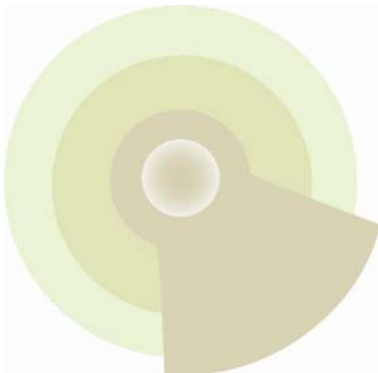


**THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS:  
A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE**

**FINAL REPORT**



**HOSTED BY THE ADVISORY GROUP ON  
CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS**

**GATINEAU, QUÉBEC (CANADA)**

**FEBRUARY 3 – 6, 2008**



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**FOREWORD**

This report on the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness presents a synthesis of the major issues examined at the Forum, noting both common ground and divergence among participants, and the proposals they made. This synthesis is necessarily selective; detailed records of plenary presentations, as well as case studies and records of Roundtables, are to be found on the website of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), <http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>, and the extranet site of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, hosted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), <http://web.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cs>. The Steering Committee which organized the Forum expresses its appreciation for the work of John Saxby, the Forum Organizer, for the preparation of this report.

The Forum was a multi-stakeholder dialogue, and the different audiences for this report reflect that quality. A key audience is the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (the AG), which mandated the Forum to offer advice and analysis. The participants in the Forum – members of civil society organizations from both North and South, of donor agencies and of governments of developing countries – comprise a second audience. There is, thirdly, a wide audience of organizations and individuals with an interest in civil society and the aid effectiveness agenda, but who did not take part the Forum. People in all these different audiences will be active in the run-up to the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra in September 2008; the ideas in this report are put forward as resources for that process.



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## ACRONYMS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AG	Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CCIC	Canadian Council for International Co-operation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO(s)	civil society organization(s)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (of the United Nations)
HLF	High Level Forum (Accra, September 2008)
OECD / DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
WIDE	Women in Development / Europe
WP / EFF	Working Party on Aid Effectiveness

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS**

1. The Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG) hosted the AG International Forum, a unique multi-stakeholder dialogue on civil society and aid effectiveness, in Gatineau, Québec, from February 3 – 6, 2008. More than two hundred invited participants took part, from sixty-six countries. They came from four major stakeholders in the aid system: donor and multilateral agencies, governments of developing countries, Northern civil society organizations (CSOs), and Southern CSOs. They were joined by eight independent experts.
2. The International Forum is part of the roadmap leading to the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra, Ghana, in September 2008. It was an *ad hoc* body, a source of advice and analysis to the AG from different stakeholders working together. The AG in turn is an advisory body to the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, located at the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. The AG co-ordinated national and regional consultations between September 2007 and January 2008, and these informed the International Forum. Complementing these meetings were a series of analyses and case studies by CSOs, donors, and independent research centres.
3. The Forum was designed to be a safe space for dialogue among different development actors, all with an interest in the role of civil society in the aid effectiveness agenda. Participants spoke in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their organizations. For this reason, the AG did not seek a declaration from the Forum, or even a consensus: the aim was to encourage dialogue across institutional boundaries, enabling participants to draw on their experience to set out the issues, to identify common ground or divergence, and to offer proposals to the AG.

**MESSAGES AND PROPOSALS FROM THE FORUM**

4. The Forum agenda was organized around three strategic themes identified by the AG:
  - 1) Recognizing the roles and voice of CSOs as development actors in their own right;
  - 2) Enriching the implementation of the Paris Declaration; and
  - 3) CSOs aid effectiveness: CSOs as aid donors, recipients, and partners.

Participants spoke to these themes in plenary, case-study workshops, and six day-long Roundtables, which were the heart of the Forum. Key messages and related proposals emerged.

## RECOGNIZING THE ROLES AND VOICE OF CSOs

### 5. Policy Dialogue and the Paris Declaration

- ❑ Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, exemplified by the Forum, is marked by complexity and diversity, but is essential to the challenges facing development co-operation. The precedent established by this Forum is valuable, and participants expect to continue the dialogue beyond Accra.

*Proposal:* Accordingly, participants proposed that governments, donors and CSOs create more opportunities and forums for equitable multi-stakeholder policy dialogue.

- ❑ Participants in the AG Forum, as they were invited to contribute advice on civil society and the international aid effectiveness agenda, also took their dialogue beyond aid and the Paris Declaration. Members of CSOs challenged the Forum to take on the larger challenge of development effectiveness, and not to be limited by the focus of the Paris Declaration on managing aid flows between donors and Southern governments. There is a larger development agenda of human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.
- ❑ Donor representatives, conversely, saw the Paris Declaration as a potentially powerful political document, one that could change the rules of development assistance. By engaging with the implementation of the Declaration, CSOs could substantially enrich it.

### 6. CSOs' Identity and Roles

- ❑ CSOs define themselves by a mission of social solidarity, and this is the standard by which their performance is to be judged. They are non-market, non-state organizations which people form to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Their work as development actors is thus inherently political – not in the partisan sense, but in the sense of engaging the big social issues of poverty, power and rights.
- ❑ CSOs' roles include mobilizing citizens and promoting public participation; holding governments and other social institutions to account; service delivery; policy and program research and advocacy; generating, disseminating and applying knowledge about development; and mobilizing financial and human resources.
- ❑ Individual CSOs are not representative – they draw their legitimacy from the way they represent the interests and values of their constituencies and from their expertise and credibility. Civil society as a whole is marked by diversity, complexity, and a broad representation of social interests. The challenge for CSOs working in development, and for governments and donors working with them, is to defend and empower those who are excluded from economic and political power – poor and remote communities, women and children, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities.

***Proposal:** Participants thus proposed that signatories to the Paris Declaration recognize CSOs as development actors in their own right, and respect the autonomy and diversity of civil society. This position enjoyed wide support within the Forum.*

- ❑ CSOs' legitimacy and credibility and their inclusiveness are challenged, both from within civil society and by sceptics within Southern governments and donor agencies. Undemocratic regimes regularly target citizens' organizations. Forum participants acknowledged the critique as well as the threat, affirming that CSOs have both the opportunity and the challenge to establish their own standards of effectiveness, and to invest in analyzing and publicizing the longer-term results of their work. This is an essential part of their accountability to their constituents.
- ❑ As an example of the issue, members of organizations promoting women's rights in development challenged the gender imbalance among the chairs and plenary speakers of the Forum. The Steering Committee responded positively, adjusting the agenda to provide space for their challenge. The intervention influenced the discourse in later Forum sessions.

## **ENRICHING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS DECLARATION**

### **7. CSOs and Democratic and Local Ownership**

- ❑ The seminal proposal in the Forum was to reinterpret the Paris principle of "country ownership" as "democratic ownership". This concept was articulated at regional consultations; imported into the Forum, it provided a fundamentally different perspective on the Paris Declaration. Forum participants – especially but not exclusively from CSOs – called for a more democratic vision of "ownership", a broader and more open and participatory approach to design, carry out and assess national development strategies and programs. A more public process would include parliaments, political parties, local governments, and the spectrum of civil society – women's and community organizations, producers' associations, professional associations, independent media and think tanks, youth groups and faith-based organizations.
- ❑ Democratic ownership thus implies a re-casting of power relationships, and the active participation of those often excluded from policy-making and decision-making.
- ❑ Forum participants also argued that democratic ownership will also be local ownership, with citizens in their communities exercising their right to shape the goals and methods of development agendas.

***Proposal:** Roundtable participants thus proposed that the implementation of the Paris Declaration should be enriched by deepening the meaning of country ownership as democratic and local ownership, thereby strengthening civil society participation in the policy process for development.*

## 8. Transparency and Accessible Information Essential for Accountability

- ❑ Transparent and accessible information on public policy, resources, decision-making and institutions is an essential condition of democratic ownership.

*Proposal:* Roundtables thus proposed that all actors commit to the highest standards of openness and transparency, donors and international financial institutions ensuring timely dissemination of information and adopting a policy of automatic and full disclosure of relevant information; that developing countries' governments work with elected representatives, the public, and CSOs to set out transparent policies on how aid is to be sourced, spent, monitored and accounted for; and that CSOs ensure their accountability to their constituencies.

## 9. Mutual Accountability

- ❑ Democratic ownership also implies a broader and more complex vision of the principle of mutual accountability, beyond the relationship between donors and executives of Southern governments.

*Proposal:* Roundtable participants thus proposed that all actors in the aid system take up the challenge to reverse the direction of accountability away from donors in the North (including CSOs) and towards parliaments, governments and civil society in the South.

*Proposal:* To assist that process, Roundtable participants further proposed that Paris signatory institutions establish an independent, rigorous and participatory system (including resources, agencies, and methodologies) for monitoring and evaluating development results.

## **CSO AID EFFECTIVENESS:**

### **ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS AND NORTH / SOUTH RELATIONSHIPS**

## 10. An Enabling Environment for CSO Aid Effectiveness

- ❑ Participants from governments, donors, and CSOs recognized the challenges of building a positive setting for citizens' organizations and public action. Too often, the current environment is typified by confrontation, exclusion, rivalry, and win / lose rather than win / win patterns of power and engagements.

