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An issue whose time has come: ICNL holds second global forum

Posted on 8 September 2011 by [Filiz Bikmen](#)



Filiz Bikmen

Promoting a 'legally enabling environment for civil society and philanthropy' is a niche field of work, recognized by many as essential, yet often unlikely to capture the headlines. However, critical developments over the past year, namely the Arab Spring, mobilization of the [Community of Democracies](#) and appointment of the new UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, have brought this issue front and centre on the global agenda.

This made 2011 a perfect year for ICNL to organize its second Global Forum on Civil Society Law in Stockholm (the first one was held in Istanbul in 2005). ICNL President Douglas Rutzen officially opened the forum with an inspirational line-up of pre-taped personalized welcoming addresses from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Archbishop Emeritus and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu and Burmese Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The closing plenary hosted keynote speaker Gunilla Carlsson, the Swedish Minister of International Development Cooperation, while UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai held his first global NGO consultation with many of the 200+ Forum delegates from 83 countries, allowing experts from Latin America to the Middle East to voice concerns about freedoms for civic space.

This line-up – not to mention the nearly 30 parallel sessions debating issues from the role of social media in the Arab Spring to the age-old challenges with receipt of foreign funds – was evidence alone that promoting a legally enabling environment for civil society and philanthropy is indeed an issue whose time has come.

Links to videos and other content from the Global Forum are available on the [ICNL website](#).

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