

## FOCUS SESSION 7

### Practical Ways to Improve the Enabling Environment for Civil Society

Tuesday 15 April, 08:00-09:15, Montejo 3

#### Panelists:<sup>1</sup>

- Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Netherlands
- Bouaré Fily Sissoko, Minister of Economy and Finance, Mali
- Emele Duituturaga, outgoing co-chair of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and Executive Director of the Pacific Islands CSO platform, PIANGO

#### VIP commentators from the floor:

- Miroslav Lajčák, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign & European Affairs, Slovakia
- Christian Paradis, Minister of International Development and Minister for la Francophonie, Canada
- Danny Sriskandarajah, Secretary General of CIVICUS

#### Conclusions and key messages:

In order to advance implementation of commitments in relation to CSO development effectiveness and the enabling environment made in Accra, Busan, and Mexico, and building on the importance of inclusive development at the Mexico High Level Meeting, this focus session concluded with recommendations for all stakeholders to develop, contribute to, and promote:

- a. An enabling environment framework, with benchmarks and guidelines for its implementation, to help advance the democratic ownership of development processes, based on internationally agreed human rights commitments.
- b. Multi-stakeholder learning fora and partnerships at country, regional and global level to help develop and implement this framework and guidelines, based on country experience and reflecting good practice.
- c. Elaboration of a methodology based on (a) and (b) above, with respect to the Global Partnership Monitoring Framework Indicator 2: enabling environment for civil society.

These recommendations are reflected in the Mexico Communiqué annex as Voluntary Initiative 12: **CSO Enabling Environment Framework and Guidelines**. The multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, as organizers of this focus session and lead on implementation of this CSO Enabling

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<sup>1</sup> Facilitators: Marion Derckx (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands), Modibo Makalou (Office of the President, Mali) and Brian Tomlinson (AidWatch Canada/CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness). Due to unforeseen circumstances Mrs. Sissoko was unable to attend the focus session. A contribution was made on her behalf by Modibo Makalou.

Environment Framework and Guidelines initiative, warmly welcomes other GPEDC members to join the collective effort in its pursuit.<sup>2</sup>

This focus session further consolidated the principle, as reflected in the Busan Partnership Agreement (BPa) and the Mexico Communiqué, that inclusion is central to successful development cooperation. Inclusive development underpinned by democratic ownership is essential to realizing an “equal partnership of all stakeholders” in pursuit of a “transformative, people-centred and planet-sensitive” Post-2015 agenda.<sup>3</sup> The starting point of inclusive development is recognition of the merit of all actors in the development process. Pursuing a ‘whole-of-society’ approach can help advance inclusiveness of all actors’ voice, actions, and results.<sup>4</sup> *“The private sector, the public sector and NGOs need to work together - not only to get better results - but also to protect the people that stand up for their rights.”*

Focus session speakers acknowledged the emergence of new diverse actors as part of the changing architecture of international development cooperation, and reaffirmed the undeniably critical role civil society plays, both in terms of service-delivery as well as in lobbying and advocacy. *“Busan set an important benchmark in establishing the vital role of civil society, and its autonomy.”* In the spirit of inclusion, the Mexico Communiqué echoes the BPa in distinguishing the vital role of CSOs in development. It reiterates the commitment to providing an enabling environment for CSOs, consistent with internationally agreed human rights. *“The more conducive and fair enabling environment for civil society is developed, the better prospects for democratic transition and development can be reached.”* For CSOs, the Communiqué in turn notes the relevance of the *Istanbul Principles* to guide CSOs in strengthening their development effectiveness, accountability and transparency.

However, various focus session speakers also noted the mounting body of evidence<sup>5</sup> pointing to shrinking space for civil society in many countries, since the 2011 Busan commitments. These trends – which impede rather than enable civil society’s contribution to development and thereby also impede inclusive development – need to be addressed. When the work of civil society is stifled, opportunities to address complex problems are lost. In light of these concerns, various GPEDC stakeholders have since Busan put forward some important recommendations and frameworks that can help implement the commitment to advance the enabling environment for civil society consistent with internationally agreed rights, including the Task Team’s own *Key Messages* for the HLM.<sup>6</sup> The Task Team Voluntary Initiative will build on these, and on country level multi-stakeholder dialogue, to help ensure that *“measurement, monitoring, mobilization, and making commitments meaningful”* is realized.

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<sup>3</sup> High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, “Communiqué: Meeting of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in Bali, Indonesia, 27 March 2013”, para. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See the HLM Plenary 1 Discussion Paper, *Progress since Busan on Inclusive Development* for more in-depth coverage of these implications, available at <http://effectivecooperation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Inclusive-Development-HLM-Discussion-Paper-April-10-final1.pdf> and at <http://taskteamcso.com/key-documents/>.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 3 of GPEDC (2014) *Making development cooperation more effective: 2014 progress report*, pp. 61-63 at <http://effectivecooperation.org/progress/>.

<sup>6</sup> The Key Messages and the Task Team’s *Review of Evidence* of progress since Busan are available at <http://taskteamcso.com/key-documents/>. Other initiatives include for example the CPDE’s contribution of evidence as well as that of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the work of the Community of Democracies’ Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society, and donor agencies’ efforts as reflected in their civil society policies, amongst others.