

CPDE Reaction to the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Ministerial Declaration

CPDE commends Member States and other stakeholders, including civil society, for their sustained ambition around the 2030 Agenda. CPDE acknowledges the engaged participation of all stakeholders in the HLPF, and in particular the 44 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that were presented as a manifestation of governments' commitments on the road to achieving the 2030 Agenda objectives.

CPDE acknowledges the inclusion of the right to development (§2 and §4) and gender equality (§5); and the importance given to countries in special situations such as countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, African countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States.

CPDE also appreciates the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration that continues the momentum of the process and adherence to people-centred and universal attributes of the 2030 Agenda. CPDE cautions that while the Ministerial Declaration is important, if it were to only reflect the minimum agreeable points between Member States then it betrays the ambition of the 2030 Agenda and hampers the momentum for the next years to come.

On the skewed Means of Implementation (MOI)

The means of implementation - the most vital component of the 2030 Agenda follow-up and implementation processes however, is unmistakably skewed.

CPDE is concerned that the delivery of SDGs in many countries falls short of the transformation needed to realise the ambitious set of goals. We are seeing a shift towards using international public finance as catalyst to attract private investments instead of directly supporting needed services, unrealised multi-stakeholder partnerships, and a continued restriction on civic space in many countries.

CPDE stresses that infrastructure, industry, and innovation does not directly translate to the goals of socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development (§3 and §18). These are often geared more towards private capital and the maximisation of profits, with only minimal and indirect benefits for poverty eradication. At the very minimum, these should be aligned with inclusive and democratically set national and local priorities. Accountability mechanisms, indicators, and guidelines must also be set in place to ensure that these processes do not magnify the current inequities in society (§18).

The "business-as-usual" approach has the counterproductive consequence that it delays or impedes addressing the structural or root causes of poverty in all its forms. In particular, tackling the systemic barriers that are resulting in ever growing inequalities within and among countries is fundamental if we are to realise the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda.

CPDE underscores the need to continue and conclude the discussion on MOI. Donor governments continue to fall short on their commitments on official development assistance (ODA) and development cooperation. We urge all parties to take steps to urgently fulfill commitments made to untying of aid, ending policy conditionality, use of country systems consistent with human rights principles, transparency of information and development flows, and upholding Common But differentiated Responsibility (CBDR).

CPDE also takes note that while the special needs of countries in challenging situations, including those affected by terrorism and conflict, have been recognized (§2) there are no explicit references to halt militarism and the increasing role of development finance in funding militarism. CPDE stresses that the 2030 Agenda should reverse the trend of using development finance to support military endeavours and acts of aggression.

On the HLPF and the voluntary nature of national reviews

CPDE recognises the efforts made by the 44 countries in their VNRs at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), especially those that engaged civil society in their respective review processes. The voluntary nature of the review process, however, undermines accountability, universality, and the global commitment made two years ago.

We caution against the continued voluntary nature of reporting and participation and how it results in differing levels of quality amongst the reports, where some are comprehensive while others are exclusive, selective, and lacking in depth and reality. CPDE reiterates its call for the HLPF to strengthen the guidelines for review at the global, regional, and national levels for this process to be truly effective.

On inclusiveness of the 2030 Agenda process

Lesson learnt from the review process cannot be the only basis in enhancing the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda of Member States as the declaration suggests (§24). The 2030 Agenda process should embody a more inclusive and participatory approach to improve transparency and accountability of the process.

The continued closing space for civil society is alarming and is still present even in many of the Member States who have presented their VNRs. This runs counter to the inclusive nature of the 2030 Agenda and its ambition to leave no-one behind. Member States, in keeping with the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, should set-out to reverse the trend of closing spaces for civil society to build a positive environment for sustainable development, peaceful societies, and accountable governance. Minimum standards must also be set for the institutionalised participation of civil society and peoples organisations at all levels of the review process.

The declaration should have also emphasised the need for primary stakeholders of the 2030 Agenda, which are the poor and vulnerable sectors, to participate in the monitoring, reporting, and review processes (§9).

On multi-stakeholder partnerships in the 2030 Agenda

While the declaration acknowledges the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ending poverty, it goes to no lengths in detailing how exactly these multi-stakeholder partnerships will be strengthened (§20).

CPDE stresses that the international community must outline the modalities that will help improve the quality of these partnerships particularly in the light of the increasing role of private sector in delivering 2030 Agenda. Principles of Effective Development Co-operation namely transparency and accountability, democratic country ownership, focus-on-results, inclusive development partnerships, in addition to the respect of human rights, must be the foundation of these multi-stakeholder partnerships. These principles ensure that multi-stakeholders partnerships enable development to become meaningful to people and to make stakeholders accountable to people.

CPDE strongly believes that success in implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs is only possible if the long-standing commitment of the international community to provide adequate public finance to developing countries - and in particular Least Developed Countries, landlocked and island states, and countries in conflict or recovering from natural disasters - is fulfilled and the ultimate beneficiaries of development initiatives - the people - are consulted.

CPDE stresses that the hard reality about the 2030 Agenda is that it is ultimately an aspirational agenda with no enforcement mechanism built-in. CPDE's concern is compounded by the fact that the declaration is also devoid of effective development co-operation principles. CPDE, through its engagement with the 2030 Agenda, continues to call for the universal application of effective development cooperation in this process. These principles are crucial for the global partnership for sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs.