

CSO Reference Group comments to the draft DAC document on civil society enabling environment

Summary of the CSO Reference Group position

The CSO Reference Group would like to extend its thanks to the DAC members and the OECD DCD for the opportunity to comment on this draft. The ambition to make this DAC document an internationally agreed set of best practices with strong dissemination is well noted, as is the desire for a coherent approach to civil society within each DAC member's international cooperation as well as between all DAC members. We are pleased to note the appreciation expressed by DAC Members for **the multiple, diverse and important roles played by civil society in achieving the Agenda 2030**.

The position of the CSO Reference Group is that the OECD DAC **should develop a DAC Recommendation** to strengthen the political commitment to learning, quality standards and follow-up of DAC members' work to support civil society. This will help establish ways in which to best contribute to more democratic, gender equal, equitable and sustainable societies in partner countries.

A Recommendation on civil society enabling environment in line with the three pillars and action points of the study on DAC Members and civil society would **build on the momentum created by the study, send a strong political message, and increase the ownership of DAC Members** of working effectively with civil society in partner countries and member states towards the Global Goals.

The CSO Reference Group supports the ambition that the DAC Document on civil society be **implemented in a gradual, iterative manner with plenty of room for joint learning**. The CSO Reference Group recognises that all development and humanitarian actors have a lot of learning to do in order to support a vibrant and pluralistic civil society's contributions to Agenda 2030 in partner countries. We are prepared to continue to learn and work in dialogue with DAC Members going forward.

Comments on Title and Introduction

- The title of the document should be changed to "Enabling the Multiple Roles of a Pluralistic Civil Society for Democratic, Peaceful and Sustainable Development" (or similar). Although the support is provided through DAC members' Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance the end goal is to enable civil society not exclusively within the development cooperation and humanitarian system, but rather enable civil society to contribute to democratic, equal and sustainable societies in line with the 2030 Agenda.
- Paragraph 5 and 6 of the Introduction contain important language on the crucial roles of civil society if the 2030 Agenda is to be achieved. These points should be made more prominent in the Introduction. Language should be strengthened along the lines of adding the following to the beginning of point 5: "All progress towards the Global goals depends on people organising to contribute to change towards the goals. Without a strong civil society, the 2030 Agenda will not be achieved."

1. Introduction

1. Civil society and the civil society organisations (CSOs) in it are important development co-operation and humanitarian actors. CSOs receive a substantial amount of development co-operation and humanitarian flows, on average 15% of DAC members' bilateral official development assistance (USD 21 billion in 2018).ⁱ They also contribute an estimated USD 42 billion in private funds to development.ⁱⁱ DAC members work with civil society based in their own countries, with international civil society, and with local civil society in partner countries and territories.

2. In its diversity civil society provides a channel for the expression of many and varied voices including those of people who are marginalised due to sex, race, colour, religion, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or other reasons. Civil society advocates for and helps enable people to claim their rights; helps shape and oversee policies; and acts as a watchdog towards governments and businesses. Their role in securing public accountability has been shown to lead to improvements in services and resource allocation, and is associated with lower levels of corruption.ⁱⁱⁱ

3. Civil society actors are also diverse in their range of experience and expertise. The independence of civil society actors, their flexible and responsive methods, and their anchoring in particular geographic locations or with particular groups of people that may otherwise be neglected provides an important complement to the actions of governments and other actors. Civil society actors are vectors of innovation, including at local levels, experimenting with approaches that can be scaled up for wider impact.

4. In DAC member countries in particular civil society fills an important role in development education, raising public awareness and facilitating citizen engagement on development co-operation and global issues. This function is critical to fostering a sense of global citizenship, by highlighting the relationships of interdependence across nations and peoples, and addressing power relations and their impact on global, national and local socio-economic asymmetries. In all countries, civil society gives motion to ideas, to values, and people willing to contribute, including as volunteers, to relevant change in their communities, their nations, or the world. Civil society's contribution to development education is also essential in securing public support for ambitious development co-operation policies.

5. In some contexts, civil society actors are significant service providers, often arriving as first responders on the front lines of humanitarian response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society's connections to people on the frontlines of poverty, inequality, marginalisation and vulnerability, and their ability to amplify these voices in development processes are critical to help meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge to leave no one behind.

6. The 2030 Agenda clearly calls for civil society engagement in the whole-of-society approach to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The role of civil society is embedded in SDG 17, which is to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. Civil society's engagement is also central to the peaceful and inclusive societies and accountable and inclusive institutions called for in SDG 16. Civil society actors are also critical for the fulfilment of each of the SDGs, whether in eliminating poverty, achieving gender equality, or protecting and restoring life on land and below water.

7. That an enabling environment must be in place to maximise the contribution of civil society to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance is widely acknowledged. Most recently, the DAC's own COVID-19 statement recognises the necessity of enabling CSOs to play their roles as key partners in tackling COVID-19 and its consequences.^{iv}

8. Evidence indicates however that more must be done to enable civil society including in partner countries and territories, in DAC member countries, and internationally, to maximise civil society's contribution to development, democracy, human rights, global citizenship and humanitarian assistance. DAC members express concern that rising autocratic governance around the globe is gradually eroding the freedoms of association and expression posing a real threat to civil society and civic engagement more broadly.^v

9. DAC members also highlight that COVID-19 has shined a brighter light on the necessity and urgency of enabling civil society. Facilitated by their anchorage at local levels, civil society actors have been playing critical roles in the COVID-19 response, recovery and resilience building. Even amidst the

need to adjust and pivot programs and ways of working, civil society in partner countries and territories has been able to maintain operations amidst COVID-19-related travel constraints. Despite this, in some countries further disproportionate restrictions on civil society space are seen when measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic are used as a pretext for or unintentionally lead to such restrictions. At the same time, COVID-19 has shed a

brighter light on gaps in CSOs' effectiveness, accountability and transparency. Long-standing issues of co-ordination among CSOs and with other actors, of inequitable partnerships between DAC member and international CSOs and those in partner countries or territories, and overall resiliency challenges are in evidence.

