

Third Session: Making good governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships the building blocks of the SDGs

By Jeffery Huffines, UN Representative of CIVICUS & NGO Major Group Organizing Partner, OWG Intersessional Meeting, 22 November 2013

Major Groups and other stakeholders active in the post-2015 development agenda all agree that only a robust institutional framework, together with strong means of implementation which includes financing for sustainable development, will ensure the successful achievement of the future SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

My brief presentation shall focus on the need for a robust institutional framework anchored in a strong High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.

Regarding this topic, the UN Secretary General's report *A Life of Dignity for All* put forward the following key elements as essential components of the post-2015 agenda:

- a new global partnership, recognizing shared interests, different needs and mutual responsibilities, to ensure commitment to and means of implementing the new vision; and
- Being “fit for purpose”, to ensure that the international community is equipped with the right institutions and tools for addressing the challenges of implementing the sustainable development agenda at the national level.

In describing the basis of a “new global partnership for development,” the High Level Panel asserts: “The need for a single agenda is glaring ... Right now, development, sustainable development and climate change are often seen as separate. They have separate mandates, separate financing streams, and separate processes for tracking progress and holding people accountable. This creates overlap and confusion when it comes to developing specific programs and projects on the ground. It is time to streamline the agenda.

Moreover, “A new global framework must be aligned with national policies, budgets, and local delivery. Without such vertical alignment, it is likely that a new framework will remain aspirational and unachievable. This entails targets and indicators tailored to the national context. Also, the new global framework needs to ensure coherence and consistency across issues, processes and systems.”

With the establishment of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) designed to provide the political leadership that will advance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development across the UN system, the question before us is whether the HLPF will be given sufficient financial resources and political weight to ensure that it will become the center-piece of global governance on sustainable development. There is also the establishment of a High Commissioner for Future Generations that would support the work of the HLPF to consider. The HLPF is of critical strategic importance in the post-2015 agenda, as it will likely be the place where the future SDGs will be reviewed and evaluated. Moreover, it has been given enhanced participatory rights,

including the right to self-organize, to major groups and other stakeholders, at the international, regional and national levels.

Starting in 2016, the HLPF will conduct state-led voluntary country and UN entity reviews that will include a platform for partnerships and the production of a global sustainable development report. From the point of view of many in civil society, the review process for the SDGs should also include strong human rights accountability mechanisms available through the UPR of the Human Rights Council and other human rights conventions. A key marker of its success over time will be the extent to which the HLPF will attract the involvement of ministers and high-level policy makers from the economic, social as well as environmental sectors on an annual basis.

Building upon the strong and enhanced participation rights granted to the Major Groups and other stakeholders the HLPF should ensure:

- The adoption of innovative modes of stakeholder participation building on best practices throughout the UN system.
- The annual preparatory process for the HLPF should be multi-stakeholder in nature to oversee the production of a monitoring and progress report on any future SDGs.
- To increase accountability and legitimacy, the HLPF review, monitoring and accountability processes should support third-party reviews by Major Groups and other stakeholders, and include reporting of voluntary commitments and partnerships.
- Technical and financial support for the participation of developing country stakeholders and the more marginalized major groups should be provided.

To conclude, with transparent and participatory governance mainstreamed into the SDGs and associated targets, as a stand-alone goal and an aspect of other goals, anchored by strong HLPF oversight, the SDG framework should:

- Ensure that all countries adopt formal mechanisms for citizens, especially women and associations of vulnerable and marginalised people, to engage with the design, monitoring and evaluation of the work of the government. Indicators should be adopted to assess that these mechanisms are open to all and that their results are heeded by the government.
- Ensure that international financial institutions work in a manner compatible with international human rights standards and enable the effective participation of poorer countries, especially the LDCs. All such institutions should accept a duty to ensure that their actions support the attainment of the SDGs.
- Ensure that all countries create an enabling environment for corporate sustainability and that all corporations are subject to binding regulation of their impacts on the environment and society. (4:21)
- Ensure that the United Nations or other appropriate bodies create a global registry for development data provided by governments and other sources, which is user-friendly and in line with emerging standards on open data.

In the years ahead we look forward to working with the UN and Member States to ensure that the HLPF shall live up to its high ambition as a critical instrument to harness the political will to end poverty as we know it through the achievement of the future Sustainable Development Goals.