



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Civil Society & Other Stakeholders

Leaving no one behind when implementing the Agenda 2030



I – General Overview

“We the Peoples” are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is “We the Peoples” who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as Parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people. Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this Agenda. It is an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people – and this, we believe, will ensure its success.”

§ 48, Agenda 2030

There is broad agreement that the intergovernmental negotiations that lead to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 were unprecedented in their openness and engagement of all key stakeholders - Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations, local authorities and the private sector alike. The engagement of civil society and other stakeholders not only served to greatly enrich the debates and build global awareness but it also resulted in concrete suggestions and proposals, many of which were endorsed by governments. Based on this experience, continued support to CSO and other stakeholders at national and regional levels will be an essential element toward creating and/or strengthening formal mechanisms and commitments aimed at fulfilling the Agenda 2030.

Now it is time for UNCTs – United Nations Country Teams –to build on the positive political environment created by the global negotiation process and explore ways to create more opportunities for meaningful communication that engage governments, parliaments, supreme audit institutions, civil society, and all other relevant stakeholders in the implementation process at the national levels.

This approach will be essential to address the challenge of designing national strategies to effectively implement this transformative and ambitious global agenda and related monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

II – CSOs & other Stakeholders in the UN Sustainable Development related Processes

- ✓ The outcome of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development



“Agenda 21” recognized nine key sectors of society or “*major groups*” as the main channels through which citizens and people could organize and participate in sustainable development processes. These include *women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, and farmers.*

- ✓ The contributions and inputs of these major groups, as well as other stakeholders, have been well recognized by Member States as vital to the achievement of sustainable development, including in the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) “*The Future We Want*”¹, which reaffirmed that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of regional, national and subnational legislatures and judiciaries, and all major groups as well as other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities. In the same document, Member States agreed to work more closely with the *major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS)*, and encourage their active participation, as appropriate, in processes that contribute to decision-making, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for sustainable development at all levels.
- ✓ A key outcome of the Rio +20 Conference was the decision to launch a process to develop a set of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the elaboration of a new post-2015 development agenda in two closely related tracks: the General Assembly *Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals*², where numerous representatives from governments, private sector and civil society provided their contributions and the *Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing – IECSDF* – which held four interactive hearings with civil society.
- ✓ As part of the elaboration of the new development agenda, the United Nations also conducted an inclusive global consultation lead by UNDP in more than 100 countries involving UN agencies, member states, and civil society, with available thematic online consultations.³
- ✓ During the subsequent negotiations on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Member States held regular hearings with major groups and other stakeholders to hear their concrete suggestions and proposals. MGoS were also able to submit their written inputs and comments to the draft documents that were under consideration. The negotiations also served to expand the modalities for “others stakeholders” participation, that included, for instance, a global civil society campaign “Beyond 2015”⁴ that has promoted the vision of a transformative agenda for succeeding the MDGs since 2010.

¹ A/RES/68/266

² § 245-251 of “The Future We Want”; 22nd January 2013 by decision 67/555 (A/67/L.48/rev.1) GA

³ <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/groups>

⁴ A global coalition of CSOs – ranging from community-based organizations to international NGOs, academia and trade unions representatives, with more than 1,500 members in 140 countries (56% from the South).



- ✓ Also during the negotiations of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, civil society formed itself around the FfD Global Civil Society Coalition that participated in the process through an open and transparent call for participation. The group had a tightly woven network of activists through an email list. Several interactive hearings were organized, they held a two-day forum immediately before the Conference in Addis Ababa to discuss positions, write papers, and strategize together and during the final moments of discussion in Addis, there was a constant presence of CS in the negotiations with the support of several countries and the co-facilitators.
- ✓ As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States have agreed to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven and which should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities.
- ✓ At the global level, the high-level political forum (HLPF), under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall carry out regular reviews of the agenda. In accordance with the new agenda, these reviews will be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. These reviews shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, Member States have also called on *major groups and other stakeholders* to report to the HLPF on their contribution to the implementation of the agenda.
- ✓ The working modalities of the HLPF grant extensive participation rights to major groups and other stakeholders. In its resolution 67/290 on the “Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum”, the General Assembly “Stresses the need for the forum to promote transparency and implementation by further enhancing the consultative role and participation of the major groups and other stakeholders at the international level in order to better make use of their expertise, while retaining the intergovernmental nature of discussions, and in this regard decides that the forum shall be open to the major groups, other relevant stakeholders and entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the General Assembly [...]”. The same resolution also encourages MGoS to autonomously establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the HLPF and for actions derived from that participation at the global, regional and national levels, in a way that ensures effective, broad and balanced participation by region and type of organization.



