

**Major Groups Oral Statement**  
**Focus Area 16: Peaceful societies and Rule of Law**

Thank you Co-Chair,

We would like to make reference to Focal Area 16, Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions. We also welcome the focus that the current text places in developing participatory approaches for the promotion of peace. Peaceful and inclusive societies and rule of law are both vital for ensuring sustainable development, and we welcome the co-chairs commitment to ensuring that both remain integral to the SDGs. Neither area can afford to be lost.

Establishing peaceful and secure societies should be based on a participatory, holistic and integrated approach that addresses the root causes of conflict consistently.

**On the focus area of creating peaceful and inclusive societies**, we propose the following targets:

- a/ by 2030 reduce by X% crime, violence and exploitation, including violence against women and eliminate all forms of violence against children.
- b/ Provide all people free and universal legal identity, such as birth registration by 2030.
- c/ Ensure that by 2030, people from all social groups feel safe and have confidence in security provision and child protection systems.
- d/ Significantly reduce the irresponsible trade in arms and conflict commodities, and reduce violence and other negative impacts associated with trade in illicit drugs.

**On the focus area of rule of law, capable institutions**, we believe it is imperative to stress 'justice based governance' as a tool to enable better institutionalization of rule of law and other practices to foster peaceful and secure societies. Additionally, we support a broader understanding of the concept of public access to information that is not limited to the government sector. We also believe that the private sector should be considered when designing a framework to promote accountability and transparency.

With that in mind, we suggest the following adjustments and additions to the targets:

- a/ by 2030, ensure equal access to and confidence in independent and responsive justice systems for all people. These including those related to human rights, property and tenure rights, employment, business, taxation, fiscal policy, trade and finance
- b/ By 2025, public and private bodies have in place a comprehensive system guaranteeing access to and the timely publication of information in the public interest, and accessibility of that information in user-friendly formats.
- c/Reduce bribery and corruption by x% and ensure officials can be held accountable
- d/ Adopt a comprehensive national framework that ensures freedom of speech, media, association, information, meaningful political participation and peaceful assembly based on existing international human rights standards.

- e/All countries through national actions and international cooperation to reduce illicit financial flows, including tax evasion and money laundering by x% by 2030

Finally, I wish to highlight that our recommendation target d above is a substitute for the target 16f in the Working Document. We suggest removing the current wording on unnecessary restrictions of freedom of media, association and speech. Its current formulation would be counter-productive given that it would give governments ultimate discretion to define what are those restrictions, and runs counter to the “necessary and proportionate” principles that guide any restrictions under international law. The target should be re-phrased along the lines we propose, removing restrictions that are contrary to international law. Further, this target should expressly include freedom of assembly, meaningful political participation, the right to information as well as protection of civil society space activists, who are the lifeblood of accountability in development.

Thank you,

May 7, 2014