

ECOSOC E-DISCUSSION ON “MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: WHAT IT TAKES”

Input from the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment



Partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda

How can multi-stakeholder partnerships be effectively established and taken into account to facilitate the implementation of development priorities?

Individual institutional efforts and joint participation/collaboration of various stakeholders – each with their own resources and comparative advantages – are needed to tackle the complex challenges the SDGs seek to address. Though there appears to be wide recognition of the need for a participatory course of action, there is less clarity on how this can be operationalized. In view of the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment (Task Team), sustained inclusive dialogue and systematic participation of civil society and other stakeholders (individually and through multi-stakeholder partnerships) will be an essential ingredient for a sustainable development framework.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can facilitate the implementation of development priorities consistent with the SDGs by promoting inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement, in terms of developing, implementing and reviewing specific development priorities. Multi-stakeholder engagement in development requires an environment that is conducive to the engagement of diverse development actors. Two key elements of such an enabling environment are sustained inclusive dialogue and an appropriate legal and regulatory framework.

1. Sustained inclusive dialogue. Sustained inclusive dialogue is about the sustained engagement of various actors (such as local governments, civil society and the private sector) in dialogue to establish, monitor and be accountable for development policy and plans. Such dialogue is inclusive when it is multi-stakeholder, institutionalized and transparent, with feedback mechanisms on how input has been taken into account. The presence of systematic and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue fora is key to take into account the interests of diverse development actors (particularly those representing poor and marginalized populations) and create the foundation for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of development priorities.

2. Appropriate legal and regulatory framework. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with civil society, need to be supported through appropriate legal, regulatory and policy environments. An enabling environment for civil society is critical for the engagement of civil society and other development actors. It implies law, policy and practice consistent with internationally agreed rights such as the freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression, which the UN Secretary General has recognized as “enablers of sustainable development.” The creation and protection of an enabling environment is highly significant in light of major challenges civil society faces in many countries where the space in which they can operate is shrinking.

Additionally, in order to benefit from multi-stakeholder partnerships, the Secretary General recognizes in his Synthesis Report the need to invest in civil society’s capacity to perform their critical and independent development roles. We highlight his recommendation that significant resources – financial and otherwise – be directed to support CSOs in these roles. This can be supported through civil society policies – developed in collaboration with civil society – that aim to strengthen civil society, promote CSOs’ role in public awareness raising, facilitate access to capacity-building, implement development programs and allow collaboration through policy dialogue and mutual learning.

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What kind of monitoring and review in the multi-tiered and multi-stakeholder responsibility structure will be required for the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda? What would be the key features of an effective monitoring and review framework? How will action on the different goals at the global, regional or national levels be better tracked, taking into consideration national and regional specificities? What incentives would be needed to ensure that a broad range of actors engage in monitoring and review of results?

The Secretary General has called for a culture of shared responsibility with multi-stakeholder participation. The SDSN in its February report on Indicators and a Monitoring Framework notes that it is important “to foster broad, multi-stakeholder participation in national reporting” while recognizing the growing role of civil society organizations. The Task Team echoes the need to foster multi-stakeholder participation and civil society engagement in monitoring at various levels, from global to local.

Multi-stakeholder monitoring is a welcome approach, but can only be realized if civil society freedoms are protected, thereby enabling civil society to perform its critical and independent role. An enabling environment is thus an important precondition for multi-stakeholder participation in monitoring and reviewing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This enabling environment for civil society implies law, policy and practice consistent with internationally agreed rights including *inter alia* the freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression, which the UN Secretary General has recognized as “enablers of sustainable development.” This is highly significant in light of major challenges civil society faces in many countries where the space in which they can operate is shrinking.

The Task Team also recommends to look to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), which serves as a model for multi-stakeholder partnership and is furthermore a significant source of ideas and experience concerning the “how” of the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including in relation to specific monitoring and reporting on progress in the effectiveness of development cooperation against specific goals and indicators.