General Assembly

Human Rights Council
Forty-first session
24 June–12 July 2019
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Civil society participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association*, **

Summary

As a follow-up to his first report on the linkages between the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session (A/73/279), the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association presents to the Human Rights Council practical recommendations for the participation of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

---

  * The present report was submitted late in order to reflect the most recent developments.

 ** The summary of the present report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission only.

Please recycle

Annex

I. Introduction

1.   The exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association contributes to the strengthening of an inclusive and effective system of checks and balances inherent to democracy and essential for societies in which power is held to account. The guaranteed enjoyment of those rights constitutes a precondition for the active participation of individuals and civil society actors in decision-making at all levels of government, which is particularly relevant to the ability of civil society to engage in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (A/73/279, para. 14).

2.   The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as a universal plan of action, seeks to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential with dignity and equality, and in a healthy environment, that they can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives, that the planet is protected from degradation, and that societies are peaceful, just and inclusive, and free from fear and violence.

3.   In the 2030 Agenda, Member States acknowledge the role played by civil society as a key partner in the intensive public consultations and engagement in the two years prior to the adoption of the Agenda, as well as in subsequent efforts to implement the Agenda. States also recognize within the Agenda the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, together with other international human rights instruments and international law. There is an emphasis in the 2030 Agenda on the obligations of States to respect, promote and protect, without discrimination, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression.

4.   In his report of 2018, submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session (A/73/279), the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association affirmed that civil society is both a means to ensuring social participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and a beneficiary of the promise of the Goals. In the present annex, the Special Rapporteur provides a non-exhaustive list of practical recommendations emanating from that report, with the hope that all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will find it to be a useful guide to optimizing the participation of civil society in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, the recommendations are aimed at supporting States in the implementation of their human rights obligations to ensure the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

5.   In May 2019, the Special Rapporteur held a consultation meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, with civil society organizations from around the world to seek their views and input in preparing the aforementioned recommendations. The Special Rapporteur is grateful to those organizations for their contribution.

II. Practical recommendations

A. A safe and enabling environment is a prerequisite for civil society engagement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6.   For civil society actors to effectively play their role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, an enabling environment needs to be in place. Such an environment should acknowledge and seek to nurture the role of civil society in service delivery, humanitarian assistance, research, public participation in policy development, accountability and watchdogs, monitoring, and amplifying the voices of the vulnerable, among other roles. The legitimacy of the role of civil society, founded in law and in practice, provides a solid basis for the active participation of groups in development

processes on an equal footing with other sectors. In that context, the Special Rapporteur highlights the conditions set out below.

1. Legal framework

7. The legal framework should establish provisions that protect, promote and facilitate the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in accordance with the principles and standards of international law.

8. Framework laws that define the existence and operation of civil society organizations, as well as issue-specific laws that affect civil society organizations incidentally (e.g. tax laws and counter-terrorism laws) should be consistent both in their intention to protect, promote and facilitate rights, and in their implementation.

9. Laws affecting civil society should be clear and transparent in conveying expectations in order to guide the actions of civil society.

10. Any restrictions on human rights should be prescribed by law, be necessary in a democratic society and be proportionate to the aim pursued. States should repeal or amend any laws and regulations that impede or hinder the work of civil society in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

2. Practice

11. In practice, everyone, including women, men, young people, children, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minority groups or groups at risk, and human rights defenders, should be able to form, join and leave associations without undue hardship. Their ability to aggregate and raise their voices will facilitate their participation in processes aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. Entry procedures and dissolution processes of associations should be voluntary, simple, non-burdensome and affordable.

13. Adverse decisions related to the establishment or dissolution of associations should have a sufficient motive, with a clear basis for the decision and the right to appeal before an independent body. Impartial oversight of decisions would ensure that any discretion afforded to authorities is appropriately used to maintain enabling spaces for civic action and participation.

