

Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Critical milestones - Role and contribution of civil society

Thank you Mr Chairman, and also to UNDESA, for organizing this meeting and inviting me to share some reflections on the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review process and in particular on the role and contribution of civil society. I work for Cordaid, an international development NGO in The Netherlands focusing on building vital communities in fragile states. At this meeting I represent the Migration and Development Civil Society Network (MADE), and am today also speaking on behalf of the NGO Committee on Migration which is for many years working in liaison with the United Nations on migration and related issues.

I Introduction

In his report, the UNSG Ban Ki Moon recalls that Heads of State and Government decided that all reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be “open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders”. He adds that “It is critical to engage major groups and other stakeholders throughout the review process. He added that “it will thus be beneficial to the review that governments ensure inclusiveness and participation through the appropriate mechanisms. Progress in doing so could also be highlighted in national reviews at the HLPF”.

I believe that civil society largely shares this perspective. The SDGs were developed by UN Member States, in a broad consultative process that included unprecedented engagement with civil society. Carrying forward the spirit of partnership, we expect this broad engagement to translate into a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda.

As representatives of civil society, including migrants and diaspora, we are pleased that migration features in the seventeen SDGs and their accompanying targets. We have campaigned for the full integration of migrants, diaspora, refugees, and internally displaced people in national and international policies, especially through the “Civil Society Stockholm Agenda” of migration-related goals and targets - that was developed around the 2014 GFMD and endorsed by over 300 civil society organizations across the globe. We have promoted

many of the goals and targets that eventually have found their place in the 2030 Agenda, including promoting decent work for migrant workers, ending forced labor, violence and exploitation of women and girls, promoting safe and responsible migration, ending human trafficking, reducing the recruitment costs of migration and reducing the transaction costs of sending remittances. We also advocated for the important role of diaspora in development and we pushed for the – now unanimous - recognition of the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive human and economic development.

We are pleased about what was agreed - though we did not get all we wanted. But we are determined to continue our efforts to ensure that – at a minimum – the SDG commitments are being fully implemented at national level. In many countries this will not be enough to do justice to the human rights and dignity for migrants, in particular in cases of violent conflict and of (protracted) displacement. This will require additional and complementary measures, especially in fragile, conflict- and post-conflict states as well as in the neighboring countries.

Agenda 2030: UNSG on the role of civil society

Not only the UNSG but also the 2030 Agenda itself envisages strong participation of non-state actors in UN intergovernmental forums and bodies and inclusiveness in follow-up and review at the global level. The ECOSOC provides space for all actors engaged in policy and implementation, in advocacy and service delivery to come together in the work of the HLPF and be able to contribute to reviewing implementation. The UNGA resolution 67/290 suggests extensive arrangements for further enhancing the participation of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the HLPF work. They could be able to access the documentation of the HLPF and to provide comments and inputs through an on-line engagement platform as done during the IGN process. Their input could be actively solicited through calls for evidence and invitations to present at the HLPF. Multi-stakeholder dialogues, such as those held during the IGN could be used more frequently within the scope of regular official meetings.

In particular, the UNGA resolution 67/290 decided that the representatives of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders shall be allowed:

- To attend all official meetings of the HLPF;
- To have access to all official information and documents;
- To intervene in official meetings;
- To submit documents and present written and oral contributions;
- To make recommendations;

- To organize side events and round tables, for example before and during the HLPF, with links to official meetings in cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat;

Such mechanisms we feel are important to ensure meaningful civil society participation.

