

Informal Working Breakfast on Agenda 2030
Rethinking the role of civil society in an evolving UN system and Agenda 2030
Tuesday, 12 April 2016
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120

33rd of a monthly series
Co-convened by the Bahá'í International Community
and the International Movement ATD Fourth World

08:30 **Arrival of Participants & Breakfast**

08:35 **Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Cristina Diez
Main Representative to the UN
International Movement ATD Fourth World

08:40 **Opening Remarks**

H.E. Ms. Laura Elena Flores Herrera
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations

Ms. Bani Dugal
Principal Representative to the United Nations
Bahá'í International Community

09:00 **Open Discussion**

Moderated by Mr. Serik Tokbolat
Representative to the UN
Bahá'í International Community

09:55 **Information Sharing**

All participants are encouraged to share upcoming related plans and activities.

10:00 **Closing**

Note: Informal notes will be taken and shared. Comments made by participants will not be attributed to the speaker.

33rd Informal Working Breakfast on Agenda 2030
Rethinking the role of civil society in an evolving UN system and Agenda 2030

Hosted by the Bahá'í International Community and
the International Movement ATD Fourth World
12 April 2016

A diverse group of stakeholders¹ attended a working breakfast to discuss key issues related to the role of civil society in advancing Agenda 2030. The following are highlights of the discussion:

History of Civil Society Engagement at the UN

- Civil society (CS) engagement precedes the UN to the time of the League of Nations. Here we had many NGOs, who are still working at the UN today – WILPF, Red Cross, Trade Union Organizations, BIC. ILO is a good example; as a tripartite organization, it integrates civil society partnership in its very structure, and CS is part of the identity of the organization.
- 1946 marked the setting up of the UN and the Charter. Relationships with CS were established and ECOSOC was deemed as the body to engage with CS. The 1993 review and 1994 Resolution govern the relationship with CS today.
- Through informal means CS was able to come to the table and engage. Kofi Annan opened up many spaces where CS engagement could be considered and furthered. Cardoso Panel's Report on the UN and civil society remains unimplemented.
- The work around Resolution 1325 has been engaging with civil society. NGO Working Group on the Security Council - CS is increasingly recognized in these spaces, not only for its implementation, but also for its ideas.
- 7 Million Campaign – A CS campaign working with ACT Group of Member States to bring dynamism and forward looking means by which we appoint the next Secretary General. We might have a women or a gender sensitive male.
- GEAR Campaign - Resulted in the first hybrid Agency at the UN - UN Women - bringing together the fragmented agencies.
- At the grassroots, catholic sisters around the table are doing a wealth of work, down in the trenches, taking on their own hierarchy, etc.
- In 2016, there was a record 630 applications from NGOs for ECOSOC consultative status. There are 4,200 approved organizations in consultative status. Besides formal engagement, so much more can be done with substantive engagement with Agenda 2030. Civil society has been able to shape the Agenda so far and it is model we have to follow in the future. CSW60 has raised the bar very high for all other processes, and having a civil society friendly chair has been critical.

¹Permanent Missions & Government Agencies: Chile, Honduras, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Panama. Representatives from UN: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Division for Social Policy and Development, Division for Sustainable Development, NGO Branch of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination), UN Development Programme, UN Peacebuilding Support Office, UN Volunteers. Non-governmental organizations: Bahá'í International Community, CARITAS Internationalis, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Curia Generalizia Agostiniana – Augustinians International, Daughters of Charity, Global Action to Prevent War, Global Policy Forum, International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Presentation Association, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, NGO CSW NY, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Save the Children, Sisters of Charity Federation, SOS Children Villages, UNANIMA International, Unitarian Universalist Association, World Vision International.

Partnership & Collaboration

- The universality and inclusive nature of this Agenda calls for more than the UN is doing and requires more in terms of implementation. We need fit for purpose and effective partnerships. We need all hands on deck – private, public, individuals, civil society. Every bit of energy and creativity is needed.
- Lack of understanding of the world around us leads to wasted resources and poor policy. What's necessary is a widening of our optics and a wider grasp of what is required to leave no one behind.
- Partnership and collaboration needs a relational attitude. How is each partner perceived in the relationship? Civil society at the UN has the desire to collaborate and to ensure the goals of the UN are achieved. Right now, CSOs see themselves being treated as lesser partners than they are. E.g. Local civil society representatives to the UN who are here every day and do not pose any threat still have to go through security every time. Our colleague from Geneva noted that it is not the case there. Civil society access to DC1, DC2 and UNICEF has been cut off. Major Groups are not reflective of all of us.
- The Peace and Security Agenda offers a good example of CS involvement. A similar process is happening in the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda 2250, which stemmed from the process directly led by NGOs who worked hand in hand with the UN, encouraging them to recognize the role of young people in building peace. Within internal UN space, such as working groups, a less formal possibility of a different type of partnership with NGOs exists (e.g. The group that pushed the adoption of Resolution 2250 co-chaired by the UN with International NGO and Youth Lead Organization as a partnership of equals). Such a space is there, but it needs a cultural shift at the UN, where technical meetings become a space for dialogue between UN and NGOs.
- The UN hands projects to NGOs, as they are seen as implementing partners. There needs to be a shift from beneficiaries to political partners, where NGOs can have an equal seat at the table but serve different functions. Hopefully the next SG is open and supportive of these ideas.
- What is the role of CSOs to provide service or to contribute to policy?
- Solidarity is going to change the world. We need to teach this principle to our kids.
- As an NGO representative I arrived to the UN with a mission to create spaces in the context of P2015 negotiations for those living in extreme poverty to have a voice and to be part of the policy thinking and reflection. Common practice at the UN is that we invite these people to the UN to speak for three or five minutes; they touch our hearts, and then we forget about it. The UN is a place for a few chosen people, but to those outside who are not counted what is the value of the UN?
It is impossible for the UN to realize the magnitude of the effort required by someone—sick of their children dying to poverty, their life a daily struggle—to re-arrange everything in their lives to come here to the UN. And when they arrive, many of us at UN are unable to take 5 minutes to meet with them, to get to know their name and where they come from; this is a lack of respect. It is very easy for people to see a “poor person;” it is harder to see the fight to survive. People manage to survive everyday, to bring peace to impossible situations. These people contribute towards the building of a better world for everyone. Value these people just like the Pope. Why do we not see them as people capable of contributing? Those excluded as partners must be seen as capable of shaping thinking at the UN.

