

News Release

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New government policy on partnering with civil society organizations receives enthusiastic reception at the Canadian Council for International Co-operation Leaders' Forum

Ottawa, Feb. 6, 2015. On February 5, at a Forum that gathered 100 leaders from Canada's top international development and humanitarian organizations, the Honorable Christian Paradis, Minister of International Development and for La Francophonie, announced the launch of the "[International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Civil Society Partnership Policy](#)," which was met with resounding applause from the participants at the Forum.

"This announcement marks a very positive turning point in the relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) working in international development and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)," said Jim Cornelius, Executive Director of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Chair of the Board of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC). "The Minister's commitment to promoting and protecting an enabling environment for civil society in developing countries and to partnering with groups to achieve sustainable results are two key elements for Canada's success abroad", he added.

In his opening speech, Minister Paradis spoke about the important role that civil society plays in development and affirmed that the government understands that it must have an effective partnership with civil society to achieve maximum development results.

The policy resulted from a consultation process launched in the summer of 2014. It included an invitation for online submissions, a series of roundtables with Minister Paradis and senior DFATD staff, and a [summary](#) of the submissions received. CCIC believes this process sets a good example for a meaningful, timely and informed consultations.

Highlights of the new policy include the recognition that CSOs are development actors in their own right with diverse roles and needs. It acknowledges the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness and humanitarian principles, as the core principles that guide the work of civil society in development and humanitarian response. It reaffirms the fundamental role that governments play in guaranteeing an enabling environment – in particular freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly - for CSOs in developing countries. The policy makes a commitment to establishing diverse and predictable funding for CSOs, and to supporting public engagement. The government has also committed to reviewing the policy with CSOs on an annual basis, which CCIC believes is essential for the successful implementation of the policy.

“Dialogue is one of the three key pillars of an enabling environment for civil society groups to realize their full contribution to society”, said Julia Sanchez, President-CEO of CCIC. “We are very encouraged to see the commitment to institutionalize regular, predictable, and transparent policy dialogue with the sector – in particular today’s announcement of a new Advisory Council. Civil society groups have a lot to contribute given the depth and breadth of our experience on the ground. We look forward to seeing the Council take shape in the coming months.”

The Advisory Council will bring together representatives from civil society, the private sector and academia to advise the Minister on key development issues, including strategic directions and priorities, on the implications of the latest development research and practice for Canada’s development policy and programming, and on how to best engage Canadians on international development issues. The initiative embodies the tenet of multi-stakeholder dialogue articulated in the policy.

“Today is a great day for the sector”, said Sánchez, “and we look forward to working closely with DFATD and the Minister to turn this policy into practice – both monitoring its implementation, and seeing the commitments the policy enunciates turned into practice. We are confident that over the coming months we will see concrete and positive outcomes of this enhanced partnership between civil society and DFATD”.

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