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The Honorable Chairwoman Namugwanya Benny Bugembe  
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Mubende, Uganda  
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[chair.defence@parliament.go.ug](mailto:chair.defence@parliament.go.ug)

Members of the Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs  
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Dear Chairwoman Bugembe and Committee Members:

We at the Secular Policy Institute, together with the below signed organizations, would like to express our concerns about the proposed Ugandan Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2015. It has been brought to our attention that the new law may potentially impede the operations of many bona fide organizations in Uganda.

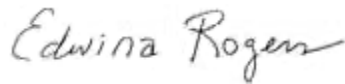
Ugandan history over the last three decades shows your country's steadfast commitment to democracy and democratic ideals. Uganda successfully awarded representation to marginalized groups by universal suffrage under the Movement System of government. The return to the multi-party politics in mid-2000s nonetheless ensured that all voices have equal right to be heard. It would be most pleasing to see that such status quo is upheld for years to come.

We fear, however, that the proposed Non-Governmental Organizations Act 2015 might create avenues to arbitrarily suppress organizations which represent unpopular viewpoints. While we agree with the stated premise of the bill to mend gaps in existing law, and curtail any possibly "subversive methods and activities" of some NGOs, we also recognize possibilities for corruption of the bill. The proposed new law calls for creation of a National Board for Non-Governmental Organizations that would not only register and issue guidelines for non-governmental organizations, but monitor all aspects of their activities. The Act also introduces some redundant requirements, for example the obligation for organizations to re-register following the enactment of the new bill. Furthermore, the Act contains wording that allows for certain discretionary decision-

making on the part of officers of the Board. This may lead to abuses of the law, as well as potential targeting and disabling of particular organizations.

There has been vocal critique of the Non-Governmental Organizations Act 2015, coming from various organizations in Uganda. Thus, we call for a review of the Act jointly with those who offer criticism. With multilateral input, a new bill may both rectify existing law, and truly foster fair and equal treatment of all non-governmental organizations in Uganda.

Yours sincerely,



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### **Signatories**

ARP Sociedad para el Avance del Pensamiento Crítico – Spain  
Canadian Secular Alliance – Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
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The Committee of Management of the Atheist Foundation of Australia – New South Wales, Australia  
Elijah Paul Rukidi-Mpuuga, Esq.  
The Foundation for Critical Thinking – Tomales, California, USA  
HALV (Humanists and Atheists of Las Vegas) – Las Vegas, Nevada, USA  
Humanist Association for Leadership, Equity and Accountability (HALEA) – Kampala, Uganda  
Humanist Association of Toronto – Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
Humanist Chaplaincy at American University – Washington, DC, USA  
Kasese United Humanist Association – Kasese, Uganda  
NLHG (North London Humanist Group) – London, UK  
OMAHA (Omaha Metro Area Humanist Association) – Omaha, Nebraska, USA  
Parent Teacher Community Action Network (PTCAN) – Washington, DC, USA  
Peter Tatchell Foundation – London, UK  
Red River Freethinkers – Fargo, North Dakota, USA  
San Francisco Atheists – San Francisco, California, USA  
Sidmennt, the Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association – Reykjavik, Iceland  
UnitedCoR – Washington, DC, USA  
Watford Area Humanists – Watford, Hertfordshire, UK