10. DAC members indicate that rising autocratic governance alongside changes taking place within the COVID-19 context signal a critical moment to take steps to strengthen DAC members' ability to provide and promote an enabling environment for civil society.^{vi}

11. This document sets out initial draft elements of a DAC document on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. It responds to the 25 June 2020 DAC meeting invitation to the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) to: i) begin drafting a document on civil society; ii) share a draft for consideration prior to the DAC High Level Meeting (HLM) so DAC members will decide in the HLM if they wish the DCD to continue working on this document in the form of a DAC Recommendation or a guidance; and iii) implement a broad consultation process on the document into 2021.

12. This DAC document addresses DAC members' work in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance with DAC member country, international, and partner country or territory civil society. It focuses on three key pillars of DAC members' work in: **1)** supporting and engaging with civil society; **2)** incentivising CSO effectiveness and accountability; and **3)** promoting and protecting civic space.

Comments on Objective of a DAC document

- Replace the first sentence of paragraph 13 with: The primary objective of a DAC document would be to underline the role of civil society in building democratic and sustainable societies and the importance of supporting an improved enabling environment for civil society in order to maximize the effectiveness and impact of civil society's contributions to society and Agenda 2030 as development actors in their own right."
- References could preferably be included in the objective of the document to:
 - providing guidance on how development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers can help to counteract authoritarian tendencies and "shrinking civic space" and work to protect human rights defenders, environmental activists and other civil society actors at risk.
 - outlining ways of providing funding to and supporting also smaller informal CSOs.

2. Objective of a DAC document on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance

13. The primary objective of a DAC document would be to underline the role of civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance and the importance of supporting an improved enabling environment for civil society in order to maximize the effectiveness and impact of civil society's contributions. The DAC document would provide a framework to support and incentivise DAC members when working with civil society in their activities in the disbursement and/or management of aid and on civil society-related issues, both in DAC member countries and when engaging with civil society from partner countries or territories. The document would be intended to support DAC members, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, to advance their policies and practices in ways that reinforce civil society's impact and roles in development and humanitarian response and as a partner to DAC members in these activities. It would also seek to support DAC members to work towards coherence in their approaches to civil society – coherence within their development co-operation and humanitarian assistance institutions and coherence across DAC members.

14. A secondary objective is to set out an internationally agreed set of best practices that could serve the international development co-operation and humanitarian assistance community, through dissemination aided by the DAC's membership and broad network that includes the UN and other multilateral institutions, partner country or territory governments, and civil society. The following sections outline draft elements for a DAC document on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.

Comments on Background and contextual elements

- The section clearly and accurately describes the background and contextual challenges that Members should consider when developing a DAC document. It is imperative that all these aspects, as well as the links between them, are understood, recognised and addressed.
- It is not clear in paragraph 17 why the way DAC members support civil society risks leading to an anti-civil society backlash and if this refers to anti-civil society sentiments among the general public or within governments. While this information can be found in the study, a one-sentence explanation would perhaps be useful to Members.
- In paragraph 17 it should be clarified that administrative requirements are not a problem per se, but detailed and varying administrative requirements and demands relating to management of results are.
- Paragraph 18 talks about declining public trust in civil society and the rise of uncivil actors within civil society as two separate points. While shortcomings related to effectiveness and accountability of civil society actors is a relevant challenge to mention, it could also be emphasised that activists in many contexts are subjected to smear campaigns aimed at undermining their credibility among the general public. This shows a potential link between the two points - “uncivil actors” may affect the legitimacy of CSOs in the eyes of the public.
- Paragraph 19 should mention that restrictions contributing to shrinking civic space include regulations that restrict CSOs from receiving donor funding.

3. Background and contextual elements

15. At the outset, it will be important that the DAC document outline the background and context against which it was developed, including recognising key policy issues, challenges, and imperatives. In this regard, DAC members are invited to consider the following background and context that could form a basis for refining more precise background and contextual elements for a DAC document. Specifically, it would appear important to recognise:

- The importance of DAC members showing leadership and taking action to provide and promote an enabling environment for civil society to help protect its independence and maximise its contribution to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, as well as more broadly to democracy, human rights, and global citizenship.
- That a rise in autocratic governance is jeopardising the role of civil society to exercise freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, to be well informed about the actions and performance of governing institutions and officials, and to make demands on governments and influence public policies.
- That the closing of civic space is part of a broader crisis for human rights and democracy that affects the quality and effectiveness of DAC members' development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, ultimately imperils the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and against which DAC members have a responsibility to respond.

16. A constellation of challenges is impeding civil society actors from reaching their full potential as independent development actors in their own right and as implementing partners for DAC members. A first challenge in this constellation has to do with how DAC members support and engage with civil society. The survey issued to DAC members for the *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society* study finds that DAC members value CSOs for: their skills and expertise; their ability to respond rapidly in times of crisis; their capacity for innovation; their proximity to vulnerable or marginalised people at local levels in partner countries; and their roles in empowerment and accountability processes in partner countries. DAC member country and international CSOs in particular are also appreciated for their value added in public awareness raising and citizen engagement in DAC member countries.^{vii}

17. Yet, the study also finds that DAC members are not working with civil society in the most development effective manner. Effectiveness gaps arise in how DAC members provide financial support, who in civil society receives that support, and many other aspects of DAC member policy and practice such as relate to policy dialogue, administrative requirements, and results management, amongst others. Moreover, the study points to the potential for the way DAC members support civil society to fuel anti-civil society backlash and associated restrictions on civic space in partner countries and the need thus to avoid such inadvertent consequences and

do no harm. Significantly, the study also finds that existing guidance in the form of the OECD's 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society*,^{viii} while informative, is outdated and lacks the necessary leverage to spur behaviour change, and is thus not being used by DAC members in their decision-making about their civil society-related work. Recently, DAC members have shown remarkable adaptability and flexibility in the ways they support and engage with civil society to enable their work in the COVID-19 context, demonstrating that change is possible, though sometimes, a catalyst or a signal of urgency is necessary. Accordingly, in the DAC document it would appear important to recognise:

- That effectiveness gaps exist in DAC member's policies and practices related to their work with civil society including regarding how DAC members provide financial support and who in civil society receives that support.
- The risk that DAC member support inadvertently fuels anti-civil society backlash and associated restrictions on civic space.

