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# Response to the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet"

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## Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment

### Introduction

The multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment<sup>1</sup> welcomes UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's synthesis report "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet". The Task Team echoes that there is now "historic opportunity and duty to act boldly, vigorously and expeditiously" and herewith offers its reflections on issues that it deems of key importance – both in terms of content and process – "to turn reality into a life of dignity for all, leaving no one behind".<sup>2</sup>

### Continued participation is key for a people-centered and people-supported agenda

Efforts to include the breadth of voices from all corners of the world in the Post-2015 process so far have been unprecedented and reflect recognition that the design of the Post-2015 Development Agenda is a shared responsibility. Participation of various stakeholders, including civil society, is a critical condition for ownership of and commitment to this agenda. Building on the Secretary General's note that a truly participatory, responsive and transformation course of action is required<sup>3</sup>, the Task Team underlines the importance of continued participation on the part of all stakeholders in the months ahead as the final contours and content of the Post-2015 Development Agenda are decided.

Stakeholder participation should extend beyond design to implementation and monitoring of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The synthesis report recognizes the need for a participatory course of action but does not elaborate how this can be operationalized. In the view of the Task Team, inclusive dialogue and systematic participation of civil society and other stakeholders at various levels – including in intergovernmental and international fora – will be an essential ingredient.

### Multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical means of implementation

The Secretary General's sensitivity to diverse development actors is appreciated by the Task Team. Diverse development actors bring distinct and complementary roles in support of development. In this light, the Task Team values the Secretary General's recognition that civil society is "ready and able to serve as a participant, joint steward and powerful engine of change and participation".<sup>4</sup>

The Task Team echoes the Secretary General's recognition that transformative partnerships include participation of all relevant stakeholders and that inclusive partnerships must be a key feature of implementation.<sup>5</sup> Maximum efforts are needed by all stakeholders – individually and jointly through multi-stakeholder partnerships – to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to address. Participation and shared responsibilities must be part of the new "ethic" of today's globalized world.<sup>6</sup>

The Task Team furthermore concurs that mutual accountability must be ensured. In this light the Task Team welcomes the Secretary General's call to "maximize our commitment to public transparency, information sharing, participatory monitoring and open data while never compromising on the obligation to protect the right to privacy."<sup>7</sup>

### An enabling environment consistent with internationally agreed rights is vital for stakeholders to maximize their contribution

For CSOs and other non-state actors to fulfil their varied roles in sustainable development – individually or through multi-stakeholder partnerships – an enabling environment is a necessary condition. This is highly significant in light of major challenges civil society faces in many countries where the space in which they can operate is shrinking. The Task Team therefore welcomes the Secretary General's acknowledgement that an "enabling environment [...] must be secured for the free, active and meaningful engagement of civil society and advocates reflecting the voices

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<sup>1</sup> The Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is a multi-stakeholder informal network of assistance provider governments, partner governments and CSOs associated with the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). The Task Team's work is concerned with issues of inclusive development and multi-stakeholder partnerships. For more information see [www.taskteamcso.com](http://www.taskteamcso.com).

<sup>2</sup> UN Secretary General, "The Road to Dignity by 20130: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet", advance unedited version of 4 December 2014, para. 161.

<sup>3</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 20.

<sup>4</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 31.

<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 81.

<sup>6</sup> High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development", 2013, at p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 142.

of women, minorities, LGBT groups, indigenous peoples, youth, adolescents, and older persons”.<sup>8</sup> The Task Team emphasizes that such an enabling environment – to be established in law, policy and practice – must be consistent with internationally agreed rights including *inter alia* freedom of peaceful assembly; freedom of association and freedom of expression. The Task Team therefore supports the Secretary General’s statement that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should “call for full consistency with [...] existing obligations under international law”<sup>9</sup> and that “as we implement the new agenda, we must [...] ensure that all actions respect and advance human rights, in full coherence with international standards.”<sup>10</sup>

The Task Team is pleased by the recognition of the need to invest in civil society’s capacity to perform their critical and independent role.<sup>11</sup> With respect to the Financing for Development discussions, the Task Team recommends that financial resources for implementation of the SDGs should be directed to support CSOs to fulfil their role in sustainable development, which includes promoting public awareness and holding governments to account.<sup>12</sup> Such support should be supplementary to sustained efforts to maximize domestic resource mobilization, Official Development Assistance and other modalities of finance to achieve the SDGs.

### **The new framework must contain a standalone goal on governance**

“Building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all” is one of the five transformative shifts called for by the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP). This includes recognition of good governance as a core element and “not as an optional extra”.<sup>13</sup> The HLP recognized the intrinsic value of good governance, not simply as a means to an end but as an end itself.<sup>14</sup> The Task Team echoes this and furthermore highlights the Secretary General’s synthesis that the voices of people across the world have “underscored the need for democracy, rule of law, civic space, and more effective governance and capable institutions”.<sup>15</sup>

With reference to the Secretary General’s note that it is possible to maintain the 17 goals, the Task Team underlines the importance of maintaining a stand-alone governance goal (SDG 16). In light of the recognition that the ambitious Post-2015 Development Agenda can only be realized with full participation of all stakeholders who need enabling conditions to fulfil their envisaged roles, the governance goal must contain provisions to this end. Building on the Secretary General’s observation that “press freedom and access to information, freedom of expression, assembly and association are enablers of sustainable development”<sup>16</sup> the Task Team recommends going beyond the current language in the Open Working Group’s SDG 16 by explicitly mentioning these freedoms in this governance goal. The Task Team furthermore recommends strengthening of the governance goal by making express mention of democratic governance and of the need for inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels whereby stakeholders (including civil society) are meaningfully engaged in frameworks of domestic accountability.

### **Examine and consider incorporation of financial and non-financial means of implementation strategies**

The Secretary General recommends member states to consider how existing structures and processes, including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, “can help review and strengthen the global partnership for sustainable development”.<sup>17</sup> The Task Team supports this recommendation, noting that the Global Partnership is a significant source of ideas and experience in relation to the ‘how’ of implementing the Post-2015 Agenda, including in relation to boosting the effectiveness of development cooperation, as also called for by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the Task Team believes a fully inclusive multi-stakeholder process is indispensable to both determine the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to realize meaningful partnerships for its implementation. In this light, the Task Team is pleased with the content of the Secretary General’s synthesis report. The Task Team welcomes that the report acknowledges the roles different development actors can play; recognizes the importance of inclusive partnerships and the participation of all relevant stakeholders, along with an enabling environment to secure that participation; and calls for coherence with international human rights standards, all as key for implementation. The reflections in this document are offered by the Task Team with the intention of contributing to pushing forward the ambitious, inclusive and transformative Post-2015 Agenda that is so widely called for.

<sup>8</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 78.

<sup>9</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 17.

<sup>10</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 65.

<sup>11</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 129.

<sup>12</sup> See [Task Team's 2014 Key Messages](#) and [Reflections on Financing for Development](#).

<sup>13</sup> HLP, *supra*, executive summary.

<sup>14</sup> HLP, *supra*, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 23.

<sup>16</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 78.

<sup>17</sup> UN Secretary General, *supra*, para. 149.