

**Civil Society Recommendations from the Northern Regional Workshop on
CSO/NGO Aid Effectiveness, Brussels, October 2007
(Evolving Document)**

WE, the members of Northern and International Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), having met in Brussels on October 15 and 16, 2007 for the Northern Regional Workshop on Aid Effectiveness (AE),

WELCOME the intention of the Paris Declaration (PD) signatories to improve technical and management dimensions of AE. Recognizing the limitations of this agenda, civil society will build on our own dialogue and processes to broaden and deepen the process so that it reflects both development and aid effectiveness. We will engage in the processes leading up to September 2008 Accra High Level Forum, take our recommendations to Forum, and beyond to 2011 when the PD will be reviewed;

WE will also continue to push for official recognition of the role and contribution of civil society as development actors in their own right working for the eradication of poverty. This is missing from the Paris Declaration and as a consequence, civil society is finding its political space and engagement constrained either directly, for example, through legal and regulatory measures in many countries, or indirectly through exclusion from decision making, policy dialogue, monitoring and implementation at both national and international levels, in the north and in the south.

TOGETHER, WE AFFIRM that the Paris Declaration (PD) and its five key principles (Ownership, Alignment, Harmonization, Managing for Results, Mutual Accountability) as they are defined in the PD, while important starting points for improving the effectiveness of aid between donors and governments, are not applicable as such to CSOs. This is so because

- The PD is largely a limited, technical agenda affecting the means for the delivery of aid between governments;
- The scope and roles of CSOs in development is broader and distinct from that of governments and donors;
- The focus of CSOs in development is mainly on poor, marginalized/excluded people (and therefore our resources are more focused as well);
- The framework for understanding CSO aid effectiveness is their effectiveness in the impact of their development roles in eradicating poverty and promoting human rights, not a more narrow aid effectiveness agenda;

- The approach of CSOs in development places individuals and their rights at the heart of all their actions and strategies (Rights-Based Approach);
- CSOs are diverse but act according to distinct values and principles: solidarity, partnership and Human Rights;
- CSOs must address how they practice accountability at all levels in relation to their own roles and relationships in development;
- A broader development effectiveness debate is required, reflecting the diversity of all development actors;

RECOMMEND that, beyond the Principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, CSOs propose the following Guiding Principles, to define CSO Aid Effectiveness and achieve our goals as development actors:

1. CSO actions are focused on **poverty eradication and the promotion of human rights: social solidarity** with people claiming their rights;
2. CSO actions are people centered: They strive to **empower** individuals and communities, strengthen **democratic ownership and participation**;
3. CSO actions are based on approaches rooted in the practice of International **Human Rights Law** and the promotion of **Social Justice**;
4. CSO actions are based on genuine and long term **partnerships**, respect and dialogue, while acknowledging the importance of CSO **diversity** in democratic practice;
5. CSO actions strive for **sustainable impact and results**, based on social processes of empowerment and mutual learning;
6. CSOs ensure their **own effectiveness** through the continuous enhancement of their
 - **Transparency**
 - **Accountability** at all levels (to right-holders, governments, donors, peers, their constituencies, and the public)
 - **Autonomy** from States
 - **Coordination**

FURTHER RECOMMEND that Northern CSOs actively engage in the processes leading to the Third HLF to be held in Accra, Ghana in September 2008, further define and debate the above Guiding Principles, to reach a comprehensive position on Northern CSO Development Effectiveness together with partners in the South, and prepare concrete actions and initiatives to improve CSO Aid Effectiveness.