

NEWS RELEASE

CCIC welcomes Development Minister Paradis' commitment to protect and promote an enabling environment for civil society

Mexico City, April 18, 2014. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) today welcomed a [statement](#) released by the Canadian Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Christian Paradis, following Canada's participation at the first High-Level Meeting (HLM) of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) in Mexico City.

"We are encouraged by this statement which both underscores the importance of civil society in reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development and commits to protecting and promoting a series of rights which are essential for civil society to realize its diverse roles," noted Julia Sánchez, President-CEO of CCIC. "Canada's renewed commitment to this crucial aspect of the development effectiveness agenda is very welcome."

The statement specifically acknowledges the role that civil society plays in realizing development outcomes and enabling people to hold their governments to account and to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them. It notes the worrying trend of governments introducing legislation that undermines civil society organizations' (CSOs) capacity to function, including undue interference, onerous registration processes and restricting access to foreign funding.

The statement also notes the importance of supporting civil society to strengthen its own development effectiveness and acknowledges multi-stakeholder processes as a fundamental norm for development cooperation. And it points to the centrality of the rights to freedom of association, to peaceful assembly and of expression, amongst others.

"Recognition of these sets of rights, which are so essential to fostering an enabling environment for civil society, and of the centrality of multi-stakeholder processes is a positive step forward," said Brian Tomlinson, Executive Director of AidWatch Canada and Co-Chair of the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment.

Minister Paradis delivered elements of this statement at one of the opening focus sessions of the HLM where the Task Team noted evidence of the shrinking space for civil society around the globe. Minister Paradis made an important connection between the role that Canada has played in supporting the protection of human rights defenders at risk through the Community of Democracies' Working Group, which Canada chairs, and the broader issues around the enabling environment for civil society being discussed at the Mexico HLM.

Minister Paradis' statement also makes clear the Canadian Government's intention to provide predictable, equitable and transparent funding for CSOs and to promote opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue.

“We congratulate Minister Paradis and his team at DFATD for this clear statement and strong commitment towards civil society and multi-stakeholder processes,” added Ms. Sanchez, “and we are prepared to collaborate on the elaboration of a CSO strategy, which will embody these principles and should lead to a marked improvement in the terms of engagement between CSOs and DFATD and enhanced joint development outcomes.”

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Notes:

1. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation:

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

2. The First High-Level Meeting (HLM) of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) in Mexico :

The Global Partnership builds on a range of international activities to improve development co-operation, including the Monterrey Consensus of 2002, the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation (2003), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), and the Accra Agenda for Action of 2008.

The Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, where the Global Partnership was created, marked a turning point in bringing this wide range of historical efforts to improve development co-operation by different partners together into one place, going beyond governments to include business, civil society, parliamentarians, international organisations and foundations as development partners.

On April 14-15, In Mexico City, over 1500 development leaders (heads of state and government, ministers, parliamentarians and leaders from international organizations, business, civil society and foundations) from 130 countries joined Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon and OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría to:

- review global progress in making development co-operation more effective;
- agree on actions to boost progress; and,
- anchor effective development co-operation in the post-2015 global development agenda.

Minister Paradis led the Canadian government delegation at the HLM and hosted a series of meetings and round tables on the margins of the HLM, including a round table with CSOs on “The Post-2015 Development Agenda and Multi-stakeholder Engagement” and another on “Engaging the Private Sector to Promote Innovation for Development”, to which CCIC was invited to represent the CSO perspective.

The Canadian CSO delegation in Mexico included representatives from Oxfam Canada, AidWatch Canada, the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC), the North-South Institute (NSI) and CCIC.

CCIC is the North-American representative on the Coordinating Committee of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), the CSO platform that brings together and represents civil society in the GPDEC. DFATD announced its financial support to the CPDE during the HLM. More than 160 CSO representatives from around the world participated in the CSO forum in Mexico on April 14th and the HLM afterwards, including CCIC and other members of the Canadian CSO delegation.

3. Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society of The Community of Democracies:

The Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society is a working group of The Community of Democracies (CD), a global intergovernmental coalition of democratic countries. This multi-stakeholder Working Group was launched in December 2009 to counter a global trend which represses civil society through restrictive legal and regulatory measures. Through research and consultations, the Working Group developed several recommendations to contribute to the Global Democracy Work Plan. Canada is chair of the group.

4. Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment:

Established in 2009, the multi-stakeholder Task Team aims to advance norms and implementation of international commitments in relation to civil society and development. More specifically, the purpose of the Task Team is to promote and facilitate implementation of development practice consistent with civil society-related commitments made at the 2008 [Accra](#) and 2011 [Busan](#) High Level Fora on aid and development effectiveness.

The Task Team is a voluntary body composed of official development cooperation providers, partner countries and CSOs. It is currently co-chaired by representatives from the President's Office of the Government of Mali, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). Brian Tomlinson, previously of CCIC and now with AidWatch Canada, is the CPDE co-chair of the Task Team.