*Proposal:* A Forum Roundtable thus proposed commitments by all actors to build an enabling environment, calling on governments to reform legislation so as to promote an independent civil society and establishing regular arenas for dialogue; urging donors to pursue a common goal of enabling a vibrant, democratic and diverse civil society; encouraging Southern CSOs to strengthen their legitimacy, representativeness and effectiveness; and calling Northern CSOs to realize their downward accountability to their partner CSOs and communities in the South.

## 11. Equitable North South Relationships

- Complementary messages came from the Roundtable on equitable North / South CSO relationships. Citing principles endorsed at a November 2007 North / South CSO dialogue in Nairobi, Roundtable participants acknowledged that NCSOs and SCSOs need to work together for common aims of social solidarity, but also need to rework imbalances of power.

**Proposal:** *The Roundtable accordingly proposed that CSOs develop a Code of Conduct on North / South CSO relationships, with shared principles and commitments to improve their development effectiveness. Key elements would include a vision of mutual accountability beyond financial accountability, embracing gender equality and human rights, for example, and anchored in CSOs' accountability to poor and vulnerable groups and individuals; partnerships characterized by inter-dependency, shared accountability and risk, and jointly developed programs; and a pro-active approach by both Northern and Southern CSOs toward new aid modalities.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 THE ADVISORY GROUP'S INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

1. More than two hundred invited participants took part in the AG International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Gatineau, Québec, from February 3 – 6, 2008. Geographically, the participants came from 66 countries in Asia, Africa, Australia and the Pacific, Latin America, North America, and Europe. Institutionally, they came from four major stakeholders in the aid system. There were fifty-three members of donor and multilateral agencies; thirty-three members of governments of developing countries; sixty members of Northern civil society organizations (CSOs), and forty-nine members of Southern CSOs. Another eight participants were independent experts.
2. The Forum is one part of a complex organizational roadmap leading to the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF), to be held in Accra, Ghana, in September 2008. (This map can be found in Annex II.) The HLF will review progress to date in implementing the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
3. The Forum was conceived, mandated and hosted by the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (the AG).<sup>1</sup> The Forum was an *ad hoc* body, a source of advice and analysis for the AG from different stakeholders working together. In this respect, the Forum was a deliberate break from common practice: for most participants, it was a unique opportunity to engage a large number of governments, donors and CSOs in a sustained and substantive policy dialogue on civil society and aid effectiveness.
4. In creating the Forum, the AG mirrored its own multi-stakeholder character: it advises the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, which is responsible for organizing the HLF, and is located at the OECD / DAC. Recognizing the limited attention given to civil society within the Paris Declaration, the Working Party created the Advisory Group in November 2006 to provide advice on ways of addressing this limitation at the HLF. Chaired by CIDA, the AG comprises three donor countries (France, Canada, and Sweden), three developing countries (Zambia, Nicaragua, and Rwanda), three NCSOs (CCIC, ActionAid, and CONCORD<sup>2</sup>); three SCSOs (Afrodad, IBON / Reality of Aid, and the Third World Network / Africa). Two international networks of organizations promoting women's rights, AWID and WIDE, have been invited to participate in the AG, and to assist it in meeting its mandate.

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<sup>1</sup> The AG contracted CCIC organize the Forum, and CIDA financed its budget. CCIC in turn worked with a Forum Steering Committee, based in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> CARE International represented CONCORD on the AG.

5. Although the Forum was a single event with a specific task, it was not a stand-alone process. Between September 2007 and January 2008, with financial and logistical assistance from a number of donors, the AG co-ordinated fifteen national and seven regional<sup>3</sup> multi-stakeholder consultations on civil society and aid effectiveness. All of these consultations fed into the Forum, together with a global consultative gathering, hosted by AWID, WIDE and UNIFEM, on gender equality, civil society, and aid effectiveness. Complementing these consultations was a series of analyses and case studies undertaken by CSO and donor groupings, and by individual research centres, on different aspects of civil society and aid effectiveness; these were integrated into the regional and national consultations, and into the Forum itself.<sup>4</sup>
6. The Forum was designed to be a safe space for dialogue among different actors in development co-operation, all with an interest in the role of civil society in the international aid effectiveness agenda. Its participants spoke in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their governments or agencies with a brief to negotiate. For this reason, the AG did not seek a declaration or manifesto, or even a consensus: the aim was to create a forum for dialogue across conventional institutional boundaries, enabling participants to draw on their knowledge and experience to articulate the relevant issues, to identify common ground or divergence among themselves, and to offer conclusions or proposals to the AG.
7. Working with the Forum Steering Committee<sup>5</sup>, the AG identified three strategic themes to structure the dialogue at the Forum:
  - ❑ Recognition of the roles and voice of civil society organizations (CSOs) as development actors in their own right, and within the current aid system;
  - ❑ Enriching the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; and
  - ❑ CSO aid effectiveness: CSOs as aid donors, recipients, and partners.

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<sup>3</sup> South and West Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America, Northern CSOs, and North / South CSO dialogue.

<sup>4</sup> The record of those consultations appears in a synthesis paper prepared for the AG, "Consultations on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: A Synthesis of Issues, Analysis and Proposals," A Background Paper for the Advisory Group's International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, Ottawa, February 3 – 6, 2008 (Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, Jan. 20, 2008.) This Synthesis Paper is available on the CCIC website (<http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>) and on the AG's extranet site for on civil society and aid effectiveness, hosted by CIDA (<http://web.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cs>).

<sup>5</sup> Members of the Forum Steering Committee were: Brian Tomlinson, Policy Co-ordinator, CCIC (Chair); John Saxby, Forum Organizer (consultant to CCIC); Molly Kane, Executive Director, Inter Pares (CCIC Board Member); Nigel Martin, Director, Forum International de Montréal; Réal Lavergne, Policy Branch, CIDA; Jacqueline Wood, consultant to Policy Branch, CIDA. Ray Gordezky, a consultant experienced in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues, advised the Steering Committee on the agenda.

8. The Forum agenda (in Annex I) offered three settings in which participants could articulate and exchange issues, analysis and proposals on these themes:
- ❑ **Plenary sessions** provided space for presentations such as the summaries of points arising in regional consultations, the Chairs' introduction and résumé of particular sessions, the Keynote Address to the Forum.
  - ❑ **Six case-study workshops** included both presentations of examples of relevant practice, and commentary and exchange among participants. (Plenary and workshop presentations are posted on the AG / CIDA extranet site, and on the CCIC website.)
  - ❑ **Six daylong thematic Roundtables** were the heart of the Forum. They afforded space for dialogue and exchange among participants, both to articulate and explore issues, and to make proposals.
  - ❑ The Roundtables examined aspects of each strategic theme, as follows. (Guiding questions for each workshop can be found in Annex III.)
- Theme #1: Recognition of the Roles and Voice of CSOs as Development Actors**
- Roundtable #1: CSOs' Roles, Voice and Legitimacy
  - Roundtable #2: CSOs' Accountability: Best Practice and Structures
- Theme #2: Enriching the Implementation of the Paris Declaration**
- Roundtable #3: Democratic Ownership: Alignment, Co-ordination and Harmonization
  - Roundtable #4: Democratic Ownership: Managing for Development Results and Mutual Accountability
- Theme #3: CSO Aid Effectiveness: CSOs as Aid Donors, Recipients, and Partners**
- Roundtable #5: Donor and Government Enabling Environments
  - Roundtable #6: Equitable North / South CSO Relations
9. The reports from these Roundtables summarize participants' statements of the issues, their agreements and outstanding questions, and the proposals they generated for the AG. The synthesis offered here draws substantially on these reports. (Roundtable reports are posted on the AG / CIDA extranet site, and on the CCIC website.)

## **2.0 MESSAGES FROM THE FORUM**

10. Plenary speakers placed the participants' Roundtable dialogue within the broader policy frame of the reform of development co-operation, and particularly within the September 2008 Accra HLF to review progress on implementing the Paris Declaration.

## 2.1 CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER POLICY DIALOGUE AND THE ROAD TO ACCRA

### 2.1.1 Multi-Stakeholder Policy Dialogue – Something New in Development Co-operation

11. Stephen Wallace of CIDA, Chair of the AG and Co-Chair of the Forum, described the Forum as a “rare opportunity to build the public good.” Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, in a setting such as the Forum, is marked by complexity and diversity. Such dialogue is relatively new to development co-operation, and is a work in progress with a potential we are just beginning to see. The Forum would contribute to the Accra HLF, but would also address broader questions of development effectiveness, genuinely inclusive national processes, human rights, and gender equality.

