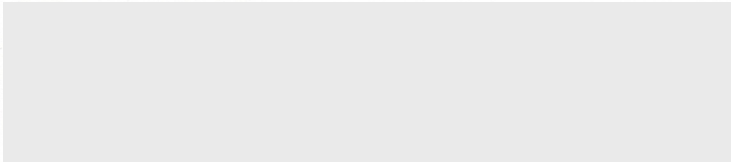




MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

November 9, 2012



Thank you for your letter informing me about the global initiative for the World NGO day. I believe it would be an excellent way to recognize the valuable work all the NGOs are doing around the world.

NGOs contribute to the building of societies by providing people with means of expression and influence. NGOs promote pluralism, diversity, and tolerance in society while protecting and strengthening cultural, ethnic, religious and other identities. NGOs motivate citizens to act, rather than depend on state power and beneficence.

Deservedly, NGOs are now widely recognized as development actors in their own right. They have increased in number and stand out thanks to their capacity to reach out to, empower, represent and defend vulnerable and socially excluded groups, and trigger social innovation. Against this background, governments in several countries have strengthened their engagement with NGOs.

Civil society is an important partner for the Finnish Government. The underlying principle of the current Finnish Development Policy is that development results can become sustainable only if the civil society can operate freely. Thus, we see NGOs as fundamental and strategic actors in achieving open and democratic societies and are committed to strengthening their capacity through increased support and improving effectiveness of their development cooperation activities.

To mark the exceptional and highly valuable work that the NGOs are doing, I warmly support the initiative to establishing an international World NGO day. The calendar day can also serve as an opportunity to aim towards more capable and strong NGO sector and to ensuring that there is also an enabling working environment for these organizations in every part of the world.

Heidi Hautala