18. At the same time as there are challenges in how DAC members work with civil society there are gaps in CSOs' effectiveness and accountability. Overall, there are indications that the public trust so necessary to civil society's legitimacy has declined in recent years.^{ix} Issues such as co-ordination within civil society and with governments, especially at partner country or territory level, need to be addressed, for stronger, more inclusive and coherent efforts.^x More equitable partnerships between member country and partner country or territory civil society actors also need to be forged along with more localisation to civil society at partner country or territory level. And although civil society' activism in response to COVID

19 may contribute to re-affirming the sector's importance and legitimacy, COVID-19 has also shed a brighter light on some of the CSO sector's vulnerabilities such as in planning and financial sustainability and in some

cases also lack of accountability and transparency mechanisms.^{xi,xii} The rise of autocratic governance and associated restrictions on civic space also point to the need to address civil society's resiliency.^{xiii} The growing numbers of uncivil actors within civil society that seek to undermine civic

| 5

freedoms and human rights, present anti-democratic and populist narratives, and engage in hate speech, further puts the broader civil society sector in a vulnerable position.^{xiv} Accordingly, in the DAC document it would appear important to recognise:

- That there are gaps in CSOs' effectiveness and accountability in their work in development co operation and humanitarian assistance.
- The rise of uncivil actors within civil society that seek to undermine civic freedoms and human rights, present anti-democratic and populist narratives, and engage in hate speech, is increasing the vulnerability of civil society more broadly.

19. As noted, other evidence indicates an alarming growth in legal and regulatory restrictions and other measures that shrink the space for civil society to operate. In 2018 more than a hundred countries were characterised by closed, repressed or obstructed civic space.^{xv} The UN Special Rapporteur on the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association amongst many others, including the OECD, warn that restrictions to civil society space are undermining the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, are incompatible with the goal of leaving no one behind, and endanger development commitments to inclusion, equality and sustainability.^{xvi} While restrictions on civic space are not new, as highlighted in the Foresight Policy Paper *Digital Transformation and the Futures of Civic Space to 2030*, the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating restrictive measures, with COVID-19 used as a pretext for disproportionate, overly broad and potentially enduring restrictions including through, for example, the use of mass surveillance technologies, suspension of access to information laws, and indefinite bans on any form of peaceful assembly.^{xvii} Increasingly seen as part of a broader trend of democratic recession and rising autocratisation, the negative effect of shrinking civic space on civil society's ability to fulfil its varied roles, including as a counter-weight to the human rights and democracy crisis, cannot be underestimated. Accordingly, in the DAC document it would appear important to recognise:

- The rise in legal and regulatory restrictions and other measures that shrink the space for civil society to operate, including but by no means limited to restrictions implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

20. That these three challenges of how DAC members work with civil society, CSO effectiveness and accountability, and civic space are interlinked is increasingly evident.^{xviii} Addressing one of them alone will not be sufficient to enable civil society to maximise its contribution whether to the COVID-19 response and resilience building, or to the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

Comment on standards

Consider adding:

- A heading on CSO standards, with reference to the Istanbul Principles on CSO development effectiveness.
- OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/48004323.pdf> and OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct: <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/due-diligence-guidance-for-responsible-business-conduct.htm>
- ILO (1948) Convention No.87: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C087 and ILO (1949) Convention No. 98: Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C098
- (UN 2007) UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

4. Existing standards within and outside the OECD

21. Any DAC document on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance should also take into consideration existing standards within and outside the OECD. DAC members are invited to consider the following list of OECD instruments which address issues of relevance to the enabling environment for civil society and would thus appear important to reference:

- [Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development \[OECD/LEGAL/0381\]](#)
- [Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations \[DCD/DAC\(2018\)/28/FINAL\]](#)
- [Recommendation of the Council on Open Government \[OECD/LEGAL/0438\]](#) • [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus \[OECD/LEGAL/5019\]](#) • [DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response \[OECD/LEGAL/5020\]](#).

22. DAC members are also invited to consider the following list of standards from outside the OECD which address issues of relevance to the enabling environment for civil society and would thus appear important to reference. These include standards related to addressing the enabling environment for civil

6 |

society as civil and political actors, and to their engagement as actors in more effective and inclusive sustainable development co-operation and humanitarian assistance to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

International instruments:

- UN (1948), [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Resolution 217 A](#)
- UN (1966), [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Resolution 2200A \(XXI\)](#) UN (1998), [General Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, A/RES/53/144](#)
- UN (1979), [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, A/RES/34/180](#)
- UN (1989), [Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25](#)
- UN (2006), [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106](#)
- UN (2013), [Promotion of the Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, A/68/456/Add.2](#)

- UN (2013), [Civil society space: creating and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment](#), Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/24/21
- UN (2015), [Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \[A/RES/70/1\]](#) • UN (2018), [Civil society space: engagement with international and regional organisations](#), Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/38/12
- European Court of Human Rights and Council of Europe (1950), [Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#)
- African Union (1981), [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)
- League of Arab States (2004), [Arab Charter on Human Rights](#)
- Council of Europe (2007), [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe](#) • Organization of American States (2011), [Resolution to Promote the Rights of Freedom of Assembly and Association in the Americas \(AG/RES 2680 XLI-O/11\)](#)

International statements:

- European Commission (2012), [The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations](#), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions.
- Financial Action Task Force (2015), [Best Practices on Combating the Abuse of Non-profit Organisations \(Recommendation 8\)](#)
- Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) (2020) [Indicator 2: Enabling environments for civil society](#) and effectiveness declarations from the (2016), [Nairobi Outcome Document](#), 2014 ([Mexico](#)), 2011 ([Busan](#)), 2008 ([Accra](#)) and 2006 ([Paris](#)) High Level Meetings or Fora on effectiveness
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2019), [Grand Bargain](#)

