

## **Shared Position Paper**

by the members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD)

### **Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Approach**

As International Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Local Authorities (LAs), participants in the Policy Forum in Development, we recognize that multi-stakeholder partnerships have become an increasingly important element of the international development architecture and feature strongly in the global dialogue on the SDG's agenda. Therefore, the aim of this joint position paper is to contribute to dialogue with the EU for the *definition and implementation of a strong and truly inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Partnership for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.

We value the role of the PFD as a consensus-building and consultative process for the involvement of CSOs and LAs in European development cooperation<sup>1</sup>, and we recognize it as a multi-stakeholder space that contributes to strengthening partnerships and mutual understanding, as well as a mechanism for exploring ways to improve development policies and programmes. We acknowledge the implicit policy-influencing character of the PFD.

We are concerned about increased development policy coherence, effective development cooperation and a mainstreamed dialogue within the EU bodies, directorates and units and would like to recall the European and International Policy Frameworks, and especially the EU Agenda for Change, the EU Communications on Europe's engagement with Civil Society and Local Authorities in external relations<sup>2</sup>, as critical references for the development and application of a Multi-stakeholder Partnership framework.

#### ***Inclusive multi-stakeholder approaches in SDG implementation***

Looking ahead to the broader, more integrated and universal agenda of the SDGs, the challenges will require a significant scaling up of Multi-stakeholder Partnerships, as stressed by the UN SG, to achieve the kind of transformative action and systemic change that the SDGs call for.<sup>3</sup> This includes the need for Multi-stakeholder Partnership policy dialogue.

This concurs with the EC engagement in previous communications to "invest more in promoting, supporting and monitoring effective mechanisms" for a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue that includes "all concerned actors, such as CSOs and the private sector where relevant, and partner governments, local authorities, parliaments and other national institutions" at different levels (EU, national and local, including in partner countries).<sup>4</sup>

Due to its great diversity, civil society plays multiple roles as an independent driver of development processes, working with governments to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, fighting for gender equality, supporting the delivery of services, social and economic empowerment and policy development and guaranteeing the full implementation of human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> See Terms of References PFD

<sup>2</sup> COM (2012), 492 final (The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations) and COM (2013), 280 final (Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes). The final Structured Dialogue Budapest Declaration recognizes the diversity of civil society actors and their specific role in development processes

<sup>3</sup> See SDG 17.16, UN SDG Follow-up report, paragraph 3. 'The follow-up and review framework must carry forward the spirit of partnership and the enthusiastic civil society and business sector engagement... It should inspire a multi-stakeholder approach to implementation'

<sup>4</sup> COM (2012), 492 final, 4.1.

Local and regional authorities are the level of government closest to the people, recognized in national laws and constitutions. They are widely recognized as a policy-making level of government and are generally responsible for promoting the development of their cities and territories, and for delivering the basic and social services that are critical for the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agenda.

The commitment to “leave no one behind” has been the main aspiration of Agenda 2030, calling for a shift in the way that multiple stakeholders are engaged in development at multiple levels and even questioning current growth patterns. This aspirational objective of the SDGs requires ownership of the broadest segment of society, as democratic ownership is key to the success of any undertaking. Hence, inclusive MSHP are an essential component in achieving the aims for the SDGs.

#### ***How we understand a real multi-stakeholder approach***

A multi-stakeholder, people-centred and inclusive approach implies the involvement of all stakeholders, including civil society, local and regional authorities and the private sector to enable governments and policymakers to better integrate the diverse needs and concerns of people in the formulation of sustainable development policies at all levels and to involve them in the implementation and follow-up processes.<sup>5</sup>

A MSHP approach can provide multi-level platforms or networks for achieving sustainable impact at scale by opening up new opportunities for advocacy and collaboration, linking action across multiple scales from national to local and from local to global, and by facilitating rapid learning and efficient knowledge transfer, both horizontally and vertically.

#### ***Added-value of multi-stakeholder involvement in consultation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation***

- It leads to stronger engagement and ownership by stakeholders as diversity constitutes a rich resource from which development policies can draw knowledge, legitimacy, and open spaces that guarantee more participation and enhanced effectiveness;
- Stimulates reinforced and respectful cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors;
- Effectively allocates tasks and responsibilities, reducing overlapping and improving coordination;
- Builds inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote democratic processes in development cooperation across different arenas;
- Increases the accountability of governments and international organisations, and engages stakeholders in this task;
- Maximises institutional synergies for the crafting and implementation of the SDGs;
- Democratises the effective development cooperation agenda;
- Creates a more enabling environment for socioeconomic development, poverty eradication and enhanced governance;
- Contributes to identifying and addressing vulnerable groups to avoid leaving anyone behind, as clearly indicated by the SDGs, through the mobilization of local resources and capacities.

