

The key building blocks of a successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

June 2016

The International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP) is a member-led network of 64 national NGO platforms and 6 regional coalitions from all continents representing over 22,000 NGOs active locally and internationally on development, human rights and environment issues.

The IFP has been engaging within the international community on the setting and negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda from its beginning. Ahead of the High Level Political Forum to be held in July 2016, the IFP has built with its constituency the following statement on the key building blocks of a successful implementation of the SDGs agenda. This IFP's declaration is based on the political analyses of IFP's members at national and regional levels.

Once more, the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP) welcomes the new international Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals, as it embodies a collective willingness of the countries around the world for a more progressive, inclusive, human rights driven and gender sensitive agenda. In comparison with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we believe this Agenda is more transformative, aiming at being universal and more coherent. **Although the level of ambition should have been higher, this agenda is positively starting to touch upon the root causes of inequality, poverty, climate change, human discriminations and social exclusions.** This has been achieved due to the more inclusive and participatory process for the definition of the SDGs.

During the next phase, threats to the effective implementation of the SDGs remain. **Will there be the required change from “business as usual” to actually ensure that the SDGs are a transformational agenda?** Will national policies reflect the SDGs? These uncertainties make it vital that people and civil society voices remain at the core during the entire implementation stage of the 2030 Agenda.

Human Rights, Environmental and Social international standards are the backbone of the SDGs

The IFP welcomes the explicit reference to international commitments on Human Rights of most goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. This is a critical element of the whole Agenda, which must be consistently and robustly defended by Civil Society and by the United Nations system (UN) every time national authorities are tempted to downgrade or to avoid references to international Human Rights standards. This applies also for environmental, climate change and social standards as well as policy coherence for sustainable development. **The SDGs must pursue the most ambitious international commitments that already exist.**

Lack of commitments on traditional and new resources for the SDGs

The ambitions of the 2030 Agenda are not reflected in the outcomes of the international Summit on Finances for Development held in Addis Ababa in July 2015. As such, **the positions taken on tax reforms, tax evasion, tax avoidance, and financial investments do not reflect serious commitments previously made by States and multi-national**

business actors. The global challenges facing humanity and the planet are urgent and in order to tackle them, additional international taxes and predictable resources are required.

On a more historic perspective, the forty-year commitment to increase the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0,7% of the GDP for OECD countries still does not have a credible and binding timeline ahead of 2030. IFP joins the voices of many other civil society actors who call on the international community for an urgent waking-up! **The SDGs negotiations have shown that for many less-resourced countries the question of access to sustainable and predictable resources is a pre-condition to deliver the agenda.** In the worst-case scenario, some countries might take this lack of available resources as a political excuse not to deliver their commitments.

A more strategic approach is needed *vis-à-vis* all stakeholders of the SDGs agenda

There is a broad consensus that the failure to deliver the MDG 8 on global partnership has been one of the factors undermining the achievement of the whole agenda. The international community and national authorities must give tangible guarantees that they have learned this lesson from the previous period. From IFP's perspective and experience, specific attention must be given to six key issues:

1) Civil Society participation

Civil Society has actively engaged in the definition and negotiations of the SDG framework. However, across all continents and regions, increasing political pressure and threats against civil society, human rights defenders and environmental activists are being observed. **This is what the international community politely calls the 'shrinking space for Civil Society'. These situations are actually a violation of international and national laws.** They put at risk the entire Agenda because without an enabling environment for Civil Society and the full participation of local and national actors, the SDGs will not be achieved.

The IFP asks the international community to mobilize its full peer-to-peer leverage to allow civil society actors, human rights activists and all forms of non-violent citizens' participation to freely and increasingly engage in the SDGs implementation. **On some occasions CSOs might engage as service-delivery, but most importantly Civil Society is engaging as propositions-makers, watch-dogs and key actors of the democratization of societies.**

2) Local actors, citizens and local institutions are at the core of the SDGs

The international community has agreed on the principle of subsidiarity and differentiated approaches between the international level and national levels, but those principles must necessarily apply between the national, sub-national and local levels. Most of the efforts of building policies, institutions and peoples-participation must focus on the grass-roots and community levels. This aspiration sounds evident, but it is often not a reality.

In concrete terms, if empowerment, political decision-making and resources are not massively transferred to the local level, the SDGs might be reduced to empty words. This transfer of power and resources closest to people requires active engagements of political parties, local authorities, community based organizations and local media. These should be

long-term commitments, directly linked to international agreements, independent of national political cycles. A significant part of the international and regional efforts to support and to steer the implementation of the SDG Agenda should be to focus on this specific level of action.

3) Supporting and empowering the voices of the voiceless

The SDGs should be neither a top-down nor an expert-driven process. If the 'expertise' is important to manage complex processes and institutions, it should never solely take-over the leadership. If all actors involved in the SDGs are serious to transform our current unsustainable, unequal and unfair societies into just, sustainable and inclusive societies, the organizations formed by 'voiceless' and marginalized groups must take and be given a pro-active role in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs agenda.

The IFP calls all actors of the international community to provide resources and space for initiatives and leadership to women, youth, disable people, children, minorities and discriminated groups. Civil Society should propose specific benchmarks on this important aspect of the Agenda. This pre-requisite should also apply within the international community by providing Least Developing Countries (LDCs) the means to become protagonists in the monitoring and political deliberations of the SDG's implementation.