23. This DAC document draws from these existing standards while providing an up-to-date framework that, contrary to these existing standards, specifically targets DAC members in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, and is specific to civil society in development co operation and humanitarian assistance.

| 7

Comments on Definitions

Regarding the definition of “Civil Society”

- The reference to civil society as a sphere, not reduced to the civil society actors, is positive. A distinction from other spheres should be added at the end of the definition, e.g. “generally distinct from government, commercial for-profit actors and family”.
- The words “including CSOs” are badly placed in the last part of the sentence making the sentence hard to understand. This makes the definitions unclear. Civil society is not comprised of CSOs; CSOs are part of civil society; but there are many civil society actors, individual activists, human rights defenders, etc, who are not part of a CSO. The term “CSOs” is defined in the next point of the document, and that definition encompasses people’s associations, formal and informal. Why then is a distinction made between these two concepts under this point? Suggestion: reconsider if it is useful to introduce peoples’ associations here.

Regarding the definition of “CSOs”

- The inclusion of informal associations without legal status is important.
- The definition of CSOs could additionally refer to organising at different levels “local, national,

regional and international levels“ (as does the EU COM Roots of Democracy mentioned in the footnote xxi).

- The definition could also further clarify the different categories of CSOs used in the document, i.e. ‘DAC member country, international, and partner country or territory civil society’.
- The definition of CSOs should include an inclusive reference to the varied typology of CSOs.

Regarding the definition of “Civic Space”

- The definition of “Civic space” is comprehensive with solid reference to important fundamental rights.
- Consider making explicit reference to fundamental freedoms of particular importance for civic space, including among them the right to freedom of religion and belief.

Regarding the definition of “Enabling Environment”

- The definition of enabling environment includes the ability to act in the capacity of independent development actors in their own right and in development partnerships. However, many civil society actors do not necessarily see themselves as development actors, such as independent activists, grassroots communities, marginalized groups, social movements, human rights and environmental defenders etc., but are essential for the positive development of a society when it comes to participation, transparency, antidiscrimination, the watchdog role and other elements contributing to good governance, which are important for the achievement of all SDGs. They usually do not define themselves as a development cooperation partner or a development actor as such, so better to define an enabling environment for “independent and pluralistic civil society actors”.
- The definition of conditions which “facilitates civil society’s ability to exist and operate...” should be strengthened. Suggestion: Enabling environment should also refer to the elements that constitute conditions, by which civil society is promoted and protected, in particular:
 - legal and regulatory framework (incl. fundamental freedoms; rule of law)
 - financial viability and sustainability (incl. tax/fiscal treatment for CSOs and donors;)
 - constructive government - CSO relations (incl. framework and practices for cooperation; involvement in policy and decision making process)

5. Definitions

24. Following background, context, and related standards, to ensure clarity a DAC document on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance would need to define a number of key terms. The following terms are used in the draft elements of a DAC document set out further below and are hereby put forward for consideration:

- **Civil society** is both the sphere of uncoerced human association within which individuals implement collective action to address shared needs, ideas, interests and beliefs that they have identified in common, as well as the formal, semi- or non-formal forms of peoples’ associations and the individuals involved, including CSOs, of which it is comprised.^{xix,xx}
- **CSOs** are an organisational representation of civil society and include all non-profit, non state, non-partisan and non-violent organisations outside of the family in which people come together to pursue shared needs, ideas, interests and beliefs, including formal, legally registered organisations as well as informal associations without legal status but with a structure and activities.^{xxi}
- **Civic space** is the physical, virtual, legal, regulatory and policy space where people exercise their rights in keeping with internationally agreed human rights, particularly the rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly.^{xxii}
- **Enabling environment** for civil society is an environment that facilitates civil society’s ability to

exist and operate as independent development actors and as DAC members' development co-operation partners.

6. Enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance: Three pillars

25. The following sets out draft elements of the main body of a DAC document on providing and promoting an enabling environment for civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. These are divided into three key pillars that address DAC members' work in: **1)** supporting and engaging with civil society; **2)** incentivising CSO effectiveness and accountability; and **3)** promoting and protecting civic space. They recognise the importance of independence, interdependence, mutual respect, open dialogue, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability as basic principles in relations between civil society and public sector institutions, in both DAC member and partner countries or territories.

Comments on Supporting and engaging with civil society

- The section contains many important aspects related to support and engagement with a pluralistic civil society. It recognises civil society as an actor in its own right and highlights contextualisation and local ownership.
- Clarify in paragraph 2, sub-point e): "are developed in close collaboration with the full diversity of affected civil society".
- Under paragraph 3, sub-point b) add: ... availability of multi-year core and/or
- Under paragraph 3, add a new sub-point: e) exploring with civil society ways in which the terms and conditions for financial support can be designed to strengthen and not undermine civil society accountability to their primary constituencies.
- In paragraph 4, coherent support for civil society, responding to challenges in the humanitarian, peace-development nexus is mentioned. It is essential that dialogue, participation and support of civil society, especially local organisations, is better coordinated between Foreign Affairs, Humanitarian Aid and International Development Cooperation divisions within DAC members and amongst DAC members.
- Under paragraph 8, strengthen the language on civil society's own initiatives and priorities: "Investing in capacities [strike -development] and leadership ... civil society actors, as identified by these actors, in areas ..."
- Under paragraph 11, add "implementation, monitoring and evaluation"
- Under paragraph 11, add a point: "e) engaging civil society in the organization, process, agenda-setting and follow-up of dialogue."
- Under paragraph 11, add "engage in a structured and institutionalised manner with civil society".
- In paragraph 12, investment in adaptable processes and civil society support mechanisms by DAC members is important, and should be built together with CSOs also with the aim of enhancing adaptive programming capabilities of CSOs themselves.
- In paragraph 16,
 - include both reducing and harmonizing financial and administrative requirements to the paragraph heading.
 - in a) "digitalizing administrative procedures" could have both positive and negative implications. On the negative side there is a tendency among some donors to demand that CSO put their applications and reports in the donor system, which reduces flexibility and adaptation to context, as well as accessibility for some local organisations.
- In addition to developing policies for cooperation with CSOs based in partner countries, in DAC

member states and international networks as described in paragraph 2, DAC members should consider engaging with member state CSOs that explicitly support a local ownership agenda and experiment together with programme design for long-term, flexible support to partner country based civil society actors which promotes local ownership and accountability to grassroots constituents.