III– The Mandate: References to Civil Society & MGoS in the Agenda 2030

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda contains several references and mandates for engaging civil society, the major groups and other stakeholders in its implementation and follow-up:

- ✓ According to the **Preamble**, “*all countries and all stakeholders acting in collaborative partnership will implement this plan*”.
- ✓ The “intensive engagement” of civil society and other stakeholders in the implementation of the goals and targets is called for on § 39 – “*This Partnership will work in a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations. It will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources*”; while the paragraph 45 brings reference to “*international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others*”;
- ✓ § 48 “*We the Peoples*” are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is “*We the Peoples*” who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as Parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people. Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this Agenda. It is an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people – and this, we believe, will ensure its success.”
- ✓ § 52 stresses that this is an agenda “*of the people, by the people and for the people*”, mentioning that “*Our journey will involve Governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people*.”
- ✓ § 60 “*The revitalized Global Partnership will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources*.”
- ✓ Inclusion and participation are also reflected on the chapter on **Follow up and Review**, committed to be “*robust, voluntary, effective, **participatory**, transparent and integrated*”. In this regard, the § 74d is critical as it sets as a principle for follow up and review at all levels to be “*open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people*” and, most importantly that they “*will support the reporting by all relevant stakeholders*”. § 74e also affirms that reviews will be “*people-centered, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and*



have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthers behind". The reviews are expected to be regular and inclusive (§ 77) at all levels.

- ✓ § 79 – "We also encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes."
- ✓ § 84 "Reviews will be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. They shall be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants. They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders."
- ✓ § 85 "(the reviews) will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into, and be aligned with, the cycle of the high-level political forum."
- ✓ § 89 calls for the High Level Political Forum to support the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the follow up and review; and also calls for them to report on their contributions to the implementation of the Agenda.
- ✓ Finally, within the **SD Goal 17**, related to the Means of Implementation, the target 17.17 states: *Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.*

IV – The Nine Pilot Country Stakeholder Engagement

The UNDESA Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), together with UNDG, UNITAR and UNCTs, will train nine countries in 2015-2016 on the transition to the 2030 Agenda. Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Honduras, Jordan, Togo, Uganda and Vietnam will be part of the project "Strengthening the Capacity of Select Developing Countries to Mainstream Sustainable Development into National Development Strategies".

The training is intended to provide enhanced understanding of the 2030 Agenda's policy-making process, planning, implementation and reviews at the national level. It will focus on the concepts and transformation implied by the 2030 Agenda; translating the global Agenda into national goals; sustainable development financing (leveraging resources and working in partnerships); as well as inclusive national mechanisms for monitoring and reviews of implementation.



It will be conducted through workshops whose didactic content was prepared by UNITAR, with input from UNDG (including UNDESA), and will strive to bring together government policy makers and institutional leaders, major groups and other stakeholders at the country level such as NGOs, academia, research institutions and the private sector.

This piloting project will require the concerted efforts of the UNCTs to facilitate the communication and close cooperation of all these relevant stakeholders to realize the targets of the SDGs by 2030.

V- Recommendations

“We need your continued pressure to align the investment toward sustainable development. We need your full support for 2015 and beyond (...) we need to keep the doors open for civil society. (...) You are the voice of the people. You can count on the UN. And, please, make your voice loud and clear.”

Ban Ki-Moon closing remarks at the FfD Civil Society Forum
Addis Ababa, July 12, 2015.

The UNCTs have a key role in helping to create the necessary conditions for overcoming the obstacles faced by many groups of people in participating fully in society and in political decision-making processes at national level. “These obstacles are rooted in political, legal, social, cultural, economic, and other structures, manifesting themselves from the local to the international level. In addition, it is often the most voiceless groups that suffer from the accelerated impacts of environmental degradation, for example those resulting from the negative effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, demographic crises and mounting social inequality and ecological debt, all by-products of an ineffective paradigm of growth and development.”⁵

For the UNCTs, it is important to recognize that many factors affect the level of engagement of CSO and other stakeholders in the UN processes. Especially for those working at national and local levels, they may range from not knowing how to voice their concerns and inputs through governmental or the UN official channels, to lack of financial

⁵<http://www.unep.org/post2015/Publications/TowardsAGlobalAgendaOfSustainabilityAndEquity/tabid/133352/Default.aspx> - Towards A Global Agenda Of Sustainability And Equity: Civil Society Engagement For The Future We Want



support or the language abilities to do so. For many who cannot participate *in person* in the global meetings, lack of information of the global discussions severely hampers their ability to do genuine follow-up at the national level.

