

## **Australia-Netherlands-UK: stable and peaceful societies, good governance and effective institutions.**

Mr Co-Chair

We welcome Focus Area 16 on “peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions”. It includes issues that are instrumental to sustainable and inclusive growth and intrinsically important in themselves – corruption, transparent and accountable institutions, justice and the rule of law, freedom of speech, of association and of the media, tackling violence, organised crime and other drivers of conflict. However, we are concerned that some of the targets are less clear than in the previous draft. And in many areas we need to tighten up language so that the targets are simple, clear and action oriented.

The paper proposes two sets of issues under this focus area: creating peaceful and inclusive societies on the one hand, and rule of law and capable institutions on the other. These could be better framed as two goals, one on “good governance and effective institutions” and the second on “ensuring stable and peaceful societies”. These issues are really quite separate – a goal on good governance is about ensuring institutions are effective, that all people have a voice in their own development and can hold their governments to account. A goal on “stable and peaceful societies” is about the safety of individual citizens – and the state’s responsibility to ensure people feel secure and protected.

Under the goal on “stable and peaceful societies”, we would like to see the following refinements:

- target (a) is helpful but conflates several issues. We suggest the following separate targets, all by 2030:
  - reduce levels of violence and the violent death rate by x%
  - Reduce illicit flows by x% and reduce money laundering and trafficking of people, arms, drugs and wildlife
  - reduce the number of refugees and Internally Displaced People by x%
- We propose that target (b) on discrimination and empowerment should be merged with target (c) on participation. We suggest the following merged target:
  - “increase public participation in political processes and civic engagement at all levels.” Although we note that this could sit better under the goal on good governance and effective institutions, rather than the one on stable and peaceful societies.
- Target (d) on a culture of non-violence is potentially helpful, but we stress that this should not be at the expense of a clear target on reducing violent deaths.
- In addition we suggest a target that would open the door to international support for the relevant domestic institutions:
  - ‘enhance the capacity, professionalism, accountability and legitimacy of the security forces, police and judiciary’.
- Finally, we believe that a target on access to justice belongs under this goal on peaceful societies. A clear target would be:
  - ‘ensure justice institutions are accessible, independent and well-resourced and protect due process rights’.

Under the goal on good governance and effective institutions:

- We support target (a) by 2030 to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- Target (b) on access to justice should be broadened beyond business and property. I have already suggested a more comprehensive target under the goal on stable and peaceful societies.
- Target (c) is helpful, but we would suggest removing reference to 'providing public services for all: - governments often deliver through non-public providers. We suggest instead:
  - 'By 2030 provide free and universal legal identity'
- Target (d) is helpful but should be broadened beyond public financial management. We suggest:
  - 'By 2030, guarantee the public's right to information and access to government data.'
- Target (e) is a good start and we propose one small change to recognise that it takes two to tango:
  - 'By 2030 reduce all forms of bribery and corruption. '
- We welcome target (f) on media, association and speech but it is too heavily caveated. We suggest:
  - 'Freedom of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to media and information'.

The targets under both these goals are all measurable, often using data that are already collected by the UN as well as regional arrangements such as the African Peer Review Mechanism. These include the UN's Rule of Law Indicators, which can be used across several targets, data on refugees and IDPs, on illicit arms flows and trafficking and on violent and conflict deaths.

I want to emphasise that this is a universal agenda – there is much for my own country to do in areas such as access to justice, reducing violence and tackling bribery and corruption. While different countries start from different positions effective, inclusive and accountable institutions build trust between the state and society everywhere. But the way to get there would not be prescribed – as for other goals, decisions on how to implement each target would be for individual countries to take while international support would reinforce national ownership.

Mr Co-Chair

The bottom line is that goals in these areas are vitally important – to sustainable growth and prosperity and, above all, to our citizens: and too important to omit from a truly transformative sustainable development agenda.

Thank you