3. Freedom to operate

14. Associations in every form, whether registered or unregistered, formal or informal, in the sphere of service delivery, advocacy or oversight, should be able to freely conduct their activities as independent actors in order to effectively represent the needs and aspirations of their constituents or beneficiaries.

15. The ability of associations to freely conduct their activities includes the ability to regulate their own governance without external interference, the enjoyment of the freedom of expression and opinion, as well as the right to access information and the ability to exercise those rights online or offline. Associations that operate freely are better able to participate effectively and to articulate the needs of the communities that they represent.

4. Funding

16. The ability to seek, receive and use resources from national, foreign and international sources is a critical part of the right to freedom of association.

17. Civil society organizations should be free to seek, receive and use financial resources from a range of local and international sources, including local communities, businesses, government, philanthropic organizations and individuals. States must refrain from any arbitrary or unlawful acts that deprive civil society organizations of those resources. The criminalization or delegitimization of the activities of civil society organizations in Sustainable Development Goal processes on account of the origin of their funding should be prohibited.

18.   Civil society organizations should be able to access such resources without prior authorization, without formal constraints to the process, without administrative burdens and with the possibility of tax benefits. Access to resources, particularly financial resources, is key to empowering civil society to effectively contribute to Sustainable Development Goal processes in various ways.

19.   States should facilitate the efforts of civil society organizations to seek and obtain public funding for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda while preserving their independence. State funding schemes should be transparent, fair and accessible on an equal basis to all civil society organizations. Private donors should strengthen their financial support for the work of civil society organizations in Sustainable Development Goal processes.

5.   Autonomy to operate

20.   Financing arrangements should be sufficiently flexible to cover project expenses, as well as long-term support or core funding directed towards ensuring the sustainability of civil society organizations.

21.   A balance between funding objectives defined by civil society organizations and those defined by donors is critical. Thus, civil society organizations should be respected as independent actors and should not be under pressure to adjust their objectives and activities to take advantage of the available funding.

22.   In relation to funding for the Sustainable Development Goals, modalities should encompass not only funding for activities directed towards achieving the Goals, but also for activities carried out to support capacity-building, awareness-raising activities and monitoring of the achievement of the Goals. Such funding is crucial to extend the reach of civil society organizations to the most marginalized and at-risk populations and those in vulnerable situations. It would also help civil society organizations to effectively contribute to monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Goals. As such, funding should be accessible to informal groups, as well as groups that play supportive roles in achieving the Goals, such as research centres and libraries.

23.   Funding should also be predictable in order to enable civil society organizations to plan activities in advance.

24.   Enhancing the autonomy of civil society organizations more broadly would encourage the ability of such organizations to prioritize the representation of community needs more effectively.

6.   Freedom of peaceful assembly

25.   Members of civil society should be guaranteed the freedom to peacefully assemble, including in public spaces, in order to engage in public debate or carry out oversight activities related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Civil society should be able to mobilize the population and channel grievances and aspirations in order to influence public policy in a variety of ways, including through peaceful protests and demonstrations.

26.   States must not require – either in law or in practice – organizers to obtain prior authorization to hold an assembly. Where a system of prior notification is in place, there is a presumption in favour of assemblies. In line with that principle, States must ensure that those participating in non-notified assemblies should not be arrested, detained or fined solely for their participation in such an assembly.

27.   The criminalization of peaceful protest or other activities of civil society aimed at denouncing and reducing inequality, discrimination and corruption and at promoting good governance, accountability and human rights, including for minority groups, should be abolished.

7.   Reprisals

28.   A tolerant political culture that acknowledges civil society as having an intrinsic and instrumental value is necessary to ensure that the sector is valued, appreciated and

protected. Public authorities should aim to engage civil society through a constructive approach, in which they publicly recognize the positive contribution of the civil society sector in country development.

29.   All acts of reprisal against those engaging or seeking to engage in Sustainable Development Goal processes, in whatever form, should be prohibited and sanctioned. Such acts include: threats to life and physical safety; stigmatization; criminalization; denial of accreditation, visas and permits; and restrictions on the freedom of movement. All allegations of such reprisals must be promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated. Access to effective remedies and reparation should be guaranteed to victims and their families.

