

# ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2016

“Regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”

3-5 APRIL 2016 | UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE . BANGKOK, THAILAND

## How ready are we to build inclusive and engaging societies?

### Side event

Tuesday 5 April 2016, 13:00 to 15:00

Meeting room H

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stresses that engagement of all stakeholders is critical for sustainable development. Effective stakeholder engagement enables governments, individuals, communities, civil society, the private sector and other development partners to respond to the Agenda and international human rights commitments as well as to the growing expectations that people will be involved in decisions that impact them.

Effective stakeholder engagement requires supportive legislation and policy, political commitment, dedicated resources and finally, *capacity* to engage. Where stakeholder engagement processes and practices are legislated and institutionalized, inclusive and transparent, and where there are dedicated resources for engagement, governance approaches become more effective and long term development outcomes more easily achieved aligned with sustainable development objectives. .

Civil society organisations are an important group of stakeholders, and have played an important role in development in Asia and the Pacific, working with Governments, engaging in policy dialogue, supporting service delivery and promoting social inclusion. However, rather than expanding to meet the needs of the increasingly complex development challenges, the space for engaging civil society is shrinking in many countries. The side event was organized with the following objectives:

1. Discuss the foundations for effective stakeholder engagement.
2. Highlight the policy requirements for effective engagement.
3. Develop recommendations for follow up on stakeholder engagement at regional and national levels.

The programme is at Appendix 1.

### Summary

This side event was organized by the Environment and Development Division of ESCAP in collaboration with various partners including the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). Discussions were facilitated by Mr. Joel Levin, Ambassador of the IAP2 Australasia, and the event was attended by over 20 participants from civil society organizations, UN agencies and governments.

The side event was informed of Indonesia’s initiatives for inclusive development that emphasizes justice, balance and equality through the presentations by Mr. Agustaviano Sofjan, First Secretary, Embassy of

Indonesia, and Mr. Aldi Alizar, the Chairman and Presiding Member of IAP2 Indonesia, who has been engaged in the national preparations for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The side event focused on discussing the foundations and policy requirements for effective stakeholder engagement. Participants stressed that stakeholder engagement policies and provisions exist in many countries but the implementation is often ineffective and executed as a formality. There are limited examples of where effective stakeholder engagement practice is part of the standard way of working (i.e. institutionalized). Participants made several recommendations during the session and pointed out:

- That identification of who should be engaged and who are currently marginalized is necessary.
- There is need to support the marginalized groups' engagement through legislation, policy, political commitment, dedicated resources and capacity was highlighted.
- Building trust in a society was important for creating an enabling environment for stakeholder engagement; at the same time, it was recognized that better stakeholder engagement could help to create trust.

### The foundations and policy requirements for effective stakeholder engagement

Prior to and during the side event, APFSD participants and side event participants were invited to evaluate how inclusive and engaging their countries were, against the following seven foundations<sup>1</sup> suggested as necessary to build inclusive and engaging societies:

1. A legislative mandate for participation
2. Safe, accessible physical spaces
3. Broad access to technology
4. A facilitation infrastructure
5. An organizational infrastructure
6. A trustworthy, fact-based media
7. Robust civic education



*APFSD participant assessing the existence of each of seven foundations in her country.*

Participants anonymously indicated their ratings with an orange sticker – most negative ratings at the top of the poster and most positive ratings at the bottom  
(Aha Consulting)

The discussion shed light on how well some of these foundations are being applied in the region. Participants pointed to the current trend of shrinking civil society space in some countries despite the existence of legal frameworks. The discussion highlighted that the 7 foundations are necessary conditions for building inclusive and engaging societies for SDG achievement, but were not, by themselves, sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> Lukensmeyer, C. 2012. *Bringing Citizen Voices to the Table: A Guide for Public Managers.*

## Recommendations

Among the recommendations made by panelists and participants for building inclusive and engaging societies were:

### ***Necessary infrastructure for engagement***

- It is important to **define quality engagement** as appropriate to local/national contexts, and to review, amend and establish, where needed, legislation, policies, administrative rules and practice for stakeholder engagement.
- **Access to justice** for civil society actors, independent and effective national human right institutions and **access to international human rights mechanisms** are integral to frameworks for quality engagement.
- Building **coherent policy responses** to stakeholder engagement at all levels and defining and ensuring the **quality of engagement practice** for respective local/ national context are needed for better engagement.
- There is a need to **build flexibility in institutions to be able to engage, the especially-marginalized**. It was noted that overly regulated institutions could end up abusing and excluding certain populations.
- Establishing a **regional platform** for stakeholder engagement is key to facilitation of information sharing and learning across different countries in the region.
- Establishing/strengthening **multi-stakeholder platforms and mechanisms for SDGs at global, regional, national, and local levels** and strengthened links among different mechanisms should bring diverse stakeholder voices to the table.

### ***Space and effective practice for engagement at national level***

- Stakeholder engagement practice should be extended to all levels of the SDG implementation – from planning to delivery, impact assessment and monitoring.
- At national level, space for engaging stakeholders in implementing the 2030 Agenda (and follow up and review mechanisms) could include: A **bipartisan parliamentary working group** on SDGs open to stakeholders to engage, present reports, and review policy analysis, formulation of new policies, and allocation of resources; an **SDG Council or Task force** that includes representatives from CSOs, private sector, professional bodies and academia; a **grievance mechanism** (at national and subregional levels such as ASEAN) as well as **community mediation mechanisms** for compliance with human rights and resolution of conflicts and disputes; and grassroots **data gathering**, including through micro studies at the community level, to complement national statistical data.
- When current engagement is limited, governments can consider adopting the **ECOSOC accreditation criteria** for civil society engagement at subregional and national level.

### ***Capacity building of CSOs to engage more effectively***

- **Long-term support and resources** for CSOs are required, including measures to identify needs and build capacity to ensure access to resources, meeting places, and technology for CSOs.
- CSOs should position themselves as **engaging and monitoring actors** in the a new national multi-stakeholder structure of SDG implementation, follow-up and review.

### ***Next steps***

Follow-up discussions indicated that next steps could include a regional study on stakeholder engagement, strengthened partnership, and capacity building for stakeholder engagement for governments.

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## Appendix 1 – Programme

Time	What
<b>1:00</b>	<p><b>Opening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development &amp; inclusive institutions <i>Mr. Stefanos Fotiou, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP</i></li> <li>- Working toward inclusive governance in Indonesia <i>Mr. Agustaviano Sofjan, Alternate Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ESCAP</i> <i>Mr. Aldi Alizar, Chairman and Presiding Member, IAP2 Indonesia</i></li> </ul>
<b>1:20</b>	<p><b>The need for engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do inclusive institutions look like?</li> <li>- What does engagement mean to you?</li> <li>- What benefits should be derived from engagement?</li> <li>- What are the challenges of engagement? <i>Mr. Joel Levin, Ambassador, IAP2 Australasia</i></li> </ul>
<b>2:00</b>	<p><b>Foundations for Engagement - Part 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An enabling environment for stakeholder engagement <i>Ms. Heike Alefsen, Senior Regional Human Rights Adviser United Nations Development Group</i></li> <li>- Exploring the 7 needs to build engagement capability <i>Mr. Joel Levin, Ambassador, IAP2 Australasia</i></li> </ul>
<b>2:20</b>	<p><b>Foundations for Engagement – Part 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Panel discussion and forum What policies are needed to build inclusive and engaging societies? <i>Ms. Cai Yping, Executive Committee Member, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</i> <i>Mr. Anselmo Lee, Co-Convener, Asian Development Alliance</i> <i>Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria, KITA-UKM, PROHAM &amp; ASEC/RIPESS-Asia</i></li> </ul>
<b>2:40</b>	<p><b>Developing engagement practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is engagement practice, who is IAP2, and what is their role? <i>Ms. Leann Hartill, Chair, IAP2 Australasia (via skype)</i> <i>Mr. Aldi Alizar, Chairman and Presiding Member, IAP2 Indonesia</i></li> </ul>
<b>2:50</b>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion on follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>3:00</b>	<p><b>Close</b></p>