### 2.1.2 CSOs: Taking the Paris Declaration seriously?

12. Ambassador Jan Cedergren of Sweden, Chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness – the body which will receive the advice of the AG – made the case for CSOs to take the Paris Declaration seriously. He argued that the Declaration is not just a technical document, but a political document that can “change the rules of the game” of development assistance. It is a negotiated document, and hence not perfect, but it builds on decades of experience about what works and what doesn’t. The Ambassador asserted that civil society can and will enrich and elaborate the Declaration. The stakes are considerable: development aid will be effective *only if* it can engage citizens of the South and the North – it will be citizens’ involvement that creates the political conditions for change. Nevertheless, he argued, **CSOs and indeed all actors face real challenges in responding to the Declaration**
13. Some of the challenges Ambassador Cedergren identified include:
  - ❑ Regional consultations affirmed the primacy of recognizing CSOs’ roles and voice as development actors. Southern governments were under-represented in those consultations, however, and comments from their representatives at the August 2007 Harnesand conference in Sweden challenged CSOs’ legitimacy and the quality of their relations with parliaments and political parties.
  - ❑ What can CSOs do to promote “democratic ownership” of development strategies? By working for transparency? By building capacity in their own ranks, as well as within government?
  - ❑ “Mutual accountability” will require watchdogs on both sides of the table. Can CSOs contribute by measuring development results at the local level? Is the capacity in place to do so?
  - ❑ How are we to ensure that CSOs are not “harmonized to death”? Can we ensure space for the diversity of civil society?
  - ❑ CSOs’ own effectiveness must be scrutinized. If CSOs channel \$40 billion of aid annually, its use *has* to be assessed, whether against Paris principles or others. This work will require an enormous investment in capacity development, in and by CSOs and communities. The Paris Declaration has attempted to rework longstanding imbalances in North/ South relations between governments. Can CSOs avoid replicating these?

### **2.1.3 CSOs: Recasting the Principles of the Paris Declaration**

14. Gerry Barr of CCIC, Co-Chair of the Forum, offered a perspective from citizens' organizations. CSOs' "ragged effectiveness" has already begun to recast the Paris principles:
- ❑ "Country ownership" is being reinterpreted as "democratic ownership", as "citizens' ownership", as a vision of public engagement and democratic spaces, with the potential to transform aid.
  - ❑ Seen through the lens of democratic ownership, "alignment" takes us beyond the narrowly institutional perspective of the Paris Declaration and into solidarity with the agendas of citizens and communities.
  - ❑ "Harmonization" from a citizens' perspective becomes more complex and inclusive – joining forces need not exclude the historically marginalized, those outside the capital city, informal organizations, women's organizations, people with disabilities or indigenous peoples.
  - ❑ "Democratic ownership" implies new markers for "development results": Does aid advance civic agency? Human rights? Gender equality? Do citizens' organizations enjoy space, recognition, and respect? Are they sufficiently engaged to insist on accountability and to judge the impact of aid?
  - ❑ How does "mutual accountability" play out in a much more complex democratic terrain, taking account of relations between citizens' organizations and their governments, and with each other – not only between donors and national governments?

### **2.1.4 CSOs as Development Actors, Their Identity and Their Roles**

15. In this broad policy process, the essential building block is the recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right, with their own distinct roles. Understanding the roles of CSOs in turn requires understanding their identity, the values that guide them, and their legitimacy. These issues are relevant to all of the Roundtable topics, and for this reason were explored in a plenary presentation by Antonio Tujan, a member of the AG and of IBON Foundation and the Reality of Aid network.
16. CSOs play multiple roles as development actors. Echoing the accounts of Regional Consultations, Mr Tujan described CSOs performing as agents of program delivery; as donors themselves and channels of donor assistance; as policy watchdogs, analysts and advocates; as contributors to good governance in society at large, promoting citizens' empowerment, the protection and realization of human rights, and social transformation. These diverse roles reflect the social breadth of CSOs as non-market and non-state organizations which people form to pursue shared ideals in the public domain.
17. There are different types of CSOs – membership, cause-oriented and service-oriented organizations – with highly diverse purposes, but they share a family resemblance, a common characteristic of social solidarity. They are driven not by imperatives of

commercial profit or political office, but by values of responsibility to a public interest, humanitarianism, and voluntarism; and though they may seek different ends, this solidarity is the test of their performance. This will be obvious for organizations defending a particular constituency, such as a trade union, a farmers' association, a women's rights organization, or an international solidarity group. But it will also be true of an advocacy CSO promoting a broad or a specific public interest.

18. A CSO's legitimacy does not derive from broad representativeness, therefore – of necessity it gives voice to a limited set of interests. It earns legitimacy and credibility from society, and from its own constituency, by the integrity and quality of its representation of constituents' interests and ideas in the public domain. At issue, then, is not whether CSOs are “self-appointed”, as critics charge – they are, by definition. The issue is how well they perform their different roles to promote citizens' voice and action for social solidarity.
19. A mission of solidarity implies multiplicity and complexity within civil society, an expression of the diversity of peoples and their concerns. Such diversity is not a problem to be tolerated, but rather it should be defended as a sign of vitality, and as evidence of citizens using social space to participate in public life. They do not always do so harmoniously – civic space is often contested, both within civil society and with other actors in the public and private realms. For this reason, a healthy civil society is one of the key pillars of democratic governance, complementing an elected legislature, a responsible executive, and an independent judiciary and media. Civil society actors such as social or popular movements have a key role to play in promoting human rights and empowering marginalized groups, especially where democracy cannot be assumed. In this context, CSOs' service-delivery work – not only its advocacy – can be critical in helping those living in poverty and the dispossessed to claim their rights.

## **2.2 STRATEGIC THEME #1: RECOGNIZING CSOs' ROLES AND VOICE AS DEVELOPMENT ACTORS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT**

20. Two Roundtables explored issues related to the strengthening of recognition of CSO roles and voice by examining these roles, voice and legitimacy, as well as CSOs' practices of accountability.

### **2.2.1 Recognizing CSOs as Development Actors in Their Own Right**

21. Participants in these two Roundtables explicitly recognized CSOs as development actors in their own right. This principle thus became the point of departure for a range of analyses and proposals by the Roundtables – and was not challenged in the Forum.
22. Roundtable Two justified this core principle in terms of human rights and democratic governance:

*The participation of civil society in the development process is an expression of their fundamental human rights, and [we recognize] their contribution to democratic ownership of the development process. [Report of Roundtable #2]*

23. From this proposition followed a proposal to recognize CSOs as development actors:

***Proposal on the Recognition of CSOs Roles and Voice:*** *All governments and institutions agreeing to the Paris Declaration affirm the role of CSOs as development actors in their own right, and respect the autonomy and diversity of civil society.*

24. Roundtable participants then elaborated this proposal with some examples of mechanisms to realize and strengthen the role of CSOs and the voices that they are able to bring to policy discourse and discussions of aid effectiveness. They included:

- ❑ Establishing *observatories* – centres of social analysis or “observation” – where a variety of actors (governments, donors and civil society) work together to plan, develop and monitor aid.
- ❑ Building on the established multilateral forums of the UN system and its recognition and norms for CSOs participation, to engage civil society in policy dialogue on aid and development.
- ❑ Creating a permanent mechanism at the OECD/ DAC and the WP/ EFF for a continuing dialogue with civil society beyond Accra. More generally, mechanisms to support ongoing dialogue, consultation and engagement among different development actors will be of primary importance at national and regional as well as global levels.

25. Complementary resources to assist CSOs in fulfilling their roles as development actors include:

- ❑ Supports to the capacity of civil society in the South, including: training; support for capacity to conduct research, analysis and monitoring; long-term and stable core funding arrangements; and organizational development.
- ❑ Agreements between donors and Southern governments with built-in roles for CSO participation in development programming, including priority-setting, development of the program, and monitoring and evaluation.
- ❑ Investments by donors and Southern governments to strengthen their own capacity to engage with civil society.

### **2.2.2 Recognizing CSOs as Development Actors – The Implications**

26. From this core principle of recognizing CSOs as development actors in their own right, important corollaries follow.

## **Political Space for Policy Dialogue**

27. Political space for inclusive dialogue among government, civil society, and other social institutions was considered to be primary importance, but currently inadequate. The Southern and Eastern Africa Regional Consultation noted, for example, that few multi-stakeholder forums existed where different social actors could explore issues and strategies for aid effectiveness; and that not only civil society but also the private sector has until now been largely excluded from the agenda. Participants acknowledged that the political space and recognition afforded to CSOs differed widely – there were stark examples of repression and harassment – and that civil society itself possessed varying strength and resources to use the space available.

## **Respect for the Autonomy and Diversity of Civil Society**

28. Participants in their Roundtables urged governments and donors to recognize the autonomy of citizens' organizations, and to respect the diversity of civil society. There exist ample precedents for doing so. ECOSOC Resolutions, for example, defining non-governmental organizations' consultative relationship within the United Nations, guarantee respect for the autonomy of CSOs. The same is true of the Beijing Platform for Action: "We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organization, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action." Participants also argued that respecting CSOs' autonomy and diversity requires that governments and donors acknowledge that development is inherently political, and that as development actors, CSOs are as well – not in the narrow partisan sense, but because of their work in the domain of public action and the public interest that often speak to the distribution of wealth and power in society.
29. In such a setting, governments may indeed recognize CSOs as development actors in their own right, but still insist, as one government representative did at the Forum, that CSOs observe national development priorities articulated by the government. In practical terms, the principle of "respect for autonomy" also becomes a question of the balance of power, the availability of space and support for competing visions, for dissent and dissonance. Participants acknowledged that some governments can see civil society as a threat, as a countervailing force commanding intellectual capacity, a public voice, and material resources – at a time when the nation-state itself has been weakened. In such circumstances, a reciprocal negotiation is required, where acknowledging the roles of civil society also implies acknowledging the roles of the state.

