



REPORT PARTNERSHIP FORUM 2018

The second Partnership Forum was hosted by the European Commission in June 2018. The participants included signatories of 30 Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs), their networks, and associations. The forum focused on ways and means to increase synergies and collaboration between partners for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Opening by Director General Stefano Manservigi, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO).

Mr Manservigi invited participants to reflect on the Commission's proposal for a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027). He mentioned that references are present in the proposed new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) both in the Geographic and Thematic Pillars and that Local Authorities are recognized both as service providers and actors of development, and can play an important role to ensure expertise and peer to peer exchanges (including twinning). An important envelope is foreseen for the civil society organisations. He recommended to promote a debate on the European External Investment Plan (EIP), through which the Commission intends to leverage investments, as an additional means to implement sustainable development goals (SDGs). The MFF presents a streamlined and simplified instrument to respond to policy and political objectives in the external field. It will be more transparent, will contain a programmable envelope (stable amount for fast interventions), will cover thematic actions and will have an amount to cover non-programmed events.



Based on this presentation, participants confirmed the need for sustainable funding to support civil society organisations (CSOs) in challenging environments, where fundamental and human rights are still violated. Participants expressed the will to work more closely with EU Member State embassies and delegations and recognised the usefulness of the support granted to networks of civil society through the Framework Partnership Agreements. Participants also expressed concerns towards the planned blending of Official Development Assistance with public investment and requested funds to develop the capacity of women's rights organisations and to tackle sexual exploitation. A number of participants shared their worries on the growing role granted to the private sector. International pressure should ensure an institutionalised mechanism to have a real time feedback system on the policy-making process to guarantee the participation of civil society organisations.

Session 1, 25 June, "2030 Agenda - Implementing and localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".

While launching the debate, panellists underlined that, to reach the target of zero hunger, address poverty and create a peaceful society, there is an urgent need for engaging women in decision making processes and prioritizing them as main agents. As to the obstacles encountered, panellists mentioned insufficient funds, the lack of means to implement the 2030 Agenda, and the difficulty to

build relationships of trust between local actors, local authorities, and central governments. If these challenges are not correctly addressed, the achievement of the SDGs will not take place.

Participants put forward the proposal for the EU to work with states on national SDG implementation plans and platforms. CSOs and local authorities (LAs) should be encouraged to submit shadow reports on the implementation of the SDGs. Multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be developed at local level to strengthen ownership and generate mutual accountability. Communication between all actors should be improved and regular consultations should be held through the creation of national platforms, also involving national governments.

Regarding the MFF, participants recommended it be fully dedicated to reaching the SDGs, reflect EU human rights values unconditionally, and contain various, adequate, predictable, and multi-annual funding mechanisms. EU investments should not reinforce power imbalances, but rather identify those partners that can reduce the inequalities and target smallholders, cooperatives, and small and medium enterprises. Regarding the single instrument proposed under the MFF, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), some participants stated that this instrument should not be extensively guided by the economic and geopolitical interests of EU Member States.

Session 2, 25 June, "Refining the partnerships".

This session focussed on the Framework Partnership Agreements and the future of the partnerships. The EU is ensuring an on-going promotion of FPAs not only within DG DEVCO, but also among EU Delegations and other services. Participants called for more exchanges between FPAs and the European Commission, recognising that the existing platform on Capacity4Dev has not been used to its full potential.



Regarding local level engagement, there was agreement on the further involvement of EU Delegations. FPAs attending the Forum were not aware of the EU country roadmaps for engagement of civil society and should make more use of them. The suggestion of merging the Partnership Forum with the Policy Forum on Development was evaluated as a positive step forward by all. Partners agreed that Capacity4dev should be used in more systematic manner in order to foster a continuous dialogue and exchange information.

Session 3, 25 June, "Public trust, transparency and accountability in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse".



Panellists briefly recalled the recent events and media coverage in the humanitarian and development sectors over this issue. Many agreed that this is a societal and sectorial issue and needs to be put in a wider context as it is a form of harassment. Policies and procedures do not suffice to tackle the issue properly. Panellists emphasised that violence against women and girls usually takes the form of sexual exploitation, a daily reality for many, within their family, community, workplace and society at large. Sexual abuse happens because of a permissive environment. The

root cause identified by participants lies in the extreme levels of inequality in power and resources between men and women, rich and poor. Victims of systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence often have no access to justice, care, or support. The role of women organisations in victim protection and recovery was highlighted.



Several interesting examples of good practices were presented by the audience, among others a code of conduct, training courses and awareness raising campaigns implemented for local authorities by PLATFORMA. In the Netherlands, a platform has been created to build solutions using existing mechanisms, adopt practical and effective measures and bring proportional responses. Regarding the European Commission, proposals on the table focus efforts around four main axes: the need for a coordinated and collective action with recognised standards at international level,

accountability (reporting and prosecution of perpetrators), strengthening the capacity and support of victims and survivors, and incentivise cultural change.

Session 1, 26 June, “Realising the transformational potential of the 2030 Agenda and promoting an enabling environment”.

Panellists highlighted the importance of a solid system of indicators for the effective measurement of the implementation of the "leave no one behind" principle. They also stressed that the involvement of the private sector is crucial in order for it to contribute and commit to sustainable development (and eliminate power imbalances). Panellists suggested strengthening national SDG implementation plans by creating, or strengthening, national multi-stakeholder platforms involving civil society, local authorities and private sector.

