

## Full response to the SDSN Global Consultation on “Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a Data Revolution for the SDGs”

### Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment<sup>1</sup>

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**SDG16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

*“Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.” (SDG 16.10)*

#### THE NEED FOR AN INDICATOR ON PROTECTING FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

**The Task Team strongly urges** the inclusion of an indicator on the protection of fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (Sustainable Development Goal 16.10).

**These fundamental freedoms can be understood to encompass civil society freedoms** when considering the Secretary General’s synthesis report in which he observes that “press freedom and access to information, freedom of expression, assembly and association are enablers of sustainable development” and that an “enabling environment [...] must be secured for the free, active and meaningful engagement of civil society.”<sup>2</sup>

**An indicator on the protection of civil society freedoms is crucial** in light of the role that civil society is envisaged to play in the implementation and review of the Post-2015 Agenda. The Secretary General recognizes civil society is “ready and able to serve as a participant, joint steward and powerful engine of change and participation”.<sup>3</sup> However, civil society is faced with challenges in many countries where the space in which they can operate is shrinking and restrictions on their access to resources are increasing, as recognized by Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in his 2013 report.

**An indicator on protecting civil society freedoms is also crucial** for the monitoring process. As noted in the SDSN report, the Secretary General has called for a culture of shared accountability with multi-stakeholder participation.<sup>4</sup> Likewise the SDSN report recognizes the growing role of civil society organizations and notes that it is important “to foster broad, multi-stakeholder participation in national reporting”.<sup>5</sup> Multi-stakeholder monitoring is a most welcome approach, but can only be realized if civil society freedoms are protected thereby enabling civil society to perform its critical and independent role.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR AN INDICATOR ON PROTECTING FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

**The Task Team wishes to offer some basic ideas on potential indicators** to measure the protection of fundamental freedoms including civil society freedoms. One idea is to develop an indicator on the existence and implementation of national laws on civil society organizations much like the current indicator 93 on access to information. Such an indicator could help assess a country’s legal and policy framework as

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<sup>1</sup> The Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is a multi-stakeholder informal network of assistance provider governments, partner governments and CSOs associated with the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). The Task Team’s work is concerned with issues of inclusive development and multi-stakeholder partnerships. For more information see [www.taskteamcso.com](http://www.taskteamcso.com)

<sup>2</sup> UN Secretary General, “The Road to Dignity by 20130: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet”, advance unedited version of 4 December 2014, para. 78.

<sup>3</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a Data Revolution for the SDGs, 16 January 2015, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> SDSN, *supra*, p. 6.

regards civil society. As with indicator 93, it is crucial to measure law, policy and practice as good laws and policy may exist but not be implemented. An indicator on perception of civic space, along the lines of indicator 94 can also be considered. Lastly, an indicator on compliance with recommendations from the Universal Period Review and UN Treaties could be another option to measure protection of fundamental freedoms, as most civil society freedoms are encompassed in international human rights treaties. Particularly pertinent is the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai.

**The Task Team wishes to refer to substantial initiatives underway to define appropriate indicators** based on the existence and implementation of national laws that enable civil society to maximize their full diversity in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. The Transparency and Accountability Initiative is looking into developing a comprehensive index to measure civic space. The development of such an index could draw from the Enabling Environment National Assessments conducted by CIVICUS and ICNL, ICNL's NGO Law Monitor, CIVICUS' Enabling Environment Index and CIVICUS' Civil Society Index.

**The Task Team wishes to refer to existing indicators** measuring fundamental freedoms such as the Freedom in the World Survey by Freedom House and the Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders.

## SDG 17

### Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

*“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries” (SDG 17.16)*

*“Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.” (SDG 17.17)*

#### **THE NEED FOR AN INDICATOR ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION**

**The Task Team strongly urges the inclusion of an indicator on the participation of civil society** in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in light of the explicit reference in SDG 17 to multi-stakeholder partnerships, notably the commitment to encourage and promote various partnerships including civil society partnerships. Indeed, as noted by the Secretary General in his Synthesis Report, inclusive partnerships must be a key feature of implementation at all levels and must include participation of all relevant stakeholders, meaning public-private partnerships.<sup>6</sup> The Secretary General urged states to invest in the capacities of civil society institutions to enable their critical role as independent development actors (para. 129).

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR AN INDICATOR ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION**

**Collaboration can be sought with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)** in monitoring civil society participation, and to some extent civil society freedoms. The GPEDC has a global monitoring framework comprising 10 indicators that tracks progress on the commitments agreed at the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan. Of pertinence to civil society freedoms is indicator two: “Civil society operates within an environment which maximizes its engagement in and contribution to development.” The GPEDC could play a role in the thematic communities referred to in the SDSN report<sup>7</sup> that develop specialist indicators for monitoring and accountability related to issues of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

<sup>6</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 81.

<sup>7</sup> SDSN, *supra*, p. 9.