## **Challenges to CSOs' Legitimacy...**

30. There was wide support for statements which recognized the validity of CSOs as development actors. Yet, Forum participants were not uncritical, and in particular raised questions on issues of CSO legitimacy, representativeness and inclusiveness.

31. Both in plenary sessions and in the Roundtables of the Forum, participants recognized that CSOs' legitimacy as actors in public governance is frequently challenged. Sceptics question CSOs' right to voice criticisms of public policy because they are not elected bodies, and thus not representative of society's interests. They may be manipulated by individuals for personal status or political or material gain. Their connections to "the grassroots" may be tenuous, and their technical expertise inadequate.
32. A response to this critique acknowledged the validity of the questions, and their relevance to all social institutions. However, to dismiss CSOs because they are not elected was seen to miss the point: At issue are citizens' rights to organize and to voice their views on matters of public interest, and to promote and defend their interests and values in the public domain. From this perspective, what is critical is an assessment of CSOs' performance – the quality of their relations with their constituencies, their representation of members' interests, the effectiveness of their work in solidarity with marginalized groups or communities, the credibility of their expertise. It was pointed out that intergovernmental bodies such as the World Health Organization have well-established criteria and years of experience in using such assessments. It follows that other stakeholders have to exercise due diligence, to assess the diversity and legitimacy of civil society.
33. CSOs in turn argued in Roundtable #2 that their presence in the public domain rests upon their credibility. Citizens' individual and collective voices are legitimate because they rest on rights of expression and association, but their credibility rests on their expertise, their experience in the field, the coherence of their analysis and values. They earn this credibility not from government accreditation, but from the scrutiny of peers, and from the commitment of their members, their supporters – whose endorsement can always be withdrawn – and their counterparts.

### **...And Challenges to CSOs' Inclusiveness and Commitment to Gender Equality**

34. Participants also questioned CSOs' inclusiveness and their commitment to gender equality. Representatives of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and of Women in Development Europe (WIDE) challenged the lack of gender balance in the structure of the Forum itself, especially the lack of women's voices and gender perspectives among the scheduled speakers of the early stages of the Forum, a feature all too common in many CSOs. Their challenge evoked a positive response from the Steering Committee. AWID and WIDE contributed perspectives and proposals from a consultation on the implication of the Paris Declaration for gender equality (co-sponsored with UNIFEM) which immediately preceded the Forum.
35. The recommendations from the AWID / WIDE / UNIFEM consultation included a critique of the gender-blind language of the Paris Declaration, as well as an affirmation of the key characteristics of civil society, and of its centrality to aid effectiveness. It proposed that governments, regional and multilateral organizations interpret "country ownership" as "democratic ownership", and acknowledge obligations to international human rights law, including women's rights and gender equality. This approach infused a proposal that the September 2008 Accra Agenda for Action recognize CSOs in general and women's rights

organizations in particular, as autonomous development actors in their own right. In a similar vein, the consultation proposed that the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness undertake a multi-stakeholder review of the monitoring system of the Paris Declaration, engaging CSOs and women's rights organizations, and integrating gender equality targets and indicators.

36. The intervention by AWID and WIDE influenced the discourse in the Forum as a whole, alerting Roundtables to the centrality of human rights and gender inequality. Examples follow below, in the Forum's treatment of the implementation of the Paris Declaration.
37. In a similar manner, a multi-stakeholder Agriculture and Rural Development Caucus convened at the Forum urged its participants, and the Accra process more generally, to give greater attention to agriculture and rural development, the livelihood of the majority of the world's poor. The Caucus noted that rural CSOs, farmers' and producers' organizations, and organizations of rural women were insufficiently represented at the AG Forum, and in the aid effectiveness debate as a whole. The Caucus also proposed that rural CSOs and farmers' organisations hold a pre-Accra meeting to prepare a common position and formulate proposals for discussion at the High Level Forum.

### **2.2.3 Redefining and Expanding the Agenda: Beyond the Paris Declaration and Aid Management**

38. As the Co-Chairs expected, Forum participants took the dialogue beyond aid and the Paris Declaration. CSOs exercised "CSOs' voice as development actors," bringing forward statements from Regional Consultations to both plenary presentations and to the Roundtables that broaden the framework for understanding aid effectiveness. Other participants referenced these issues in their own commentaries and proposals. They included the following thematic issues:

#### **Aid Budgets are a Global Public Good**

39. This perspective was registered in plenary by the presentation from the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Consultation. Other speakers returned to it in Roundtables and in later plenaries, including the wrap-up by the Forum Co-Chairs. What then are the criteria which govern its use? Introducing the Roundtables, Ms Molly Kane, introducing the second day of the Forum, explained that from this understanding of aid as a public good flow imperatives of accountability, transparency and democratic ownership, grounded in the affirmation of the rule of law, international standards of human rights, and the needs and aspirations of the public. This perspective enables us to see the positively and inherently political nature of aid and development. She point out that the social and political environments required for civil society to flourish, contributing to social and economic transformation, are also the environments in which the rule of law and respect for human rights can support the strengthening of democratic institutions and political culture, and where material conditions for human development are realized for those who have historically been expropriated, disenfranchised and marginalized.

## **“Aid Effectiveness” and “Development Effectiveness”**

40. The link between “aid effectiveness” and “civil society” is the formal reference point for the mandate of the AG and the dialogue at the Forum. Yet the Synthesis Paper summarizing the Regional Consultations highlighted CSOs’ insistence on defining their own reference point as the much larger domain of “development effectiveness”. Plenary presentations from those Regional Consultations underscored this position. The Co-Chairs acknowledged the importance and validity of the “aid effectiveness” agenda – aid has a significance of its own, and is also an important entry point to the debate about development effectiveness; they also recognized that perspectives within the Forum broadened the dialogue beyond aid. The question from the Latin American and Caribbean consultation provided an example of the issue: How can the international community go beyond “aid” (grounded in assumptions of deficits and needs) to “co-operation”, grounded in assumptions of reciprocity and joint assets to respond to a common challenge? Roundtable reports joined these two issues – aid as a public good and development effectiveness – by proposing that the purpose of aid, as a global public good, is development; and that the conditions of aid not limit the development policy options for communities and countries of the South.
41. The approach to development effectiveness, finally, was informed by a tripartite agenda: human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The report from the AWDI / WIDE / UNIFEM consultation, as well as from Regional consultations, prefigured this agenda, and Roundtable reports incorporated it as well.

## **In Africa, a Growing Dependency on Aid**

42. Reports from the Regional Consultations in Africa highlighted a growing dependency on aid to finance the budgets of governments on the continent. This trend is paradoxical in the era of “aid effectiveness” – surely a *declining* reliance on aid is the essential indicator of its effectiveness.

## **The Imperative of Engaging Citizens**

43. Donor representatives argued the imperative of engaging citizens of the North and the South, if aid is to be effective. A similar position emphasized what was at stake: If the opportunity offered by the Forum was not seized, if civil society is not acknowledged and engaged, then the effort to reform and improve aid cannot succeed.

In their analysis of and proposals for the first strategic theme of the Forum, participants thus made it clear that the Paris Declaration is not the whole story of development, or even of aid. In doing so, they also broached the second strategic theme of the Forum, showing that the perspectives, interests and methods of civil society can enrich the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

## **2.3 STRATEGIC THEME #2: ENRICHING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS DECLARATION**

44. In the Roundtables, Forum participants scrutinized the application of the principles of the Paris Declaration. While they acknowledged their importance, they re-cast these principles as they considered their applicability to the work of CSOs.

### **2.3.1 “Country Ownership” Becomes “Democratic and Local Ownership”**

#### **Reinterpreting Country Ownership as Democratic Ownership**

45. The seminal proposal of the Forum was to reinterpret the Paris principle of “country ownership” as “democratic ownership”. This idea arose in Regional Consultations, and was further reinforced by Forum participants. This shift in perspective influenced all the Roundtables, not only those charged with exploring democratic ownership. It was suggested that engaging civil society in the design, implementation and assessment of a national development agenda implies significantly broadening the range of “stakeholders” in that process – and even naming them differently, as publics, constituencies, or development actors. A public process will engage parliaments, political parties, and local governments; women’s groups; grassroots organizations; producers’ associations such as farmers’ organizations; independent think-tanks and media; professional associations; chambers of commerce; faith-based groups; social-service NGOs and many more. Not all of these entities are CSOs, but CSOs have insisted on their participation in national development strategies. Participants reflected that democratic ownership necessarily rests on popular rights of association, speech, and access to information, and on the equal participation and voice of women and men in decision-making.
46. The principle of democratic ownership thus means that the actors share responsibility for addressing power relationships, with government and non-government stakeholders negotiating a broad consensus to work together. It requires strengthening the capacities to do so – among all parties. Participants pointed out that it also means the active participation of groups often excluded from policymaking and decision-making – women’s organizations, small organizations, remote communities, disabled and indigenous peoples.

