

Statement by Human Rights Caucus at Major Groups and Stakeholders Interactive Dialogue

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Your Excellencies and friends from the Civil Society,

Today, I speak on behalf of the Human Rights Caucus, a broad coalition of development, environmental, feminist, trade union and human rights organizations worldwide.

First and foremost, we want to thank the co-chairs, who in the true spirit of the United Nations, have ensured a rightful space for Civil Society in the OWG and now in the Post 2015 negotiations. We hope this opportunity to engage is maintained right through, to the end of the negotiations.

For the human rights caucus, the two big issues that are crucial for the success of the Post 2015 agenda and which need attention in the next few months are:

1. Need to advance human rights from being aspirational to operational;
2. Need for a strong accountability mechanisms to be applied to all stakeholders

Advancing human Rights from aspirational to operational – We all know that the MDGs were not aligned to existing human rights obligations or standards and hence were not on target or at times even led to undesirable outcomes. We are encouraged by the references to human rights both in the Open Working Group outcome document and in the synthesis report. Now is the time to move a step further by ensuring, well agreed and established human rights standards, making their way into the declaration, goals and targets of this framework.

Member States, will have to make concrete proposals on how to realize human rights not just in the targets and indicators but also in financing, means of implementation, monitoring and review. The caucus extends its willingness to engage and support in the formulation of such language.

Need for strong accountability mechanisms – The “A” word is essential for impact and fulfilment of the dreams for a transformational agenda that empowers people. Regardless of the language we use to describe it – monitoring, follow-up, review, reporting, or accountability – we need robust mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to track progress, highlight gaps and hear directly from people about what is working and what is not. The formal, safe and independent participation of civil society in reporting and accountability mechanisms, as recognised in the SG’s synthesis report also needs to be underscored. This is not about conditionality or accountability to other States, but providing platforms for evaluating the experiences of people and communities, hearing directly from them and sharing ideas and challenges. Innovative spaces can be created to strengthen the role of domestic stakeholders, thereby reinforcing the power of citizen engagement to foster greater accountability.

Many of the goals of the OWG outcome document are underpinned by international human rights and environmental laws and agreements which also underscore extra-territorial responsibilities for violations of human rights by state and private sector actors. The agenda gives us a unique opportunity to strengthen the monitoring, reporting and verification process of these laws thereby creating stronger ties between the technical and political tracks of accountability.

I have 3 practical suggestions:

1. Member states can use existing human rights language as a guide in the drafting of targets and indicators. Most of this language has already been negotiated and agreed by member states.
2. Member states need to ensure the entire spectrum of rights and related principles are included in the agenda. This includes not only economic and social rights, but also good governance, the rule of law and transparency, as well as with participation (especially of women, minority groups and marginalised communities), reducing corruption and promote civil and political rights such as freedom of expression, association and assembly.
3. Member states need to ensure accountability of corporates and actors such as international organizations including international financial institutions.

I thank you for this opportunity.