Bangkok Unity Statement

Bangkok, Thailand – March 31, 2017

We, civil society organisations (CSOs) from around the world, have gathered in Bangkok alongside representatives of our partners in national governments and international institutions, to mark the seventh anniversary of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.

CSOs contribute in unique and essential ways to development as innovative agents of change and social transformation. CSOs are channels for social solidarity, service, and mobilisation. CSOs implement, monitor, and review effective development cooperation. CSOs enable people to better claim their rights, to improve conditions of life, and to build a democratic society.

In 2010, almost 200 CSOs from 82 countries unanimously adopted the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness. These Principles constitute a statement of common values and approaches to guide CSO work, adaptable to highly diverse country contexts and different CSO approaches. They represent a meaningful commitment by CSOs to the practical implementation of the four development effectiveness principles (democratic ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability).

This workshop in Bangkok has been inspired by the seventh Principle, by which CSOs pledge to create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning. These meetings have represented an important opportunity to take stock of where CSOs have been successful in being accountable for, and effective in, their development practices. CSOs and other stakeholders have been candid in evaluating their experiences with the Istanbul Principles. We have celebrated where implementation has been successful, and acknowledged where further work and greater progress are needed.

Today, we strongly uphold the continued value of the Istanbul Principles as well as associated documents, notably including the Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. We reaffirm our commitment to take action to continue improving, and to be fully accountable for our development practices.

In particular, we affirm the following five points:

1. CSOs are important and independent development actors in their own right, and equal partners with government and other stakeholders in inclusive, participatory, and effective development cooperation.

2. Civil society is united and committed to achieving development that is based on human rights, and supports self-determination and the empowerment of people, especially the poor and marginalised and those in situations of vulnerability. We

note that this includes contexts of humanitarian response, human insecurity, and conflict and fragility, and that these situations particularly affect women and girls as well as children and youth. We are committed to leaving no one behind. We acknowledge the essential importance of CSO practices consistent with human rights standards and approaches.

3. Progress in realising CSOs' potential contribution to effective development cooperation depends in large measure on government policies, laws, and regulations that create and maintain an enabling environment for civil society. The policy, legal, and regulatory environment with which many CSOs find themselves inhibits their ability to fully implement the Istanbul Principles. We note with concern the closing and shrinking of civil society spaces globally. We are similarly alarmed by the increasingly limited access in many countries to funding for CSOs, despite commitments such as the Grand Bargain pledge to allocate at least 25% of humanitarian funding as directly as possible to local and national organisations.

4. Despite these restrictions and impediments, CSOs have and remain committed to proactively and unilaterally strengthen their own development effectiveness through implementation of the Istanbul Principles. In particular, CSOs are committed to continue improving their own practices in relation to transparency, mutual accountability, and country-level ownership of initiatives, including by ensuring that CSO policies and practices support the participation, empowerment, and equitable partnership of local communities.

5. Effective development cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a critical role in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Effective development cooperation is an essential and stand-alone complement to the Sustainable Development Goals, and must be applied universally.

Furthermore, we make concrete commitments to:

- Take proactive actions to improve and be fully accountable for our development practices, including by expanding CSO accountability frameworks and developing national and sectoral CSO effectiveness compacts.

- Comprehensively implement human rights-based approaches throughout our development cooperation efforts, including by integrating and implementing gender equality and women's rights in all of our practices, and by supporting and facilitating transparent, participatory, inclusive and multi-stakeholder dialogue at various levels (national, regional and sub-regional, and local) that allows the free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities and stakeholders.

- Support and facilitate inclusive, participative, and local partnerships that ensure the delivery of meaningful and sustainable results to people and communities, particularly those most in need.

- Integrate climate justice, oceans management, and environmental sustainability into all CSO policies, practice, program planning, design processes, advocacy and public engagement—recognising that the fates of people and planet are inherently connected.

- Uphold mutual accountability with other stakeholders in development, including local communities, using a variety of development cooperation policies and tools.

- Be guided by country-led results frameworks in which our work as independent development partners in our own right is acknowledged, in support of the notion of countries' responsibility for and democratic ownership of their development.

- Use evidence-based processes, including through the use of disaggregated data and gender- and age-responsive tracking, to identify the most vulnerable people—including refugees, migrants, children, people with disabilities, and indigenous peoples—and to leave no one behind.

- Continue to engage with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), including accountability through the monitoring process, and with stakeholders inside and outside of the GPEDC, to evaluate, document and communicate the contributions of CSOs to effective development, including in relation to CSO commitments in the Nairobi Outcome Document from the Second High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC.

- Participate and engage in all relevant policy arenas with the objective of universalising effective development cooperation.

- Share and disseminate these commitments with our development partners, including the communities in which we work, using a diverse range of appropriate communications tools and strategies, and continually assess our progress in meeting these commitments.