

News release
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Canadian Council for International Co-operation welcomes renewed engagement of government with development groups

Ottawa, May 15, 2014. In a keynote address to a conference of hundreds of international development experts, practitioners and academics meeting in Ottawa, Minister of International Development, Christian Paradis, announced new funding for international youth internship programs, aboriginal internship programs and for the next five-year Volunteer Cooperation Program. He also recognized the specific and important role of civil society in development, and underscored his commitment to increase and enhance collaboration between his Ministry and civil society actors.

“We welcome the Minister’s recognition of the importance of civil society for development, and the much-awaited funding announcements”, commented Julia Sanchez, President-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and co-organizer of the conference attended by the Minister.

At the end of March, the Minister announced DFATD’s intent to renew the youth internship programs – whose future had been uncertain, despite positive evaluations. Yesterday’s speech confirmed that intent and launched the funding process.

The funding announced for Volunteer Cooperation Agencies – who send Canadian professionals to volunteer overseas – contained some particularly positive elements, including the same level of funding as the current program, and the possibility of dedicating up to 10% of the budget to public engagement activities in Canada, a feature that had been abandoned for civil society programs since 2010. Public engagement helps mobilize and channel the support of Canadians around issues of global poverty.

In the past few years, both opportunities for dialogue with DFATD and funding opportunities for civil society have seen a sharp decline. Canadian CSOs and their partners in developing countries have borne the negative effects of these cutbacks.

“This conference is a testament to the vitality, innovation and engagement of our sector in reducing poverty and inequality”, she added. “And it is good to see the government committing to support our work”.

The conference, entitled “*Redefining partnerships: A New Role for Canadians in Global Equality and Cooperation*” is co-organized this year by CCIC and the Canadian Association of International Development Professionals. After delivering his address, Minister Paradis spent 30 minutes discussing a range of issues with Ms. Sanchez that had previously been identified by conference participants.

“Having the Minister present at our conference and reiterate his desire to engage with the sector more constructively, is a welcome breath of fresh air”, said Ms. Sanchez.

“Minister Paradis’ remarks today, along with his recent statement committing Canada to protect and promote an enabling environment for civil society, are encouraging. We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with the Minister and DFATD as well as announcements in the near future of further funding opportunities for a wider range of civil society programs”, concluded Ms. Sanchez.

-30-

Notes:

-The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is a coalition of Canadian voluntary sector organizations working globally to achieve sustainable human development since 1968.

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