

Middle East and Neighbourhood South PFD Multi-Stakeholder Meeting

Dead Sea, Jordan, 3-4 October 2017

The European Commission (EC) held the first meeting of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) in the Middle East and the Southern Neighbourhood Region at the Dead Sea, Jordan, from 3rd to 4th October 2017. The meeting gathered around 80 representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including the private sector, Local Authorities (LAs) and parliamentarians from all over the region as well as EU staff.



Opening remarks: The meeting was officially opened by H.E. Thikra Alwash, Mayor of Baghdad; Ibrahim Ghattas (on behalf of Magdy Belal, President, Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement); and Loic Lallemand Zeller, Deputy Head of Unit, Civil Society, Foundations, DG International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), European Commission. The three speakers referred to the challenging situation that the region is currently facing and emphasised the need to capitalise on the multi-stakeholder nature of the PFD, bringing relevant actors together at regional level to encourage a renewed space for dialogue. H.E Thikra Alwash, representing the second largest city in the Arab world, reflected upon both the challenges in the delivery of good services to citizens under the current security constraints, and the progress that, despite these challenges, is taking place to live up to the goals agreed in the 2030 Agenda. She emphasized the importance of developing partnerships for that purpose and acknowledged the importance of the work done with and by CSOs. Ibrahim Ghattas, reading the presentation of Magdy Belal, pointed at corruption and bad governance as one of the key causes of the problems in the region and criticised Western countries for their share of responsibility in this behaviour. He stressed the need to move ahead as partners to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable development, gender equality, and spread human rights. Lastly, Loic Lallemand Zeller invited all to take advantage of the opportunities for dialogue in the agenda, focusing on progress toward the SDGs and regional challenges. He discussed partnership and noted one example in Iraq where the EU funds an NGO consortium to improve service delivery in the judicial sector, facilitating access to juvenile justice.



Participants were asked to share their key expectations and concerns



EU policies: The session was moderated by Nabila Hamza, Civil Society Forum South Expert. Ambassador Andrea Fontana, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and Irène Mingasson, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes, Neighbourhood South, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR, presented both the main aspects and the interaction between the EU Global Strategy, the European Neighbourhood Policy and EU Development policies, particularly the recently adopted New European Consensus on Development. The Ambassador expressed that the EU's engagement is a force for positive change to support multilateralism and a rules-based global order and he added that the EU Global Strategy is a vision that now needs to be turned into real action. In that sense, the EU Global Strategy, the European Consensus and the EU Neighbourhood Policy compose the overall framework to respond to regional issues such as resilience, migration, security, climate change, gender equality and human rights. He discussed the various venues of support to civil society in Jordan, with a special focus on women and youth, and opportunities for community-based organisations to partner across governorates. The overarching priority of the European Consensus on Development is to support resilience with a multi-dimensional approach; therefore, a dedicated Trust Fund was created in Jordan to address the Syrian refugee crisis, in which the government, local authorities and civil society partner in providing humanitarian assistance, education, municipal services, water and sanitation, creating livelihoods and targeting both host communities and Syrian refugees.



Irène Mingasson described the scope and action of the EU Neighbourhood Policy and emphasized that the CSOs and LAs have an important role to play in addressing those issues. She echoed the need for security to ensure development, and the necessity of a rights based approach to development as reiterated in the "Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019." She stressed the need for further exchange and cooperation, with more good examples and information sharing channels, to transform recommendations into action. "Our common number one challenge is socio-economic. It is about creating the conditions for jobs and opportunities for young people in the region." She noted that no actor can tackle this alone. The EU should promote an enabling environment, where CSOs - including independent labour organizations and trade unions - can act freely and access resources."

The audience shared several comments and concerns, including: the EU approach to Policy Coherence for Development, which remains problematic; how to support an enabling environment for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national, regional and global levels; and the need to include more voices of local actors to review the collective response to crisis and fragile environments, and make further efforts to understand why crises lead to current regional trends, such as mass migration or terrorism.

An overview of the PFD and its role in the region: Members of the PFD Task Team and Irène Mingasson animated the session. The speakers presented the PFD, a multi-stakeholder platform which brings together different networks of CSOs and LAs from all over the world to facilitate dialogue, promote policy debate and provide a space to discuss development issues in general and EU's development policy in particular. Different aspects of the PFD were introduced to the audience, including the 2016 and 2017 milestones, works in progress such as PFD research and multi-stakeholder survey¹, as well as ideas for the future.

Progress of the 2030 Agenda in the region: During this session, moderated by Ziad Abdul Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development, Lebanon, the panel exchanged views on the regional and national progress in adopting the 2030 Agenda. Speakers included Karima El Korri, Head of Unit, Agenda 2030, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); Ahmad Awad, Phenix Center; and H.E. Adli Yaish, Mayor of Nablus. The speakers stated that the 2030 Agenda is a new approach for development policy, where institutions, CSOs, LAs and the private sector must work together to ensure that the SDGs become a reality.



Karima El Korri explained that ESCWA established an Arab Forum on Development to help Arab countries monitor how they respond to the 2030 Agenda in terms of alignment and integration of policies, measurement of progress, multi-stakeholder engagement and means of implementation. She expressed some encouraging trends, including some countries aligning their development plans with the 2030 Agenda and installing a certain level of institutional capacity to coordinate and lead the 2030 Agenda. She summarized the key challenges: institutional effectiveness; governance; peace and security; gender inequality and women's empowerment; migration; a lack of financial resources to meet 169 targets; and the need for baselines and reliable data and the development of sound statistical systems. She stressed the need to work on all fronts and not to wait for the perfect systems and all data to start work, as we only have 13 years left to meet the goals.

