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Speaking points for CS constituency, PFD Virtual meeting with DEVCO DG

The primary challenge for the NGO sector is protecting our space to work. The pressure on the civic space was constantly a structural challenge to development, but the current measures to face Covid19 create additional challenges. The EU should not compromise on fundamental Rights, inclusion and participation of all stakeholders in partner countries. It should rather enhance their capabilities to advocate and influence laws, investments, planning and public policy making. Citizen's engagement needs to go beyond awareness and education about A2030 to allow for active and democratic participation in decision making and policy implementation.

Active and free participation is fundamental to **inclusive dialogue**, that is necessary to maximize EU programming impact. Additional steps to **institutionalise inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue** are needed using existing tools: a more consistent follow-up and implementation of CSO roadmaps, ensuring that EU delegations include local CSOs in their policy dialogue with partner countries and that civil society can effectively monitor all sector reforms supported with EU funds, build linkages between national and regional/global civil society networks through mechanisms such as the Policy Forum on Development.

Speaking from my own country of Lebanon, we know how vital the role of civil society and inclusive dialogue is in crises situations and peacebuilding processes. For an appropriate and sustainable response, we must attempt to involve all the members of the community. **Funding for EU programming should include the humanitarian- development nexus and not leave it to the rapid response pillar**, particularly in protracted crises and conflict contexts.

An independent and active non-governmental sector is an integral part of migration and refugee management and integration. The EU should see migration as an opportunity and commit to actions addressing its root causes. As for refugees, interventions should ensure their meaningful participation, alongside the host communities and local institutions.

Finally, simplifying EU international assistance by lifting administrative and financial barriers would allow for greater civil society engagement, so we look forward to new simplified procedures at DEVCO to ensure that local CSOs are in terms of tackling the many challenges ahead.