



**Cameroon Civil Society**  
**Engagement Charter for the Sustainable Development Goals**  
**(SDGs)**

July 2016

## I- PREAMBLE:

In September 2015, UN Member States adopted a landmark agreement on a universal transformative agenda - The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). The SDG is an agenda for people, planet and prosperity, which also 'seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom.' The new agenda is universal; it will be implemented by "all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership". The vision articulated in the 2030 agenda for a better world, free of poverty and want, will be achieved through the attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, forming an integral part of the agenda. The adoption of Agenda 2030 presents significant opportunities and challenges to Africa, particularly in ensuring that "no one is left behind" in the development process.

The mobilization of the Cameroonian civil society to actively participate in the development of Cameroon is based on the relevant provisions enacted at the national, continental and global levels.

### ***At the global level:***

For the defining of the "Future We Want" after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and in order to avoid past mistakes, the United Nations recommended that all components of Member States' population should agree on the post 2015 development perspectives.

### ***At the Regional level:***

The African Union agenda 2063 dubbed the "Africa We Want" is a continental development agenda that incorporates the full participation of citizens for its implementation, particularly with regard to its "aspiration 3" that underscores "a united Africa with prevailing good governance, democracy, respect human rights, justice and the rule of law". It "stresses that" Africa should be a continent where institutions are at the service of his people, and citizens provide and actively participate in social, economic and policy development as well as to management".

The essential factors for the transformation of Africa focus on "the determination, participation, autonomy and solidarity of the people and African leaders, as prerequisites for success, in recognition of a number of key tenants such as ownership and continuous mobilization of the people of Africa and the Diaspora in various circles, effective communication, outreach, and social dialogue as inclusively and sustainably addressed on Agenda 2063.

### ***At the national level:***

Relevant provisions for the involvement of civil society are included in the Cameroon national strategic documents. In fact, the "Vision 2035" and the Growth and Employment Strategy paper (GESP) include numerous lines on involvement of the civil society, such as:

**National integration<sup>1</sup>:** Participation of all people is indispensable to the success of any social project. The strategies considered in this context include the promotion of partnerships between the State, private sector and civil society and the integration of marginalized groups (marginal populations) or usually marginalized (women, children, disabled, elderly, etc.).

**The economic role of the State and the partnership strategy:** As a strategic partner of the State, civil society will be mobilized at four levels: (i) provision of social services for the fight against poverty and social advancement, including for marginalized groups; (ii) moral authority to

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<sup>1</sup> Vision-2035, page 35, paragraphe 3

safeguard and promote the national cultural heritage, the promotion of common values, fight against the centrifugal forces; (lii) participation and social mobilization crucible for the integration of the productive forces and democratization in the context of decentralization; (Iv) monitoring activity in defence of human rights in general, including those of workers, women, children and minorities.

The promotional mechanisms of the GESP will focus on strengthening the participatory approach, consultation, promoting a framework for expression of freedom of association, social dialogue, participation of citizens in policy and plans development, participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, monitoring by citizens of the delivery of public services, etc. The partnership with civil society is part of a proactive approach that takes the form of creative spaces through which social actors form their educational development perspective to drive inclusive citizenship development models in Cameroon. By also being involved in the function of social and political mediation, civil society contributes to risk management and to lifting other constraints.

The GESP promotes involvement of the civil society through:

- A strategic governance and management approach of the State that promotes the participation of citizens and civil society in public affairs running;
- An improvement of citizen's access to information for the monitoring and evaluation of public affairs' management by (i) strengthening the participatory monitoring of public governance and (ii) the systematic dissemination of information on public acts including development projects monitoring & evaluation and audit reports.

The monitoring & evaluation system of the Public Investment Budget went through a third generation reform in January 2009 in a view to strengthening both the parliamentary scrutiny and citizen's auditing in the implementation of programs and public investment projects. Additionally, an option was taken in the GESP for the civil society to be widely associated, through various appropriate mechanisms, to the implementation and monitoring of programmes aiming at fighting poverty.