- Investment in civil society networking bodies is welcome, for the institutionalized dialogue with duty bearers. However, covid-19 proved that it is also necessary to strengthen organisations that engage with people at the grassroots level and deliver services to those in need. Hence next to engagement with civil society platforms and networks, engagement with a broad spectrum of CSOs, including those who deliver services, is essential.

1): Supporting and engaging with civil society

DAC members, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, should support and engage with civil society by:

1. Taking an ecosystem approach to strengthening a pluralist and independent partner country or territory civil society whereby the impact of any DAC member intervention on the civil society sector is considered including on the CSO labour market and on public perceptions and trust in civil society.
2. Establishing policies or strategies for working with partner country or territory, DAC member country, and international civil society that:
 - a. include clear definitions of CSOs and civil society in its plurality;
 - b. articulate objectives for working with civil society actors both as implementing partners and as independent development actors in their own right towards strengthening a pluralist and independent civil society in partner countries or territories;
 - c. put local ownership and accountability as central to strengthening civil society's legitimacy and contextual embeddedness;
 - d. address contextual issues regarding civil society's operating environments including civic space;
 - e. are developed in collaboration with civil society;
 - f. and are monitored and updated.
3. Providing financial support for civil society actors as implementing partners on behalf of DAC members, and as independent development actors in their own right, towards strengthening a pluralist and independent civil society in partner countries or territories by:
 - a. recognising and supporting civil society's "right of initiative" whereby civil society actors put forward their own visions, ideas and approaches to address needs they have identified;
 - b. increasing the availability of core and/or programme-based support to civil society actors that is aligned to their strategic objectives;
 - c. minimising the degree of directiveness within support through civil society actors to allow local-identified priorities to be addressed; and
 - d. maintaining multiple and flexible financial support mechanisms so that diverse civil society can be supported to pursue diverse priorities and objectives.
4. Providing financial and other support for more coherent humanitarian, development and peace actions, working with civil society actors and communities to ensure that the support enables civil society actors to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in their work as relevant.
5. Providing financial support for civil society actors to promote citizens' awareness and critical

understanding of an interdependent world and their roles and responsibilities in it, and to enable citizens' and civil society's active engagement in achieving the SDGs in a universal manner.

6. Increasing the availability and accessibility of direct and indirect financial support, including core and/or programme-based support, to partner country or territory civil society actors and collaborating with these actors in programme management and implementation, increasing the financial resources and capacity development opportunities available to them.
7. Exploring how to best support a broad range of formal and informal civil society actors and actions including social movements, traditional and new types of civil society actors, while identifying obstacles, piloting approaches and sharing lessons through the process.
8. Investing in capacity development and leadership of partner country or territory civil society actors in areas including but not limited to:
 - a. improving performance to deliver and sustain their stated long-term objectives and results;
 - b. diversifying funding for greater financial independence and sustainability; and
 - c. digital literacy, skills and infrastructure to counter digital power asymmetries and digital threats.
9. Investing in civil society networking and infrastructure bodies that can provide services to support and strengthen the civil society sector and represent their collective interests to governments and other stakeholders.
10. Including civil society representatives in DAC members' national delegations to select international meetings where feasible.

| 9

11. Engaging in more structured dialogue with civil society on identifying priorities, policy and program design and implementation, following good practices such as:
 - a. involving a wide range of formal and informal civil society, including at partner country or territory level;
 - b. ensuring that such dialogue is inclusive and accessible;
 - c. co-ordinating dialogues with DAC members and other stakeholders; and
 - d. supporting cross-government dialogue with civil society on policy issues beyond development co-operation (e.g. on wider foreign policy and private sector investment and trade policy).
12. Incorporating adaptive processes into results and programme management of civil society funding that:
 - a. seek to measure transformative development processes rather than only target outputs and outcomes;
 - b. include results indicators co-defined with civil society;
 - c. focus on essential information (need to know rather than nice to know); and
 - d. are flexible and iterative, with learning to inform and improve programme directions.
13. Working with civil society to explore possible common impact indicators for various sectors and themes of civil society support.
14. Working with civil society to better articulate a clear vision on the value and relevance of a pluralist and independent civil society, and identifying ways to demonstrate that strengthening a pluralist and independent civil society is a valuable development result in its own right.
15. Developing guidance on evaluating value for money of civil society funding applications that takes into account the wider and long-term social, economic, environmental and democratic value of a pluralist and independent civil society in partner countries or territories.
16. Reducing administrative requirements of civil society support to lower transaction costs for civil society and DAC members, through:
 - a. digitalising administrative processes;
 - b. accelerating procedures related to funding proposals and reporting; c.

streamlining administrative requirements;

d. using civil society's own or co-defined formats and systems, coupling these with formats and systems vital for DAC members to meet their domestic accountability requirements;

e. accepting reports in multiple national languages;

f. providing multi-year funding;

g. adopting a proportionate, risk-based approach to requirements that reflects contribution size, risk level, and local context; and

h. co-ordinating and harmonising among DAC members and with other donors, including but not limited to the use of multi-donor pooled funds.

17. Enhancing transparency of funding volumes for civil society by

a. disaggregating funding information by partner country to which it is channelled: b.

making the information accessible to partner country stakeholders;

10 |

c. using an appropriate level of disaggregation (e.g. by sector, theme, CSO) to ensure funded CSOs in sensitive environments are not put at risk; and

d. fostering civil society's own transparency.