30.   Civil society organizations denouncing corruption, lack of good governance and human rights violations by State and non-State actors should be protected and supported in their advocacy for positive change. In that way, they contribute to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as required under the 2030 Agenda.

Box 1
Ensuring a safe and enabling environment: examples of promising practice

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted guidelines on the rights to peaceful assembly and association, which offer guidance to States on how to promote and protect those rights and adopt a legal framework that has, as its primary purpose, the enabling of the exercise of those rights.[a]

Anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) legislation exists in several states in the United States of America, such as California, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon and Texas.[b] Those state-level laws provide procedural protections against baseless suits to silence and intimidate civil society actors in their work. The growth of anti-SLAPP statutes in the United States is largely attributable to a growing recognition of a worrying trend of suits filed by corporations against non-governmental individuals or organizations as an intimidating tactic to silence them and drain their resources.[c]

[a] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa (2017).
[b] See https://anti-slapp.org/your-states-free-speech-protection.
[c] Section 425.16 (a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure states, for example, that "there has been a disturbing increase in lawsuits brought primarily to chill the valid exercise of the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and petition for the redress of grievances".

B.   Inclusion and participation of civil society is essential

31.   The inclusion of civil society organizations in processes related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves to enrich debates, build global awareness of the Agenda, and add to the knowledge and expertise needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. That principle ensures that the overarching theme of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind is fulfilled by civil society by amplifying and aggregating the voices of the poorest and most marginalized and channelling them into conversations at the local, national, regional and global levels. The conditions described below enhance the possibilities for the full participation and inclusion of civil society in Sustainable Development Goal processes.

1.   Full participation

32.   Genuine consultation processes should ideally be embedded in local and national development and planning processes, thereby including civil society in the full range of activities leading to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

33.   Civil society voices should be included in the determination of how civil society participates, including in defining local needs, setting priorities, developing strategies and

policies, implementing projects and programmes, monitoring outcomes and impact, and reviewing lessons learned.

34.   Civil society plays a critical role in data collection, research, awareness-raising and sharing knowledge and expertise, and should be engaged in those processes.

35.   Institutionalized spaces for civil society participation that promote consistency and adhere to agreed rules of engagement should be established, as they serve to facilitate the effective engagement of stakeholders in issues of concern.

36.   Inclusive dialogue should be organized regularly, be well communicated in advance, and be well guided, with clear objectives, roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.[1] Such dialogue should take account of the unequal power relationships and different primary interests among the stakeholders at the table.

37.   Feedback to stakeholders on how their input has been incorporated into policies, plans and programmes is crucial for building trust and motivation.

38.   Full participation is particularly important to provide spaces in which the voices of those most at risk and marginalized can be raised and heard, thus fulfilling their right to take part in the conduct of public affairs. Digital divides should be taken into account when designing participation mechanisms.

39.   Full participation depends on the ability of civil society actors to move freely, including in leaving or entering a country and moving within their own country. Travel bans that prevent civil society actors from leaving the country and are imposed solely for reasons related to their work should be prohibited. Visa regimes and procedures should not impose undue obstacles on civil society actors when travelling to another country for the purpose of engaging in Sustainable Development Goal processes. States should consider practical measures to ease visa processes for civil society actors when hosting international or regional meetings related to the 2030 Agenda.

2.   Inclusion

40.   Broad stakeholder engagement is necessary to ensure that all voices are heard. Positive measures are required to ensure that the groups most at risk of marginalization are consulted and heard. States should strengthen their outreach to engage stakeholders outside the established circles, such as young people and children, migrant workers and refugees, grass-roots groups and spontaneous social movements.

41.   Stronger partnerships should be formed, for example with the media and in order to encourage greater involvement of national parliaments.

