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Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation — EuropeAid

Human and Society Development
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NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS AND HEADS OF OPERATIONS

Subject: EU relations with Civil Society and Local Authorities in development, following the Structured Dialogue consultations: Role of delegations.

Engaging more strategically with Civil Society and Local Authorities is high on the EU and International agenda and at the heart of forthcoming EU policy framework, where governance and democratic ownership are key elements. EU Delegations are core players in this respect.

In this context it is fundamental to share with you the results of the “Structured Dialogue for an efficient partnership in development”. This initiative, launched in March 2010, was concluded in Budapest in May 2011. The Dialogue aims at exploring a more strategic involvement of Civil Society and Local Authorities in EU development cooperation, in line with the Aid Effectiveness Agenda. It has allowed new interlocutors, beyond the traditional NGOs, to emerge. It has also built consensus and trust, by developing a shared vision of the new roles to be played by organized Civil Society and by Local Authorities and a clearer understanding of the responsibilities entailed for them and for the EU.

The Dialogue is now considered as a *point of reference by all stakeholders*, entailing a strong degree of visibility and credibility for the Commission. More background is in annex and all the documents on the Structured Dialogue and conclusions are available on CiSoCH¹, the web portal dedicated to Civil Society and Local Authorities (available in EN/SP/FR).

The Dialogue brought together 700 participants from the EU and partner countries, with participation from Partner countries: more that 600 representatives from over 60 countries, from grass-root organizations, national Platforms, the European Parliament and EU Member States. On the European CS/LA side, the 10 European Platforms of CSOs were involved as well as the network of European Local and Regional Authorities².

The Budapest conference was co-hosted by the Hungarian presidency and by Commissioner Andris Piebalgs who described civil society and local authorities as an essential component of any working democracy. The conference led to the so-called “Joint Declaration of Budapest”, a series of commitments and recommendations, addressed to each category of actor (EU, Civil Society, Local Authorities, and Partner Countries).

¹ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/index.php/Structured_dialogue

² For Local Authorities: Platforma; for Civil Society: Trade Unions/ITUC, development NGOs/CONCORD, Human Rights Network, Youth Networks, Chambers of Commerce/Eurochambres, Networks of Political organizations/ENoP, Environmental NGOs/Green10, Cooperatives movement/Cooperatives Europe, European Foundations/EFC.

Commissioner Piebalgs announced a follow up both at institutional/headquarters and at country level. I would therefore invite you to carefully consider these recommendations, annexed to this note.

In synthesis, the EU should promote systematic partnerships with civil society and local authorities, support an enabling environment for CSOs as independent actors and promote their right of initiative. Decentralization and the role of local governments should also be promoted including in policy dialogue.

The EU is also called to diversify its delivery and selection mechanisms incorporating actor differentiation. Special efforts have been made in this respect and I encourage delegations to consult the 12 technical fiches (via the CiSocH link) on alternative mechanisms for supporting CSOs and LAs (such as re-granting, ring fencing, direct award, simplified calls, pool funds).

At country level, delegations should play a key role facilitating dialogue between Governments and Civil society/local authorities. In synthesis, they are invited to:

- support inclusive regular multi-stakeholders dialogue to increase trust and mutual accountability across stakeholders with special attention to the quality of dialogue and of the consultations;
- consider developing context based strategies, conduct regularly strategic mappings to identify most relevant actors, going beyond the well known beneficiaries, build in-house expertise in local governance and decentralisation;
- ensure coordination with other donors and notably MS and promote a "strong political articulation" in the area

Headquarters will provide guidance and will, with your collaboration, reinforce networks of CSOs and LA focal points in delegations. DEVCO D2 "Civil Society and Local Authorities" is responsible of the follow-up of these recommendations and keen to support your initiatives and share information (contact Virginia Manzitti and Erika Pasquini). D2 is also keen to support initiatives to enhance complementarity between geographic and thematic programmes in support to CSOs/LA (contact A. Oyowe).

Kristian SCHMIDT

Enclosures: Leaflet on the Structured Dialogue
Extract on the recommendations – from part II of the Concluding Document.

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Focal points on Civil Society Organisations and on Local Authorities in delegations