Challenges for Civil Society

- **NGO Accreditation.** Nineteen Member States sit as gatekeepers to the UN. As CS, we want the most credible organizations to join the club and gain the privilege of accreditation. There are really hardworking NGOs doing really good stuff, they could have great contributions here but are being left out because of the narrow minded of certain Member States. We want deserving NGOs at the table. CSOs accredited at the UN tend to represent more established, affluent, global NGOs. How can NGOs working at the national and local level express their needs at the international level? The Ebola crisis was an example of this.
- **Is there funding for civil society?** When there is, are we competing for that funding? Sometimes in these situations CS doesn't show its best side. Is CS just there for service, the arms implementing what the UN wants?
- **Oneness of humanity.** Material wealth is used as a measurement of development, but is this the rubric we should be using to measure the development of all of society? Economic development is not synonymous with human development. Building capacity and knowledge generation are crucial to successful

implementation. Justice requires universal participation. Knowledge is central to universal participation and social change. It will not be a small group of people who change things for others, rather everyone changes and contributes together.

- **The Membership of the NGO Committee** changes every 4 years, and the hope is for CS friendly member states to be elected. Civil society was able to attend and participate in the negotiations. Facilitators of the negotiations were briefing the NGOs that were unable to attend. Member States who are CSO friendly are in for a challenging task as they work to open space for CSOs. The NGO Committee does not rank high; it is a lot of work in a difficult setting, so it is not surprising that Member States would rather be elected to more visible and interesting committees.

What is the most effective mechanism for CSO participation?

- The UN employed the Post 2015/Agenda 2030 process in engaging with CS at grassroots and the national level. The question now is, **how will the HLPF engage with CS?** Will we continue to have dynamic CS engagement at the grassroots and national level? Or will we work through the Major Groups from Agenda 21 – it worked to some level, but is this grouping really representative of the individuals at the grassroots? We talk about leaving no person behind, so how will we bring their views to the table?
- CSO participation is praised in principle but marginalized in practice. NGO speeches are left to last if there is time. Spaces are awkward and not fully appreciated.
- Implementation phase – The input of CSOs at every level offers invaluable insights into reality and challenges we must address.
- How do we overcome the traditional mistrust across sectors, as we now need to collaborate as partners? Mistrust stems from a history of failure. Partnerships require incentives. Previously, we were creating Win-Win situations, with a financial backer and NGO being able to tick a box. Now we need Win-Win-Win situations, where the recipient of programs Win too. Practice make perfect as we learn to work together.
- We need to reach a common platform for all actors who are not State actors. Jan Eliasson's 2006 initiative produced a good report, but it didn't change the ways CS contributes to the UN. There are still good contributions, e.g. at the regional level ECLAC. Member States cannot act behind closed doors.
- Member States need to be ready to incorporate appropriate and effective interaction with increasing number of NGOs.
- Civil society has achieved some access in this slow and patient process of being present. The UN in 2020 will not be the UN any of us know today. Right now, eight people posited for SG and all have influence at the local and national level; we should remember this. As Pope Francis said, don't just give me numbers, give me names, who are these people we serve? Everybody counts.

Connecting to the National & Local Level

- Close engagement in UN processes doesn't necessarily start here at the UN; it starts at the local level where children are most vulnerable, and where people live. To create an environment which is peaceful and where there is freedom there must be strong commitment to make real the right to fundamental freedoms. There is a shrinking of civil society space. Red thread is the informal way that CS is being allowed to engage.
- CSW60 was an amazing event with 4000 women from around the world present. We moved towards all hands on deck in a much better way than previous CSWs. How did we do this?
 - We met with all Members of the Bureau. Brazil was the Chair of CSW, and he was extremely receptive, even speaking at our reception day—never has a Chair spoken there. The interviewer was able to get UN Women's director and the CSW Chair to answer hard questions and to speak together.
 - Made available a "Handbook of Advocacy."
 - Interactive dialogue - 20 NGOs spoke before the end of the meeting and participants were able to build on other's comments.
 - Morning briefings with UN Women, the Bureau and CS –by the end of the Commission we were really partners working together.
 - Engagement at the local level –There is a movement in the U.S. to get CEDAW passed in 100 U.S. cities. This reaches the local in a way that is exciting, involving both women and men. HABITAT is interested in moving this internationally.

- There needs to be more knowledge on the breadth of civil society. Representatives from International NGOs seem to be taken as the voice of the grassroots because they can speak the same UN language and policy terminology, but what are we trying to address and where are the local voices?
- Two processes on participation— 1) national standards of human rights and 2) Indigenous participation in the UN decision-making processes –are starting to have a particular status and recognition.
- You can't provide education and other services, if you don't know your population. If you don't count us, we don't exist (e.g. people with disabilities). We need to gather and disaggregate data.