

**GOODWILL MESSAGE DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS'
CONSULTATION FORUM ON THE NATIONAL VOLUNTARY REPORTING OF THE SDGS
ON BEHALF OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA**

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PROTOCOL

On behalf of the Nigerian CSO community working on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, I want to acknowledge the rightful recognition accorded CSOs to be part of history making at this very important national stakeholders consultation on the road map to the National Voluntary Report on the SDGs.

Nigeria as one of the countries that have volunteered to be part of the second review process and a leader in Africa, is in a unique position to provide continental leadership by ensuring that the African Union Agenda 2063: The future we want for Africa; Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals; The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development; and The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (recently ratified by President Buhari) all sets the tone for the full realisation of the Nigeria and Africa, it's people would want to see as well as defining the means of implementation for all these agendas.

As we prepare for the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, from Monday, 10 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017 under the theme "*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*", we recognize the importance of the stakeholder's consultation which provides the space for all actors to give feedback, make comments and input into the national voluntary report, however, we all need to make sure that our leaders keep their promises with citizens also playing their part.

With this in mind, we therefore note the following;

1. DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE COORDINATION

Effective implementation of the SDGs requires commitments from leaders at all levels to actively engage with the 2030 agenda. Governments are in the driving seat, but the contribution of all sectors of society is essential to successful implementation. We applaud the national consultation and coordination mechanisms that the Government has put in place to steer the review process, however, we underscore the need for a more comprehensive coordination framework that promotes and supports coordinated organizing and includes Local Governments across the country.

2. DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The lessons from the MDGs was the exclusion of local governments and other stakeholders in its implementation. Local Governments have an important role to play in the implementation of the SDGs through providing leadership for the SDGs at local level, domestication of the agenda and alignment of local development plans to national plans. However, Local Governments need to be empowered to champion priority setting and allow flexibility in mobilizing resources for financing their development priorities.

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AT ALL LEVELS

Promoting gender equality is a national reality. Gender issues have also been identified as critical to the achievement of national development goals. In fact, the attainment of gender equality is not only seen as an end in itself it is equally a catalyst to, and a sine-qua-non for the achievement of sustainable development goals.

In Nigeria, at the moment, the legal and policy environment for the protection and empowerment of women is fragile as a result, women and girls continue to experience inequality and dis-empowerment. Worst still the experiences of women in the conflict zones of the North East are not adequately captured or reflected in discussions. Although, some laudable efforts have been made to put in place the necessary mechanisms required for the elimination of gender discrimination so as to ensure gender parity and human dignity have to be strengthened. The National Gender Policy, is particularly targeted at the gender inequality which is problematic in Nigeria. In the face of the above, the history of development policies in Nigeria has somewhat been that of lackadaisical attitude to the gender variable. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals maintains that if women are granted their pride of place in history, this gesture and development will assist the process of effectively eradicating poverty, end hunger, achieve food security, ensure healthy lives and stimulate sustainable development. The gender and equal opportunity bill was rejected and has been represented at the NASS if Nigeria will attain goal 5 by 2030. At least until equal numbers of girls and boys are in school at all levels of education, employment, women in parliament and decision making, it will be impossible to build the knowledge necessary to eradicate poverty and end hunger. Gender disaggregated data and accountability is essential in the benchmark for assessing the level of attainment of gender equality and women empowerment.

4. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Disability is not inability – we call for full inclusion of PWDs in implementation of SDGs. We appreciate efforts of Government in mainstreaming disability however, implementing programmes on disability, enacting disability friendly legislation and policies to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities is essential. The current absence of a national disability law presents challenges in addressing and responding to issues affecting persons with disability. In the spirit of ‘leave no one behind’ there is need for adequate data on disability disaggregated by gender, age, nature and extent of disability. There is also need for the institutionalization of disability planning in all sectors so that the environment we live in is not disabling. We need to also include increase in funding to disability programs and scaling up of disability programmes that are rooted in the social model that recognizes that

disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. We therefore need to work in ways that will remove barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people so that they are not left behind.

5. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Youth unemployment is recognized as a significant challenge to Nigeria's development, grown at an alarming rate. Though the Government has implemented a number of strategies to boost youth employment such as the YouWin and the Business Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programmes etc. The major implication for Nigeria's young population is an increasing burden at the household level with a related increase in the demand for social services which are not keeping pace with population growth. To achieve the SDGs Nigeria must recognize the impact of population dynamics on development, forced migration with its attendant consequences and focus on interventions that will address the rapid population growth, climate change as well as take advantage of the youth bulge.

6. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Nigeria is rated as the highest corrupt country in Africa and will continue to lose millions of naira through corruption. Corruption diverts public resources to private gain and escalates the cost of providing public services which undermines the progress of development initiatives and good governance to the detriment of the majority of Nigerians. The recent whistle blower's saga is a testimony of the level of corruption where billions are staked in warehouses, graveyards and shopping complexes. There is slow progress with the way corruption cases are investigated and prosecuted before the courts of law. Civil society calls for full adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability in the use of public resources and plugging the revenue leakages to curb corruption. Domestic accountability should form the core of governments' responsibility towards their citizens in the implementation of the SDGs.

7. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Create a platform for broad and regular exchange of information, analysis and experiences on progress towards the attainment of the SDGs amongst CSOs, private sector, government and other stakeholders as appropriate;
- ii. Improve and strengthen engagement with the civil society advisory group on the SDGs including creating space for the advisory group to engage with the private sector forum with a view to evolving models for meaningful partnerships that can drive attainment of the SDGs.
- iii. A coherent national data management system would be effective in mainstreaming the efforts and interventions of our development partners, and also enable the civil society carry out its task unencumbered. Strategically, capacity building on the Open Data concept is needed, especially for civil servants, CSOs, private sector and the media.

8. OUR COMMITMENTS AS CSOs

The Civil Society in Nigeria have been actively involved right from the conception at Rio+20, open working groups, negotiations and formulation and adoption of the SDGs in 2016. The focus of the SDGs which itself are encapsulated in the idea of serving-people and the planet is very compelling for civil society and other stakeholders in Nigeria. The CSOs in Nigeria are working at different levels, from global, national, regional to Local level bringing together women, men, youth, faith based organizations, people with disabilities, cultural organizations while linking to global CSO processes like the Major Groups at the UN, Women Major Groups, Women2030, Action for Sustainable Development and national processes convened by Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD), Civil Society Action Coalition on Education For All (CSACEFA), Society for Water and Sanitation(NEWSAN), SDG Action Campaign, Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO) etc.

The focus of the SDGs encapsulated in the idea of serving-people and the planet is very compelling for civil society leading to a coherent set of actions that will shape our engagement with the SDG process going forward.

The following key areas will be central for Civil Society work:

- SDG sensitization and awareness raising amongst the general public
- Advocacy for national level prioritization, development and implementation of clear policy frameworks that ensures attainments of the SDGs by the year 2030
- Promoting the domestication of SDGs at the State and Local Government level
- Participatory Citizen's engagement and Monitoring of SDGs within the context of Nigeria's development agenda
- Support the attainment of the SDGs through direct programme and project implementation in hard-to-reach communities in order to compliment government's efforts.

9. CONCLUSION

The CSOs will also work collaboratively to develop a coordination mechanism of the SDGs process locally and nationally. This process will entail working on specific aspects within the scope of the SDG to ensure that there is maximum impact through the use of shared resources and collective organizing. At the regional and global level, we shall continue to participate in the processes towards the attainment of the SDGs which includes membership of global coalitions such as Action for Sustainable Development, African Working Group/ African Women Major Group, Major Groups amongst others.

The time is now for us to work together for people and planet and to ensure that we leave no one behind.

I thank you.