We also encourage Member States to include NGO delegates in their national delegations to the HLPF. This is especially important for the first 19 countries that have volunteered for this year's review. These include **Mexico and Peru** in Latin America, **Morocco and Uganda** in Africa, **France and Germany** in Europe, and **Turkey and the Philippines** in Asia. In these 8 countries civil society organizations are considering producing a shadow report about their countries' efforts and results in:

- translating and implementing the migration-related goals and targets into national policies;
- engaging civil society in such a process of policy (re-)formulation
- mobilizing the necessary budgets for swift implementation;
- in particular mobilizing funds for the implementing role of civil society;
- ensure national goals and targets are being measured by strong and robust indicators, building on and moving beyond global indicators
- ensure the necessary capacities and budgets for NSOs in measurement and data collection
- support for civil society in their role of providers of complementary quantitative and qualitative data

We hope the CSO Shadow Report will also include a section about their own commitments for achieving the SDGs, with measurable milestones and deliverables.

The UNSG has also proposed the HLPF this July to review SDG 8 and SDG 10 as part of the envisaged 4-year round of thematic reviews. This opens up opportunities for civil society organizations around the world to review and assess progress in the area of decent work for migrant laborers, in particular women migrant workers, and progress in the area of safe and responsible migration. We expect that the CSO Shadow Reports of the 8 countries I just mentioned will also focus specifically on progress made in implementing SDGs 8 and 10. We very much agree that SDG 17 will feature prominently in every HLPF sessions.

Commission on Population and Development

Civil society is also keen to engage in the work of the IOM Council and annual International Dialogue on Migration (IDM, the next one being organized next week) and also of the functional commissions of ECOSOC. We would like to highlight the important role for the Commission on Population and Development, where migration is reviewed as part of the Plan of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). In particular the forty-ninth session of the CPD this April is an important opportunity to address situations of voluntary and forced displacement, and to ensure the social and economic integration of migrants, as set forth in Chapter Ten of the outcome document of the International Conference of Population and Development.

Last autumn, civil society organizations, including members of the NGO Committee on Migration have submitted concept notes on important issues for policy dialogue, including data collection of irregular and undocumented migrants, and on five targets and matching indicators of specific importance to migrants and migration (5.2, 8.8, 10.7, 10c, 16.2). We would suggest a special emphasis every fourth year, when these SDGs are being discussed thematically at the HLPF and could be given the central focus of the session of the CPD that immediately precedes it.

We also welcome the initiative of the previous CPD Chair to organize an informal meeting with NGOs prior to the annual session of the CPD. In line with previous CPD practice, we also welcome the participation of NGOs, civil society and academia as speakers and panelists. Regarding outcomes, despite the challenges encountered in recent years, the CPD could continue to strive for the adoption of a negotiated outcome in the form of a resolution combining the review, follow-up and implementation of both the ICPD Program of Action and the 2030 Agenda, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Such a resolution will send a strong message to the HLPF.

Global Forum on Migration and Development

The UNSG also foresees a meaningful role in the follow-up and review process for fora outside the UN system, such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Civil society has long engaged with the GFMD process leading to productive civil society interaction with states. Around the “Friends of the Forum” meeting earlier this month in Geneva, members of the civil society International Steering Committee for the GFMD put forward a set of proposals aimed at deepening this interaction. The proposals were based,

firstly, on the good experiences of civil society involvement that succeeded at the UN High-level Dialogue on International Development and Migration (HLD) in 2013, *secondly* on some good practises developed in recent GFMD meetings, and *thirdly* in view of the potential role of the GFMD in thematic (peer) review of SDG implementation in the area of migration and development.

From our perspective, we recognize that the key is implementing practices that take discussions and recommendations like those that arise in the Global Forum forward with concrete, positive results. Such results will only be achieved if civil society participates in the discussions on the definition, implementation and monitoring of the recommendations and practices. Civil society has become an important partner in the process: bringing concrete examples of practice and partnership, engaging with states in preparatory events and follow-up to the GFMD meetings, frequently raising issues and approaches that states were not raising but came to appreciate, and building relationships and trust at national, regional and international levels. We believe that the experience has been positive, with working relationships more and more strong, professional, tested and trusted.