#### **... And “Democratic Ownership” is in Turn Localized**

47. To the vision of “democratic ownership”, Forum participants added “local ownership”, arguing that ownership must rest with communities and the poor, with people and organizations at the grassroots. Regional consultations such as those in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean emphasized the importance of linking democratization to decentralization, challenging the appropriateness of national development designed and delivered from the top down. The notion of “local ownership” is therefore highly relevant to the programmatic work of CSOs in local communities and regional districts of countries.

### **2.3.2 “Alignment” to a Broader Set of Interests and Priorities**

48. Roundtable participants concluded that alignment in relation to national development priorities will look quite different when viewed through the lens of democratic and local ownership. Leadership can be exercised by women and men in different institutions, and at different levels of society. National development priorities, articulated by government, will be a product of a social process more diverse, complex and participatory than the construction of a PRSP.
49. It was suggested that a commitment to alignment in the context of democratic ownership offers donors, governments and CSOs the opportunity to invest in capacity of citizens and their organizations to generate, monitor and assess development policy and programs. It opens the door to considerations of alternative policy information, ideas, and experience from the local or community level that potentially challenge the “policy monoculture”. Many CSOs proposed that for donors, this commitment suggests *facilitating* rather than *designing* policy and reducing conditions on aid which stifle domestic policy space, especially on core issues such as macro-economic policy. For both official donors and Northern CSOs, the commitment to democratic ownership also implies supporting Southern CSOs’ call for democratic ownership of and accountability for aid agreements.
50. Roundtable participants thus recognized that the challenge for the Accra HLF and its accompanying Agenda for Action would be to transcend “country ownership” in realizing commitments to alignment. It should affirm the importance of engaging civic and legislative actors beyond the national executives of Southern governments, and should pave the way for their participation in the policy process.

### **Co-ordination and Harmonization**

51. The principles of co-ordination and harmonization were similarly re-interpreted by many participants. The Roundtables challenged donors to take account of civic actors in their efforts to co-ordinate their resources, so that “co-ordination” becomes a broader and more participatory process, anchored not only by national plans and PRSPs but by citizens’ priorities as well. Conversely, participants acknowledged that the multiplicity of CSOs and the frequent lack of co-ordination among them are likely to present a practical obstacle to such an approach. Southern governments in turn may be sceptical of CSOs’ autonomy, viewing them as strongly dependent on the resources and good will of donors and their Northern counterparts.
52. Roundtable #3 capped the discussion by anticipating a declaration by a possible 4<sup>th</sup> HLF in 2010, including the proposal that “Partner countries commit to take the lead in co-ordinating aid ... in dialogue with donors and *ensuring* the participation of civil society and the private sector” [Report, Roundtable #3].

### **2.3.3 The Critical Condition: Transparent and Accessible Information**

53. Participants from all stakeholder groups argued convincingly that transparent and accessible information is essential to democratic ownership. Ready access to comprehensive information about public policy is a precondition for an informed and engaged citizenry. It was noted that financial information on budgets and aid resources is especially important. A civic dialogue about public policy and programs becomes authentic when citizens make their own information and analysis part of the public discourse. The combination of ready access and citizens' engagement results in a virtuous circle – the public regime of transparency is strengthened by citizens' confidence in their own voice and status, and by greater public trust in society's institutions.

### **2.3.4 Mutual Accountability**

54. The insistence on transparent and accessible information connects the Paris principle of mutual accountability with actors' accountability to domestic constituencies in developing countries.
55. The Roundtables retained this essential principle of the Paris Declaration, but reworked it with the tools of democratic and local ownership. By adding civil society to the process of accountability, they radically expanded the original dyad – Northern donors and the executive arm of Southern governments – to a multifaceted web of accountabilities. Like other stakeholders, CSOs' accountabilities are complex, diverse, and often competing: to their boards and members, to government and corporate funders and individual donors, to regulators, to communities and publics – some of whom may be in other countries.
56. The methods and mechanisms proposed to redefine mutual accountability in the context of an enriched notion of ownership require both recognizing and rebalancing power relationships among donors, governments, and civil society. It was suggested that this implies a multi-party commitment to negotiate goals together in a more open and inclusive way – “democratizing the aid agenda” – and then holding one another accountable for results and shortcomings.

### **2.3.5 Management for Results**

57. The Paris principle of “management for results”, transformed by the vision of democratic and local ownership, became a call to localize and democratize results. Roundtable participants asked, “Who defines results?” This Roundtable insisted on interpreting “aid effectiveness” as “development effectiveness”, thus giving priority to results on the ground to advance human rights, gender equality, poverty eradication, and environmental sustainability. A new vision of managing for results was accordingly put forward in which “local ownership” meant community-level ownership of the development agenda, with resources and space to support local definition of results and indicators, a process in which women and men, civil society and governments took equal part.

58. Any system of independent evaluation requires accessible and relevant information. Hence, the proposal to reframe managing for results rests upon the proposal that all actors commit to the highest standards of transparency. The vision of democratized and localized results, independently assessed, is intended to support a more democratic regime of mutual accountability.
59. In their discussion of enriching the implementation of the Paris Declaration, Forum participants generated four specific proposals from Thematic #2 Roundtables, several of which drew inspiration from AWID / WIDE / UNIFEM consultation conclusions:

***Proposal on Country Ownership:*** *The implementation of the Paris Declaration should be enriched by deepening the meaning of country ownership as democratic and local ownership, thereby strengthening civil society participation in the policy process for development.*

***Proposal on Transparency:*** *All relevant actors must commit to the highest standards of openness and transparency, which implies that*

- ❑ *Donors and international financial institutions ensure timely and meaningful dissemination of information, the adoption of a policy of automatic and full disclosure of relevant information, and submit to the norms and direction-setting of the United Nations;*
- ❑ *Developing countries' governments work with elected representatives, the public, and CSOs to set out open and transparent policies on how aid is to be sourced, spent, monitored and accounted for; and*
- ❑ *CSOs exercise their accountability to and nurture their legitimacy from their constituencies.*

***Proposal on Mutual Accountability:*** *All actors in the aid system must take up the challenge to reverse the direction of accountability away from donors in the North (including CSOs) and towards parliaments, governments and civil society in the South.*

*Operationally, such a change will require a deliberate expansion of access to information and decision-making, especially in financial matters, and a redistribution of resources and power towards those excluded from the current accountability regime – women, poor and remote communities, citizens' organizations.*

***Proposal on Managing for Results:*** *Paris signatory institutions establish an independent, rigorous and participatory system (including resources, agencies, and methodologies) for monitoring and evaluating development results – both the implementation of the Paris Declaration and national development outcomes.*

60. By challenging CSOs to enrich the Paris Declaration, the Forum was also inviting other actors to assess CSOs' own effectiveness, and was challenging CSOs to reflect on how well they perform their own development roles.

## **2.4 STRATEGIC THEME #3:**

### **CSO AID EFFECTIVENESS: CSOs AS DONORS, RECIPIENTS AND PARTNERS**

61. Roundtables spoke to two aspects of this theme, enabling environments for civil society, and equitable North / South relations among CSOs.

#### **2.4.1 Enabling Environments for Civil Society: Everybody's Business**

62. In a Roundtable dialogue on the roles of donors and governments in promoting enabling environments for civil society, a senior official of an African government in his presentation summarized government perspectives on the challenges involved. These included disabling environments, where government did not fully accept a role for CSOs in national development, and where service-oriented CSOs were much preferred to advocacy organizations by government. The legitimacy of CSOs was often a matter of opinion. Even where government accepts the presence of CSOs, their sheer diversity requires government to make a strategic choice of which ones to work with, a choice complicated by the fact that some CSOs represent mainly their own interests. CSOs faced their own difficulties, such as access to information on policies and resources, and for all actors, creating regular forums and opportunities for dialogue remained a challenge.
63. A donor representative recognized CSOs' fears of being marginalized by the Paris Declaration and new aid modalities, but argued that the tide was flowing the other way, that the presence and contribution of civil society will be recognized as critical to the whole enterprise. The diversity of civil society means that "harmonization" of donor initiatives becomes complex. A donor may respond in different ways – supporting CSOs' own priorities; engaging CSOs as sub-contractors; creating an independent forum for CSOs to associate; and indirectly, by promoting an enabling environment for civil society. Faced with such diversity, donors and governments have to take responsibility for "due diligence" by learning the civic networks and their different actors.
64. All stakeholders in the Forum agreed that international arenas such as this Forum are crucial, as they create space where the different actors can meet one another and exchange ideas. These arenas also help to strengthen national multi-stakeholder dialogues, essential if real joint accountability for development strategies and results is to be established. It was highlighted that too often the current environment is typified by confrontation, exclusion, rivalry, and win / lose rather than win / win patterns of power. The challenge for governments is to provide the legal frameworks and the resources to strengthen citizens' organizations – and hence the stock of national assets – rather than shutting them down; and for all actors, to create space for dialogue that builds trust. Participants recognized that there will be failures, but suggested that these should be treated as opportunities for learning, not censure.
65. The Roundtable proposed commitments on an enabling environment for civil society for the different stakeholders:

## ***Proposals on Commitments to an Enabling Environment for Civil Society:***

### ***By Partner Governments:***

- To reform legislative frameworks to promote an independent civil society, recognizing its roles, voice, and activity;*
- To establish regular arenas for multi-stakeholder dialogue to treat specific development issues and policies, and to build trust among different actors;*
- To contribute resources to CSOs, to encourage an independent civil society with effective roles, voice, and performance.*

### ***By Donors:***

- To adopt a common goal of a vibrant, democratic and diverse civil society, promoting dialogue with civil society and partner governments, and supporting capacity-building within both government and civil society.*
- To practice “good donorship” in support of civil society, which includes*
  - *Providing long-term core support, with negotiated objectives;*
  - *Adopting common and appropriate contracting, funding and reporting modalities;*
  - *Being flexible and responsive, building on existing capabilities;*
  - *Investing in rigorous and participatory impact evaluation; and*
  - *Promoting South-South learning.*

### ***By Southern CSOs:***

- To operate within fair and transparent regulatory frameworks and establish CSO codes of conduct for better accountability and transparency;*
- To strengthen their legitimacy and representativeness by sharing information and consulting regularly with local constituencies; and more generally, to develop accountable mechanisms for info sharing and dissemination to all partners;*
- To embody gender equality, human rights, and poverty reduction in their programming; and*
- To develop mechanisms for self-monitoring and evaluation, and to strengthen their accountability for results.*

### ***By Northern CSOs:***

- To promote, commit to and realize downward accountability to CSO partners and beneficiaries, and to strengthen their accountability for results;*
- In their programming, to promote sustainable and more equitable partnerships with S-CSOs through a) core funding, b) capacity building based on needs identified by S-CSOs, c) long term commitment, d) empowerment, e) local partnership and participation;*
- To advocate for inclusive policy dialogue, making but not taking all the space;*
- To enhance their legitimacy through codes of conduct and transparency with their publics; and*
- To reduce duplication of effort by appropriate harmonization of service delivery efforts, while preserving diverse approaches to human rights, social change and advocacy.*

***By All Stakeholders:***

- ❑ *To ease access to information for CSOs, recognizing that CSOs are also sources of information, innovation, research and analysis;*
- ❑ *To acknowledge the political but non-partisan nature of civil society's development efforts – CSOs are agents of change;*
- ❑ *To acknowledge the legitimacy of CSOs' specific goals, beyond the priorities of governments and donors;*
- ❑ *To abide by an uncommon principle in our dialogue: HUMILITY.*

**2.4.2 Equitable Relationships Between Northern and Southern CSOs**

66. A complementary Roundtable #6 focussed on equitable relationships between Northern and Southern CSOs. The dialogue here also echoed that of some other Roundtables. Participants acknowledged that Northern and Southern CSOs need each other to work together for common aims of social solidarity, especially to defend freedom of association, a fundamental principle for civil society. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that while there are some very good North / South CSO relationships in support of shared goals and programs, there is also bad practice that should be challenged and subject to reform and innovation.
67. Participants identified unequal CSO power relationships between North and South as a significant challenge to real and sustainable partnerships. At the heart of these inequalities lie imbalances in financial resources and in mutual accountability, and the Roundtable recognized that CSOs have work to do among themselves. Some of the issues raised included direct and changing roles of Northern CSOs in Southern countries, the impact of Northern CSO dependency on donor funding on both the content and terms of their relationships with Southern counterparts, the impact of the growth of very large Northern “NGO families” on Southern CSOs as well as smaller Northern CSOs, and the emerging trends in donor funding towards mechanisms of direct support for Southern CSOs.
68. On the other hand, participants also pointed to strong comparative advantages in Northern CSOs roles that are seen to be increasingly important in the context of the new aid modalities and that may form the basis for more equitable relationships. It was suggested that northern CSOs should avoid crowding out Southern CSOs, while strengthening and taking advantage of opportunities for shared fundraising, southern-driven capacity development, joint advocacy, and the importance of research and documentation, in rethinking North / South relationships. Many spoke of the advantage to Southern CSOs Northern CSOs access to information as an essential ingredient of effective campaigns. Others suggested that direct donor support for Southern CSOs may diminish opportunities for international solidarity relationships, while shaping Southern CSOs executing agencies for donors and government. Others points to innovative financing arrangements for CSOs that are more directly Southern managed and the corresponding need for Northern CSOs to change their relationships with Southern counterparts accordingly.

## An “Effectiveness” Agenda for CSOs and Their Accountability for That Agenda

69. As autonomous entities, CSOs insist on defining their own “effectiveness” agenda, rather than applying Paris Declaration principles uncritically. Notably, CSOs have argued that an assessment of their effectiveness not be restricted to their roles as actors in the aid system, but in development more generally. They registered this message strongly at regional consultations and in the Forum as well. CSOs’ insistence on their own effectiveness agenda also leads directly to their accountability for that agenda, to their different constituencies.
70. The hard questions of effectiveness thus do not apply only to donors and government. Some donor representatives, for example, questioned whether CSOs, having first been excluded from the making of the Paris Declaration, really do want to engage with the aid effectiveness agenda. Roundtable #2, treating CSOs’ accountability in the context of mutual accountability among actors in the aid system, highlighted the particularly complex obligations of CSOs – inward and outward, upward, downward, and horizontal. Accordingly, the Roundtable called on CSOs to remain accountable to their constituents and to improve their own transparency, especially about their program priorities and their finances; to assess the their own work and to monitor the implementation of the Paris Declaration, using their own independent indicators; and more generally to share information and knowledge with people who lack access, empowering them to hold governments, parliaments, corporations and CSOs to account.
71. A draft resolution from the North / South civil society dialogue held in Nairobi in November 2007, part of the consultative process for the Forum, summarized the points at issue and informed the proposals from this Roundtable.

***Proposal on North / South Relationships among CSOs:*** *CSOs should develop a Code of Conduct on North / South CSO relationships, with shared principles and commitments to improve their development effectiveness. Components would include:*

- A vision of mutual accountability that is broader than financial accountability, embracing gender equality and human rights, for example, and anchored in CSOs’ accountability to poor and vulnerable groups and individuals;*
- Partnerships characterized by inter-dependency, shared accountability and risk, a negotiated division of roles, and jointly developed programs;*
- Joint support for South-South collaboration; and*
- A pro-active approach by Northern CSOs and Southern CSOs toward new aid modalities, treating these as opportunities to redefine their relationships and recognize their distinct roles, and building on positive features if these appear, such as donors’ long-term core support to Southern CSOs.*

***Proposal on CSOs’ Policy Roles:*** *Governments and donors should make consultation with CSOs, including women’s organizations and marginalized groups, and institutionalize practice in all aspects of the implementation of the Paris Declaration.*

The context for this proposal is the observation that new aid modalities may be shrinking the space for CSOs' policy and advocacy roles, and that the growth of "policy monocultures" necessitates alternatives and the space to develop and promote them.

### **3.0 NEXT STEPS: TO ACCRA AND BEYOND**

72. Both Ambassador Cedergren, the Chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness – the bridge to the Accra process – and Stephen Wallace, the Chair of the AG, described the Forum as an opportunity to bring new voices into the aid effectiveness debate, and to enrich the implementation of the Paris Declaration. A complex sequence of official consultations, led by the World Bank and the regional development banks, will follow the appearance of the draft Accra Agenda for Action early in April 2008. An informal meeting followed the closure of the AG International Forum, in which there was an exchange between members of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and the Independent International Steering Committee co-ordinating independent CSO input into the HLF in Accra. The different actors made a commitment to maintain both formal and informal engagement and dialogue in the months ahead.
73. There were evident lessons to be learned from the Forum which will be relevant to a continuing dialogue. These have been identified by observation and by participants' evaluative comments:
  - ❑ Because of the clarity and candour that participants contributed, the Forum exceeded expectations. Having created a multi-party forum for dialogue where few existed before, participants argued to preserve the precedent and to continue using it. Several participants expressed confidence that national preparatory consultations for the Forum have opened space for a continuing dialogue.
  - ❑ Participants recognized the AG International Forum as an opportunity, and the Accra HLF as well – although there were different views about the amount of space available at the latter, both in the substance of the agenda and the composition of the gathering. Beyond those divergent views, however, many participants saw Accra as a starting point for dialogue with and about civil society, rather than an end point in the process. There were proposals that the AG's advice to the Working Party include a post-Accra process on civil society and aid effectiveness, with the appropriate structure, mandate, and workplan.
  - ❑ If the dialogue does continue beyond Accra, the HLF may set norms for recognizing CSOs' roles and voice as development actors, and their contributions to the aid effectiveness agenda. Such norms can become important reference points, yet the use of those norms in policy dialogue, and possible related changes in programming strategies and the disposition of aid resources, all remain to be determined. These issues pose the question of carrying out commitments made to and with civil society: Who oversees practice and ensures compliance with policy norms?

