

## HLPF 2016 Position paper

### Major Group of Non Governmental Organisations

(Final Draft – 23 April 2016)

*UN DESA/DSD has invited the nine major groups and other relevant stakeholders to submit one paper per sector/group of no more than 2,800 words to DSD by Monday, 25 April 2016. The list of the endorsing organizations may be found at the end of the document.*

## HLPF 2016 – “Ensuring that no one is left behind”

### Our starting point:

All members of the Major Groups of NGOs are committed to deliver fully on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Active participation of civil society organisations and other stakeholders is crucial for its success. It is historical that at the UN such a comprehensive agenda has been adopted by all Member States. This agenda has the potential to transform the global economic system. By making the most of this opportunity, the international community could break out of the ‘business as usual’ approach that left the MDGs unmet. Our governments must recognize that the implementation of the SDGs is universal and governance driven.

The international community and UN member States need to upscale the role of and support for civil society in implementing the SDGs, along with the need for all countries to fully engage in the 2030 Agenda. All countries need to integrate implementation both horizontally and vertically (thus across all sectors of the economy and society and across all levels of governance) and with sufficient action being undertaken and being on track to fully achieve the goals, targets and indicators.

If governments really take this new framework seriously, it requires changing our economic relations and institutions, and most critically the political will to change power relations and achieve shared collective interests, above that of the wealthy minority. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is based on human rights, justice, and common but differentiated responsibilities. It is about putting sustainability at the heart of all national and international policies and involving stakeholders at all levels. This includes ensuring that policies and strategies are relevant to all vulnerable populations. This implies policy coherence, a shift in investments, tax reform, and a redesign of finance mechanisms. It also requires removing taxes on labour to use of natural resources and financial speculation. Economic and trade systems also need to be properly regulated after decades of deregulation. We call for a fair global economic and financial system. This includes the control of international financial markets as well as the restriction of harmful speculation, tax evasion and avoidance, and the suppression of the illegal flow of capital and harmful tax competition. To do so, improved regulation of conduit banks and derivatives is needed. The transparency of financial markets must also be increased.

The inequality gap is reaching new extremes worldwide between individuals, social groups, regions and countries, both inter- and intra-generational. The current economic system as well as consumption and lifestyle patterns are based on massive and unlimited resource consumption and are not capable of delivering on sustainable development. Economic inequality is driven by deliberate policy choices designed to enrich the extremely wealthy while impoverishing everyone else. This is accompanied by an increased need for land for agriculture, settlements, and transportation routes, as well as an over-exploitation of natural resources.

It is not enough to just ensure that 'no one is left behind', but to also make sure that there are limits on the accumulation of extreme wealth. Redistribution of wealth, public access to natural resources and other basic needs is a more effective and realistic approach than continuing the failed neo liberal policies of seeking to end poverty through economic growth alone. "No-growth" models of societies need to be defined, particularly for wealthy countries. The size, quality, and functionality of ecosystems are reduced, and biodiversity as well as ecosystem services for people are lost. The squandering, exploitation, and overuse of resources (agricultural land, water cycles, forests, fishing stocks, etc.) is constantly increasing. We are by far exceeding the planetary boundaries. As a result, many societies are losing the basis for their livelihoods or seeing their future perspectives deeply compromised. Global poverty will not be eradicated without respect for ecological limits and planetary boundaries. Overuse leads to and reinforces poverty in societies heavily dependent on natural resources. Protecting biological diversity and restoring ecosystem functionality and capacity on all levels – from a global to a local level – must therefore be one of the central pillars of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This should include sustainable availability and accessibility of, as well as the just distribution and equal access to, natural resources.

