

## **TOGETHER WE STAND:**

### **Coordinating efforts for a global movement on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda**

Istanbul, Turkey | 23-24 February 2014

*Over 50 people from 6 continents and representing more than 30 key platforms and organisations engaged in civil society-led campaigns relating to sustainable development gathered in Istanbul, Turkey on 23-24 February 2014. The meeting was convened by CIVICUS in collaboration with the United Nations, the Overseas Development Institute and the United Nations Foundation. This communiqué summarises the discussions held in Istanbul.*

#### **A Historic Moment**

There was consensus that the culmination in 2015 of inter-governmental negotiations on climate change and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda provide a powerful opportunity for collective and decentralised large-scale, public-facing actions aimed at compelling governments at all levels to commit to ambitious and transformative action to end poverty, address inequality and ensure sustainable development.

The timing of these processes implies that the year 2015 could potentially be the point of transition to a bold, new generation of people-centred and planet-sensitive development and the beginning of a strong movement for transformational change. Achieving a new social contract that reflects a strong and radical narrative of hope and transformation however requires a concerted effort across existing and prospective civil society platforms, effective cooperation with social movements and a major push for citizens and communities around the world to be engaged with shaping the post-2015 global development agenda. It was agreed that campaigners working on climate change, development and gender equality needed to work together to make the most of this historic moment within a perspective of long-term change and engagement.

#### **Building a Critical Mass for Change**

It was felt that there is a need to build a critical mass of support for the adoption in 2015 and implementation thereafter of a transformative global agenda that is built around the demands and aspirations of people most affected by the crises of poverty, inequality and climate change. Debates around the new development

agenda are currently confined to global policy makers and advocacy groups, and need to move into the mainstream discourse with the aim of inspiring massive numbers of people worldwide to form a global movement for sustainability, justice and accountability. Such a movement would help ensure that the next phase of the development effort 'leaves no one behind'. The year 2015 will be an all-important moment but must be seen as the starting point – not the culmination – of the proposed movement building effort.

### **New Strategies and Alliances**

This ambitious endeavour needs new thinking on strategies, tactics and partnerships. It was recognised that there is no singular global landscape and so a single, centralised public campaign would not work. Rather, we need processes that are mindful of distinct national and regional realities, and methods to create global impact through a vast but inter-connected network of locally relevant actions.

To achieve this, a systematic effort to harness strategies, expertise and resources across the broadest spectrum of civil society needs to be engaged, including local and international development and environmental organisations; campaigns for development and climate justice; trade unions; faith based organisations; academic, scientific and media institutions; and, perhaps most importantly, broad-based social movements and organisations of marginalised people. It was felt that any new campaign needed to be 'radical and radically inclusive'.

A powerful narrative of change that provides the basis for these diverse actors to work together and a range of campaign tools, including a powerful communication strategy that speaks to the needs of an inter-generational and inter-regional mobilisation effort are essential. An ambitious and unprecedented effort is needed to ensure that millions (or indeed, billions) more people know about the opportunity available through this campaign and its objectives to tackle poverty, injustice and inequality in the lead up to 2015 and thereafter.

It was also felt that the campaign needed to identify partners and supporters beyond civil society who could be engaged to undertake mass outreach as well as promote the values and objectives of the campaign. The need for further work on potential partnerships in keeping with the need to be 'radically inclusive' was agreed. This includes finding ways to encourage governments and the private sector to support this effort, adopt its brand and, in doing so, stand up for values represented by the campaign.

### **The Istanbul Text**

Participating groups agreed on a shared meta-narrative, the 'Istanbul Text' that outlines the ambitions, values and objectives that hold together the proposed movement-building effort. It was hoped that this text would be the purpose that supports the new global movement.

#### **ISTANBUL TEXT**

We come together because 2015 is a generational opportunity for transformational change. Two processes (COP - UNFCCC and the finalisation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda) culminate within months of each other with the potential to shape the future of our people and our planet. Our aim is to inspire actions that empower the marginalised and collectively tackle the root causes of inequality, injustice, poverty and climate change.

We want a world where development justice is assured and all people are able to realise their rights. We want a world where everyone is able to equally and freely participate in the decisions that affect their lives and hold governments, international institutions, the private sector, civil society and other power holders accountable. We need to urgently address the challenges posed by economic and political systems that favour elites and concentrate power and prosperity in the hands of a few. We must transform production and consumption patterns so that they do not harm people and the planet.