Fully implementing these commitments will require, in some countries, different actions and the UNCT need to be ready to respond the call to support an enabling national environment that allows for civil society and other stakeholders to operate freely and effectively in pursuing the SDGs. These demands can vary from commitment to provide financial support, in some cases, to ensure access to timely and clear information about the national ongoing processes. In this regard, some key recommendations are:

- ✓ To spread information about the existence of formal mechanisms to national level CSOs and other stakeholders to participate and engage at the UN debates and the Agenda 2030 follow up processes – sharing best practices in public forums and meetings with key national decision makers.⁶
- ✓ Stimulate and support governments to create opportunities for dialogue with national and local CSOs and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Agenda 2030, especially with marginalized and excluded groups, and authorities at the local and national levels by institutionalizing dialogue structures, such as inclusive debates – at parliamentary and local government level, and also within communities. "In many cases such bodies could be based on existing institutions (e.g. village and town assemblies in many countries) that if empowered, could take on such a role"⁷.
- ✓ Support regular communication processes, a mechanism, through which civil society and other stakeholders could be informed about the ongoing implementation of the sustainable development agenda at national, sub-national, and local levels. These mechanisms must reach those from different marginalized groups.
- ✓ Provide support to CSOs and other stakeholders to participate in the relevant debates and institutional arrangements, and responsibilities at national, sub-national, and local levels for the coordination and implementation of the Agenda. In order to foster coherence and cooperation within policy-making structures, this should include, for instance, supporting their participation in the national sustainable development commissions, dialogues with the national statistical offices, social, environment, finance, foreign affairs, planning.
- ✓ It is important to note that the expression *stakeholders* is very broad and should be used and adapted to the country level in a way that expands participation of civil society actors. It works very well in English, but it is quite hard to translate to other languages. One must be careful not to narrow down its definition, for in some circles there is an

⁶ This will be very helpful once the Technology Facilitation Mechanism is implemented, in the near future.

⁷ Ibidem 13



attempt to link it only to the private sector and in others is a way to leave behind advocacy groups. It is always advisable to establish clear references, with public open calls, and define the rules of engagement and of accountability for all who want to participate.

- ✓ There is a clear relation between civil society and democratic **political society**, as a result of their roles in creating awareness, stimulating an informed citizenry, and holding government more accountable⁸. In general CSOs build **social capital**, trust and shared values, which are transferred into the political sphere and help to hold society together, facilitating an understanding of the interconnectedness of society and interests within it⁹. But because civil society is broad concept –and a concept under dispute–its capacity and power can be exercised in different ways – e.g. private lobbyists that corrupt government's officials, whether legally or not, call themselves civil society too.
- ✓ Specifically in the case of UNCTs, it is crucial to verify *who* are the national-level actors defending a transformative sustainable development in your country, and act to support the involvement of the CSOs that represent under-served constituencies while not giving even more space to those with the mission of protecting the economic, social or cultural privileges of the few groups who concentrate power, wealth and resources.

Annex 1 – Extracts from statements delivered by Member States during the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Summit¹⁰

Country	Quote	Reference
Colombia	(...) Ya establecimos en Colombia una comisión interinstitucional -con la participación de territorios, sociedad · civil, sector privado, academia, medias y organizaciones internacionales- ·para coordinar la implementación de las Objetivos de · Desarrollo Sostenible, y diseñar metodologías de trabajo intersectorial, y de evaluación, medición y seguimiento. (...)	http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/7651318/colombia.pdf
Costa Rica	(..) the United Nations has fostered significant policy development, even extending border protection to cover an increasing number of vulnerable groups, such as children, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants and indigenous people. It is crucial to create opportunities for effective participation of non –governmental	http://statements.unmeetings.org/GA70/CR_EN.pdf

⁸ Almond, G., & Verba, S.; *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes And Democracy In Five Nations*; 1989; Sage

⁹ Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti (1994). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press. ISBN 0-691-07889-0.

¹⁰ Source: Beyond 2015 collection of inputs and the IISD report on the Summit.



	<p>stakeholders; to enhance regional structures for the implementation of the global agenda;</p> <p>(..)Let us remember the importance of keeping our doors open to new realities, to civil society, to non –government organizations and to women; open to youth, who we should engage to promote reconciliation and sustainable peace; open to the suggestions of groups such as The Elders; open to collaboration among its agencies, for it is necessary to provide holistic responses to the challenges we face; open to regional and sub-regional organizations that also play a crucial role in conflict prevention and management, open to all peoples and individuals, to their ideas, their dreams and aspirations; open to change and prepared to act.</p>	
Jordan	<p>(...)On the political reform front, a new wave of laws that aim to further increase citizens participation in decision-making covering Political Parties, Municipal Elections, Decentralization have been endorsed by Parliament Discussions on the new parliamentary Elections Law will start at the next ordinary session of Parliament. (...)</p>	<p>http://statements.unm eeti ngs.org/media2/7651467/jordan.pdf</p>
Togo	<p>(...) Le premier facteur de succes pour la realisation de ces nouveaux objectifs est leur appropriation par les peuples que nous representons a ce sommet Nous devons les adapter a nos contextes regionaux et nationaux et a la diversite de nos cultures, si nous voulons realiser pleinement notre agenda. (...)</p>	<p>http://statements.unm eeti ngs.org/media2/7651332/togo.pdf</p>
Vietnam	<p>(...) We will mobilize all necessary resources. We will engage all ministries, sectors, localities, organizations and communities. And we will place the people at the center in this major endeavour.(...)</p>	<p>http://statements.unm eeti ngs.org/media2/7651351/vietnam.pdf</p>