With regard to the institutional implementation framework, the private sector and the civil society, as partners to the Government are required by the GESP to provide inputs in the definition and implementation in a number of specific aspects. It is in fact prescribed that resources for building their response capacity or enhancing their representativeness and governance be explicitly budgeted in each program in which they are called to intervene and integrated into their task specifications. Development partners are equally called to contribution, through provision to of adequate technical and financial assistance to the Government and to other national development actors, based on expressed needs.

Based on the above foundations the civil society was involved, in the SDGs consultation phase in Cameroon, through the organization of participatory consultations in 2013 to define national post 2015 priorities and in 2014 to discuss the localization of the related agenda. These participatory consultations were fruitful opportunities for exchanges between representatives of all development actors in the country (the civil society, local elected officials, the private sector, the youth the government and development partners, including United Nations agencies).

In 2015, the civil society also organized a national workshop to strengthen their capacity regarding their full participation in the implementation of the post 2015 Agenda in Cameroon. This civil society capacity strengthening and engagement workshop issued 11 recommendations and resulted in the establishment of a Common Working and Collaboration Platform for Collaboration (CWCP) for the implementation of the post 2015 Agenda.

Collaborative working relations are in the process of consolidation through formalization with key governmental institutions within CWCP. The desire for greater involvement of all segments of the population in discussions and development activities, encouraged by the development partners, is thus clearly expressed by the civil society and the government.

However, in practice, it frequently happens that contributions from the civil society are not addressed in the way or at the level expected, due to issues with CSOs identification in accordance with relevant topics, the short time allocated to prepare contributions, or to insufficient prior information.

## **II- THE ROLES, DUTIES AND COMMITMENTS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY**

In consideration of the foregoing fundamentals, taking a more active part in development discussions and activities requires that the Cameroonian civil society works to do better than in the past, to increase and improve its contribution to national development. Therefore Cameroonian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) hereby commit to:

### **1) In general**

- Strengthen their technical, organizational and operational capacity, in light of the “Istanbul Principle”, to improve their performance;
- Respond positively to all invitations and requests from other development actors in Cameroon, so far as they are in the interests of the country and consistent with its areas of intervention, and to the extent of available resources;
- Apply the principles of good governance in their approach and actions and contribute to the establishment and functioning of an SDGs accountability framework involving all development actors;
- Jealously ensure in all their undertaking that the national interest is preserved;

### **2) In particular**

- Working in partnership with other development actors in Cameroon within the framework of the Common Working and Collaboration Platform (CWCP);
- Contribute to the creation and maintenance of a database of civil society by fields of intervention and SDGs interest;

## **Justification and orientations of the Civil Society Charter**

The Civil Society commitments with regard to their engagement for the SDGs implementation are state in the present charter:

**Mindful of the fact that the Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter** will enable the civil society, citizens, the government and the private sector to make better informed decisions as means to fast track the achievement of the SDGs in Cameroon;

**Conversant of the fact that the Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter** can help highlight trends, identify social and economic challenges and inequities, and benchmark progress in public programs and services regarding the SDGs in Cameroon;

**Knowing that the Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter** can empower governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations to work toward better outcomes for public services in areas such as health, education, public safety, environmental protection, human rights, and natural disasters management;

**Noting that, the Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter** can contribute to the generation of inclusive economic growth by supporting the creation and strengthening of new markets, enterprises, and jobs. These benefits can multiply as more civil society and private sector organizations adopt good open data practices and share their own data with the public.

**Mindful moreover that a Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter** can help improve the flow of information within and among governments, and make government decisions and processes more transparent, as increased transparency promotes accountability and good governance, enhances public debate, and helps combat corruption.

