

POLICY ROUNDTABLE
**“Regional Outlook on the Implementation of 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development”**

World Forum for Democracy
Strasbourg, France
9 November 2016

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

The world faces multiple and complex challenges in the 21st century. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits the international community to act together to tackle those challenges. However, sustainable development is achieved at different paces around the world, and it is intertwined with multiple elements that either allow or prevent the effective achievement of the goals set at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

As stated in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda, *“this is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity (...) that seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom (...) All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan (...) to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and to heal and secure our planet.”* In other words, there is a global expectation on the contribution that each political, economic and social actor play in the implementation of the Agenda, and there is a need to learn about the plans that the regions have to develop in order to advance on the 17 goals and 169 targets proposed by the Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda builds on the achievements of the Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs,) and looks at going further to eradicate all forms of poverty. The new Goals are unique in that they are universal and call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. There is a recognition of the fact that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Throughout the negotiation process that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, member states, non-state actors and international organizations, including regional organizations, underscored the importance of democratic governance as the only enabling environment for delivering on the SDGs framework and the Agenda as a whole.

Governments, in close partnership with multilateral organizations, civil society organizations and citizens in general and a wide range of different actors, are expected to take ownership and establish frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals within the next 15 years. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the Goals. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and will contribute to monitor implementation at the global level.

The 2030 Agenda renewed and confirmed the role that Regional Organizations have in this process. It provides a unique opportunity for regional organizations to follow up and review the progress towards the achievement of the development commitments, but also to support their member states in their effective implementation.

Regional organizations have the opportunity to get closer to their citizens by holding governments accountable when it comes to the effective implementation of the commitments. This adds to the national checks and balances mechanisms, providing citizens with an additional layer of accountability.

Regional organizations are also called upon to facilitate the effective domestication and translation of sustainable development policies, including by supporting their member states in the development of concrete action plans at the national level.

If national governments are to effectively implement the sustainable development agenda, they need to work closely with other institutions, including regional organizations. Sound policies to eradicate poverty that are truly gender sensitive and inclusive need to be created at local, national and regional levels, and regional organizations can be a positive driving force of these processes.

Regional organizations will play a key role on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Contributing to peace, prosperity and inclusive democratic processes in their respective regions is a priority and a shared challenge for all regional organizations, as they have developed strong legal frameworks and institutions for this purpose.

2. *What is the purpose of the Policy Roundtable?*

There are very few opportunities where the Heads of the Regional Organizations gather with the sole purpose of having an open and frank conversation on the main challenges that are affecting their particular regions and identify synergies and channels of cooperation.

The Inter-Regional Dialogue for Democracy (IRDD) is a unique platform designed for this purpose, and is enabling on the occasion of the World Forum for Democracy the possibility of this exchange, to allow for the definition of future cooperation among peer organizations, to strengthen their capacities and support each other's effort based on experienced good practices and lived reform processes and developments.

This Policy Roundtable has the purpose of allowing an open discussion with leaders from the regions, on the main challenges and opportunities that serve as enabling (or disabling) agents to move forward in the race to achieve sustainable development at the regional level. They will also analyze what is expected from the regions to contribute for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This discussion is also designed to allow an exchange of good practices and experiences in the field of sustainable development, based on regional perspectives. It will result in the development of policy recommendations that can provide guidelines to policymakers, civil society organizations, practitioners and experts on the next steps forward to develop common agendas and jointly tackle the main global challenges related to poverty, inequality, democracy, governance, gender equality, educations, peace and security.

Hosting an event in the framework of a successful platform such as the World Forum for Democracy also contributes to the ultimate goal of involving all stakeholders in the discussion and bringing the work of the regional organizations closer to civil society and to citizens in general.

3. Why is this theme relevant?

The 2016 World Forum for Democracy will focus on the relationship between education and democracy, and will examine whether these two concepts can reinforce each other and together address the risks of new social divides. This fits into the broader topic of equality and development, which are key components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The global education agenda is part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The Global Goals and targets aim to stimulate action over the next fifteen years to lift and boost the people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The SDGs reflect the important role of education by encapsulating targets in a stand-alone goal. Education is also included in goals on health, growth and employment, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change.

Having a discussion on the Regional Outlook on the Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the general guideline for the work of all key stakeholders is key to explore the different realities of each region, while bringing to the table the complexities of the context in which the implementation of these 17 goals will take place.

Governments, policy-makers, practitioners, academics and civil society organizations have to align their agendas to boost their capacities, and this can only be done based on a real understanding of the context they are working in. Also, it is relevant that regions, based on their differences, complement their knowledge and fill their operational and conceptual gaps, adapting successful development models applied in other parts of the world, if applicable. The success of this agenda at any level will be driven by the capacity and openness of actors to collaborate and learn from each other.

4. How will the Policy Roundtable work?

This event will have a roundtable format to allow an open discussion among the Heads of the Regional Organizations, practitioners, civil society organizations and other participants to the World Forum for Democracy. The Policy Roundtable will be structured on the basis of relevant guiding questions to be provided by the organizers (See next section). These questions are not exhaustive, but will constitute the core of the exchange.

The Policy Roundtable will:

- (1) Look into the normative frameworks, legal instruments and accountability mechanisms each Regional Organization is considering to move forward in support to the global strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda, considering challenges, opportunities and expectations;
- (2) Explore how the Regional Organizations perceive the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and present alternatives of partnerships with CSOs and other key actors to advance the Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- (3) Lead to the formulation of policy recommendations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on the exchange among key stakeholders.

The Policy Roundtable will be moderated by the Secretary-General of International IDEA, who will provide a brief introduction to the topic to be discussed and a general explanation on the scope of the questions, and will open the floor for discussion. The panel will include three (3) or four (4) Heads of Regional Organizations (depending on the availability of the participants.)

5. *What are the guiding questions for the Regional Consultations?*

The following questions were designed as a guide for the participants and the moderator, but are in no way intended to limit the discussion:

1. What would you highlight as the main challenges, opportunities and expectations from the Regional Organizations in the task of advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? What lessons learned by Regional Organizations through the MDGs process are relevant to the 2030 Agenda?
2. What activities have regional organizations engaged in to promote the Agenda and kick-start implementation within Member States?
3. How can we connect the diverse mechanisms that monitor global and regional commitments to ensure that states strive towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? What is the experience of Regional Organizations in facilitating peer review mechanisms in various policy areas, and in particular in the field of democratic governance, that could be relevant to the 2030 Agenda?
4. At the global and regional levels, what mechanisms can efficiently monitor and effectively evaluate the impact of the actions taken toward the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals? How can regional organizations improve effectiveness?
5. What can be done to facilitate the coordination and partnership-building among the Regional Organizations, Member States, CSOs, the Private Sector and other relevant stakeholders?