

The 7th Session of the Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development's (AFRSRD-7) Side Event on Multi-Stakeholder Platform Processes and Regional Cooperation for National SDG Delivery in Africa

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Via Zoom

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Host - Global Forum Working Group on a Regional MSP Network in Africa

Background and context

Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) have a high potential to be catalysts for delivery on the 2030 Agenda by promoting a whole-of-society approach for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and could therefore act as national champions to accelerate action. MSPs advise their respective national governments, provide knowledge quickly and straightforwardly, can generate learning from their international partnerships, provide impulses for local initiatives and generally support their governments as strong knowledge partners. And also, it can provide platforms for discussing controversial topics and can thereby generate consensus across stakeholder groups (academia, civil society, business, and trade unions).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to multi-stakeholder partnerships, this is particularly reflected in Goal 17, 'Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development, which the United Nations sees as crucial for the delivery of all the SDGs (UN DESA 2015: 10)'. Specifically, Targets 17.16 and 17.17 are aimed at improving and promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Against this background, the Global Forum Working Group on a Regional MSP Network in Africa hosted a side event at the 7th AFRSD. The purpose of this side event is to provide a platform for regional peer learning and exchange on Multi-Stakeholder-Platform (MSPs) and to enhance political buy-in at a regional level.

The side event was aimed at sharing experience MSPs as SDG advisory bodies in Africa and kick-start the process of peer learning and exchange on the institutionalisation of MSP and build a business case at a regional level. It focused on demonstrating the rational and functions for Multi-Stakeholder-Platform as SDG advisory bodies in catalyzing for SDG-delivery in four African countries by having the panelist answer the following questions:

1. What has been the experience of SDGs Advisory bodies in Africa?
2. What has been the guiding principles and modalities of these MSPs?
3. What is the level of political buy-in by the state to the idea SDGs Advisory bodies in Africa
4. What are the required political, legislative and administrative environment for MSPs to be effective and successful to achieve their objectives?

The Panelists included:

- Mr Felix Meyerhoff - German Council for Sustainable Development
- Dr Dineo Seabe – University of Stellenbosch
- Dr Bala Yusuf Yunusa – Senior Technical Advisor at the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs) Nigeria
- Mr Michael Mwangi, Kenya SDG Unit (Republic of Kenya)
- Mr Francis Shirima – Ministry of Finance and Planning in Tanzania
- Ms Florence Syevuo – Kenya SDGs Forum

- Mr Yared Tsegay – African Monitor
- Mr Stephen Chacha – African Philanthropy Foundation

Multistakeholder Platforms and their role in sustainable development

Mr Meyerhoff, from German Council for Sustainable Development, explained that MSPs are bodies that provide for platform for consensus building on controversial issues, and thereby aim for practical, inclusive, and socially acceptable solutions to set the course for greater sustainable development.

The unique value added for government is to have a body that anticipates the vested interest for civil society, academia and private sector and thereby aims to negotiate transfers for solutions that are consensual.

Institutional integration of multi-stakeholder advisory councils or similar bodies hold the potential to advance national roadmaps. Incorporating MSPs as strong knowledge partners into national institutional architectures to implement the SDGs has proven to provide national governments with a valuable short-cut in accelerating action to implement the SDGs, however, these do not represent a silver bullet, and do have limitations, it is therefore important to not overload them.

Beyond the core mandate of advising the government, some advisory bodies play an active role in specific policy processes, the German Council for example is tasked with generating contributions to the German Sustainable Development Strategy and thereby aims to present recommendations that have the potential to provide important impulses for greater sustainability. They also evaluate measures and try to propose the integration of innovation and inclusive indicators.

It is therefore important to connect the advisory bodies' official mandates to the official policy sustainable development processes, now during the pandemic, it is especially important to connect them to national recovery plans to build back better and build forward. Their success is context dependent and should be based on a thorough assessment of the political and institutional landscape of a country they will be set up.

