices and views of the most vulnerable in our society, and the importance of strong environmental protections, are lost from public and political debate.

We strongly encourage you to ensure that the Civil Society Strategy includes a commitment to revising Part II of the Transparency of Lobbying, Third Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act, and to ensuring that government grant agreements support rather than limit the ability of civil society organisations to contribute fully in public debate.

We hope that you are able to meet with us to discuss these issues further, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



**Judith Brodie**

Interim CEO, Bond

**Kate Allen**

Director, Amnesty International UK

**Craig Bennett**

CEO, Friends of the Earth

**Vicky Browning**

CEO, ACEVO

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila McKechnie Foundation (June 2018) The Chilling Reality: How the Lobbying Act is affecting charity and voluntary sector campaigning in the UK. Available online at: [www.smk.org.uk](http://www.smk.org.uk)

**Rita Chadha**

Interim Director, Migrants' Rights Network

**Mike Clarke**

CEO, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

**Sarah-Jayne Clifton**

Director, Jubilee Debt Campaign

**Amy Gibbs**

Director of Advocacy, Unicef UK

**Andrew Neal**

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**Naser Haghamed**

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**Elfatih Ibrahim**

Acting Chief Executive, Human Appeal

**Neil Jameson CBE**

Executive Director, Citizens UK

**Lt-Col David Kelly**

Secretary for Communications, The Salvation Army

**Sara Llewelin**

Chief Executive, Barrow Cadbury Trust

**Girish Menon**

Chief Executive, ActionAid UK

**Amanda Mukwashi**

CEO, Christian Aid

**Polly Neate**

Chief Executive, Shelter

**Paul Parker**

Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

**Chris Roles**

Managing Director, Age International

**Alexandra Runswick**

Director, Unlock Democracy

**Tanya Steele**

Chief Executive, WWF

**Christine Stegling**

Executive Director, International HIV/AIDS Alliance

**Sue Tibballs OBE**

Chief Executive, The Sheila McKechnie Foundation

**Alison Wallace**

CEO, SOS Children's Villages UK