- ❑ The interventions by AWID / WIDE on gender equality and human rights, and by CSOs working in agriculture and rural development, both highlighted inequalities of power among the principal actors in the aid system, and the need to name and redress these inequalities if aid is to be effective. For the Accra process, the questions then become: Who sits at multi-stakeholder policy tables? And how is the policy agenda decided? The point is underscored by noting the range of CSOs not participating in the Forum, and yet to be included in the dialogue. The evaluation by one participant noted the relative lack of representation of several types of CSOs in the International Forum, including faith-based and humanitarian organizations, independent media and research centres, environmental NGOs, human rights organizations, village associations, foundations, co-operatives, and youth groups.
- ❑ CIDA will assemble a body of evidence of good practice on issues of civil society and aid effectiveness as a background document for the HLF, in the form of an analytical paper and casebook. This offers an opportunity to inject lessons of experience into a broader process, as did the case-study workshops within the AG Forum.

# ANNEX I

## FORUM AGENDA

THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS:  
A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

HOSTED BY THE ADVISORY GROUP ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID EFFECTIVENESS  
CHATEAU CARTIER HOTEL, GATINEAU, QUEBEC (CANADA)  
FEBRUARY 3 – 6, 2008

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

- 16 h 00**                    **On-Site Registration for Forum** (continues on Monday). Participants sign up for Case-Study workshops (Monday, February 4) and Roundtables (Tuesday, February 5)
- 17 h 30**                    **Shuttle leaves Holiday Inn for Château Cartier**
- 18 h 00**                    **Shuttle leaves Holiday Inn for Château Cartier**
- 18 h 30 – 19 h 30**       **Reception (Chaudière Foyer): Hors d’oeuvres, complimentary juice and soft drinks, cash bar. (Dinner not provided.)**
- 19 h 30 – 21 h 30**       **Opening and Keynote Address (Chaudière A, B and C)**  
*Note: All plenary sessions have simultaneous interpretation.*
- Mr. Stephen Wallace, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Chair, Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (Advisory Group)
  - Ambassador Jan Cedergren, Chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
  - M. l’Abbé Apollinaire Malumalu, President of the Independent Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 21 h 45**                    **Shuttle leaves Château Cartier for Holiday Inn** (second run if required)

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4

- 07 h 30**                    **Shuttle leaves Holiday Inn for Château Cartier**
- 07 h 30 – 08 h 30**    **Buffet Breakfast at the Château Cartier** (Champions Room and Sam Snead Restaurant)
- 08 h 00 – 08 h 30**    **On-Site Registration** (continued from Sunday)
- 08 h 30 – 10 h 00**    **Welcome** (Chaudière Salon A, B and C)  
Situating the Forum, recognition of participants, and review of the Agenda
- Mr. Stephen Wallace, CIDA, Chair of the Advisory Group
  - Mr. Gerry Barr, President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)
  - Ambassador Jan Cedergren, Chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
  - Mr. Ray Gordezky, Advisor to Forum Steering Committee
- 10 h 00 – 10 h 30**    **Pause café** (Chaudière Foyer)
- 10 h 30 – 11 h 30**    **Regional Presentations** (Plenary, Chaudière): **Consultations in West / Central and North Africa, and Eastern / Southern Africa**
- Mr. Aurélien Atidegla, Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour la Promotion de L'Agriculture et du Développement (GRAPAD)
  - Mr. Samuel Nnah Ndobe, Centre for Environment and Development (CED)
- 11h30 – 12h30**        **Regional Presentations: Asian Consultations** (plenary, Chaudière)
- Mr. Antonio Tujan, IBON Foundation
- 12 h 30 – 14 h 00**    **Lunch** (Champions Room and Sam Snead Restaurant)
- 14 h 00 – 15 h 00**    **Regional Presentations** (Plenary, Chaudière)  
**Consultations in the Americas, and in the OECD Countries**
- Mr. Rubén Fernandez Andrade, ALOP / Corporación Region
  - Mr. Olivier Consolo, CONCORD Europe
- 15 h 00 – 15 h 30**    **Chairs review highlights, participants ask questions of clarification**
- 15 h 30 – 16 h 00**    **Pause café** (Chaudière Foyer)

**16 h 00 – 18 h 00 Lessons From Experience: Six Case-Study Workshops**

*Note:* Participants must sign up for Case-study workshops when they register for the Forum on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning.

Workshop Titles (see list of case studies in your kit):

- 1) *Applying and Enriching the Paris Declaration: Alignment, Coordination and Harmonization* (Rive Gauche)
- 2) *Recognition and Voice of CSOs in Policy Dialogue* (Chaudière C, with simultaneous interpretation)
- 3) *CSO Effectiveness: Accountability and Enabling Environment* (Rose)
- 4) *A Sector Approach: Roles and Voices of CSOs* (Chaudière A, with simultaneous interpretation)
- 5) *CSOs as Change Agents for Democratic Ownership* (Beau Rivage A, with simultaneous interpretation)
- 6) *Models of Donor Support for Civil Society* (Frontenac)

**19 h 00 Buses depart from Château Cartier Hotel for Canadian Museum of Civilization**

**19 h 30 – 21 h 45 Reception and Buffet Dinner, Museum of Civilization** (Riverview Salon), Tour of Canada Hall. Complimentary juice and soft drinks, cash bar.  
**Welcome:** Mr. Robert Greenhill, President, CIDA

**22 h 00 Buses depart from Museum for Château Cartier Hotel and Holiday Inn Plaza la Chaudière**

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

- 07 h 30** Shuttle leaves Holiday Inn for Château Cartier
- 07 h 30 – 08 h 30** **Buffet Breakfast at the Château Cartier** (Champions Room and Sam Snead Restaurant)
- 08 h 30 – 08 h 45** **Introduction** (Chaudière)  
▪ Chairs: Mr. Stephen Wallace and Mr. Gerry Barr.
- 08 h 45 – 09 h 45** **Theme-Based Roundtables: Introductory Plenary**  
**Introducing the Roundtables**  
▪ Ms. Molly Kane, Member of International Forum Steering Committee  
**CSOs' Identity and Values**  
▪ Mr. Antonio Tujan, IBON Foundation
- 09 h 45 – 10 h 00** **Pause café** (Chaudière Foyer)
- 10 h 00 – 12 h 30** **Theme-Based Roundtables in six breakout rooms.**  
*Note:* Participants must sign up for Roundtables when they register for the Forum on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning.  
**Theme #1: Recognition of the Roles and Voice of CSOs as Development Actors**  
▪ *Roundtable #1: CSOs' Roles, Voice and Legitimacy* (Rive Gauche)  
▪ *Roundtable #2: CSOs' Accountability: Best Practice and Structures* (Chaudière C, with simultaneous interpretation)  
**Theme #2: Enriching the Implementation of the Paris Declaration**  
▪ *Roundtable #3: Democratic Ownership: Alignment, Co-ordination and Harmonization* (Chaudière A, with simultaneous interpretation)  
▪ *Roundtable #4: Democratic Ownership: Managing for Development Results and Mutual Accountability* (Rose)  
**Theme #3: CSO Aid Effectiveness: CSOs as Aid Donors, Recipients and Partners**  
▪ *Roundtable #5: Donor and Government Enabling Environments* (Frontenac)  
▪ *Roundtable #6: Equitable North / South CSO Relations* (Beau Rivage A, with simultaneous interpretation)
- 12 h 30 – 14 h 00** **Buffet Lunch** (Champions Room and Sam Snead Restaurant)
- 14 h 00 – 15 h 30** **Theme-Based Roundtables continue**