The testament of our success is that concrete actions are taken now, agreements are ambitious, reflect local struggles and leave no one behind. We call for a transparent and inclusive process for the articulation, implementation and monitoring of such a framework. Our vision is a transformational shift that ensures gender justice and enables everyone to live their lives in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression, discrimination or injustice, in a way that protects the planetary systems required for survival of life on earth. This is the world we want and believe can be achieved.

### Governance of the campaign

There was agreement that any new global campaign needed to be organised through a decentralised (flotilla-like), responsive and agile coordination structure. The following areas of consensus emerged:

- The effort needs some facilitation but not command and control centralisation.
- The aim should be to tap into, channel and amplify the energy that already exists.
- The campaign should have an exclusive focus on mobilisation (not lobbying/policy), crowding in behind key initiatives and reaching the public.
- The sharing of information across campaign actors and supporters should be facilitated.
- National and regional groupings should be able to self-define their structure (or lack of it) but would be encouraged to build on existing platforms; though they may decide they want their own administrative capacity and/or reference group.
- Funds should not be held centrally; instead funds would flow into activities rather than to a central body. However, there would need to be a mechanism for effective coordination so that funding flows fairly. This mechanism needs to be defined, but one option would be via a fundraising action group.
- There needs to be some dedicated administrative capacity to facilitate the flotilla e.g. facilitate the flow of information, set up calls etc. – this should combine some central capacity (based somewhere neutral e.g. CIVICUS) and some decentralised, devolved capacity (from existing organisations).
- Organisations that want to sign up would need to agree to the values of the campaign (i.e. Istanbul text), and the broad approach.
- Action groups will be the driving force of the campaign. These will be opt-in, task-orientated and self-run, for example to promote outreach (regions, countries, constituencies, etc.), or on communication.

There was a shared desire amongst participants to keep campaign governance as light as possible, enabling not controlling, while still being able to make urgent decisions and spot and react to opportunities. It was proposed that this would be achieved through a structure based on two elements:

1. **Regular assemblies** – These will be open to all organisations from civil society that supports the campaign. How these would function and how regular they would be will need to be decided. It would be essential that there was equality of access to the assembly and that they would drive

accountability and transparency. It was suggested that they be held to coincide with existing events to reduce costs.

2. **A reference group** - This will be elected by the assembly and (in keeping with a flotilla approach) have a very limited remit. It would not revisit decisions made by assembly, nor change opt-in criteria, nor set policy. The reference group would provide a light steer to the administrative capacity we create and help ensure our strategy stays on track. It would actively spot opportunities and encourage the flotilla to respond. We need to define whether there is a need to make this group more diverse and inclusive, and how to go about it.

### Action points

In keeping with the emphasis on ensuring this was a broad-based effort across the civil society spectrum, it was felt that the immediate priority would be to consolidate the conclusions from the Istanbul meeting and then engage with a wider range of partners. To this end, three working groups were formed:

- Governance. This group would further articulate the principles agreed in Istanbul, and work towards having a firmer set of proposals ready for circulation to would-be supporters of the new campaign.
- Campaign Tools and Signifiers. A creative working group was formed and charged with developing options for campaign materials that could be used to generate a broad, populist campaign that will lift the profile of the movement and be useful to all its mobilisations. Building on the ideas presented at Istanbul, this group has been charged with putting together a creative brief that could potentially be agreed at the time of the proposed launch meeting.
- Potential Actions. A group was charged with listing potential processes and events that could provide opportunity for coordinated action in keeping with the campaign and movement building objectives of the proposed effort. Mechanisms to enable responsive action to spontaneous, external events or trends that are relevant to the outcomes and potential impact of the campaign are also to be considered in this effort.

Finally, it was agreed that once sufficient progress had been made on the above three fronts a large, open gathering (physical and/or virtual) of those wanting to be part of the effort would need to be convened to launch the common effort. As wide a cross-section of global civil society as possible would be encouraged to sign up to

the new campaign and take part in this gathering. It was envisaged that this launch gathering would take place within the next few months.

**Organisations represented in Istanbul:**

- ACORD
- ACT Alliance
- Africa CSO Platform on Principled Partnership (ACP)
- Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
- Beyond 2015
- BOND (UK)
- Campaign for People's Goals
- Change Mob
- Change.org
- CIVICUS
- Climate Action Network International
- DEEEP
- FEMNET
- Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
- IBON International
- International Disability Alliance
- International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP)
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- M&C Saatchi
- ONE
- Oxfam
- Portobello Studios
- Restless Development
- Save the Children
- Sightsavers
- SocialTIC
- UN Foundation
- United Nations (OSAP2015, UN Millennium Campaign, UNFPA, UN Department of Public Affairs)
- Wada Na Todo Abhiyan
- World Vision International

ENDS.