4) Private sector must be held into account

While the 2030 Agenda encourages Private Sector actors to engage in the implementation of the goals, this should not happen without conditions. Unfortunately, the SDGs remain silent on: the new financial resources the private sector should invest in this Agenda; on the specific commitments the private sector should take to prevent and control tax avoidance; on the responsibility the private sector is expected to take urgently to shift the current model from extractive economy to sustainable patterns; amongst others. As the 2030 Agenda lays emphasis on the private sector's contributions, **it is therefore crucial that the private sector is not only encouraged but also required to genuinely commit to engage in achieving the SDGs.**

While civil society might engage with progressive private sector actors in specific partnerships on the SDGs, these actors should remain targets to be closely monitored and watched-dog through the entire process of the Agenda implementation. More specifically, the SDG agenda should contribute to make illegal the merchandising of Nature and of local knowledge. In our time of increasing open-source intellectual innovation (such as free software) and sharing new economy, it is unacceptable that few private interests are intending to 'own' and grab common goods such as biodiversity.

Civil society must keep requesting from international institutions and national authorities the establishment of binding standards applying specifically to private sector's behavior and accountability.

5) Multi-stakeholders partnerships

Since 2000, the international community has called for multi-stakeholder partnerships but this aspiration remains often abstract or too global. The MDGs failed to deliver this important aspect of the agenda. The multi-stakeholder approach should be based on a firm understanding of

the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. States must not be allowed to use this approach as a pretext in order to pull out of their responsibilities.

The IFP calls for a specific focus and transparent allocation of resources (human and financial) toward tangible local partnerships between local authorities, local State institutions, local civil society, local academies, research centers and schools, local business, farmers organizations, traditional forms of community governance and citizen driven initiatives. **Broad and inclusive multi-actors partnerships at local level are key for achieving the SDGs.**

National institutions and the international community have the responsibility to provide incentives, an enabling environment and financial support for this to happen. The IFP urges all the UN member states to form multi-stakeholder mechanisms at national, sub-national and local level to monitor the progress and provide feedback to the government agencies, insuring CSOs have a central role in the SDGs implementation.

6) Mobilizing citizens, public opinion and media on the political vision embodied by the SDG agenda and on the respective means of implementation

Another lesson learned from the MDGs is the collective failure to create awareness on the previous agenda. It is partly because this objective rests on an incorrect approach: promoting an international agenda through a top-down approach! **People need to live the agenda concretely in their daily lives to feel ownership. They need to see and hear institutions and other actors referring to them in a tangible way (improvement in their livelihood conditions, through political deliberations in their own environment).**

Another key success factor to achieving SDGs by 2030 is the people's recognition and understanding of the interdependency between individuals, states, regions, and continents. Root causes of poverty and inequality are the same all over the world: they just may take different forms and shapes in various political and cultural contexts. The 2030 Agenda provides a great opportunity to close the gap between North, South, East and West.

Creating political momentum around the SDGs at national and local level in order to keep governments accountable seems to be the first priority for all actors involved. In parallel, the focus should also be on localization of the SDGs and on mobilizing citizens. People must have their role reinforced as active actors in denouncing bad practices, corruption, wrong policies and in experimenting alternatives. **If all the actors feel empowered by the SDG agenda, then they will naturally push and fight for it.**

In addition, the IFP calls upon the international community to support independent journalists and media all over the world including local community based media (especially via radio and web streams) since **independent media and journalists are one of the key pillars of genuine democratic and inclusive processes.** The IFP also proposes to all actors involved in the SDG Agenda to consistently engage in broad initiatives on global citizenship education.

Paradigms shift must become reality

The 2030 Agenda has managed to incorporate new language on system change and on transition toward just societies. Nevertheless, the SDGs are not precise enough on the definition of 'inclusive growth' nor do they propose alternative definitions and measurement of

well-being or human development++, despite the fact that many international actors and economists have worked on alternative indicators.

The SDGs constitute a unique opportunity to fully and sustainably link development and human rights through the formulation of evidence-based public policies. The IFP invites the international community to reflect on new models for monitoring development and well-being before establishing rigid and old-fashion monitoring frameworks for the next 15 years.

The International NGO Forum of National Platforms (IFP)'s commitments:

- The IFP will boost within its membership exchanges of best practices, intelligence sharing and peer-to-peer learning regarding the SDG agenda.
- The IFP will represent its members from all continents in international high-level forums and negotiations.
- The IFP will be an active partner within broad civil society alliances such as the Action for Sustainable Development coalition (A4SD).
- The IFP will apply high standards in terms of accountability, participation and inclusiveness.

In conclusion, to quote an IFP member from the Asia region, the NGO community '*expresses fully-fledged commitment to contribute in implementing the 2030 Agenda based on five principles of Development Justice: redistributive justice, economic justice, social justice, environmental justice and accountability to people*'. Finally, a francophone African member of the IFP invites all of us to support '*people to get on the path to a world with zero exclusion, zero carbon and zero poverty*'!

International Forum of National NGO Platforms

<http://ifp-fip.org/en>

Twitter : @IFP_FIP

Contact: secretariat@ifp-fip.org