

Speaking points, Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary, Norwegian MFA

What: Speaking points to High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018 Side Event

Title of side-event: *Stakeholder engagement with 2030 Agenda: How transformative, inclusive and accountable is implementation and monitoring around the globe?*

Where and when: 16 July 2018, 18.30: Conference Room 4, UN Building, New York

Government co-sponsors: Norway, Ecuador (tbc)

Civil Society Partners: Together 2030, Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment, CEPEI, JDPC, Leonard Cheshire Disability, PhilSEN, Save Matabeleland Coalition, Sightsavers, World Vision International.

Organization name: Together 2030 (proposal submitted on Together 2030's behalf by CEPEI)

Type of organization: Accredited NGO

Complete name of the contact person: Philipp Schönrock

(the first four bullet points are from the introduction by Astrup and Lomøy to the new Norad principles on civil society, June 2018ⁱ)

- The Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision for the future. They emphasise the role of the state in terms of responsibility, national ownership, review and follow-up of the implementation process. The SDGs also call for the “intensive engagement” of civil society. The underlying principles of the SDGs of “leaving no one behind” and “realising human rights for all” are the backbone of Norad’s (Norway’s) civil society support.
- A strong civil society is a key feature of any democratic social order and a goal in its own right. Civil society is key to ensuring public engagement in defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at all levels, for achieving sustainable development targets.
- Civil society plays a key role in monitoring and holding authorities accountable, in challenging power structures, setting the agenda and developing policy, and bringing people together around a common agenda to exert influence for a democratic society. Not least, civil society plays an important role in delivering services to marginalised groups and individuals, who are subject to discrimination or live in fragile or humanitarian settings. This work is demanding and takes time.
- At the same time, the space for civil society to organise and foster civic engagement is shrinking, with governments, business actors and extremist groups being the main offenders. Across the world, this includes an intensification of attacks against the freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. In their most recent annual reports Civicus and Human Rights Watch point to increasingly divided societies around the world, and restricted space in more than 100 countries – a list that includes a number of new additions.
- Peaceful civil society organisations promoting democracy, human rights and sustainable development operate in an increasingly restrictive environment across the globe, varying from legal restrictions and physical violence to subtler forms of intimidationⁱⁱ. Civil society is under pressure.
- Standing up to governments and companies harming the environment – our environment – sometimes takes courage. It can be dangerous. Too many pay the ultimate prize. Last year, 197 environmental defenders were killed.ⁱⁱⁱ

- Without a vibrant civil society, brave citizens that come together for a better world, we will fail to reach the SDGs.
- Human rights are integral to SDG implementation – that was made clear in 2015. The protection of human rights defenders^{iv} and civil society^v is an important priority to Norway. This year also marks the 20th Anniversary of the UN Resolution of Human Rights Defenders.
- We need arenas outside the government, the market and the family that are created by individual and collective actions, organizations, and institutions to advance shared interests. This is what civil society offers. It helps build trust and open, inclusive and resilient societies, connecting people, ideas and activities.
- For this purpose, the Norwegian delegation is broad, and includes both a representative from civil society working for sustainable development, a youth organization, a trade union representative and other stakeholders.
- We have not included them in the Norwegian delegation to be nice: In Norway, more than 80% of the population are members of a non-governmental organization. Over half of the population participate in voluntary work annually. They are an important part of Norwegian society. Such organisations played a vital role in the political and social development over the last few hundred years.^{vi} It is unlikely that Norway would have had one of the world's most developed and open democracies without civil society.
- Norway is characterised by a well-developed Nordic model: organisations that both receive funding from the government, but also cooperate with and frequently criticise our government. A vibrant democracy needs impulses from its citizens.
- More needs to be done to recognise the links between environmental protection, human rights and social rights. Challenges facing indigenous populations is a good example of this
- Governments, private sector and multilateral organisations can work better with civil society to ensure the voice of marginalised groups are heard; civil society needs to be strengthened and this can only be achieved when stakeholders work together – government, business, civil society and other actors that can help reach the SDGs.
- To reach the SDGs, broad collaboration is needed. None of us can do this alone.

ⁱ <https://norad.no/om-bistand/publikasjon/2018/norads-support-to-civil-society-guiding-principles/>

ⁱⁱ Norad evaluation June 2018: <https://norad.no/globalassets/publikasjoner/publikasjoner-2018/evalueringer/civil-society-under-pressure-.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Data from the Guardian and Global Witness <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/02/al-most-four-environmental-defenders-a-week-killed-in-2017> Many threatened environmental defenders participated at Oslo Tropical Forest Forum 27-28 June.

^{iv} <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/human-rights/ny-struktur/menneskerettighetsforkjempere/id2339808/>

^v <https://norad.no/en/front/about-norad/news/2018/new-principles-for-norads-support-to-civil-society/>

^{vi} <http://www.ngonorway.org/bilateral-partnerships/norwegian-ngos>