42.   Financing to help to facilitate the attendance and participation of smaller local civil society groups at key consultations, gatherings and meetings is crucial to ensuring inclusion. Furthermore, capacity-building, skills-building and training may be necessary to ensure that all stakeholders can participate meaningfully in the related processes.

43.   Government-organized non-governmental organizations should not be used to stifle independent voices during Sustainable Development Goal processes.

44.   Applying legislation and measures towards the elimination of discrimination is necessary to fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind".

3.   Access to information

45.   States should adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees regarding public access to information and ensure their effective implementation. Laws and policies should guarantee the right to request and receive information from competent authorities without mentioning any special interest or explaining the reasons for the request.

---

[1]   Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, *Guidance and Good Practice on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment* (April 2019), p. 17. Available at https://taskteamcso.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/TSKTM-01C-Guidance.pdf.

46.   States in particular should generate, collect and disseminate high-quality, accessible and disaggregated information and data relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in a proactive and timely manner, and should periodically update that information.

47.   Environmental information in the possession of business corporations, in particular information on their operations and the possible adverse impact of those operations on human health and the environment, should be made accessible.

48.   Information should be disseminated at the national, subnational and local levels, in accessible language and format, for all stakeholders and participants, with minimal expense or other obstacles to access. Access to information is of particular importance to facilitate the participation of individuals and communities at risk, including indigenous peoples and minority groups, in Sustainable Development Goal processes.

49.   Individuals who expose wrongdoing, human rights law violations or other threats to the overall public interest, such as risks to public health or the environment, should be protected against legal, administrative or employment-related sanctions.

50.   Information on the formal mechanisms that exist for civil society organizations to participate at the national and international levels should be made widely available.

51.   All available communications platforms and forums should be utilized to raise awareness and conduct consultations, including physical and online spaces. The use of information technology, such as videoconferencing and online tools, would encourage greater and more diverse civil society participation in Sustainable Development Goal processes.

4.   Power and influence

52.   All stakeholders should have an equal opportunity to be heard at governmental and intergovernmental forums at the national and international levels. Such opportunities include: access to meetings, processes and bodies; speaking rights with the same opportunities for civil society as those for Governments and private sector entities to express views and opinions and have those views taken into account; and the right to submit documents such as shadow reports and memorandums.

53.   All stakeholders should have timely and easy access to all relevant information and documentation – guided by comprehensive and fair access-to-information policies – to enable them to participate effectively.

Box 2
Ensuring inclusion and participation of civil society: examples of promising practice

Civil society played an active role in shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by contributing expertise, knowledge, amplifying the voices of marginalized populations and those at the grass-roots level, and engaging in all levels of the process. It was one of the best examples of comprehensive engagement of civil society in developing a global plan of action and it succeeded in addressing many of the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals. The energy, openness and consultative nature of that process should be the foundation upon which future implementation, monitoring and accountability activities are grounded.

In Finland, the Commission for Sustainable Development maintains a web portal through which individuals, civil society organizations and companies can register their commitments to contribute to "the Finland we want by 2050".[a] At the time of writing, the website had collected 1,830 operational commitments.

The Government of Canada has recognized that:

The realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without collective action that recognizes and includes the diverse voices and participation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. There is significant alignment between the SDGs and the work of reconciliation – centred on closing socio-

---

economic gaps between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians, advancing self-determination and improving relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Canada is taking important steps in the work of reconciliation through historic investments. Canada is building on programs for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to deliver clean water, housing, child and family services, training and health care, as well as establishing new funding relationships with First Nations intended to secure a better quality of life for Indigenous peoples by moving toward predictable and sustained funding for First Nations communities. Most recently the 2018 federal budget announced $5 billion over five years to support Indigenous communities and peoples by taking further steps to improve the quality of life for Indigenous peoples and to support the recognition and implementation of Indigenous rights.[b]

In Georgia, the Supreme Audit Office launched the Budget Monitor tool, an online platform providing budget information, including on public debt, major infrastructure projects, municipal budgets and audits, in an accessible format. The platform allows public participation and invites users to identify shortcomings in public service delivery, report cases of corruption and prioritize government agencies for the Office to audit. The platform now includes a feature related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal-related audits, issues and recommendations for budget spending.