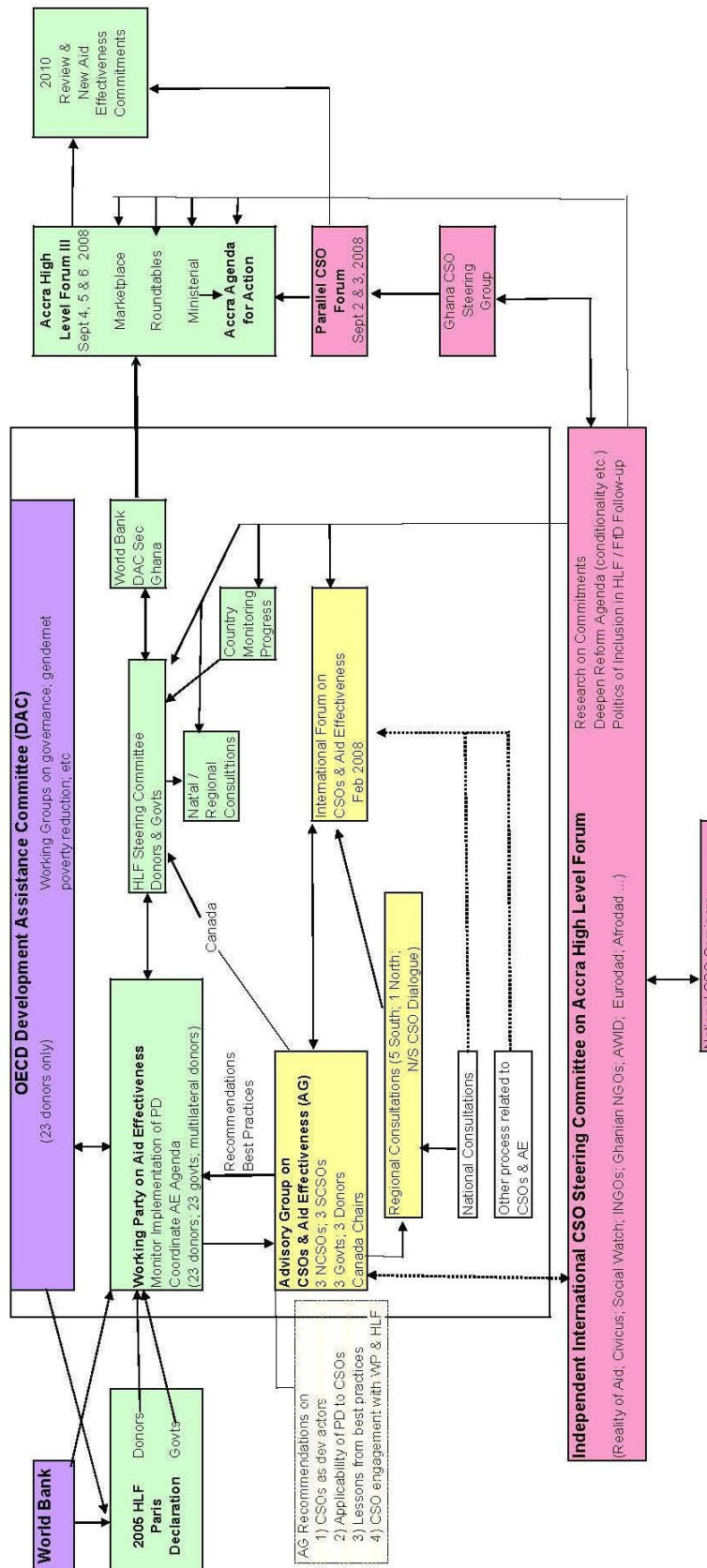
- 15 h 30 – 16 h 30**    **Pause café** (Chaudière Foyer) **and Roundtables prepare reports**
- 16 h 30 – 17 h 30**    **Roundtables #1 and #2 Report to Plenary** (Chaudière)
- 17 h 45**                **Shuttle departs from Château Cartier for Holiday Inn**
- 19 h 00**                **Shuttle departs from Holiday Inn for Château Cartier**
- 19 h 30 – 21 h 30**    **Dinner** (Château Cartier, Chaudière A, B and C)  
**Speaker:** Mr. Rakesh Rajani, East Africa Civic Agency Initiative, Tanzania
- 21 h 45**                **Shuttle departs from Château Cartier for Holiday Inn**

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

- 07 h 30** Shuttle departs from Holiday Inn for Château Cartier
- 07 h 30 – 08 h 30** **Buffet Breakfast at the Château Cartier** (Champions Room and Sam Snead Restaurant)
- 08 h 30 – 08 h 45** **Introduction (Chaudière A, B and C)**  
▪ Chairs: Mr. Stephen Wallace and Mr. Gerry Barr
- 08 h 45 – 10 h 00** **Roundtables #3 and #4 Report to Plenary**
- 10 h 00 – 10 h 30** **Pause café** (Chaudière Foyer)
- 10 h 30 – 11 h 30** **Roundtables #5 and #6 Report to Plenary**
- 11 h 30 – 12 h 30** **Chairs Review the Forum, Highlighting Roundtable Reports and the Critical Issues for the Advisory Group**
- 12 h 30 – 13 h 00** **Adjournment and Thanks**  
▪ The Honourable Beverley Oda, Minister for International Cooperation, Government of Canada  
▪ Mr. Stephen Wallace and Mr. Gerry Barr
- 13 h 00 – 14 h 00** **Lunch and Checkout**
- 14 h 00** **Shuttle departs from Château Cartier for Holiday Inn**
- 14 h 00 – 16 h 30** **Informal consultation between the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and the CSO Independent Steering Committee for the Accra High Level Forum.** (Chaudière B and C)  
*Note:* This is not a formal part of the International Forum. All participants are welcome to attend. An agenda is included in your kit.
- 17 h 00** **Shuttle departs from Château Cartier for Holiday Inn**

# ANNEX II

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR HIGH LEVEL FORM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS ACCRA, SEPTEMBER 2008



## **ANNEX III**

### **QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL FORUM ROUNDTABLES**

#### **THEME ONE: RECOGNITION OF CSO ROLES AND VOICE AS DEVELOPMENT ACTORS**

##### **Roundtable 1: CSOs' Roles, Voice and Legitimacy**

1. What characteristics of civil society – identity, values and roles – define CSO as development actors in the aid system, distinct from donors and southern governments?
2. How do Northern CSOs, Southern CSOs, Donors and Governments view CSO legitimacy? How do these stakeholders view CSO diversity in the aid system?
3. What proposals should the Advisory Group make for all stakeholders (together and separately) to the High Level Forum to strengthen the recognition of the roles and voice of CSOs as development actors in their own right within the aid system?

##### **Roundtable 2: CSOs' Accountability: Best Practice and Structures**

1. What characteristics of civil society – identity, values and roles – define CSO as development actors in the aid system, distinct from donors and southern governments?
2. What are appropriate forms of CSO accountability for Northern CSOs, Southern CSOs, Donors and Governments? How do Donors and Governments shape CSO accountability?
3. What proposals should the Advisory Group make for all stakeholders (together and separately) to the High Level Forum to strengthen the recognition of the roles and voice of CSOs as development actors in their own right within the aid system?

#### **THEME TWO: ENRICHING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS DECLARATION**

##### **Roundtable 3: Democratic Ownership: Alignment, Co-Ordination, and Harmonization**

1. How can all stakeholders enrich the implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) commitment to “country ownership” by promoting CSO roles that strengthen “democratic ownership”?
2. How can all stakeholders promote the PD principles of alignment in ways that recognize distinct CSO roles as development actors in their own right? How can all stakeholders similarly enrich the principles of coordination and harmonization by recognizing distinct CSO roles?
3. What proposals might the Advisory Group make for all stakeholders (together and separately) to the High Level Forum to build on CSO roles and voice to enrich the implementation of the PD?

**Roundtable 4: Democratic Ownership:  
Managing for Development Results and Mutual Accountability**

1. How can all stakeholders enrich the implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) commitment to “country ownership” by promoting CSO roles that strengthen “democratic ownership”?
2. How can all stakeholders enrich the PD principles of managing for development results and mutual accountability in ways that recognize distinct CSOs’ roles and contributions as development actors in their own right?
3. What proposals might the Advisory Group make for all stakeholders (together and separately) to the High Level Forum to build on CSO roles and voice to enrich the implementation of the PD?

**THEME THREE: CSO AID EFFECTIVENESS AS DONORS, RECIPIENTS AND PARTNERS**

**Roundtable 5: Donor and Government Enabling Environments**

1. How do CSOs, donors and Southern governments distinguish the various principles, including CSO-determined principles, which might guide improvements in CSO aid effectiveness?
2. How might donor practices (e.g. modalities of donor support to CSOs) and Southern government policies (e.g. regulations and taxation) affect CSO development roles and their aid effectiveness?
3. What proposals might the Advisory Group make to all stakeholders (together and separately) to the Accra High Level Forum to promote an enabling environment for CSOs as development actors in their own right?

**Roundtable 6: Equitable North / South CSO Relations**

1. How do CSOs, donors and Southern governments distinguish the various principles, including CSO-determined principles, which might guide improvements in CSO aid effectiveness?
2. How might donors, Southern governments and CSOs create enabling conditions for more equitable North / South CSO relationships that strengthen CSOs as development actors?
3. What proposals might the Advisory Group make to all stakeholders (together and separately) for the Accra High Level Forum to foster more equitable North / South relationships?

## **ANNEX IV**

### **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE ON AG AND CCIC WEBSITES**

The following documents are relevant to the origins of the AG International Forum, its planning and its process from February 3 to 6, 2008. They are or will be available on the AG website hosted by CIDA (<http://web.acdi-cida.gc.ca>) and on the CCIC website (<http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>)

Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, “Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness,” Concept Paper, May 2007.

Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, “Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness,” Issues Paper, October 2007.

Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, “Consultations on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: A Synthesis of Issues, Analysis and Proposals,” January 20, 2008.

AG International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, Gatineau, Quebec (Canada), February 3 – 6, 2008:

- ❑ Plenary presentations on regional consultations
- ❑ Case studies presented to workshops
- ❑ Roundtable reports to plenary
- ❑ Speeches by
  - Ambassador Jan Cedergren, Chair of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
  - Keynote Speaker, l’Abbé Malumalu
  - Mr Wamupu Akapelwa, Government of Zambia

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