Comments on Incentivising CSO effectiveness and accountability

- Under paragraph 2, add: "Supporting CSOs' implementation of the Istanbul Principles for CSO development effectiveness."
- Under paragraph 3, add: 'Calling on and supporting CSOs to develop robust internal systems to ...'
- Under paragraph 5, change "capacity development" to "capacities in areas such as ..."
- Paragraphs 7 and 8 describe the crucial issues of successfully using participatory approaches and the need for equitable partnerships based on local ownership and comparative advantages between partner country based and DAC member country based CSOs. The DAC Document should also acknowledge that aside from being challenges that must be taken on by civil society organisations, they are also issues for donors themselves. We suggest adding to paragraph 7: "...while acknowledging the importance of comparable donor practices, which would better enable effective participatory approaches by CSOs." and to paragraph 8: "... while acknowledging that donor terms and conditions for partnerships with CSOs in donor countries can affect these important qualities in CSO partnerships."
- Paragraph 9 can risk being interpreted as slightly too directive. We suggest adding: "Fostering CSO leadership and innovation, taking the lead from civil society actors, in identifying and adapting...". And consider adding at the end of the paragraph: "...and actively considering their advice in shaping donor programming in general and in their partnerships with CSOs."
- Under paragraph 10, add: "including to ensure accountability and adherence to development effectiveness principles" after private sector and multilateral institutions.

- We suggest to add the following two points to this section:
 - "Acknowledging that CSOs in most countries are accountable and transparent in compliance with the regulatory requirements that governments have put in place for these purposes."
 - "Ensuring, in collaboration with related civil society, that government regulatory requirements for CSO accountability and transparency, are informed by and adhere to international best practice."

2): Incentivising CSO effectiveness and accountability

DAC members, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, should incentivise CSO effectiveness and accountability by:

1. Encouraging CSOs to participate in CSO-led self-regulation and accountability mechanisms at partner country level as a signal of CSO accountability, and considering CSO participation and performance in these mechanisms as part of DAC members' CSO partner selection and monitoring processes.
2. Supporting CSOs in establishing and operating CSO-led self-regulation and accountability mechanisms, building on lessons learned and the experience of self-regulation initiatives at international and national levels and in different sectors.
3. Calling on CSOs to develop robust internal systems to meet relevant human rights standards on preventing and responding to discrimination due to race, colour, religion, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or sex, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in their activities and organisations, and communicating clear and systematic sanctions where standards are not met.
4. Working with CSOs to help them address the development, humanitarian and peace nexus in their work.
5. Working with CSOs to address their vulnerability to identified risks and bolster their resilience including capacity development in areas such as mitigating and adapting to risk, modernising organisational models and business development, leveraging networks, connecting to constituencies, and communications.
6. Collaborating with CSOs to identify and address factors that impede local initiation and ownership of initiatives and greater localisation to partner country or territory level overall.
7. Promoting participatory approaches in CSOs' activities in partner countries or territories throughout programme design, implementation, and monitoring, including instituting beneficiary, rights-holder and constituent feedback mechanisms to respond to local communities that CSOs seek to support or represent, to build legitimacy while helping ensure that programmes do not exacerbate existing forms of discrimination or inequalities.
8. Working with CSOs toward more equitable partnerships between DAC member country and international CSOs, and the partner country or territory CSOs they work with, and encouraging partnerships based on local ownership so that the comparative advantages of each type of CSO can be drawn on appropriately, capacities shared, and localisation strengthened.
9. Fostering CSO leadership and innovation in identifying and adapting new approaches to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, including through partnerships with a range of other actors such as the private sector.
10. Encouraging co-ordination among CSOs, with constituents, within the sector and across sectors including with the private sector and multilateral institutions, and between CSOs and partner country governments or territories with a view to optimizing efficiency and effectiveness, avoiding duplication, and building mutual respect and trust.
11. Requiring CSO adherence to regulatory requirements in the partner countries or territories they operate in, fulfilling commitments to accountability and transparency, while observing international best practices.

Comments on Promoting and protecting civic space

- The overall, positive impression is that the third pillar incorporates most of the recommendations/positions of the DAC CSO Reference Group in previous statements.
- For example, we welcome paragraph 10, which is a concrete step towards protecting the role of CSOs as human rights advocates, especially in countries where repressive governments openly attack CSOs as means to control dissent with the perception of CSOs as stumbling blocks to development rather than recognizing them as development actors in their own right.
- The draft also recognizes the issue of shrinking space brought about by existing regulatory frameworks, for example related to registration and regulations on receiving donor support. Incentives must be provided to DAC members to address this issue.
- We see the risk that paragraph 2 leaves the question of civil society “legitimacy” to DAC member states’ parameters. Instead of classifying organisations, DAC members could counter uncivil, anti-democratic narratives by further expanding support for civil society work on rights and democracy.
- We welcome the recommendation to include CSOs in dialogues that involve other stakeholders such as the private sector. We reiterate the importance of the Kampala Principles.
- Under paragraph 9, we suggest to make specific reference to “workers and trade unions” in the list at the end.
- At the end of paragraph 9, add “Committing to protect and support in particular the defenders of human rights and the environment who face threats or sanctions for speaking out for the rights of the most marginalized.”
- The draft acknowledges that restrictions to CSO participation exist both in the physical and online spaces and that systemic inequalities that prevent vulnerable groups from participating in traditional spaces remain unresolved in the digital world. DAC members must ensure that policies address these systemic inequalities that prevent vulnerable groups (e.g. women, indigenous peoples, etc) to actively participate and be involved.
- We suggest to add a paragraph to this section which addresses multilateral development bank investments and other types of development projects sometimes affecting human rights including civic space: “DAC members should strive to uphold civic space and the protection of human rights defenders across their development portfolios, including bilateral and multilateral grants, loans, and private sector instruments”.
- Under paragraph 8, we suggest making explicit reference to “including diplomatic action to prevent governments in partner countries to further restrict CSOs to receive donor support”.