MSPs in the national SDGs coordination mechanism in Africa

Dr Seabe, – University of Stellenbosch,, stated that the South African government considers MSPs as important in furthering the country's development agenda, this is expressed in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Action Plan (NSSD 1), National Development Plan (NDP) as well as the Medium Term Strategi Framework (MTSF). The SA VNR Report 2019 affirms the government's commitment to a multistakeholder approach. The MSP in SA is still in the ideation stage and SA government envisions the MSP it to fall within the South African Coordination Mechanisms for SDGs and its role being to bring in sectors that are not part of government to form part of the solutions. SDG implementation in South Africa has been slow and the MSP will be to accelerate progress towards achieving SDGs. Stakeholders stated that it should be citizen centred and inclusive, allow for active participation and engagement, pragmatic, innovative and flexible, and allow for issues of accountability and transparency to be addressed.

Mr Yared , **African Monitor**, added that in in South Africa, there is a level of commitment from government in establishing the MSP and are grateful that civil society could produce the proposal for the MSP and have submitted a copy and received feedback from government. we are now in the process of submitting the final draft, then we will be working with inter- departmental committee on producing a roadmap for South Africa. He also stated that as part of the recovery plan, South Africa has committed to social compacting.

Dr Yunusa, Government of Nigeria, pointed out that Nigeria acted quickly following the adoption of the SDGs and established the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGS at the Presidency with a four-fold mandate of (1) strategic planning, coordination and guidance for the SDGs (2) representation, advocacy and partnership building (3) resource mobilisation and management (4) monitoring and evaluation, and reporting. On top of this office is the Presidential Council on SDG led by the President, it is made up of governors, federal Ministers and representatives of the private sectors, it is supposed to meet quarterly to review the progress on the SDGS. OSSAP serves as the Secretariat to the Presidential Council. MSPs have been established, the country has a bicameral legislature and have standing committees on SDGS. There is also a private sector advisory group on SDGs and the civil society strategy group on SDGS, and donors and development partners group. All of these are MSPs established to mobilise expertise and incremental resources in support of Agenda 2030. The country's strategic approach can be seen at a national level and sub-national level. At national level the SDGs are integrated into the medium and long term plans and policies, at subnational level, OSSAP supports states to strengthen their capacity to do SDG based plans. The country's MSP approach is that it uses the private sector advisory group to expand the fiscal space for SDG implementation in Nigeria. They work closely work with civil society umbrella group. Nigeria went for its second VNR in 2020 and used these platforms to reach the majority of Nigerians.

Mr Mwangi, Government of Kenya, stated that Kenya has in place an Inter-Agency Committee (IATC) made up of government departments and Ministries and business. This committee coordinates SDG activities in the country. Other actors include the SDG Kenya Forum which coordinates non-state actors, academia, the Council of Governors, the Parliament Caucus on SDGs and Business and the National Youth Council. The country has a whole society approach and has institutionalised stakeholder's engagement in the implementation, monitoring and awareness through umbrella bodies. Civil society and business' submissions were included in the official government VNR report for 2018 and 2020. The country's, Multistakeholder Engagement Framework was finalized in March 2020, civil society and the private sector are Co-Chairs of the Interagency Technical Working Committee chaired by State Department of Planning. They have held the annual Multistakeholder Forum SDGs Awards to reward stakeholders that are excelling in the implementation of the SDGs and produced the Status Report in 2019. The Kenya Government has agreed to track SDGs bi-annually. They are currently compiling and submitting the accelerated actions for the Decade of Action.

Mr Shirima , government of Tanzania, stated that from the time Tanzania adopted the 2030 Agenda in 2015, they faced challenges in implementing the agenda and in order to tackle those challenges, the established a coordinating group called the National Relations Framework which brings stakeholders together to participate in the implementation and reporting of the SDGs. They started the development of the framework in 2019 and the development involved all stakeholders which included civil society, business and development partners. The framework has now been initiated and launched by the government and is ready to share with stakeholders. As the first step to implement the framework, they had a multistakeholder workshop that took place in December 2020 and were able to share the progress the country has made and some of the challenges it has faced. .

