Civil Society Intervention
Accountability and improving MGoS* participation in SDG implementation

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Despite praiseworthy intentions, our nation states fall short on their commitment to meaningfully engage with civil society for Agenda 2030 implementation. Processes like Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and High-level Political Forums (HLPFs) are inaccessible to civil society due to three challenges:

- Limited consultation and participation within member countries;
- Little comprehension of processes and goals related to Agenda 2030; and
- Lack of funding for training and participation, including traveling to HLPFs.

These challenges detract from the promised inclusivity of Agenda 2030. In Canada, important stakeholders like our youth, elders, Indigenous Peoples and women are disenfranchised from strategizing for and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We spend resources on limited public consultations with no mandate to act on them. Here, tokenism is unacceptable when HLPFs *could* facilitate true partnerships. Transparent and accessible accountability processes must be formalized and institutionalized.

There is also limited information available for monitoring SDG implementation. Knowledge exchange and building stakeholder capacity for participation *must* be cornerstones of practice from this HLPF onwards. This means engagement of civil society during data collection, evaluation and use. This means co-creation of SDG initiatives. This means sharing ownership of data with civil society, even transferring ownership altogether.

Further, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation found that limited finance is the most prominent barrier to effective civil society participation. This challenge is not a new one. Why are these obstacles present throughout VNR and HLPF processes? Perhaps the MGoS* can run a failure analysis session to answer this question.

Finally, I reach out to my fellow MGoS*. Today we call for improved public engagement by, and accountability of nation states. Let us also call upon ourselves to exemplify mutual accountability to our governments and our communities in our behaviours, the risks we take and our collective actions implementing the SDGs. Thank you.

** MGoS = Major Groups and other Stakeholders (this is the collective title for civil society).*