Summary of the HLPF 2016 side event "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Good or Bad Start?"

11 July 2016 Conference Room D 6:15-7:30PM

During the 2016 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) side event, "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Good or Bad Start?", participants discussed the 2016 edition of the [Spotlight on Sustainable Development Report by the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its potential to serve as an accountability and advocacy tool for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). As moderator Barbara Adams noted, "this is a very serious Agenda, from which we do not pull one thread out without first understanding how that will impact all of the others".

Speakers included authors and members of the self-identified "public interest" civil society organizations that contributed to the Spotlight Report. They reflected on their experiences creating the chapters on each of the SDGs and what it meant to hold the UN accountable for their commitments to achieve the SDGs. They discussed some of the major obstacles to implementation such as systemic issues like inequitable trade, investment and tax rules and policies that restrict countries from honoring their commitments, thereby exacerbating poverty and inequalities between and within countries; the responsibility of the rich and powerful governments, including extra-territorial obligations; and the persistence of the neoliberal growth agenda, increasing the turn to the corporate sector and the resulting influence of corporate priorities in policy-making.

The first speaker, Meera Karunananthan of the Council of Canadians, authored chapter 2.6 "Whose rights to water will the 2030 Agenda promote?". She worked with Blue Planet Project and the Mining Working Group to create the chapter, saying "we have been pushing against the corporate takeover, or attempts and neoliberal efforts by International Financial Institutions and corporations to secure greater access to water resources", which has a negative impact on communities and an event greater impact on poor, indigenous, and rural communities particularly women, who are normally expected to secure these resources for the household.

Sandra Vermuyten of Public Service International, who authored chapter 2.11 "Towards a New Urban Agenda", works with the global trade union of service workers (essential services) on the human right to education. She discussed how important education is to development, which she said "was a slap in the face to institutions who are pushing the privatization of education". She also highlighted the lack of any evidence that Public Private Partnership models deliver services more efficiently or cost-effectively than public service models.

Chee Yoke Ling- of the Third World Network, which seeks to build solidarity in the South and North to hold the UN accountable to the inhabitants of the world it has promised to protect-authored chapter 2.12 "Corporate capture subverts production and consumption transformation". She pointed out that if countries were to try to negotiate the 1992 Declaration on Population and Environment (Agenda 21) today, there wouldn't be consensus, owing to entrenched power imbalances, saying "with new technologies come new problems, including

the increase of poverty and inequality in all countries, especially middle income countries". She addressed corporate capture saying that corporations "are narrowing the public policy space in terms of which direction policies are taken. Through trade and investment agreements, "more rights are given to the corporations than to the people".

Ziad Abdel Samad of the Arab NGO Network, which works on policy and advocacy for social and economic issues, addressing SDG 16, highlighted the challenges of peace and security, governance, institutional frameworks, rule of law, and access to justice. He discussed inequality as a systemic issue and the main cause of political instability, calling it "the root cause of armed conflict and violence".

The Spotlight on Sustainable Development report includes an overview and analysis of approaches. There is a section that looks at the politics of the SDGs targets and indicators, including a bold analysis of what those indicators should look like, as well as a summary of national reports prepared by civil society groups from 40 countries. The full reports examine country experiences on obstacles and commitments that must be dealt with at the national level. These are included on the website 2030Spotlight.org.