The moment is now to secure the next step of interaction. We propose to the GFMD Presidency to build on the experiences of the HLD in 2013 where civil society organized two days of interactive hearings ahead of the states HLD sessions, coordinated many of its discussions and recommendations with the themes that the states were taking up in the HLD round tables, and participated both as panellist and as respondents from the floor. We very much welcomed His Excellency Shahidul Haque's expression at the 8th GFMD last October in Istanbul, of the commitment of the Bangladesh GFMD Presidency for real, effective and meaningful CSO participation. We expect the modalities of UNGA resolution 67/290 on participation of representatives of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders to be fully applied when we meet in Dhaka in December to consider progress on migration and SDGs.

Setting a framework for global indicators

As with the IGN process, civil society has also engaged with the process of developing global indicators, participated in the New York and Bangkok meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals (IAEG-SDGs) and will also attend both the third IAEG meeting in Mexico City and the next UNSC meeting from 8-11 March. Whilst we have been providing inputs on a regular basis, and appreciate the efforts of the IAEG-

SDGs to ensure that the principles of the SDGs are upheld, with technically and methodologically sound indicators, we as civil society have expressed concerns about the extent to which inputs from stakeholders have been taken into consideration. We have all along advocated that the right level of ambition is set, and that this is adequately tracked and measured. For example we have proposed indicators for measuring safe migration, including:

- (1) the number of migrants killed, injured or victims of crime while in closed detention centers, attempting to cross maritime, land, air borders, or be forcibly returned to their countries of origin, disaggregated by sex and age.
- (2) the number of countries providing regular migration channels for labor market access across skill levels, family reunification, and refuge to migrants and asylum seekers by 2020.

Instead, this week's IAEG report to the UNSC with the final proposals for global indicators in Annex IV proposes the number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies. We are concerned that such an indicator creates a real danger of reduction of this important SDG target. A reductionist agenda resulting from ignoring the civil society inputs on robust and strong indicators is not acceptable.

We feel the limited window of openness and transparency also compromises the final outcome. Ahead of the second IAEG meeting in Bangkok, over 100 civil society organizations and stakeholders sent an open letter to the co-chairs of the IAEG-SDGs expressing our collective concerns around the lack of transparency, inclusion and participation, and about the disconnect between our inputs and the proposed indicators without any process for feedback, explanation or consultations. We asked for clarity on how various inputs have lead to substantive or marginal revisions and about the process by which decisions on the "green" indicators have been made, and "grey" indicators were going to be made. We meanwhile support the sentiments echoed by some Member States, putting into question the March 2016 deadline for the adoption of the global indicators and suggesting it would be prudent to take a few more months to August 2016 to allow for meaningful multi-stakeholder consultations and not sacrifice quality for speed and a weak outcome.

What is needed for civil society to make its contribution?

Both the UNSG and the 2030 Agenda itself envisages strong participation of non-state actors in UN intergovernmental forums and bodies and inclusiveness in follow-up and review at the global level. Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, this is not going to happen!

This is not going to happen unless the right conditions are being put in place. Number one is political space for civil society to operate, to express its views openly and publicly. Last August, Carnegie Endowment and Amnesty International raised alarm about a new wave of restrictions on civil society operating in some 60 countries around the world, controlling and curtailing their activities. New restrictive laws (restrictions in registration or association, on foreign funding anti-protest laws, etc) under which international aid groups and their local partners are vilified, harassed, closed down and sometimes expelled results in shrinking political space. Almost half the world's states have implemented controls that affect tens of thousands of organizations across the globe

Next to political will, this will require financial resources, both for CSOs to implement the SDGs but also to engage in national policy formulation, development of national indicators, producing additional and complementary data, producing a national shadow report, engage actively in CPD and HLPF discussions, or in GFMD and other fora. Much of this is not budgeted and would require additional resources for CSOs.

Finally,

I would like to thank the UNDESA Population Division for organizing this important consultation and for inviting me to share our thoughts and reflections on the role and contribution of civil society. We hope these ideas can be taken up in the various international follow-up and review processes in the coming 12 months.