

Open Letter to the Members of the High-Level Group on Agenda 2030

Dear members of the High-Level Group on Agenda 2030,

As representatives from civil society organizations in the nine countries constituting the High-Level Group on Agenda 2030, we welcome your leadership in the implementation of the agenda. We believe that this high level initiative, which you launched during the 70th United Nations General Assembly, presents a unique chance for you to take lead and turn your commitment into concrete actions to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the local, national, regional and global levels.

We want to take this opportunity to offer our support and collaboration, and would also like to present the following recommendations.

1. Guarantee inclusion and participation

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has called the process leading up to the agreement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) *'the most inclusive and transparent negotiation process in UN history'*¹. It is an agenda for, by and with the people. Further, the working modalities of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) grant extensive participation rights to major groups and other stakeholders. We expect these rights to be realized in the follow-up and implementation at all levels.

Therefore, we hope that the High-Level Group on Agenda 2030 takes concrete steps to include civil society as an equal partner in the implementation and follow-up. This would include;

- Convening meetings with civil society and other development actors and inviting them to participate as partners of the High-Level Group for Agenda 2030 and in drawing up the national implementation plan(s).
- Committing to include civil society, academia and think tanks in the reporting as part of the national follow-up and review processes, and push for this to be addressed in the global follow-up processes (HLPF) and relevant regional mechanisms.

2. Political commitment and leadership

The best way to show leadership is by leading by example, which in this context implies taking concrete actions to implement the 2030 Agenda, particularly at the local and national levels.

The commitments made in the agenda are complex and interlinked. Efforts must therefore be made to maximize synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the agenda. Leaders must also pave the way for policy coherence for sustainable development by ensuring that the responsibility to implement the agenda is shared by the government as a whole.

We suggest the following steps are taken;

- Creating or building on already existing national multi-stakeholder commissions for sustainable development and creating platforms for collaboration.
- Creating parliamentary SDG oversight committees in your countries, as parliamentarians will play a key role for the achievement of the SDGs.

¹ <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8879>

3. Allocation of funds and financial resources

Achieving the ambition set out in the agenda will require financial resources. UNCTAD has estimated that we need to mobilize 3.3-4.5 trillion US dollars a year, in order to achieve the 17 SDGs in the developing countries. With the current levels of financing for development, leaves us with a gap of 2.5 trillion US dollars every year². Governments and international organizations have a crucial responsibility to mobilize the finances needed and both international and national financing remains pivotal for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In our view the Addis Ababa Agenda of Action (AAAA), adopted in July 2015, does not hold concrete and strong solutions to generate the resources needed to achieve the sustainable development in all its three dimensions by 2030.

Some of the actions which need to be taken in order to ensure the financing needed for the commitments made are:

- Enhancing international cooperation to build tax capacity, including increased ODA;
- Phasing out inefficient and harmful subsidies;
- Promoting equity, gender equality, accountability, good governance and transparency, including in public procurement;
- Reducing illicit financial flows³ by addressing tax evasion and corruption through national regulation and enhanced international tax cooperation through transparency and reporting mechanisms;
- Using innovative approaches and sources of financing;
- Strengthening progressive tax systems, broadening the tax base.

4. Robust and accountable follow-up and review mechanisms

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved if regular, transparent and robust reviews of progress and setbacks are conducted. Although the goals are not legally binding, monitoring and accountability are an integral part of the Agenda, which also states that the reviews must be conducted in an inclusive and participatory way, bringing all stakeholders together. The High-Level Group could play a key role in putting in place robust and accountable mechanisms and to ensure monitoring and review processes translate into real change on the ground, strong citizen feedback loops will also need to be put in place to complement global and national level monitoring efforts.

The reviews must be also conducted at the national levels in a way that allows for comparison across countries and goal areas at the global level.

We therefore propose that you show leadership by;

- Volunteering to be reviewed in the first round of follow-up and review in the High-Level Political Forum 2016, focusing on the national implementation plans and initial process. Currently, only Germany from this High-Level Group has volunteered to be reviewed.

5. Support the 'Data Revolution'

The lack of quality, timely data has long been acknowledged as a significant obstacle to relevant, effective strategies and interventions for sustainable development. Throughout the so

² UNCTAD (2014): Developing countries face \$ 2.5 trillion annual investment gap in key sustainable development sectors. <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PressRelease.aspx?OriginalVersionID=194>

³ Global Financial Integrity estimates that in 2013, US\$1.1 trillion left developing countries in illicit financial outflows, <http://www.gfintegrity.org/issue/illicit-financial-flows/>

called post-2015 process, we have heard clear calls for a much needed data revolution, which has underlined the need for more resources to be channeled into improving data and for successful measurement of the 17 goals.

Therefore, we ask that you support this data revolution by;

- Committing to measure ALL goals, meaning that at the national level there is no ‘cherry-picking’ which commitments to deliver on.
- Strengthening the national statistical offices’ capacities, in order to have useful, qualitative, real-time and relevant data, making it possible to take action towards the realization of the SDGs.
- Opening up and supporting new forms of data, the so called ‘third party data’ by working with other stakeholders including civil society and citizens to develop, and support new data, or existing initiatives, to produce and use data.
- Implementing open data and transparency measures at the national and global levels, to strengthen the monitoring and follow-up processes and ensure accountability.

6. Work with us!

We hope that you want to collaborate with our organizations and we would very much welcome an invitation for a joint meeting or forum to discuss how we can best work to make the 2030 agenda become reality.

In Solidarity,

Ahmed Allouch, Youth Without Borders, Tunisia

Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso, Director, Africa Monitor, South Africa

Christopher Wleh Toe, Secretary General, National Civil Society Council of Liberia, Liberia

Alessandra Nilo, Director, GESTOS, Brazil

Philipp Schönrock, Director, CEPEI, Colombia

Stephen Chacha, Founder and CEO, Africa Philanthropic Foundation, Tanzania

Terence McCaughan, Country Director, Plan International Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste

Klaus Milke, Chairman of the Board, Germanwatch, Germany

Kristina Henschen, President, CONCORD Sweden, Sweden