



NEW YORK  
CITY BAR

**UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE**

CLAYTON CHENEY

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October 4, 2021

**Via Email**

Linda Thomas-Greenfield

United States Ambassador to the United Nations

Mark Simonoff

Legal Adviser

United States Mission to the United Nations

799 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and Legal Adviser Simonoff:

Please find attached a letter from the New York City Bar Association and its United Nations Committee requesting that the United Nations restore the access of ECOSOC-accredited civil society organizations to United Nations facilities. We believe our access to United Nations facilities, along with that of other similarly situated civil society organizations, is vital to the proper functioning of the United Nations system.

Best regards,

Clayton Cheney and Catherine van Kampen, Co-chairs  
United Nations Committee

Katherine Ball

New York City Bar Association's Primary Representative  
to the United Nations

**About the Association**

*The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has 25,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world.*

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BAR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

42 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10036

212.382.6600 | [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org)



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**Via Email**

H.E. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General, OLA

Mr. Stephen D. Mathias, Assistant Secretary-General, OLA

Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, DESA

United Nations Headquarters

New York, NY 10017

**Re: UN Access for ECOSOC Accredited Civil Society Organizations**

Your Excellencies:

The New York City Bar Association (City Bar) is proud to be an ECOSOC-accredited nongovernmental organization and a civil society organization associated with the Department of Global Communications. The City Bar, and its respective committees, support and promote the work and objectives of the United Nations, particularly in the field of international law.

We are disappointed, however, that we and other civil society organizations, alone amongst the contributors to the work of the UN, have been uniformly denied any access to UN headquarters this fall. An appeal to restore our access by many NGOs was rejected once again in a September 7 email from the NGO branch at UN DESA, confirming our grounds passes will not be renewed “until further notice.” Further letters on September 17 from Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, the Chef de Cabinet for the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, did not even specifically address the NGO request for the renewal of grounds passes.

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Civil society organizations are recognized invitees and contributors to the work of the UN, with Article 71 of the UN Charter explicitly recognizing the status of ECOSOC-accredited NGOs. We believe that civil society organizations' participation in meetings, when permitted, and interactions with UN staff and representatives of Member States are essential to a properly functioning UN system. We trust that any restrictions being imposed by the UN are based solely on public health concerns, but we are concerned that some Member States may support such measures as a pretext to hinder the participation of civil society organizations in the work of the UN. We sincerely hope that due consideration is given to the role civil society organizations play within the UN system when the next review of restrictions on access to the UN is conducted in early October.

The City Bar takes COVID safety very seriously and supports the UN imposing all reasonable safety measures and protocols, including those mandated by New York City for access to public spaces, for the renewal of NGO grounds passes and access to UN meetings and events. We understand the UN cannot impose these requirements on diplomats, but we are willing to comply with the same mandatory protocols imposed on UN staff.

We appreciate the emphasis the Secretary-General has placed on the importance of participation of civil society organizations in the work of the UN. However, singling out NGOs for continued exclusion runs very much contrary to that laudable policy.

We urgently request the renewal of NGO grounds passes and access to UN headquarters immediately following the end of high-level week.

Many thanks for your kind consideration,

Clayton Cheney and Catherine van Kampen, Co-chairs  
United Nations Committee

Katherine Ball  
New York City Bar Association's Primary Representative  
to the United Nations

**Contact**

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