In Sri Lanka, the Right to Information Act, approved by Parliament in June 2016 following over 20 years of advocacy by civil society organizations, provides a robust and progressive legal framework to ensure the effective exercise of the right to freedom of information in accordance with the Global Right to Information Rating system of the Centre for Law and Democracy. Since its adoption, the Act has empowered communities and civil society actors to scrutinize government decisions and participate in public life. Use of the law by civil society organizations has led to the disclosure of information related to corruption and human rights violations. For example, information relating to bilateral agreements between the Government and Middle Eastern States pertaining to migrant workers was disclosed pursuant to a decision of the Right to Information Commission.

Another good example of how Governments can empower people and promote civil society participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Escazú Agreement), adopted in March 2018. The Escazú Agreement develops Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which states that the best way to deal with environmental matters is though the effective participation of all people. The Escazú Agreement is also the first binding instrument to offer a specific regimen of protection for environmental human rights defenders and their organizations. While the Escazú Agreement promotes citizen participation, the negotiating process also saw the public participate directly by way of electing representatives from the public to have a seat at the negotiating table and present proposals to delegates.

[a] See https://sitoumus2050.fi/en/web/sitoumus2050/home#/.
[b] Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Review* (Ottawa, 2018).

C. Accountability for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its processes is crucial to ensuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in which the role of civil society as a watchdog is critical

54. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides for the follow-up and review process to be "open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people", and to be "people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on

the poorest and most vulnerable and those furthest behind".[2] Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims, inter alia, to "build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". The role of civil society can be strengthened in the ways set out below.

1. Monitoring

55.   At the national and subnational levels, civil society should have a stake and a role in tracking progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by developing appropriate indicators for particular country contexts and ensuring the means to assess and follow up on the implementation of improvements needed.

56.   The availability of data and the development of progress assessment methodologies are crucial to the success of review and follow-up mechanisms. The capacity of civil society to collect, disaggregate and analyse relevant data should be strengthened.

57.   Collaborative, creative, innovative, efficient and cost-effective approaches to monitoring and data collection should be developed, taking advantage of existing civil society capacity, reach and expertise in that area.

58.   Technical trainings and sessions on how to monitor implementation of the Goals, collect and produce data, and conduct awareness-raising should be developed at the national level.

59.   Recommendations from the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council, the human rights treaty bodies, and special procedures should be integrated into the follow-up and review process through the use of tools such as the Universal Human Rights Index, which is designed to facilitate access to human rights recommendations.

2. Review and accountability

60.   Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure the active and meaningful participation of civil society in the voluntary national review. To that end, States should implement multisectoral and ongoing mechanisms and platforms to ensure that civil society is able to contribute to the voluntary national review, including through consultations, online platforms, written submissions and reporting. Models of civil society ownership of a section of the voluntary national review should be promoted.

61.   National review reports are an opportunity to evaluate progress and extract lessons that will support further implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. They should be a solutions-based tool rather than just an opportunity to showcase good practices.[3] In addition, they should be drafted in an accessible manner and disseminated through appropriate means in order to give relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the opportunity to make observations on the reports before their presentation to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The comments and contributions of civil society to the voluntary national review should be reflected in the final report.

62.   Civil society should also be part of the Sustainable Development Goal review process at the global level. States and the coordination mechanism of the high-level political forum should promote the inclusion and participation of a wide range of civil society actors and major groups at the forum. In particular, civil society shadow or alternative reporting on national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda should be supported, incentivized and formally accepted during the forum, as they are effective tools to identify and address shortcomings where the responsibilities of States are not met. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should consider providing guidance to civil society organizations through toolkits and by promoting best practices and encouraging funders to support shadow reporting efforts. Access to reporting by civil society

---

[2] Voluntary common reporting guidelines for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum for sustainable development. Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated_Voluntary_Guidelines.pdf.

