



## **Shaping the future: a new vision for civil society and the G7**

### ***Preamble***

Global leaders met on June 8-9 in Charlevoix, Quebec, at the Group of Seven (G7) Summit, to address the challenging global issues of inclusive growth, gender equality, peace and security, jobs of the future, and climate change and the health of our planet. The G7 can play an important role as a global trendsetter, using the power and position of its members to bring key neglected issues to the fore, and leveraging change through political attention, policy development and resource commitments.

The engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) has become an essential part of the G7 process. CSOs are a critical element of the international system and its infrastructure. CSOs drive action, mobilize resources and implement programs, generate evidence and advocate for change, holding governments to account for their action or inaction. In the G7 context, engaging CSOs connects leaders and decision-makers of some of the world's most advanced economies to the organizations who work directly with local communities both at home and abroad. CSOs add value by bringing a broader and more diverse set of voices and human experiences to conversations and processes, identifying intersectoral and intersectional dimensions, and offering external expertise, insight, ideas and solutions. CSOs present bold and ambitious visions for a fairer, more sustainable and safer world, pressing global leaders to follow suit.

On May 28-29, 2018, ten days prior to the G7 Summit, civil society leaders and representatives from most of the G7 countries came together in Ottawa, Canada, to answer two questions. First, what is the best framework for engaging CSOs in a more meaningful way, that situates civil society as a core asset and essential partner in the G7 and beyond? And second, what does this look like in practice?

This summary articulates that vision.

### ***A new partnership with civil society within the G7***

If we are to realize the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, all actors have a role to play. Civil society therefore calls upon the leaders of the G7 to commit to building a productive, meaningful, mutually beneficial and collaborative relationship between civil society and G7 countries. This relationship must respect civil society's independence and autonomy, value its role and expertise, and promote diverse, inclusive, sustainable, multi-generational and intersectional solutions.

Consistent, iterative and earnest engagement between CSOs and the G7 sets the enabling conditions for civil society to effectively carry out G7 commitments, as well as their own work and priorities, and continue to advance community-driven development solutions at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Canada's G7 presidency represented a new degree of engagement between civil society organizations and G7 leaders. CSOs call upon G7 leaders to commit to sustaining and furthering this level of engagement between the G7 and C7 in future presidencies, building on past precedents.

This procedural framework for interaction between CSOs and the G7 sets the stage by which civil society should be engaged on policy and issue-specific matters, and feed into the agenda and theme-setting process of the G7 – more accurately reflecting in G7 outcomes the lived realities, challenges and opportunities, and current states of work and progress on the ground.

### ***Benchmarks for a productive and meaningful relationship***

The basis for a productive and robust civil society and G7 relationship is encompassed in continuity, commitment, inclusion and transparency:

1. Long-term continuity of, and progress on, process and substance.
2. Commitment to consistent high-level political and bureaucratic dialogue and engagement.
3. Fostering inclusive and diverse spaces for engaging different perspectives and ideas.
4. Transparency and accountability of information and process, and open communication.

These four key conditions, which overlap, help create an environment conducive to building such a relationship.

More specifically, civil society organizations are calling upon the G7 leaders to commit to:

#### **1. Long-term continuity of, and progress on, process and substance**

- Facilitate a timely handover process between G7 presidencies that involves civil society and includes the following:
  - An evaluation by civil society organizations of the progress made at the G7 Ministerials and Summit relative to CSO recommendations, noting what issues got left behind and what lessons were learned in terms of process and substance, to be sent to both the current G7 Presidency and the upcoming one.
  - A meeting between the current G7 Sherpa and 7s community to share these findings and knowledge, as well as with representatives from the incoming presidency and civil society.
- At the start of each G7 presidency, develop a model for engaging civil society, building upon past summits, that is fair, transparent, fully-funded and evaluated on an on-going basis, and that ensures the inclusion of all civil society actors engaged in the G7 process.
- Engagement with CSOs should incorporate a feminist perspective and should include gender equality principles at the core.

#### **2. Commitment to consistent high-level political and civil dialogue and engagement**

- Co-create a timeline for pro-active outreach to stakeholders in the CSO/G7 process in January of each year, and identify where and how to engage these stakeholders meaningfully throughout the process.
- Facilitate ongoing virtual and in-person dialogue in each of the G7 countries between CSOs, key political staff and civil servants around the thematic areas of the G7 presidency each year.
- Engage CSO leaders in direct thematic consultations related to the G7 agenda in each G7 member state, allowing for a two-way communication and exchange of ideas on key areas of policy within the G7 agenda. This should be conducted in a way that it encourages greater intersection between issues and participants, including as part of each ministerial engagement.
- Ensure the participation of the G7 head of state and relevant Ministers at the C7 formal engagement group meetings.

**3. Fostering inclusive and diverse spaces for engaging different perspectives and ideas**

- Ensure that engagement with CSOs is diverse, intersectional and cross-sectoral, and includes a variety of actors from policy areas that align with the G7 themes.
- Encourage inclusion in consultations and pre-summit dialogue by engaging formal and informal civil society organizations and movements, domestic and international, specifically those impacted by the G7 themes, and those representing the most vulnerable groups.
- Ensure outreach to a broad range of partners in non-G7 States. An invitation of Head of States/ high-level representatives at the Summit only is insufficient.
- Foster diverse and multiple engagement spaces where individuals and organizations can engage and provide feedback – for example, through on-line portals, social media, physical spaces and meetings, among other things.
- Support spaces for people to assemble peacefully and express their perspectives.

**4. Transparency and accountability of information and process, and open communication**

- G7 leaders under each presidency should be as transparent as possible, communicating information in a timely manner about key events, the overall timeline for the presidency, and upcoming opportunities for engagement around thematic development and discussions
- Regularly meet with and share, when possible, outcomes from Sherpa meetings, as well as policy and resolution language for input that will be fed into the consultation and communiqué processes.
- Building on the evaluation prepared by CSOs on the G7, the G7 Presidency should develop more robust accountability mechanisms for holding G7 leaders and ministers to account for their promises and commitments and include insights and a right to reply to CSOs in the G7 accountability reports.

***Partnerships within CSO networks***

Civil society organizations will commit to collaboration and harmonization of work between their CSO networks as part of the ongoing G7 process including:

- Information sharing amongst CSO leaders within the G7 space and an informal accompaniment by CSO leaders involved in the G7 last year, this year and next year to help with continuity of process and substance.
- A formal reporting process, designed by civil society to evaluate the progress, actions and outcomes related to civil society recommendations and calls-to-action at relevant G7 Ministerial Meetings and the G7 Summit. The findings of this process shall be shared with the successive C7 presidency holders and other related formal engagement groups.
- Joint identification of key political and bureaucratic stakeholders on an ongoing basis.
- Continued and ongoing communication on policy items relevant to G7 commitments and agendas.

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Civil society will evaluate future G7 presidencies against these criteria to determine their level of commitment to meaningful CSO engagement.