

Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism
Small and Medium Enterprises Constituency

SMEs account for 97 per cent of all businesses, employ over half of the workforce and contributes up to 60% per cent of the gross domestic product of Asia-Pacific economies. So that in the conversations on the private sector as partners for development, there is a need to ask which private sector is being supported. As it stands, private sector remains broadly defined and not sufficient effort has been given to distinguish the wide variety of actors that comprise this sector and the very nature of their activities. The needs and interests of for-profit enterprises would certainly differ from that of not-for-profit organizations; as would big conglomerates for SMEs; transnational corporations from local enterprises, formal from informal, etc. And in the current partnership models, the potential contribution to economic activity by smallholder producers, farmers and workers in the agriculture sector remains largely ignored while big business is being favored as the voice of the private sector.

We push for the recognition of the contributions by social enterprises, fair trade organizations, cooperatives and other economic actors who employ the triple bottom lines of economic, social and environmental not just as a way to do business but also to help people come out of poverty. Emphasis on the redistribution of wealth and profits to our stakeholders is imperative.

The following are our recommendations:

- Structure the High Level Political Forum as a meaningful venue for accountability of both Member-States and corporate partners. House a monitoring and oversight hub for partnerships within a strong and effective HLPF.
- Build an intergovernmental accountability framework housed in the HLPF, with government-adopted guidelines and government monitoring. It is essential to create a robust and truly universal accountability mechanism that upholds the values of the UN system in accordance with the international human rights framework and existing obligations related all three dimensions – social, economic, and environmental – of sustainable development.
- Challenge the post-2015 partnership euphoria, by problematizing the growing business influence in political discourse and agenda-setting.
- Highlight and publicize problems with the partnerships approach: the increasing fragmentation of global governance; the weakening of representative democracy and institutions; the unpredictable, insufficient financing of public goods; and the lack of an effective monitoring and accountability mechanism.
- Call for more transparency on funding and contributions from the corporate sector.
- Evidence-based research on the outcomes of Public-Private Partnerships.

Finally, participation is critical. The ambition of the Post-2015 development agenda and processes will only be achieved if all peoples and sectors have spaces and means to engage as partners in the decision-making, planning, implementation and monitoring from local, national, regional and global arenas of the future we all want. ###