[3] See https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/TAP-HLPF-Position-Paper_FINAL.pdf.

organizations should not be limited to non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

63.   The coordination mechanism of the high-level political forum should identify spaces in which civil society shadow reports can be presented or shared with States to enable dialogue and further partnerships during the forum.

64.   States and the coordination mechanism of the high-level political forum should ensure that the recommendations from civil society reports are taken into account when discussing and negotiating the ministerial declaration of the forum.

65.   The outcomes of the voluntary national review and its presentation at the high-level political forum should be widely disseminated among civil society actors at the national and subnational levels.

66.   Civil society should develop collaborative endeavours at the local level to identify the priority areas of people's concerns and build their capacities to hold government institutions accountable. That includes raising levels of awareness and understanding of the 2030 Agenda among all civil society actors, including by breaking silos and building solidarity.

67.   It is critical to strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions to: monitor and hold Governments accountable for the lack of progress or adequate progress in the implementation of the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals; identify patterns of discrimination and inequality that impede the promise of the Goals to "leave no one behind"; and utilize the quasi-judicial mandates of national human rights institutions to receive and redress complaints of human rights violations related to development.

Box 3
Ensuring accountability for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its processes: examples of promising practice

Monitoring and accountability functions are at the heart of the mandates of national human rights institutions in many countries.[a] In Argentina, the National Ombudsman developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme for the Sustainable Development Goals in January 2016. As part of the programme, the Ombudsman has initiated 57 investigations that are explicitly linked to the Goals, the results of which will be sent to the relevant national authorities and to the United Nations system on an annual basis.[b] The Danish Institute for Human Rights developed the Human Rights Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals and the SDG - Human Rights Data Explorer, which connect each target of the Goals to international human rights instruments and country recommendations, providing an integrated approach to implementation of the Goals.[c] Similarly, Paraguay established the SIMORE Plus platform, linking its follow-up mechanisms for international human rights recommendations to the Goals. The SIMORE Plus platform strengthens State capacity to monitor compliance with human rights recommendations and their connection to the Goals.[d]

In 2019, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched a pilot global data collection on the implementation of access-to-information laws in 43 countries.[e] UNESCO is the custodian agency for indicator 16.10.2 of the Goals on access to information and is mandated to monitor and report on the number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information. The data collected through the pilot project will help UNESCO to map global progress towards realization of access-to-information rights and feed into voluntary national reviews.

In 2017, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs launched the Indigenous Navigator, a platform for and by indigenous peoples to systematically produce data and monitor the level of recognition and implementation of their rights. The Indigenous Navigator monitors both the implementation of relevant international human rights conventions, including International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries, and essential aspects of the Goals. The project has been conducted in countries such as Bangladesh, the

Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Suriname and the United Republic of Tanzania.[f]

Together 2030 is a global civil society initiative aimed at generating and sharing knowledge on the implementation and accountability of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative helps civil society organizations to promote national implementation and track progress of the 2030 Agenda.[g]

Since 2016, the civil society Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in partnership with several civil society organizations and trade unions from around the world, has published a report entitled "Spotlight on sustainable development", which provides an independent and comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals.[h] In Nepal, the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal presented a shadow report to the country's voluntary national review process ahead of the high-level political forum. The shadow report mapped local civil society contributions to realizing the Goals, identified gaps in the country report and provided suggestions to improve the voluntary national review and the process in Nepal.[i] Similarly, in 2017, the SDGs Kenya Forum, a civil society platform that advocates and promotes engagement with the Government in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, submitted a comprehensive report to the Government towards the voluntary national review, ahead of the high-level political forum.

