

NGO Major Group presentation – Priorities and Actions for sustainable development in SIDS

27 August 2013

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to share the following practical and pragmatic actions proposed by civil society in selected priority policy areas, including regarding specific roles civil society can play in partnership with government and other actors. Additional actions are outlined in our written statement but we will only highlight a few key points here.

We present actions under four policy areas:

1. Participatory governance
2. Economic development
3. Ocean governance
4. Building resilience to risks

The first policy area is **participatory governance**.

Civil society proposes that **inclusive governance that effectively engages all stakeholders is needed to improve success in policy planning, programme design, implementation of development initiatives, and evaluation and reporting of results.**

Recommended specific actions to achieve this include:

1. The contribution of civil society to achieving development goals should be measured and counted in national, regional and global assessments.
2. Longer-term technical and financial support should be provided to build resilience and transform models of development at grass roots levels.
3. Implementation should take place via development of national strategic development plans, as well as sectoral and cross sectoral plans, developed with meaningful involvement of civil society. Plans should clearly define roles for civil society in implementation.

The second policy area is **economic development**.

Civil society proposes that **social equity and environmental sustainability must become core and entwined objectives of economic development.**

Recommended specific actions to achieve this include:

1. Economic development priorities should be determined based on national and regional visioning processes to identify appropriate strategies in different contexts. This should emphasise the importance of economic development which: aims for long-term prosperity through equitable

distribution of economic benefits and effective management of ecological resources; is economically viable and resilient, self-directed, self-reliant, and pro-poor. This can be facilitated via integrated national development planning approaches taking place in some SIDS.

2. Increased support should be provided to catalyse and support development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that deliver economic, social and environmental co-benefits. Civil society is poised to play a critical role in catalysing and supporting entrepreneurship, especially in poor and vulnerable communities and marginalised groups which do not have the capacity to access existing programmes for business development.
3. Local, community-driven, economic development that brings social and environmental co-benefits should be supported. Civil society is well positioned to catalyse and facilitate bottom-up integrated development in partnership with government and other actors.

The third policy area is **ocean governance**.

Civil society proposes that **linked ocean governance policy cycles need to be multi-level, from local to global, for the equitable use of shared resources to benefit SIDS.**

Recommended specific actions to achieve this include:

1. Opportunities and support should be provided to enable resource users, including small scale fisherfolk organisations, to effectively engage in ocean governance at local, national and regional levels to protect their livelihoods and well-being and to ensure their continued and enhanced contribution to food security.

The third policy area is **building resilience to risks**.

Civil society proposes that **resilience of SIDS needs to be built to multiple, complex and inter-related risks from climate change and climate variability, natural disasters, and social, political and economic risks.**

Recommended specific actions to achieve this include:

1. Policy priorities, funding, technical assistance, capacity building and action for SIDS should move from disaster response to resilience building approaches.
2. Building resilience of local communities “on the ground” should be a high priority. Civil society is positioned to facilitate this but needs to be supported to play this role via funding, an enabling policy environment, and strengthening of partnerships with government.
3. SIDS should receive special priority for climate change adaptation funding based on recognising their unique and critical vulnerabilities.

In conclusion, civil society organisations recall our commitment to continue working in partnership with government and other partners to achieve SIDS development priorities. We bring to the table our connections and knowledge of issues and opportunities on the ground, perspectives from diverse stakeholders which we represent, and our innovative, integrated and inclusive approaches to development.

Thank you.