**Convinced that the Civil Society SDG Engagement Charter** presents opportunities to provide innovative, evidence-based policy solutions and support, economic benefits and social development for all members of society, and **thus it** shall foster the following

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- **Supporting evidence-based policy making:** Encouraging consideration of the SDGs by the government in policy development and evidence-based decision-making, which enables improved public policy outcomes and underpins sustainable economic and social development;
- **Enabling cross-sector collaboration:** Supporting collaboration among governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations on the design of policies and the delivery of better public services;
- **Monitoring Public Investment Budget (PIB) performance:** Showing how and where public money is spent in order to incentivize governments to demonstrate that they are using public money effectively;
- **Improving governance of natural resources:** Increasing awareness about how countries' natural resources are used, how extractives activities' revenues are spent, and how land is transacted and managed;
- **Monitoring impact:** Supporting assessments of the impact of public programs, which in turn allows governments and civil society and private sector organizations to respond more effectively to the particular needs of local communities.
- **Promoting equitable growth:** Supporting sustainable and inclusive growth through the creation and strengthening of markets, enterprises, and jobs;
- **Improved decision-making:** Enabling citizens to make better informed choices about the services they receive and the service standards they should expect;

Acknowledging the importance for CSOs to develop action plans or identify existing mechanisms and policies in support of the implementation of **the Civil Society SDGs Engagement Charter's** principles, as well as the importance of agreeing to commit the necessary resources for work within existing legal frameworks, in accordance with technical best practices and fixed time frames;

Mindful that "no one should be left behind" in the 2030 agenda and therefore it is absolutely necessary for the Cameroonian civil society to organize itself around thematic clusters as a citizen's mandate to engage in the entire process of mobilizing resources for the implementation of the SDGs, as well as aligning their respective missions towards the monitoring and evaluation of the 169 SDGs global targets.

It is against this backdrop that the organizations endorsing the present Cameroonian SDGs engagement charter agree to work according to the engagement principles and orientations developed herein. The Cameroonian Civil Society Organizations hereby agree to comply with these Engagement Principles in a view to contributing (where possible) in fast tracking, monitoring and evaluating the SDGs in Cameroon.

## The Cameroonian Civil Society Engagement Principles:

The Cameroonian Civil Society engagement on the SDGs shall be based on the following principles:

**Engagement Principle 1:** The Civil society has a responsibility in fast tracking the implementation and achievement of the SDGs in Cameroon:

The Cameroonian civil society has made a commitment to get involved in and help fast track the implementation and achievement of the SDGs in terms of mobilizing stakeholders towards domestic and international resource mobilization as well as the developing a monitoring and accountability framework for the tracking of the SDGs.

**Engagement Principle 2:** The desired “theory of change” for engaging with public and private sector stakeholders **is geared toward** achieving positive behavioral change by engaging in cross-sector dialogue:

The CSOs desired theory of change is that of “seeking to achieve meaningful and critical engagement of the Cameroonian civil society to lobby and advocate for institutionalized cross-sector dialogue with all stakeholders in order to monitor and evaluate the overall implementation performance (outcome indicators and impact) of the SDGs in Cameroon.

**Engagement Principle 3: Categorize CSOs into thematic clusters in relation to the SDGs, in order to ease collaboration with likeminded CSOs, the Government and other stakeholders with the purpose of drafting periodic thematic reports:**

The Cameroonian CSOs shall be categorized into thematic clusters in order to align them with the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets with the intent of easing collaboration with corresponding key public institutions and other stakeholders as well as the drafting of thematic reports regarding their respective sectors of intervention in the implementation of the SDGs.

**Engagement Principle 4:** Engage in fostering institutionalized dialogue with key government institutions and the private sector in Cameroon to encourage broader cross-sector dialogue in Cameroon:

The Cameroonian civil society shall be committed in engaging with sectoral government ministries and departments to foster institutionalized dialogue, and will equally engage in cross-sector dialogue with the private sector to foster Inclusive Partnerships for Effective Tripartite Development Cooperation as recommended by the Busan partnership for Development Effectiveness.

