

## SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen and honourable members of the PFD, Honourable Ms Linda McAven, Ms Andersone, EEAS (tbc), dear Co-Chairs, Ms Moustache-Belle and Mr Balbis.

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this third global meeting of the Policy Forum on Development.

I cannot imagine a more fitting audience than the grouping present today to discuss the future of the development agenda. The civil society networks and local authorities associations are behind the need to create space for all actors of development, working for equality and opportunity, for justice, dignity, social development and poverty alleviation.

Governments and leaders will converge later this year to agree on a new development agenda. But the impact of these decisions and changes will very much depend on whether people are free to unite, to speak their minds and hold their leaders and governments accountable; and whether entrepreneurs are free to create and develop new ideas in order to innovate economies and create new and decent jobs.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the wider framework of our coming together. That is the reason why this platform for dialogue was created because you, CSOs, are an essential component of any working democracy, by promoting universal values that are also at the core of EU policies. Local Authorities are key to enhancing local governance by delivering public services and bolstering local economic development, ultimately leading to better lives. By bringing you all together in this unique setting of the PFD, we hope to make the best use of synergies, ideas and good practices.

And I believe we have gone far beyond mere technical meetings: the platform has indeed matured to an active space of exchange, of constructive criticism, of better knowing each other, of sharing experiences. It has by itself already contributed significantly to a more enabling environment for you and intensified our relationship. It's a win-win situation.

I also believe that the Commission has stood up to its commitments and supported this process further not only in words but also in actions.

Take for example the support to associations and umbrella organisations, discussed and proposed in the structured dialogue process. We signed 5 strategic partnerships earlier this year with 5 representative associations of local authorities. I am convinced that a stronger empowerment of Local Authorities is a powerful vector of development in all its dimensions: political, economic, social and environmental. Responsible and accountable Local Authorities triggering a change in the quality of citizen's life and promoting active citizenship are also paramount for increasing democratic participation and for human rights. The so called Framework Partnership Agreements are no longer "hypothetical" but a reality! And we have the intention to extend this possibility also to CSO umbrella organisations.

Another example are the Roadmaps: in early 2014 we launched the Roadmaps at country level in order to engage more strategically with local civil society organisations. This is the first time that we - together with Member States - provide one single framework for all our various engagements with civil society – from policy dialogue to operational support. Although it is too early to assess the results of this exercise we are encouraged to see that many Delegations use the Roadmaps to engage in broad consultations at country level. This is also backed up by a recent report from CONCORD, which I believe you will discuss later in the programme. Now we must focus on implementing the Roadmaps and I am counting on you to work with us and to hold us accountable in the years to come. The Roadmaps hold the potential to significantly improve our engagement with civil society and they remain therefore a useful tool which we will further build on.

We have also just published guidance on promoting the participation of civil society organisations in domestic policy and budget processes. CSOs have an important role to play throughout the policy and budget cycle - from the mobilisation of domestic revenue to the delivery of services at the local health clinic or the local school. CSOs are not only vital to promoting domestic transparency and accountability. They can also play an important role by participating in public policy processes – including at the local level by working closely with local authorities.

And to end my list of examples, let me also mention our permanent strive for a more efficient and more effective EU aid. Far from promoting a one-size-fit all approach, we favour a smart mix of aid delivery mechanisms for better

efficiency. Where feasible we support direct granting but we are also looking at other modalities such as sub-granting as a mechanism to reach smaller actors. The latter remains a challenge and more work is needed to find modalities which provide the right balance between "feasibility" and "necessity or opportunity". Tomorrow you will also have the occasion to discuss, as we do regularly, the programming stage of the Thematic Programme CSO/LA and its implementation modalities.

Allow me to place our PFD work in the wider framework of Commission priorities and initiatives.

When taking up office, the Juncker Commission spelled out its main policies and priorities. A key task for President Juncker is to strengthen democratic legitimacy on the basis of the Community method, to restore European citizens' confidence and to bring Europe closer to its citizens, listen to them and respond to their needs and their concerns. Initiatives like the PFD are based in the same spirit of initiating a dialogue closer to citizens and help us to drive our change agenda forward by stimulating debate, developing people's awareness and pushing us further to do more and better.

You are by now all familiar with the 2015 EYD initiative. At EU level, this is the first time ever that a European Year is devoted to the EU's external action. This provides for the DG in charge of International Cooperation and Development a unique opportunity to showcase our commitment to eradicating poverty worldwide, to engage Europe's citizens and to show how EU development cooperation brings added value and makes a real difference to people's lives. The EU Programme "Development Education Awareness Raising" (DEAR) under the CSOs/LAs Thematic Programme is specifically aimed at raising the awareness of development among EU citizens. 6 projects involving 32 Local Authorities have just recently kicked off, for an amount of 15 Million Euros to raise awareness on global development issues and to make EYD concrete at local level.

On 3-4 June 2015 we will then have the European Development Days.

The EDDs are an open, collaborative and inclusive forum. They show Europe's commitment to the eradication of global poverty. The forum builds on a core belief: cooperation is the cornerstone of a fairer world. An essential

aim is thus to facilitate networking and inspire the desire to work together even more closely in a spirit of true partnership. You are of course all welcome to participate and assist us in carrying this message of partnership beyond Europe's borders.

The EDDs will be preceded on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> by another event of interest to you namely the two yearly Assises of Decentralised cooperation co-organised between the Committee of the Regions and the Commission. The Assises will gather together several hundred representatives of local and regional authorities from the EU and developing countries to continue the political dialogue with the European institutions on the challenges of development cooperation.

Let me close by expressing my appreciation for your dedication, contribution and commitment to the PFD process. In all your diversity you have been able to foster a rich, fruitful and free debate resulting in shared ideas and common understanding. I hope we will further move on that path.

Wishing you a successful and enriching dialogue!!