

Civil Society Organisations Statement to Working Party
June 29, 2012

Yesterday's discussion was the last in a series of developments that signaled to us that the promise of generating a truly multi-stakeholder consensual process has been broken.

The 35 representatives of CSOs here in the room today are a very small representation of the thousands of CSOs who have mobilized around the world with us in solidarity with poor and marginalized people to influence the global development agenda.

We began our work before HLF3. We were encouraged by the promises made by governments for an enabling environment, for human rights, decent work, sustainable environment and gender equality. And we welcomed our inclusion after Accra as independent development actors in our own right and as full members of the Working Party.

During the past three years, together with our constituencies around the world, we engaged in this process because we believed we were equal partners. Many other civil society networks criticized us for this decision. But we engaged nonetheless because we felt that the recognition we had earned in the Working Party would enable us to change the development paradigm to advance our agenda on development effectiveness in fulfillment of the rights of the poorest and most marginalized - 70% of whom are impoverished rural women living in situations of conflict. We also established our own framework for holding ourselves to account as development actors.

And so through BetterAid, we advocated for a human rights framework for development, gender equality, decent work and environmental sustainability. Through the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, we created the Istanbul Principles and the Siem Reap CSO International Framework.

At Busan we made some small progress – as well as suffered some big losses - both in terms of substance and process, engaging for the first time technically as an equal negotiator at the table.

We had no false assumptions that change would be anything but incremental, and that there would be compromise and consensus along this path. But the changes in Busan were changes nevertheless. And we welcome yesterday's endorsement of a common transparency standard, as well as the global monitoring framework.

At many points over the past three years, we were asked by other CSOs if our participation in this process was really worth all the time, money and effort we were investing. We asked ourselves the same question many times, as we continuously had to defend and justify our positions and our right to be here. The past three years have seen many setbacks, in particular on an enabling environment and a people-centered, rights based model of development. But because we still saw the possibility of some progress, we decided, repeatedly, that it was worth it.

During the past six months, we – like many others here - participated in the PBIG in good faith, bringing our recommendations to each multi-stakeholder meeting. Very few were accepted, some not even discussed, but we remained committed to the process, assuming that consensus continued to mean compromise, and that our views would continue to shape this agenda.

The past six months have confirmed our belief that since Busan the multi-stakeholder nature of this forum has itself been compromised. It is not a global partnership, interested in generating consensus and compromise among the range of stakeholders – whether others or us. For example, almost everything raised yesterday by various groups such as demand for CSO Co-chair was rejected. There was no consensus. And as this Global Partnership goes forward, guaranteeing the consensual nature of this forum becomes even more important, but appears ever more elusive. What has changed for us in the past six months is that we increasingly doubt that consensus, compromise and change is possible. Our confidence in this process has been seriously shaken.

At this point, we have elected to go back to our respective constituencies – more than 5,000 networks and organizations - to see whether we should continue to engage in this Global Partnership, and what the basis of that continued engagement should be. We remain committed to the spirit and principles of Busan. For us, that means moving beyond paternalism and power imbalances to inclusive partnership and mutual respect.

We are willing to continue to seek solutions to address our concerns with the Global Partnership and ask the Working Party to address the challenges presented by us in this statement.

There are 35 of us who are here today, and we will spend the rest of the day in the listening room where we find ourselves welcome.