

KEY MESSAGES FOR ACHIEVING AGENDA 2030



February 2019

This paper has been produced by CONCORD Sweden's working groups for Agenda 2030, AidWatch, Civic Space and Gender Equality. The key messages are based on the following reports:

[Barometer 2018 – civilsamhällets granskning av Sveriges politik för global utveckling i genomförandet av Agenda 2030](#)

[Tag Plats, 2018](#)

[Civilsamhällets deklaration för en feministisk utrikespolitik, 2018](#)

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda is universal and indivisible with clear objectives: a society and economy within the limits of the planetary resources and where no-one is left behind. The global follow up and review of both Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be an inclusive process where new forward-looking steps are taken.

In this paper CONCORD Sweden presents four cross-cutting issues which are key for all the SDGs

We ask Sweden and the EU to address these issues in all discussions prior to and during the Financing for Development forum (FfD), The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) under ECOSOC to finally be part of the ministerial declaration during the HLPF convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in September 2019:

Civil society



Highlight the crucial role of civil society and democratic space for the achievement of each SDG, including the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of assembly, and the need to enable a meaningful engagement of civil society at all levels of society.

Gender equality



Include a feminist analysis and messages on how to promote gender equality, including the rights of women and girls, in relation to each SDG.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development



Emphasize the importance of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development including actions to manage conflicting policies and goals, eliminate obstacles to sustainable development and better contribute to each of the SDGs evaluated. Ensure a strong focus on the commitment to Leave No One Behind.

Financing for Development



Mention the necessary and suitable development finance strategies to achieve each SDG, so that financing issues are integrated in the follow up of the 2030 Agenda and specific to the different goals.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society actors working for human rights, democracy, peace building and sustainable development are essential partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Yet, the democratic space to act faces restrictions at the global scale. Independent reports¹ show widespread violations of the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of association and assembly. Human rights and environmental defenders face financial and legal restrictions, social stigmatisation as well as threats and violence, including death, against themselves and their families. This is unacceptable.

Civil society is a precondition for democracy and therefore key for the achievement of all SDGs.

Some examples relevant to the SDGs up for review in 2019:

Civil society actors are watchdogs that scrutinize and demand accountability from decision-makers, which is essential for the promotion of the rule of law at national and international level (Global goal 16.3) as well as for effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (16.6) and the protection of fundamental freedoms (16.10).

The role of civil society organisations, including religious actors, in channelling the voices of marginalised groups is key for the implementation of goals and targets relating to social, economic and political inclusion and participatory, representative decision-making (10.2 and 16.7), as well as equal opportunities and reducing inequalities and eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices (10.3).

The protection of labour rights (8.8) as well as the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (13.2) are other examples of areas where human rights and environmental defenders play vital roles.

Sweden must ensure that international UN-led processes and negotiations, such as the FfD and HLPPF, contribute to the promotion of civic space. Namely, inter-governmental negotiations must ensure meaningful participation of civil society, in particular those representing marginalised groups and populations, in order to present their important perspectives and expertise on the topics under debate.

¹ See for example: Freedom in the world 2017, Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy (2017) by Freedom House, CIVICUS Monitor Tracking Civic Space, Global Findings April 2017, Annual Report on Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2017 (2018) by Front Line Defenders, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Suffocating the movement – Shrinking space for women's rights (2018) by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

KEY MESSAGES

- **Civil society’s meaningful participation at multilateral level, including at HLPF and other UN processes and negotiations, is essential** for implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in general and several goals and targets in particular.
- **Diverse civil society actors must be meaningfully engaged in all the stages of preparation and evaluation of Voluntary National Reports and other preparations of the HLPF.** Without the inclusion of civil society, it is impossible to guarantee that the experiences of marginalised groups are included and that no one is left behind.
- **The rights to freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of association and assembly** are key to democracy building and achieving sustainable development, and they must therefore **always be respected as important parts of human rights.** States must ensure that civil society organisations’ engagement is enabled and protected.



GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights of all people regardless of their gender are at the core of the 2030 Agenda, both as a standalone goal and as a cross-cutting priority consistent with the commitment of **Leaving No One Behind**. Progress in gender equality remains uneven across regions and within countries. Across the globe we are witnessing a stronger and more well-organised opposition to gender equality and women's, girls' and LGBTI- people's rights.

Women are still less likely to participate in the labour force, and are more likely to take insecure, unsafe and poorly paid jobs when being part of the work force. The impacts of climate change continue to overly burden those living in poverty or marginalisation, the majority of these being women and girls. They are less able to cope with – and more exposed to – the adverse effects of the changing climate. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are being violated, leading to unwanted pregnancies, ill-health, suffering from gender-based violence and increased mortality. People of all ages are consequently being denied the most basic information and education about SRHR, leaving them unequipped to make healthy, voluntary and informed decisions about their sexuality, relationships and life in general. Sweden, as a world leading champion for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), has a particular role to play in contributing to make sure that CSE – in the light of its controversy – is not excluded from the global monitoring and follow up of SDG.

Forced displacement exacerbates the above inequalities. To achieve gender equality by the year 2030 requires prioritizing the poorest and most excluded, including migrant and refugee/ women, girls and LGBTI people. It also requires urgent action to eliminate the many causes of discrimination, and concrete suggestions on how to change structural inequalities. These include deeply rooted and harmful social norms about femininity and masculinity.

A thorough feminist analysis should be done of the different realities, representation and resource allocation issues faced by all people, regardless of their gender, in the implementation of each SDG. The main messages should include concrete suggestions on how to change structural inequalities. Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy is therefore more important than ever.

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- Goal 4: Champion sexual and reproductive health and rights. Change norms which affect the right to quality education and skills training over the life course for all girls and women. Raise the importance of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and highlight the importance of including religious actors for better impact. Raise the need for all schools to have basic human rights infrastructure like water and sanitation in order to give pupils - particularly girls - the chance to fulfil their education after menstruation.
- Goal 8: Address gender inequalities and emphasize women's rights in the workplace. Promote productive employment, decent work and publicly funded universal social protection systems including childcare, old age pensions and old age care. Include women's right to land and extension services. Promote human rights due diligence for businesses abroad. Call for awareness of the fact that lack of human rights to water and sanitation at workplaces and in public spaces discriminates woman from the labour market.
- Goal 10: Reinstate and strengthen safe and legal paths to asylum and ensure the right to international protection for women, children and LGBTI persons seeking asylum. Call for increased ambition on structural and group-based inequalities, prioritising those experiencing greatest poverty and marginalisation.
- Goal 13: Raise the need to change patriarchal structures and norms standing in the way of addressing climate change. Call for climate finance which sufficiently supports not only climate mitigation but also invests adequately in adaptation, including resilient water, sanitation and hygiene, and the transition to sustainable agriculture based on gender equality and agroecology.
- Goal 16: Ensure a strong focus on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, particularly with respect to increasing the role of women of all ages in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Address arms trade and arms exports. Strengthen the commitment to disarmament, including the spread of small and light weapons. Raise the situations of women and LGBTI human rights defenders. Raise the correlation between high degrees of freedom of religion or belief and peaceful societies, particularly the importance of protecting and promoting the right of women to self-determination in relation to their lives, their beliefs and how to manifest those beliefs. Increase focus on discriminatory legislation, especially family law, which strongly influences women's possibility to exercise their rights and economic empowerment.

POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Policy Coherence is outlined in the specific target 17.14, but above all in the holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda where all different policy areas are inter-linked. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) means to engage all policy areas, identifying how such policy areas interact, and enable them to reinforce each other. It also entails hampering negative effects and making positive synergies towards sustainable development globally. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development is a prerequisite for the 2030 Agenda.

