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***Building Inclusive Voluntary National Reviews: Promoting civil society participation on the SDGs***

**NAME OF CO-ORGANIZERS:**

* Asia Development Alliance (ADA), Asia Civil Society Partnership on Sustainable Development (APSD), Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), Forus International, Transparency, Accountability and Participation for the 2030 Agenda (TAP Network)
* UN: UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub; UN ESCAP (tentative)

**SUMMARY:**

2019 marks the fourth year since the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed and the end of the first cycle of reporting but how far is civil society truly able to engage in the follow up and review process?

Paramount to the achievement of the SDGs is a strong partnership between all stakeholders, including civil society, community organisations and all citizens, to ensure that the Goals are translated into actions with tangible results and the pledge to ‘leave no one behind’ is delivered by the year 2030. Without robust and smart partnerships on the SDGs, the Goals will remain mere aspirations. In line with the “whole-of-society” approach, the SDGs will only be achieved by ensuring the inclusive and meaningful engagement and participation of diverse stakeholders, not only for implementation, policy analysis, data collection and financing but also in the monitoring and review processes.

It is a crucial time to consider the functioning of the follow-up and review processes for the SDGs, and make constructive proposals on how systemic barriers to the inclusive and meaningful implementation of the SDGs, particularly through effective review and follow-up mechanisms.

**OBJECTIVES:**

This event will aim at sharing the experiences of government-CSO engagement and the role of the United Nations to encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships and ensure that the transformative promise of the SDGs to ‘Leave No One Behind’ is delivered. It will focus on challenges and opportunities related to CSO-government engagement based on CSO lessons learned during VNR reporting and other SDG follow-up mechanisms between 2016 and 2019, drawing on extensive comparative studies on national CSO reporting from A4SD, Forus, TAP and partners. It will be an opportunity for CSOs and government representatives from countries with VNRs in 2019 to share their experiences and learn about best practices from other regions.

Bearing in mind the HLPF reform process taking place in early 2020, it will be an opportunity to brainstorm on HLPF reforms by exchanging experiences and key recommendations among member states and CSOs from the Global North and Global South to improve the next cycle of follow up and review processes, and ensure they are more inclusive and meaningful. The outputs will be fed into the proposals for the HLPF review in the processes of seeking accountability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to take place in late 2019 and early 2020.

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

* Introduction & Welcome by Moderator (5 mins)
* Overview of analysis and recent support to national partners including toolkits from Action for Sustainable Development, Forus & TAP (30 mins)

Moderated discussion and Q& A with key countries (45 mins)

Country Case 1: Ghana/ South Africa/ Tanzania

Country Case 2: Timor Leste

Country Case 3: Mongolia/ Pakistan

Country Case 4: Guatemala/ Chile

Expert inputs from IISD? (10 mins)

Q&A (30 mins)

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

* What are the challenges and opportunities for an inclusive and meaningful CSO engagement in the VNR process and other SDG follow-up mechanisms across regions?
* What can we learn from CSO submissions on VNR reporting, including alternative CSO reports, and from VNR guidelines prepared by CSOs over the first 4 years?
* Are the governments of 2018 VNR reporting countries prepared to fulfil the principles of the [UNDESA guidelines](http://sdg.iisd.org/news/desa-issues-vnr-handbook-revised-voluntary-guidelines/) regarding the role of civil society in this process? How effective is the VNR process to ensure national engagement and accountability?
* How can the UN support CSO engagement in SDG implementation at the country level? What tools and platforms can be created to advance CSO engagement?
* How to promote regional exchange of learning and good practice linked to VNRs and other SDG follow-up mechanisms?
* What are constructive proposals for improvements to these processes so that we achieve transformation, integration and inclusive and meaningful participation by 2030?

**PARTICIPATION:**

It is proposed that the panelists for the sessions should be drawn from, CSOs, government and the UN. CSOs from Ghana (and other African countries) and Asia can share their experience of working with government on the SDGs, including comparative reports and efforts to strengthen CSO structures for effective coordination and engagement with government and other stakeholders. It may also be useful to learn about the role the United Nations have played in encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships and ensuring that the transformative promise of the SDGs to ‘Leave No One Behind’ is delivered

**BACKGROUND:**

The Ghana Civil Society (CSO) Platform on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was established in October 2015 to ensure more coordinated civil society efforts in achieving the SDGs in Ghana. The Platform was institutionalised in May, 2016. The Platform presently has over 300 member organisations, including coalitions, associations, unions, community-based organisations, national and international non-governmental organisations and religious groups. The Platform’s membership cuts across all districts in the country. Platform members are divided into 18 sub-platforms, one for each of the 17 goals and a youth sub-platform. Each of the 17 sub-platforms is headed by a team of one convener and two to five co-conveners. The Platform will for the first time this year prepare a VNR Shadow Report to capture civil society contribution to the implementation of the SDGs.

ADA and APSD in Asia have supported more than 12 national coalitions in the past 4 years and generating data from almost 23 VNR countries in Asia. ADA has also been doing a synthesis report on CSOs in engagement in the VNR process for the past three years in Asia. ADA and APSD are also the regional partners of A4SD, Forus and TAP network. The global alliances of A4SD and Forus International have provided direct support and good practice advice to national coalitions around the world to enable them to build effective national reports together with TAP Network, that has also been engaged on highlighting Goal 16 as an enabler and accelerator of other goals. Forus International and A4SD were involved in commissioning a joint CSO report called “[Progressing National SDG Implementation](http://forus-international.org/en/news/global-launch-progressing-national-sdg-implementation)” in 2018, which analyzes the VNRs submitted by governments in 2017 and 2018 and produces findings, best practices and recommendations.

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