### On 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

*"We want a new global approach where the economic and financial systems are an instrument to deliver wellbeing for all, instead of only giving profit to a few. This implies going back to a real economy that is not based on debts; where trade is not an objective on its own, but a way to distribute goods and services; where labour standards and the limits of planetary boundaries that support human life are respected; where local and regional scale trade, SMEs and cooperatives are supported to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns. An economic approach where the global trading system is development-oriented and developing countries have the right to develop according to their own models". (Action for Sustainable Development – a global civil society platform)*

- The SDGs are a step forward compared to the MDGs, both in terms of the process to develop them and in their universality, scope and ambition, and in particular their potential for tackling inequality and environmental degradation.
- One of the main aims of the negotiations leading up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda was to develop a comprehensive, ambitious and integrated framework, such that all three dimensions are represented, preferably within each goal area and linked to each other across the framework. This has been achieved, up to a point. It must therefore be retained, respected and reflected in the monitoring, review and accountability mechanisms that are to be set up. It will be critical to measure and ensure that progress

in one area of the framework does not undermine progress elsewhere in the framework. This means that *how* a target is reached is as important as to whether it is reached.

- Civil society is committed to realising goals and targets to end poverty; foster decent labour standards; ensure quality education and life-long learning; provide public services; achieve human rights; achieve health for all; reduce inequalities; provide safe and sustainable infrastructure; champion women and girls' rights; support children and youth to ensure sustainable development, and ensure environmental and climate justice, so as to seek nature-inspired solutions to problems relating to unsustainable practices.
- The world is faced with numerous challenges like growing social and economic inequity, continued and increasing environmental degradation, growing resource consumption and the aftermath of the financial, economic and food crises, as well as the intensifying of climate change. Therefore, we need commitment and new solutions to tackle these issues along with achieving tax justice, eliminating tax havens, addressing the worldwide lack of human rights. Conflict and war are accompanied by growing migration and refugee movements as well as xenophobia, racism and a continuing political undermining of the right of asylum. All countries need to meet their common but differentiated responsibilities and respect international conventions.
- Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is a key element of accountability for the comprehensive, ambitious and integrated framework of the 2030 Agenda. PCSD is a necessary bridge across the principles and the indivisible Goals. As a principle it prescribes that states must take into account the impact their policies and actions have on people's prospects for sustainable development, as well as the ability of other countries to realise their people's human rights within planetary boundaries. It speaks to the need for states to mitigate any potentially negative impacts reduce by reducing total environmental pressure and to provide redress for impacts that are proven to have been detrimental to groups of people or other countries.
- Given that up to 80% of those facing extreme poverty live in small, rural, or impoverished urban communities, Member States must provide them with the support needed to ensure that their basic needs are met, access to basic services is guaranteed, and investment in environmental protection measures is provided that includes biological waste treatment, eliminating pollution and the adoption of restorative practices that will reverse the degradation of the natural environment.
- Addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and forced displacement of people is imperative. It is not enough to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants, refugees and trafficked persons but policies need to be put in place to stop the arms trade and the conflicts that lead to such situations.
- All member states must build its success on capacities, knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

### On 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development: monitoring, review and accountability

- As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a policy and political agenda, it is key that States are the primary duty-bearers for successful implementation. States are the bodies that decide on the rules of the game, governance and legal frameworks.