Ahmad Awad presented the case at national level, focusing on the strong involvement of CSOs in the development of Jordan's Voluntary National Report (VNR) presented in New York at the High Level Political Forum. He discussed the SDGs as a tool to improve human rights and how

¹ Results from PFD Middle East and Neighbourhood South meeting participants can be found at: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/policy-forum-development>

this vision was used in discussions in Jordan to enhance coordination amongst CSOs. Jordanian CSOs produced a shadow report on the VNR and the government invited them for dialogue. The Jordan case highlights the different levels of implementation and spaces for dialogue. This continuous dialogue led to the reform of the council on the SDGs and to greater inclusion of civil society in this council and in the official Jordanian delegation at the UN meeting. "The most important challenge facing the development process in the region is the inability to measure progress in the development process, in addition, to the lack of a unified policy to deal with CSOs to achieve SDGs".

H.E. Adli Yaish presented the view from the local level and noted the specific challenges of Nablus, Palestine, in working toward the SDGs, explaining how efforts, with very limited resources, are being directed to improving essential areas, from education to physical infrastructure, often working in collaboration with CSOs. He showed how creative solutions are being used to meet challenges, in particular sharing the development of a new water treatment plant, and highlighting examples such as the use of internet to overcome travel restrictions.

One of the most repeated aspects was the need to embrace that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires forging stronger partnerships beyond governments. After the plenary participants moved into working groups to contribute with their own experience about the key factors that encourage or prevent the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and elaborate concrete proposals to promote the role of CSOs and LAs in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The working groups had fruitful discussions. For example,

while it was positively acknowledged that the 2030 Agenda provides a framework to create bridges among different sectors and actors, there is still a general lack of information among many CSOs and LAs about the SDGs and, more importantly, a lack of willingness by national governments to engage CSOs and LAs in development discussions. Other problems remain, such as the lack of an enabling environment, a unified voice among CSOs to advocate common goals or sufficient funding. Some common proposals arose from the debates, for instance:



the necessity of enhancing the capabilities of CSOs and LAs in mobilizing resources and implementing the 2030 Agenda; the importance of building trust between national governments and CSOs; the need for more instruments at the disposal of CSOs to raise awareness, and particular attention to the role of women and youth in the Arab world. At the end of the discussions, the role of the EU was seen as especially important in promoting political dialogue with national governments and stimulating an increased space for work among different development actors.

Regional Specific Challenges: The session was divided into roundtables, to discuss more in detail five of the most critical regional-specific challenges: Enabling Environment for LAs and CSOs; Crises, Post Crisis and Fragile States and Migration; Inequalities and Social exclusion, including gender inequality, youth unemployment & underemployment; Democracy and Human Rights; Environmental Challenges: Natural resources scarcity & waste; environment-blind policies & implementation. The groups discussed: positive examples to encourage further work,

ways to improve dialogue, collective action and partnerships, how EU policies could better support the work of CSOs and LAs and, eventually, how the PFD could also support their work. Each group gave various examples about the collaboration between CSOs, governments, international organizations and LAs. For example, the Turkish refugee camps, where the government provides education and vocational training to refugees as well as improving the capacity of CSOs. Similarly, different initiatives to support gender equality and economic and social inclusion in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and Morocco. In addition, the participants emphasized the need to strengthen collective action, for example, to undertake local and thematic campaigns to build trust with governments, encourage trans-regional dialogue on common issues such as migration, continue and intensify the efforts promoted by the EU to develop the capacities of CSOs in south Mediterranean countries, and create platforms that involve LAs, CSOs, migrant, and donors to coordinate and monitor all issues related to refugees. The participants also offered good insights in terms of how the EU could better support CSOs and LAs in the region. To ensure inclusion of all persons, including persons living with disabilities, the EU can start by meeting internationally agreed regulations and ensuring that its beneficiaries do the same. Further proposals included: support LAs in providing staff capacity building; develop a roadmap for the Arab countries that reflect disparities and positive steps related to human rights; further consolidate the cooperation and trust between EU and CSOs; review past EU programs and interventions that target social inequalities using the 2030 Agenda targets and indicators, and encourage more activities to think differently in regards to environmentally friendly policies, regulations and programs. Lastly, participants highlighted the role of the PFD as a space for a more regular dialogue between CSOs, LAs, partners and governments on local and regional level and the benefits of sharing knowledge, particularly from countries that have gone through similar crisis in Latin America, Asia and Africa.



Conclusions, recommendations and closure: Ziad Abdul Samad and Salim Korkomaz, regional representatives of the PFD Task Team, presented their closing remarks including the draft version of the main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. Different important issues such as the need to combat inequalities within and among countries; respect for freedom, human rights, transparency and accountability to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to enhance a dialogue with CSOs that is inclusive, independent, representative and policy oriented. Loic Lallemand Zeller concluded the meeting emphasising the importance of continuing the critical work that both CSOs and LAs are undertaking in the region, supporting their role to increase awareness about the 2030 Agenda and build trust between communities. He confirmed to have taken good note of both the discussions and recommendations and ended the meeting by expressing his gratitude for all of the suggestions presented.