3): Promoting and protecting civic space

DAC members, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, should promote and protect civic space by:

1. Fortifying policy positions on the value of an independent and diverse civil society (including counter-narratives to the anti-civil society narrative), and policy positions on the need to promote and protect civic space in line with internationally agreed human rights, and supporting cross-government policy coherence on these issues.
2. Developing clear parameters for what constitutes positive, legitimate and independent civil society and working to counter uncivil narratives within civil society.
3. Raising awareness of and reinforcing the legitimacy of partner country or territory civil society by including them in events and diplomatic visits, and through other means of raising a positive civil society narrative such as prizes and media stories.
4. Continuing to monitor and assess DAC members’ policies and practices of support and engagement with civil society to ensure they do no harm, that is, that they do not undermine civil society’s relationships of accountability in partner countries or territories, nor lead to

inadvertent negative consequences on civic space.

5. Engaging in dialogue with partner country or territory governments on the important roles of an independent and diverse civil society and the need to promote and protect the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, while encouraging dialogue between civil society and partner country or territory governments and other institutions including parliaments and the private sector, and the public.
 6. Investing in partner country or territory governments' institutions of accountability and in their legal and regulatory capacities to better enable civil society through appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks in line with internationally agreed human rights.
 7. Working with the private sector and the media to make and disseminate the business case for open civic space as well as encouraging investments in the private sector and media development that promote and incentivize the protection of civic space.
 8. Co-ordinating among DAC members for better information sharing and stronger and more coherent diplomatic and other actions to promote and protect the independence of civil society and civic space, including at partner country or territory level and through international and regional multilateral bodies.
 9. Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders that understand and seek to mitigate the distinct barriers and risks faced by particularly vulnerable civil society actors such as those working in the areas of human rights and more specifically the rights of women, youth, LGBTQ+ and indigenous communities.
 10. Supporting access to diversified local funding and strategic alliances for longer-term civil society sustainability, as well as making flexible or emergency funding available for civil society actors at risk from quick onslaught against civic space wherever possible, including but not limited to funding for repatriation of human rights defenders, physical security, and legal protection.
 11. Facilitating dialogue between civil society actors from countries where civic space is under pressure to exchange experiences and develop shared response strategies, including through support to regional platforms that can advocate for the protection of civic space and reinforce civil society capacity in partner countries or territories.
 12. Addressing civic space challenges associated with digital transformation, including risks related to surveillance, disinformation, and online censorship and discrimination, ensuring digital frameworks in partner countries or territories comply with internationally agreed human rights.
- 12 |
13. Supporting the development of 'civic technologies' to promote greater civic engagement online, while promoting digital inclusion and helping secure basic digital rights.
 14. Taking into account and addressing possible risks to civic space of business activities including when engaging with or supporting digital technology companies.
 15. Building capacities of DAC member staff in partner countries or territories to improve digital security and safe digital communication with CSOs and civil society actors.

Comments on Implementation and Follow-up

- The emphasis on peer reviews as key follow-up tools of the DAC Document is positive. Making the DAC Document a Recommendation would strengthen its usefulness in peer reviews and provide more impact and ownership of the work with civil society at member state level between DAC reports and other follow-up moments. Regular reports on DAC members' work with civil society every five years is positive to create continuity, learning and accountability to effective ways of working, as well as the mentioned biennial OECD International Conference on Civil Society.
- We concur with the ambition to clarify reporting directives and terminology, particularly the

“to” and “through” distinction in support to CSOs, which is currently applied differently by donors.

- While the DAC CSO Dialogue Reference Group is mentioned in the section about the process of developing the DAC document, there is no mention of the DAC-CSO Dialogue Framework in the section about implementation and follow-up of the DAC document. We suggest clarifying in paragraph 26 that regular dialogue with the DAC CSO Reference Group and other CSOs at the level of the DAC, relevant subsidiary bodies, and the DCD is part of the implementation and follow-up process. Building mutual trust, and civil society participation planned from the outset of learning and decision processes, are key to making this implementation and follow-up process a model for systematic dialogue with civil society.

7. Implementation and follow-up

26. In consultations for the *DAC Members and Civil Society* study, DAC members requested a gradual, iterative approach to implementation in which peer learning and adaptation would be embedded. Throughout implementation, the DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society would act as the primary forum for peer learning, with its members a source of mutual, practical support to each other's implementation efforts. Further linkages with GovNet would be sought especially as relates to promoting and protecting civic space. The DCD would also provide practical support for implementation, such as with toolkits and direct technical assistance to individual DAC members as and if requested. It is also envisaged that the DCD and DAC would work to address OECD DAC reporting terminology and directives that may present obstacles to effective implementation, such as the coding of support *to* and *through* CSOs.

27. Follow-up of the implementation of this DAC document would depend somewhat on the form the document takes, and on DAC members' preference as regards frequency and level of rigour. It is proposed that follow-up make use of existing processes and data from within and outside of the DAC. Externally this includes potentially the GPEDC monitoring and evaluation. Internally, DAC peer reviews will be a key follow-up tool alongside peer exchanges. Implementation lessons would be shared in light touch learning exchanges at each biennial OECD International Conference on Civil Society. A short version of the survey used to gather evidence for the *DAC Members and Civil Society* study would be issued every five years to complement information gathered from existing processes.

Comments on Process and timeline

- There seems to be ambitions for an inclusive and transparent process, clear timeline and sufficient time, including time for consultations with stakeholders in DAC member states, civil society and coordination with the GPEDC.
- In paragraph 28, be explicit in saying “allowing sufficient time and requesting that DAC members hold consultations with civil society”.
- The final sentence on consultation with CSOs under paragraph 29 should be made into an independent paragraph on consultation with CSOs, also mentioning something about the process in line with the more elaborate description of the internal process of the DAC.
- In paragraph 30, where the text refers to consultations with “others”, add the text “, including CSOs,”.