#### ***How to mobilize multi-stakeholder frameworks within the SDGs***

Potential ways to include diverse stakeholders in SDG implementation need to be further explored. Different actions could be advanced: 1) recognition of the role of the different actors at all levels, 2) awareness-raising and capacity building for the SDGs, their targets and processes, with adequate human, financial and technical resources 3) dialogue and consultation to create ownership of the goals and targets of Agenda 2030, 4) opening of the implementation processes to all stakeholders 5) including stakeholders in the monitoring and

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<sup>5</sup> COM (2012), 492 final, 4.1. and COM (2013), 280 final, 2, suppose that the involvement of CSOs, the private sector and local authorities, among others actors, in public policy processes and in policy dialogues leads to inclusive and effective policies and in the development, implementation and monitoring of national strategies, at all levels. The UN SG, in its UN SDG Follow-up report, calls for multi-stakeholder dialogues (such as those held during the negotiation of the 2030 Agenda, p 67)

evaluation mechanisms and, finally, 6) institutionalising spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue to ensure the continuity of the process.

### ***How to use the Multi-stakeholder approach at different levels***

#### ***At the local level:***

A multi-stakeholder approach at the local level can be built on significant existing experience in participatory mechanisms (such as participatory planning or budgeting) to foster local development policies, for the definition of localized priorities (in coordination with national goals and targets), assessment of priorities, mobilization of resources, co-responsibility and cooperation for implementation, follow-up and evaluation. This is in line with the concept of a “territorial approach of development”, as developed by the European Commission, whose aim is to strengthen cooperation between all actors, to promote activities embedded in the territory (endogenous growth), put human values at the centre and mobilise local potentialities and assets. A MSHP approach can also support data localization through the involvement of local actors in their collection.

#### ***At the national level:***

Efforts should be made to move stakeholders towards a national consensus on the definition of national priorities, strategies and the institutional framework for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the new goals and targets with the aim of placing the SDGs at the centre of the development agenda. During the MDGs, some countries created special multi-stakeholder MDGs fora or committees at the national level. Some countries are now moving in a similar direction (e.g. Colombia).

The national dialogue should be instrumental in creating an enabling institutional environment (national legislation and regulations) to provide the framework for stakeholders to act, create incentives or detect obstacles to sustainable development action, especially regarding social inclusion (encouraging the full exercise of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights), inclusive economic development and progressive environmental protection. As an example, social dialogue at the national level can also contribute to the inclusion of stakeholders in all stages of SDG implementation for issues generally relating to economic and social policy, from the local to national or regional level, on the broad spectrum of issues covered by the 17 SDGs.

The EU should make the most of its network of delegations to promote a multi-stakeholder approach in the partner countries where it is based. While they should not replace the states’ responsibilities, EU delegations can nevertheless promote inclusive dialogue between national institutions, CSOs and LAs.

#### ***At the regional level:***

The regional and sub-regional levels play a key role in the follow-up and review of the SDGs, as reflected in paragraphs 80-81 of the 2030 Agenda. UN regional commissions and organisations undertaking these efforts should emulate national and global level multi-stakeholder mechanisms to involve CSOs and LAs in consultation and input to regional and sub-regional SDG reporting. The contribution of CSOs and LAs with a regional scope can prove useful for the aggregation, analysis and comparison of data related to SDG targets and indicators. The EU, as a regional organisation that regularly involves multiple stakeholders in policy-making in general, and most particularly in development policy through the PFD, provides an example of a multi-stakeholder framework to other regional organisations.

#### ***At the global level:***

The 2030 Agenda has a universal character. All countries need to contribute their fair share to realise full harmony between the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. This can only be done with the inclusion of CSOs and LAs in SDG implementation at all levels, from local to global. A multi-stakeholder approach is therefore needed to ensure that local realities are also the priority of a global agenda. In this sense, civil society and local authorities must be seen as fundamental actors in guaranteeing more resilient and sustainable societies. The EU should use its leading role in multilateral arenas and global governance to involve CSOs and LAs in all SDG processes.