In 2003, the Swedish parliament adopted the policy for global development (PGU), which states that Sweden should conduct a coherent policy for global development which covers all policy areas. According to PGU Sweden will contribute to a fair and sustainable global development based on human rights and perspectives of people living in poverty. 15 years with the PGU, Sweden has gained experience but also recognised challenges in involving all ministries of the government, authorities and the Swedish parliament, to prioritize global dimensions in all political work, national as well as international.

The commitment of **Leaving No One Behind** in the 2030 Agenda should guide all policy areas. Policies need to include proactive measures and be based on what creates results for people with disabilities, or who are living in extreme poverty and vulnerability, or are facing discrimination or violence. The ambition must be to consider these groups first in the analysis of all policies.

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- **Governments are responsible** for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, which includes the three dimensions of sustainable development. Legislation and programmes, and funding and investments, should systematically maximise synergies and minimise trade-offs between economic, social and environmental policy objectives and contribute to – and not undermine – the achievement of the SDGs.
- Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development should be **proactive** and **include long-term mechanisms within the government** that enable policy makers to make conflicts of interest between different policy areas visible and support decision makers to make well-informed and conflict sensitive decisions. Sustainable development and human rights must be prioritized over short-term interests and other political considerations.
- Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development should be guided by the commitment in the Agenda 2030 to **Leave No One Behind and the Human Rights**. That includes inclusive policies and practice that embrace everyone as well as general welfare solutions to reduce inequality. Particular attention should be paid to those who face discrimination or marginalisation and to the fulfilment of the human rights.
- Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development must be **transparent** and include **multi-stakeholder dialogues** that can contribute to new ways of thinking, but also constructive criticism and scrutiny of the government. Policies must support diverse civil society actors in their own right to advocate and follow up on the agenda and governments' commitments.

FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is welcomed that the Swedish government makes linkages between the financing for development and the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review processes. The support for increased domestic resource mobilisation is vital for the success of the 2030 Agenda, and these efforts need to be combined with policies in other areas, such as stronger domestic and international policies against tax avoidance.

Domestic public finance and taxes are the main sources of finance for the 2030 Agenda, and there is a need to further strengthen support to develop both the mobilisation and management of these resources. Public funding is essential, for example, for building national systems for social protection. The Financing for Development agenda would be strengthened by more in-depth discussions on appropriate strategies for mobilising finance for each SDG and targets, which need different strategies depending on a number of factors. Financing needs to look differently in the Least Developed Countries compared to Middle Income Countries. Private development finance can be mobilised towards achieving some goals but is less accessible or suitable to achieve others.

The Financing for Development agenda would also be strengthened by an increased focus on participation, so that the discussion does not stop at the mobilisation of finance but also addresses accountability and people's influence over the use and distribution of resources at country level. International development assistance remains an indispensable resource in countries, sectors and situations where financing needs cannot be met by other resources or where the ability to mobilise and manage financing needs to be strengthened. Because of this, it is alarming that the flows of Official Development Assistance are stagnant and still far from meeting international commitments.

Since there is a special focus on the country level at the 2019 FfD Forum, in the dialogue leading up to the forum, Sweden should raise the importance of participatory processes where all countries should engage with relevant local groups and organisations in the preparations for the FfD Forum.

¹ See for example: Freedom in the world 2017, Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy (2017) by Freedom House, CIVICUS Monitor Tracking Civic Space, Global Findings April 2017, Annual Report on Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2017 (2018) by Front Line Defenders, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Suffocating the movement – Shrinking space for women's rights (2018) by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

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- Highlight and promote innovative cooperation for domestic resource mobilisation, and strengthen public finance, to balance the international debate on innovative finance.
- Increase work on combating capital flight and tax avoidance. International measures to strengthen transparency are urgently needed.
- Urge all donor countries to meet international commitments of 0.7 per cent of GNI for Official Development Assistance and 0.2 per cent of GNI to Least Developed Countries. International development cooperation has a unique role and is indispensable to ensure enough financial resources for sustainable development in low income and fragile countries as well as for marginalised people and groups.
- Secure civil society's participation and scrutiny in national development planning and development financing strategies in general.