8. Process and timeline

28. The elements of a DAC document on enabling civil society will continue to be developed through inclusive and transparent consultations, relying on existing structures and allowing sufficient time for national consultations in DAC member countries.

29. The DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society, comprised of senior representatives from all DAC

members' headquarters, is spearheading development of the document. Consultations with the DAC will take place throughout the document's development in formal DAC meetings and through relevant DAC subsidiary bodies and groups including the Informal Group on Engagement. Collaboration with the DCD effectiveness team will continue to ensure that the DAC document and the work done by the Reference Group on Effective Development Co-operation toward a modernised DAC narrative on effective development co-operation are mutually reinforcing as regards civil society. Collaboration with the GPEDC will also continue in order to benefit from lessons from the GPEDC monitoring and evaluation and to ensure synergies with the GPEDC's work on civil society and upcoming revisions to its monitoring framework.^{xxiii} Collaboration with the DCD Governance team and GovNet will ensure complementarity with its work on programming in the context of rising autocratisation. Other relevant OECD bodies and DCD teams will also be consulted to ensure alignment and coherence across the Organisation. Consultation with CSOs from within and beyond the DAC-CSO Reference Group will be critical throughout the document's development as will DAC members' direct consultation with CSOs in their countries.

30. Moving forward and as agreed at the 25 June 2020 DAC meeting, DAC members will decide on the document's form (i.e. DAC Recommendation or guidance) in the DAC HLM. The consultations and drafting of this DAC document with the DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society and others will then continue through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. It is envisaged that the document will be finalised in 2021, targeting a launch at the OECD's International Conference on Civil Society in June 2021.

| 13

Endnotes

ⁱ This figure underrepresents the total amount of DAC member flows reaching CSOs, as it does not include DAC member funding CSOs receive through multilateral institutions and partner country governments. ⁱⁱ This estimate for 2018 based on figures in OECD (2020), [Creditor Reporting System \(database\)](#). The figure is based on amounts reported by DAC members, not by CSOs themselves, and is considered to under-represent the total amount of such private contributions as noted in OECD (2011), [How DAC Members Work with CSOs](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ ITAD (2016), [Macro Evaluation of DFID's Policy Frame for Empowerment and Accountability](#). ^{iv} OECD (2020), [Joint Statement by the OECD Development Assistance Committee on the COVID-19 Crisis](#).

^v Discussed at the 27th Plenary Meeting of the DAC Network on Governance (GovNet), 8-9 October, 2019. ^{vi} The necessity and urgency of pursuing and promoting an enabling environment for civil society including in the context of rising autocratisation and/or COVID-19 were stressed by DAC members at the DAC meetings of 10 Dec. 2019, 23 January 2020, 28 May 2020, 25 June 2020, 15 July 2020; at the 28 November 2019 and 14 May 2020 Community of Practice (CoP) on Civil Society meeting; at the 23 April 2020 DAC Informal Reference Group on Effective Development Co-operation meeting; and at the 4 June 2020 DAC CSO Dialogue in which over 30 CSOs participated.

^{vii} OECD (2020), [Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society](#). ^{viii} OECD (2012), [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#). ^{ix} Public trust in CSOs had been high relative to public trust in some other institutions but began to decline in recent years in tandem with declining public trust in other institutions according to the [2017 Edelman Trust Barometer](#). According to the [2020 Edelman Trust Barometer](#) public trust in CSOs increased in 2019. ^x GPEDC (2019), [2019 Progress Report](#).

^{xi} Brechenmacher, S., T. Carothers and R. Youngs (2020), [Civil Society and the Coronavirus: Dynamism Despite Disruption](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

^{xii} Worsley, W (2020), [COVID-19 reveals weak spots in NGO contingency planning](#); LINC (2020), [How Civil Society Organisations in the Global South are Impacted by COVID-19](#).

^{xiii} See INSPIRES [Resiliency+ Process](#).

^{xiv} Youngs, R. (ed.) (2018), [The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

^{xv} CIVICUS (2018), [People Power under Attack](#).

^{xvi} UN (2019), [Civil society participation in the implementation of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/41/41/Add.2](#); OECD (2018), [Development Co-operation Report 2018: Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind](#); ActAlliance and Institute of Development Studies (2019), [Development Needs Civil Society – The Implications of Civic Space for the Sustainable Development Goals](#); Fowler, A. and K. Biekart (2020), [Activating Civic Space for Sustainable Development: Helping and Hindering Factors for Effective CSO Engagement in the SDGs](#).

^{xvii} OECD (2020), [Digital Transformation and the Futures of Civic Space to 2030](#); International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (2020), [Coronavirus and Civic Space: Preserving Human Rights During a Pandemic](#). ^{xviii} Recent studies in which how donors support civil society, CSO accountability, and civic space are shown as interlinked include Brechenmacher, S. and T. Carothers (2019), [Defending Civic Space: Is the International](#)

[Community Stuck?](#); Bossuyt, J. and M. Monceray (2020), [Claiming Back Civic Space: Towards Approaches Fit for 2030?](#); and Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (2020), [Responding to the Contested Space for Civil Society](#).

^{xix} Based on Edwards, M. (2011), "Introduction: Civil society and the geometry of human relations", in Edwards, M. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, p. 4. ^{xx} As actors in civil society represent all nature of interests and beliefs in wider society, not all of civil society or all CSOs hold and/or operate by what might be considered positive social values, as pointed out in OECD (2010), [Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice](#) and by Edwards (2011), amongst others.

^{xxi} Drawing from OECD (2010), [Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness](#), p. 26 and European Commission (2012), [The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in](#)

14 |

[external relations](#), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions, p. 3.

^{xxii} Based on CIVICUS (n.d.), [Guide to Reporting on Civic Space Media Toolkit](#), p. 4. ^{xxiii} These GPEDC activities are taking place under its [Action Area 2.4 Civil society partnerships](#) and [Leveraging monitoring for action](#) priority.