Mr Chacha, Philanthropy foundation -Tanzania, shared their experience as the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform in their engagement with government in setting up their MSP, highlighting the importance of preparing the ground, this has to do with the engagement that you have with other stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs. Civil society started in April 2015 when they organised the first engagement that brought together civil society in Tanzania to review their engagement in the MDGS implementation and what can be done better to improve civil society engagement in the follow up and review. The also attended by the private sector, government and development partners so that they can understand how they can work together. This led to the establishment of the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform.

- The 2019 VNR process was a key milestone in building trust and patriotism needed to establish an MSP in Tanzania. Government realised that the SDG agenda was too big to implement alone, and civil society used the VNR process to make a case for why there is a need for a coordination mechanism.
- The establishment of the MSP in Tanzania brought up the importance of institutionalisation clearly, not only to the government but also need to have other groups such as the Parliamentary group on SDGS which was initiated 2018 and need to also have a clear mechanism on involving the local governmental committees in the implementation and follow-up and review of the SDGS in order for SDG implementation to benefit people on the ground.
- Maintaining the independence civil society, the right to write the civil society VNR report was and having direct input into the official VNR report were important for the implementation and follow-up of the SDGS in Tanzania.
- Civil society in Tanzania worked on a mechanism to leverage the resources that they had as member organisation of the platform, this funded the consultation for the civil society 2019 VNR report. Going forward, they had agreed to include by-deadlines for specific SDG activities so that they can be able to leverage the budgets available in the organisations.

Ms Seyvuo, Kenya SDGs forum, stated that it was key for civil society in Kenya to be at the table in terms of critical decision-making on SDGs are being made in the country and the establishment of platforms has enabled this. This has been effective because civil society has gone a step further and pushed for independent annex reports, this means that their reports are not censored. This is critical as there are many controversial subjects and human rights issues across the continent that they are fighting for and these are not reflected in the country reports.

- With regards to resources, they use the Kenyan model, they come together as different stakeholders and all draw budget (basket fund) so that they can meet their joint activities therefore leveraging the little resources they have. This has been important for breaking the silos and ensuring that there is no duplication.
- She stated that going forward, they needed to strengthen the participation of other critical stakeholders like media, marginalised groups, academia in the processes. They have also been involved in peer-to-peer learning across the continent and hope as they move forward with the MSP in Kenya hope to have peer to peer learning at national level.
- Kenya adopted a two-tier government structure in 2010, they have a national government and county government with 47 counties. It would like to see a more robust stakeholder engagement at a subnational level so that they can have the 47 have formal engagements with stakeholders.
- What not to do when establishing MSPs / What is not working well, have distrustful relationship with all stakeholders including existing relationships. The process needs to be inclusive. And Negotiating minimum consensus.

Lessons learned:

- multistakeholder advisory bodies are successful when they can establish a constructive, formal and trustful relationship with their government.
- It is also crucial to enhance social acceptance of transformation and social change by promoting inclusivity, diversity, and participation in multistakeholder bodies.
- Sub-national engagement to foster society dialogue and advocacy at a local level for sustainable development is another key element to their success, example initiate regional/ local hubs.
- Build on already institutionalised or organised stakeholder groups or umbrella bodies/ corporate with similar actors. Active corporation benefits all actors, and the key lesson is that it is important

to bring actors together operating in a comparable context and common vision supported by contextual factors.

- Nigeria would like to see civil society working closely with government to expand not only the fiscal space but also the territorial reach of the state so that no one is left behind, this can be reached through a coordinated MSP.

Closing remarks

In closing Ms Mniki and Mr Tsegay thanked the panellists and participants and stated that the regional network that hosted this meeting is to enhance political buy in at a regional level and undertake peer-learning of MSP between different countries and will generate knowledge to establish those MSPs, this is a process and hopes they will also be useful for countries that have already established MSPs.