- For effective monitoring and accountability, all governments should urgently develop national and local strategies for the SDG implementation, including concrete, binding action plans with targets, timelines and milestones. All national sustainable development plans should include provisions to implement all relevant SDGs and not only those for which budgets, programs and frameworks already exist from the public and private sector. National budgets must include allocations for all goals. All national goals and indicators must give consideration to human rights, the social, ecological and economical dimension of sustainable development and be regularly readjusted.
- All Member States must strengthen existing or design new participatory processes which will enable civil society to contribute to the design and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all stages and levels and to engage in a systematic way in monitoring, review and accountability processes. The creation of multiple participatory review mechanisms at all levels from local to regional will, therefore, be necessary in order to be inclusive of all people, including those who are the hardest to reach. Examples of such mechanisms include social audits, scorecards, surveys and online/mobile telephone polling. In this way, qualitative data will complement quantitative data. Clearly, freedom of expression, association and assembly, including freedom of the media, and full transparency and availability of information to all actors is a sine qua non for people to engage in monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development.
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which complements and supports the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, also calls for improved accountability in a number of areas, not least in the context of the role and responsibilities of the private sector, public-private partnerships, financial institutions, philanthropic organisations and through the transparent provision of information and data.
- We do not believe that reporting by Member States at the HLPF only twice over the 15 year lifetime of the 2030 Agenda is adequate. We would propose a minimum of every 5 years, along the lines of country reporting to the UN Human Rights Council.
- All States should be held accountable by the HLPF for whether they have set aside the requisite financial resources - "to the maximum extent possible" - for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the domestic level. Similarly, the HLPF must focus on the effort states have made to assist other states to achieve the SDGs through the Means of Implementation (MOI) and in their national context.
- Appropriate and ambitious indicators should be developed at all levels, which will guide the Member States in their reporting and for which they will be held accountable according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. These indicators must ensure that a focus on disparities is maintained to ensure a more equitable distribution. All countries must be expected to collect disaggregated data in order to monitor progress in closing the gaps in equality between people and countries, maintaining and improving ecosystems and staying within the fair share of the ecological footprint. Civil society must be given access to these data and vulnerable populations should also be involved in the monitoring process.
- All public private partnerships must be held to account in a fully transparent manner, with clear terms of reference for what is expected of all parties, which is made available to the public. Any actor that is called upon by a state to contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be held fully accountable for their part against international standards and guidelines on human

rights, decent work and environmental sustainability and justice, at the very minimum. There is currently a considerable gap in effective mandatory accountability mechanisms in the area of corporate transparency and accountability.

## On Means of Implementation (Mol) and Financing for Development (FfD)

*“Developing countries lose at least \$170 billion in tax revenues each year, because rich individuals and multinational companies hide vast amounts of money using tax havens. Many governments are complicit in sustaining this network. Poorer countries in particular suffer the consequences: they are deprived of funds to provide services like health and education, and to tackle poverty and extreme inequality. Governments need to act together to force this system to end, and create a global tax system that works for the many, not the few”. (Oxfam International)*

- The Financing for Development Forum and international human rights forums play an important role in reviewing the means of implementation targets of the Agenda, and the processes must be viewed as complementary. While there are clear overlaps, the FfD agenda goes further to the systemic issues than that of the Mol in the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development.
- Domestic Resource Mobilization is a powerful tool to redistribute wealth and promote equality. This has to be done through: progressive fiscal policies and tax justice, including effective taxation of multinational corporate activities, and fighting tax evasion and avoidance by the rich, closing tax loopholes and banning tax havens. That includes the (re)introduction of progressive and socially fair tax systems and higher actual taxation of multinational corporations in particular, but also more transparency regarding wealth and poverty.
- Civil society is concerned about the different clauses in trade and investment agreements, which instead of promoting the development of countries undermines state sovereignty, undermines environmental standards, and violates labour rights as well as human rights.
- Civil society is very concerned about the privatisation of the sustainable development agenda. The private sector is not a viable alternative to the state for ensuring human rights, especially those rights related to access to basic needs and public services. Unconditional criteria are needed to ensure that private sector intervention is in line with the public interest, especially since this is supported by public resources. Accountability obligations, transparency and effectiveness must be guaranteed where private finance sources are involved in the 2030 Agenda.
- Finally: We insist that the private sector and wealthy individuals stop receiving subsidies and concessions from governments and pay their due taxes. No more #PanamaPapers.

***The following NGOs endorsements are illustrative of the worldwide membership of the NGO Major Group:***

The Association of World Citizens

The Institute for Planetary Synthesis

The All-Win Network

Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries

Center for Ecozoic Societies

Toward Ecological Civilization

UNANIMA International

ENDA Tiers-Monde

International-Lawyers.Org

Global Ecovillage Network (See comment before taking our endorsement please)

Psychology Coalition of NGOs Accredited at the UN

Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

Association for promotion sustainable development, Hisar, India

International Presentation Association

Mayama, A.C. (México)

Corporativa de Fundaciones, A.C. (Mexico)

United Religions Initiative

CEEweb for Biodiversity

Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat)

German NGO Forum on Environment and Development (Germany)

United Religions Initiative

National Ethical Service

Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (CEPEI)