

Policy Forum on Development
Closing Speech
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Over these two days we've talked about the WHAT: the policy that is the new European Consensus on Development—what IS on the table, what we want to see in this policy, and how ambitious the policy must be to achieve its (*and our*) goals. We've discussed our concerns, challenges, and most importantly, what needs to happen on the ground as well as the structural and systemic challenges that must be overcome to achieve the aspirations of the SDGs. Today we've focused on the HOW to advance this global agenda, i.e. translating policy into action through *inclusive* multi-stakeholder partnerships and an enabling environment for civil society.

Taking what we've heard over the past few days from Commission representatives and other EU officials, the revision process of the European Consensus on Development is moving in a direction that highlights the importance of the working together *with* local communities in the development process, promotes the principles of development effectiveness, acknowledges the centrality of human rights to development,

With the new Consensus, the EU puts forth a goal to be “stronger and more effective in a changing world” to combat global challenges and trends and to move forward the 2030 Agenda. Our shared values--such as protecting the planet and climate action, of gender equality, of decent work for all people, and justice and peace--should be the EU's principal guide in strengthening its development action. Its development action should be an act of solidarity that reflects an inherent commitment to our shared values and to the people who are struggling for their basic rights and for better lives.

But at the end of the day the EU has to back up its words with action. As “a stable partner” (*Kristin de Peyron, European External Action Service on Wednesday’s ACP panel*), as the 3rd largest supporter of CSOs and LAs, and a partner who values human rights, the EU must truly be a leader to achieve the type of change it seeks. EU instruments must be responsive to ensure continuity of initiatives of CSOs and LAs. The means of implementation (MOI) to achieve our collective aspirations cannot be missing in action (MIA) for 2018.

Will the EU stand with trade unions and with workers who labor in dangerous conditions to prevent such tragedies as those in the Philippines where more than 1,000 people have lost their lives in a single factory fire or in Bangladesh where people have perished in factory collapses? Will the new Consensus induce the political will among the EU and its Member States to not only create but also enforce regulatory and accountability standards on multinationals?

How will the Consensus push the EU and its Member States to promote human rights so that the people who defend human rights don’t fear for their lives? How will it protect environmental activists like Berta Caceres in Honduras or Emilsen Manyoma in Columbia who were murdered for speaking out against corporations destroying the environment? How will the EU give courage to and show solidarity with striking workers—such as those who were massacred at the Marikana mine in South Africa—and other brave protesters who hold their governments to account and claim their rights?

In response to the multiple crises — will the new Consensus keep the EU’s development action strictly trained on poverty eradication, reducing inequalities, and human rights?

And, while CSOs face closing space and as the private sector slides easily into a seat at the table, will the new Consensus push the EU and Member States to rally for an

enabling environment so that all parties participate equally in the development process?
I said this yesterday, and I'll say it again now: "Leaving CSOs out of the discussion means getting only part of the story right and even less of the work done." This is critical to doing development right.

How the EU and Member States respond to questions such as these is key to our work and achieving the SDGs. And in this response, transparency and mutual accountability are necessary to bring results where it matters the most--looking not only at the outcomes but at the impact of development initiatives on the people and planet as the ultimate indicator of success.

These couple of days have been good for us to come together to share our experiences of what we've seen work, express our concerns about what's not going quite right, and offer solutions together. But we have to take these lessons to heart if they are to translate into action. For example--

As we heard today, inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships are indeed a necessary approach, but we must have clarity on WHAT the purpose of our partnership is and WHO does the partnership truly serve. We have to ask: does the partnership address the systemic problems that contribute to poverty or is it just a band-aid to get us along until the next quick fix?

Further: We have to be careful to not romanticize local action. There is work to be done at the local level and at the global level, and each must be given the necessary attention and effort.

And finally: We all recognize the unique role of civil society and local authorities in the development process and what we have to offer to the 2030 Agenda. It is

essential for us to be at the table as equal partners and not, as we often find ourselves, on the menu.

As the new Consensus is proposed to be the “cornerstone” of the EU’s development response we hope to see these lessons shine through in the EU’s work to achieve the sustainable development goals. And if we are to make real progress--together--towards achieving the SDGs we have to stay determined and challenge each other to take bold action to achieve the transformative change we all want to see for a better tomorrow for us and our planet.