[a] See https://nhri.ohchr.org.
[b] See www.dpn.gob.ar.
[c] See https://www.humanrights.dk/what-we-do/sustainabledevelopment-goals.
[d] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/paraguay.
[e] See https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-pilots-global-data-collection-access-information.
[f] See http://nav.indigenousnavigator.com/index.php/en/.
[g] See https://www.together2030.org/.
[h] See https://www.2030spotlight.org/en.
[i] See http://action4sd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NepalShadowReport.FECOFUN.pdf.

D. Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals affirms the need for partnerships between Governments, civil society and the private sector in order for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be successful

68.   Partnerships for sustainable development are defined as multi-stakeholder initiatives that are voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and other stakeholders, whose efforts are contributing to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed development goals and commitments. Partnerships are recognized as effective instruments for mobilizing human and financial resources, expertise, technology and knowledge.[4]

69.   In order for civil society to mobilize and collaborate effectively, the elements described below need to be in place.

70.   Partnerships that offer opportunities for formal engagement between civil society, Governments and other key stakeholders should be maximized, keeping in mind the principles for full and effective participation outlined above. To that end, forums such as the Open Government Partnership need to be strengthened and leveraged, particularly in their efforts to encourage the meaningful engagement of citizens and civil society in open government reforms.

71.   Stakeholders engaged in development cooperation, including civil society, should be considered equal partners seeking a common objective and should therefore pool their resources and competencies to achieve that objective. Stakeholders should share ownership

---

[4] Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

and jointly develop the process, including in developing the agenda and the decision-making process.

72.   The establishment of partnerships with a wide cross section of civil society and other actors who would not typically engage in development or human rights or are not given sufficient prominence or capacities, such as local governments and municipal authorities, enriches development processes and promotes the inclusiveness that is so crucial to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals.

73.   Autonomy of operation is important for all stakeholders to fulfil their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For civil society, that means independence in determining priorities, programmes, funding, internal governance and staffing, among other things. Furthermore, civil society members of multi-stakeholder initiatives should determine their own selection process, which should be transparent and fair. Civil society actors should not be treated as extensions of government departments or agencies that are thus bound by government priorities.

Box 4

Building partnerships for sustainable development: examples of promising practice

Workers in coal-fired power stations in Port Augusta, Australia, anticipating the closure of the stations, developed a plan to create jobs and solar thermal power and took their plan to state and federal government authorities and to global energy companies in France and the United States of America. In the case study, collective bargaining supported an inclusive and just transitional approach that brought together workers, communities, employers and Governments in social dialogue to drive the concrete plans, policies and investments needed for a fast and fair transformation towards a low-carbon economy (thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7, on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, Goal 12, on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, and Goal 13, on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).[a]

An initiative spearheaded by the Centre for Civic Collaboration in Mexico has resulted in the creation of a semi-formal coalition of 40 civil society organizations working on different issues to form a network for the implementation of Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The Centre for Civic Collaboration specializes in enabling effective multi-stakeholder dialogue and consensus-building processes, mediating conflicts between parties and strengthening civil society networks and coalitions to address common problems affecting the public sphere. The initiative has also established open and dynamic communication channels between civil society organizations participating in the coalition and government institutions working on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[b]

In Mongolia, the Government "partnered with local non-profits to train citizens, educators, health workers, businesses and public officials, teaching them how to enlist citizens to report on public services. They also learned how to collaborate to improve services by identifying needs and incorporating them into budgets and local development plans. As a result, rural Mongolians were empowered to shape how public services ought to be delivered to meet the needs of the community".[c]

[a] Submission from the International Trade Union Confederation.

[b] Community of Democracies, *The Importance of Ensuring an Enabling Environment for Civil Society as it Relates to the Sustainable Development Goals* (2017), pp. 61–63. Available at https://community-democracies.org/app/uploads/2018/06/Study-Enabling-Environment-and-SDGs-1-1-1.pdf.

[c] Open Government Partnership. *Star Reforms in the Open Government Partnership*, 2nd ed. (November 2018), p. 21. Available at http://live-ogp.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/OGP_Star-Reforms_2018.pdf.