Session 2, 26 June, “Resilience”.

Participants concluded that CSOs and local authorities should act as a bridge between the national authorities and communities after a disaster, by recognising the rights of the priority groups such as children, migrants, indigenous population and persons with disabilities. The debate highlighted how



local authorities can ensure and promote long-term efforts and commitments towards resilience objectives. One of the main obstacles in achieving resilience is the lack of capacity on behalf local authorities. Participants called for a stronger cooperation between CSOs and LAs on this issue, along with further capacity development, transparency and accountability. The important role of young people was recognised as was the need for their closer involvement.

Session 3, 26 June, “The New Urban Agenda”.

The recommendations formulated by participants underlined the weaknesses of some local authority structures, which cannot bear the burden of implementing the variety of international development agenda objectives due to their limited political, financial and technical capacity. There is a clear distinction to be made between rural and urban areas, while the linkages between them are not to be neglected. It was highlighted that the partnership between central and local government together with Civil Society Organisations and the local private sector, including the informal sector, are of key-importance in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The panellists advocated for

strong local government associations that build LA capacity and advocacy roles, while fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships. Botswana was mentioned to highlight how a national steering committee with all relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the SDGs can succeed. Whether in cities or in the countryside, women are the “carers”, care for the land, the children, and their environment. Inequalities remain a permanent challenge. The role played by women in the economy of their community has not been recognised yet and a change of mindset is therefore necessary. Leaving no one behind means including the voice of “resistance” which, in contexts of tensions and violence in cities, for instance, ensures the link with the population. Again, women and young people usually constitute the resistance voice.

Session 4, 26 June, "Climate action: policy coherence on the climate agenda".

Participants agreed on the fact that urgent action is needed to achieve the 1.5°C objective of the Paris Agreement. Among the priorities identified, the difficulty for local stakeholders to access funds, and the need to involve all stakeholders stood out. An integrative approach should not focus only on the objective related to climate but on all SDGs, in order to avoid negative impacts on other SDGs. Participants described the difficulties encountered when trying to convince donors or national authorities to support the scaling up and expanding of experiences which have proven to be positive.



Session 5, 26 June, “Peace, Security and Development: Partnership for Peace”.



Participants expressed their wish for the EU to work with CSOs through a systematic engagement in policy processes, and sustain long-term support for CSOs and LAs given their key role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They stressed the need for the inclusion of young people throughout the process, along with their education. Recommendations highlighted the need to build resilience and support gender sensitive approaches at all stages of the process.

Session 6, 26 June, “Reshaping decentralised development cooperation: the key role of cities and regions for the agenda 2030”.

The OECD presented the main findings and recommendations of the above Report financed by the European Commission. Partnerships between LAs in developed and developing countries have a key role in contributing to SDGs and localising the Global Agendas. Despite the global financial crisis, the volumes of decentralised development cooperation (DDC) have increased by 12% passing from USD 1.7 billion in 2005 to USD 1.9 billion in 2015.

Gender and climate change are becoming two top priorities in terms of ODA. Over the last decades, DDC has evolved from traditional vertical cooperation to the co-operation of a network of territorial stakeholders in both partner countries, which includes local and regional governments but also CSOs, association of local regional governments (LRGs), private sector and academia. Key recommendations include the need to recognise the diversity of DDC concepts, characteristics, modalities and actors and the fact that the promotion of a territorial approach to DDC can increase the impact of DDC actions, improve the coordination and reduce the fragmentation of projects, and better exploit the key DDC



principles of territorial partnership (reciprocity, proximity and co-development). The OECD is now launching one programme on the territorial approach to the SDGs, while the Commission is launching a “city to city” partnership for the localisation of SDGs. The report is already available on the OECD website.

Closing speech by Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission.



In the speech delivered to conclude the Partnership Forum 2018, Commissioner Mimica recognized the valuable role of LAs and CSOs. He recalled the 27% budget increase in EU development spending proposed by the European Commission to carry out external assistance, and stressed that the new MFF will allow matching the ambitions of the global commitments of the 2030 Agenda. Among his priorities, Commissioner Mimica referred to the Spotlight Initiative launched with the UN to tackle violence against women and girls in partner countries. Regarding the New Urban Agenda,

CSOs and LAs will be supported in order to make cities more resilient, safe, sustainable and inclusive. He also highlighted the importance of the development cooperation carried out by Local Authorities for the achievement of the SDGs. Commissioner Mimica thanked participants for their strong commitment and active participation, and proceeded to sign two additional FPAs, one with the International Trade Union Confederation and one with the International Organisation of Employers.



Main conclusions and recommendations:

- Cooperation and dialogue between FPAs and with the EU is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Consider merging the two main fora (Partnership Forum and the Policy Forum on Development) in order to have a unique space for policy dialogue with our main partners.
- Organise thematic and regional meetings with CSOs and LAs and simultaneously foster a continuous dialogue on a virtual platform, possibly building on existing tools (e.g. capacity4dev).
- Partners are encouraged to further engage with EU Delegations in the revision and implementation of the EU Roadmaps for Civil Society engagement in external actions. In addition, the EU should support the establishment of national platforms between civil society, LAs, and the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Policies and procedures must be put in place, or strengthened, to address sexual exploitation and abuse in the development field. Partners stressed that the root causes can be found in power imbalances that need to be addressed through cultural change. Partners also called for opportunities to learn from each other and exchange best practices to prevent and respond to SEA cases in their workplaces.