**Engagement Principle 5:** Develop an accountability framework that holds all stakeholders and the civil society first, **accountable towards** their responsibilities, through the preparation and publication of periodic thematic reports (evidence based advocacy documents):

In a drive to hold all stakeholders accountable towards their responsibilities in the implementation of the SDGs, it is absolutely necessary to develop a comprehensive people-driven social accountability model geared towards the publication of thematic reports (evidence-based advocacy documents) that shall drive the entire implementation cycle of the “2030 agenda” on sustainable development.

**Engagement Principle 6:** Validate the People's perspective in the entire cycle of the SDG implementation:

Regular thematic review and validation meetings will serve as conveyers of the people's perspectives in the implementation of the SDGs in Cameroon.

**Engagement Principle 7:** Advocate for the leveraging of public policies regarding the SDGs by providing inputs to all policy making frameworks regarding the SDGs in Cameroon.

This is likely to result in the development of a blueprint for decent jobs including a legal framework to encourage decent work in Cameroon.

**Engagement Principle 8:** Fight against the misuse and embezzlement of public funds in Cameroon;

A data base established in collaboration with relevant existing institutions such as the CONSUPE will help effectively monitor the use of public resources allocated to the SDGs in Cameroon.

**Engagement Principle 9:** Engage with Local Councils parliamentarians and Traditional Authorities collaborate in building their capacities in popularizing the SDGs at the local level by sensitizing grassroots population.

This will enable "Elected Local Authorities" better defend the interest of grassroots populations in the SDGs implementation process in Cameroon. It will also strengthen the capacity of Traditional Authorities regarding the implementation of the SDGs at the grassroots level.

**Engagement Principle 10:** Provide greater visibility to SDG activities;

By developing a comprehensive communication and knowledge sharing blueprint geared toward publishing all SDGs related projects in Cameroon to keep the wider public informed on the progress; also by setting up and operationalizing a national civil society SDGs information center.

**Engagement Principle 11:** Engage CSOs in the monitoring of Public Investment Projects and procurement process in Cameroon.

This is part of the necessary commitment by CSOs in developing the culture of data tracking regarding the SDGs in Cameroon.

**Engagement Principle 12:** Engage in inter-cultural dialogue to trigger cultural and customary transformations in order to achieve certain SDGs.

This is in relation to boosting creative expression for the SDGs in Cameroon in light of the rich national art and culture potential.

**Engagement Principle 13:** Always refer to the national official roadmap on the SDGs localization in alignment with the national development strategy, to propose solutions and get the implementation process move forward.

The Civil Society component of the SDGs national official roadmap attached as annex to the present charter plus the actions defined herein constitute the minimum extent of the responsibility of Cameroonian CSOs and shall always be fully taken for the SDGs implementation.

### III- EXPECTATION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

By making first efforts towards finding overall performance on the SDGs, the Cameroonian Civil Society from the other development partners expects more consideration, more attention in the selection of Civil Society Organizations to be involved in various processes, and adequate resource allocations for related activities on which CSOs are assigned.

## **ANNEX**



## A1- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

### A2- CSO Key actions for the SDGs implementation in Cameroon

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1	Baseline SDGs Progress Assessment Report	September 2016	Collaboration with the National Statistics Institute
2	Database to effectively monitor the use of public resources allocated to the SDGs in Cameroon	December 2016	In collaboration with the CONSUPE (State Auditing Institution)
3	Regular thematic review and validation meetings to convey people's perspectives in the implementation of the SDGs in Cameroon	Annual	In collaboration with Local Government, Parliamentarians and Traditional Authorities

### A-3 National Roadmap for the SDGs Localization<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Page 23-33 of the Synthesis report of the Cameroon National Report on the Localization of the Post 2015 Agenda (MINEPAT/UNDP, 2014)

## **A4- Participants in National Workshop to adopt the Engagement Charter**

## A5- Signing Organizations of the Engagement Charter

	<b>Organization Acromym</b>	<b>Organisation full name</b>	<b>Signing Official</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
1					
3					
4					