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**Interactive Dialogue 5  
“Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions  
to achieve sustainable development”**

**Statement by Mr. Yves Leterme  
Secretary-General of International IDEA**

Esteemed Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Institutions matter for sustainable development. However, the mere architecture of institutions alone will not ensure delivery on the 2030 Agenda. What matters most is their quality, and how responsive they are to the needs of the people.

Democratic accountability refers to the many ways in which citizens, political parties, parliaments and other democratic actors can provide feedback to, reward or sanction officials in charge of setting and enacting public policy. Well-functioning accountability mechanisms provide incentives for governments to work in the best interests of citizens. And they are the backbone of the follow up and review mechanisms envisaged by the 2030 Agenda.

The inclusion of SDG#16 among the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda is an historical achievement. It places citizens empowerment and democratic accountability of states at the core of the 2030 Agenda. The challenge is now to deliver on a commitment that recognizes the fundamental inter-linkages between peace, justice and the quality of institutions.



In our view, this will demand all the actors involved to enhance the quality of democracy. There is a global need to improve the substantive elements of democracy, and its checks and balances, to ensure that public goods are delivered according to people's priorities and that those who govern provide adequate account for their performance to the citizens and their representatives.

In many countries policy making processes are weak, political society is not pluralistic, exclusion and inequality – especially gender inequality – build insurmountable obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights, and checks and balances are poor. These factors skew political incentives away from promoting public goods that favour societies at large.

More substantive democracy requires mutual, active engagement from political actors, state agencies and groups of citizens in the daily functioning of the state between elections. It means making policies address public needs, providing services to the public in an effective way, giving feedback for adequate reforms, and giving account to the citizens and their representatives for the way public affairs are dealt with.

Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are key factors for turning the vision of the transformative and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into reality. International IDEA stands committed to supporting experience-sharing on national efforts at implementing the Agenda based on the fundamental principle of democratic accountability.

I thank you.