**35th Informal Working Breakfast on Agenda 2030**  
*Genuine stakeholder engagement for effective implementation and review: the national level lens*

Hosted by the Bahá'í International Community and   
the International Movement ATD Fourth World  
15 July 2016

A diverse group of stakeholders[[1]](#footnote-1) attended a working breakfast to discuss key issues related to connecting Agenda 2030 to national and sub-national level engagement. The following are highlights of the discussion:

* Social Watch started 20 years ago when governments of the world met in Copenhagen to establish the eradication of poverty and promotion of equality between men and women as major goals. As NGOs we wanted more, but those two promises are quite powerful.
* Our network engages in this work worldwide. In some cases, the dialogue is indirect but it is still influential. Out of what was learned from such dialogues, a group of organizations including Social Watch, developed the document ‘[Goals for the Rich’](http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/11253.pdf). This document says that if this is going to be powerful, transformative and change the way that we are operating, then we have to clearly spell out the responsibility of the rich and the powerful. This leads to the question, ‘Who are the rich and powerful?’ They are the rich and powerful countries that not only have the capability to contribute to the Sustainable Development Agenda but also the responsibility for having created a lot of the damage such as climate change, which is recognized in the SDGs. The rich and powerful are also the corporations around the world that are affecting the outcomes of whatever decisions are made. Further, it is the rich and powerful individuals in each country who have amassed even more wealth over the past years. The 2030 Agenda recognizes this in several ways: Goal 10 about inequalities within and among countries; Goal 16 about justice; Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns.
* What does sustainable development mean? No country can claim to be entirely developed, but a certain group of countries has to take the lead. Social Watch is coming out with a Spotlight Report, asking countries and organizations doing this work what their learnings and obstacles were. We have gotten reports covering many aspects of development. Common difficulties: who is in charge? Requires more of a perspective across the silos. Two conclusions:

1. In the report’s data on powerful countries (including Germany, France, Switzerland) we find that specific responsibilities include the responsibility to do things at home; reducing national poverty by half in fifteen years- this is not in the SG’s report. We don’t know how this is going to be measured. Traditional responsibilities to cooperate with countries that are less capable, and to look at spill over effects, the impact around the world of things done at home. Hosting of tax havens, which damage others; disruption of resources. These responsibilities have to be taken into account.
2. An emerging issue in all countries is PPPs (Public Private Partnerships) invariably associated with corruption, which waste resources, generate debt, etc. This should alert us in a moment when these are sold as the solution and not part of the problem.

* Together 2030 is an initiative launched in December by group of organizations who were working closely during post 2015 process.
* A question to ask is “how is civil society participating; how are citizens participating?” Recalling paragraphs 74d, 77, 79, there is a significant role that civil society needs to play in the implementation of this Agenda. This is a time for action at the national level.
* *Perception Survey on open, inclusive, transparent process for people.* Surveyed countries that had volunteered to present a national report to the HLPF. There were 265 responses: 76% from civil society, 2% from government (22 countries)? Four Main Conclusions of survey:

1. *Language matters*: Those replying to the questionnaire in English tended to be more informed of the process than those speaking other languages.
2. *There is a willingness to engage*: Of those who were informed of the process, 93% indicated willingness to participate in the follow up and review processes.
3. *There is a desire to coordinate*
4. *Awareness of agenda did not translate to awareness of national plans*

* There is a contract between governments and their people – that governments are accountable to civil society – and this is where the Office of the Special Adviser for the 2030 Agenda comes in. The key principle is the universality of the Agenda. It is also the people’s agenda, and everybody has a role in implementation. It is not an agenda for the north or south, every country is a developing country in this agenda.
* Goal 16 is very important. There is an interconnectedness and indivisibility to the agenda.
* The Survey on Perception and awareness was interesting. We have to translate this to the languages people speak, but we don’t want people to just know that the SDGs exist. We need to be able to let people know “we need to start outlining what you can actually do as an individual but also in your community.”
* Collaboration between civil society and government concerning preparation of national reports is an issue. How would civil society participate in national reporting? What happens in countries that are not submitting reports?
* When working with people in El Salvador, one representative said they ask “what is development for you?” People immediately say peace. We must work from the understanding that everything we do should ultimately lead to peace. More social movements towards this end needed. People have things to say but they are too far and it is too difficult: “The people that forever have experienced exclusion, those are where we have to start.”
* Analysis in how governments are including communities in planning the implementation process presents a mixed picture. In Uganda, Korea, and Finland there are more spaces for engagement.
* Need to bring ordinary people into the spotlight. These are the people affected by often inadequate decisions. This includes older persons, children, etc.
* We’ve provided education to people with disabilities and collected data about their participation in national reports. When I look at people coming here today in the same room it is lovely. We all do have collective responsibility to ensure that we not only engage but share information. There is much to learn about reasonable accommodations so that everybody’s needs are met.
* In the context of multi-stakeholder engagement, we need to look at the relevant dynamics of social movements. In Ghana, the role of faith groups is key for outreach and influence. We are focusing on goal 16 in the context of our general election. Elections in Africa can be divisive. We need to find creative ways to engage all political parties.
* Spain is lacking political will; no stable government in place. We want to give our voice.
* We are focused on global issues but we want to engage in local level thinking on how municipalities can implement the goals. To this end, we reached out for new partners; sports organizations thinking about social issues, churches thinking about inequality.
* It’s important that countries report to the HLPF but more important are national implementation plans. Governments can try to involve civil society in their reports and implementation plans. Data is very important; we have to be able to produce the necessary data, which relates to accountability.
* Need for collaboration and recognition for what citizens are doing. Many people who should be here are missing from this meeting. Member States need to bring this back to their capitals.
* For people, an overarching vision is important. If we have a new jurisprudence that supported our work that said that rights begin with existence and after that the existence to be in a place, and after that the right of a mutually-enhancing relationship with processes of the earth. Something as simple as that.
* Lack of money within civil society. It’s not knowledge or insight we lack, it’s funding.
* Importance of building large and diverse coalitions to speak with a single voice as civil society. Importance of diversity within civil society. We don’t do enough for social movement.
* It’s evident that we are at a different moment than we were with the MDGs. We need to be careful – this has to be a national process, and efforts among ourselves need to be bottom up. We cannot come up with big global platforms and then go to the national level. We need to remember civil society at the country level. We need to support grassroots efforts and let them implement this agenda.
* There is a balance we need to strike when implementing this agenda. The national level is important, because that’s where people are, but when we come to the UN we also need to look at the obstacles that the global system imposes. These obstacles constrain governments’ capacity, even some quite powerful –for example to raise taxes.
* Will take thoughts back to the SG office. To continue the conversation Itai can be reached at [matabombe@un.org](mailto:matabombe@un.org)

1. Permanent Missions & Government Agencies: Finland, Office of the Permanent Observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie. Representatives from UN: Executive Office of the Secretary General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Department of Public Information. Non-governmental organizations: AARP, ActionAid France, ASEAN Disability Forum, Bahá'í International Community, CMB International, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Daughters of Charity, Franciscans International, GAPW, Global Action to Prevent War, Global Policy Forum, Gray Panthers, Helpage, IBVM – Loretto, International Committee for October 17, International Disability Alliance, International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Instituto del Tercer, Kepe Finland, Light for the World International, Maryknoll NGO, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Siglo XXIII, Social Watch, SOS Children’s Villages, Together 2030, World Blind Vision, World Vision International. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)