

Civil Society Day on Inclusive Partnership for Sustainable and Democratic Development

Phnom Penh, Cambodia / March 19, 2019

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We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.

There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development.

(Preamble of UN 2030 Agenda)

We, approximately 300 participants representing members and partners of the organizing committee (CCC, DCA, BSDA, Oxfam, NEP, TI, SCW, STT, SILAKA, UN/women, World Vision), government officials, development partners, provincial non-governmental organizations networks, community-based organizations, private sector and other stakeholders gathered to participate in the Civil Society Day held at Cambodiana Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia on March 19, 2019.

The whole day Civil Society Day focused on the main theme of “Inclusive Partnership for Sustainable and Democratic Development” in Cambodia. We are supporting and appreciating this converging approach for all of us from different sectors to learn, discuss, and find solutions to address the challenges we face in common, particularly on the nine sub-themes of Enabling environment for civil society; Financial sustainability for civil society; Human capacity development; Governance and anti-corruption; Natural resource management and governance; SDGs 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution”; Policy engagement (case study on sub-national democratic development); Multi-stakeholder engagement; and Gender and social inclusion.

We are expressing our appreciation on the recent improvement in the operating environment made by all actors towards civil society including the amendment of regulatory framework, the adoption of Leave No-one Behind principles, the provision of financial and technical resource, and the multi-stakeholder partnership commitment to promote socio-economic betterment of the citizen.

Deeply realizing the diversity, working approaches, and enduring complexities among all of us but recognizing that this is the role for each of us to converge our efforts to achieve the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) and other relevant national plans.

In order to realize the inclusive partnership for sustainable and democratic development, we admit that further efforts need to be made and we would like to convey the following priority recommendations to the following stakeholders:

Royal Government of Cambodia

- Fully engage civil society in all stages of the key development agenda/policies and reforms specifically the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs); the Sub-National Democratic Development; the Public Administration Reform, and the Implementation of Social Accountability Framework (ISAF); the governance and anti-corruption; the human capital development; the gender and social inclusion; the multi-stakeholder partnership; the natural resource management and governance; and the attainment of peace, justice and strong institution. ***This year, we strongly request the government to ensure inclusive space for civil society to participate in the SDGs VNR process.***
- Ensure the enabling environment for CSOs, especially in relation to the legal framework that become more and more repressive for civil society especially the Law of Associations and Non-Governmental Organization (LANGO), Taxation Law, Anti-corruption Law, Accounting and Auditing Law, Labour Law. We call the government to make necessary review to the laws and ensure the dialogue mechanism between relevant ministries and civil society to address respective challenges.
- Activate the key multi-stakeholder partnership modalities as stated in the new Development Cooperation and Partnership Strategy (DCPS 2019-2023), especially the five attached guidelines: 1). Multi-stakeholder consultation at national and sub-national level; 2). Government and civil society consultation; 3). Multi-stakeholder sectoral consultation; 4). Technical Working Groups (TWGs); and 5). Joint Monitoring Indicators (JMIs).

Development Partners/Donors

- Support and facilitate to have the inclusive space for civil society to participate in the key development agenda/policies, especially the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) and the Technical Working Group (TWGs) mechanisms.
- Promote the enabling environment for civil society, specifically through the technical, financial and spiritual supports. DPs/donors should closely monitor how the operating environment and sustainability of civil society evolves so that they can well reflect those trends in their respective country strategy.
- Ensure dialogue mechanisms between DPs/donors and civil society at both the national and sub-national level. The DPs/donors should also influence the government, private sector, and CSOs from their back countries to work in inclusive partnership with civil society in Cambodia.

Private Sector

- Sensitize among the private sector the outstanding national development priorities, especially the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs), the effective development cooperation, the sub-national democratic development, and the Business and Human Rights.
- Establish the dialogue platforms with civil society both through the formal and informal manners. If possible, the sector should identify the champions and like-minded business persons/firms who will mobilize greater contributions from private sector into inclusive and sustainable development.
- Work in partnership with civil society to reaffirm the roles and commitment of private sector in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in promoting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Civil Society

- Make this CS Day initiative as a regular platform, at least once a year, for civil society and other development stakeholders to collectively respond to development challenges and better promote effective development cooperation.
- Through the best possible means (civil society working group, civil society council or...), strengthen the representation of civil society and use this to promote the quality of inputs made by civil society in various dialogue mechanisms.
- Empower the Community based Organizations (CBOs) and grassroots organizations, who closely work with and for the community, to have meaningful contribution to development from the ground.

Last but not least, we as the civil society participants in this Civil Society Day, commit ourselves to fully implement these calls to action in partnership and solidarity with other CSOs, the government, private sector, and DPs/donors to ensure that our efforts are inclusive, aiming at sustainable development in Cambodia.

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