A Communique on the Financing for Development (FfD) Forum and 4th Preparatory Committee Meeting of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)

28 April - 1 May 2025
New York

A delegation of select civil society organisations (CSOs) from around the world organised by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) recently gathered in New York, to engage at the FfD Forum and 4th PrepComm Meeting of the FfD4 under the International Development Cooperation (IDC) Workstream of the CSO FfD Mechanism.

The FfD presents an opportunity for CSOs to advocate for meaningful reforms in the IDC architecture and revitalisation of the Development Effectiveness agenda. CSOs, including CPDE, have engaged meaningfully with the FfD Forum and the 4th PrepComm where key issues relevant to the Seville Conference and the First Draft of its Outcome Document (OD) were deliberated.

At this stage of the process, there is a clearer recognition of the dire circumstances facing IDC and, in response, there are resounding calls for change among member states (MS) and other actors. There are, however, divergent views on what these changes need to be. Further, the emerging level of consensus in the negotiations still lacks the level of ambition in time-bound commitments, actionable priorities, and substantive reforms to address the current challenges.

Achievements
1. CPDE has engaged FfD4 preparatory processes through providing input and support to the IDC Workstream's contribution to the CSO FfD Mechanism and in-person engagement of the Preparatory Committee Meetings. At the FfD Forum and the 4th PrepComm, delegates made interventions in the plenary, presentations and comments in side events as well as bilateral talks with representatives of MS, other CSOs, and development actors. These efforts demonstrated a robust and united civil society constituency advancing effective development cooperation (EDC).
2. The political messages delivered by the delegation at this stage reiterated the need for reforming the IDC architecture to put countries of the Global South in the driver's seat, the importance of effectiveness especially democratic country ownership, and the critical role CSOs play in IDC architecture.
3. Some policy gains have been observed in the first draft of the Outcome Document and/or the discussions among member states, including:
   ● stating the urgent need to refocus international development cooperation on poverty eradication
   ● deciding to undertake all efforts to reverse cuts in aid volume and encouraging provider countries to set timeframe to meet their commitments
   ● elevating the effectiveness principles listed under the Busan Partnership Agreement as core tenets of EDC: country ownership and leadership by developing countries; policy and system coherence by development partners; a strong focus on results; transparency and mutual accountability; and strengthened partnerships
   ● committing to fully leverage the convening role of the UN to strengthen dialogue, coherence and norm-setting in IDC and strengthening the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)

Continuing challenges

4. The meaning of effectiveness of IDC remains an arena of contestation. To many developed countries, it is a call for developing countries to 'do more with less'; to many developing countries it's the key to claiming ownership over their own development path to which ODA should align. The dimensions of inclusive partnership and human rights-based approach crucial for CSOs' advancement of the effectiveness agenda are not being covered in the mainstream discussions.

5. There is a tendency to equate leveraging the convening role of the UN in IDC and strengthening DCF with undermining the roles of other platforms such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), instead of viewing such as an opportunity to coordinate and build on the comparative advantages of different actors.

6. With the current trend of significant ODA cuts among many important providers, there are clear efforts in the negotiations and discussions to dilute the language regarding meeting commitments on aid volume. Moreover, the CSO call to recognise the cumulative shortfall in the Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) commitment –estimated at USD 7.1 trillion – as unmet ODA debt that should be delivered to Global South countries is supported only by the G77.

7. While the discussions at this stage seem to give more recognition to the role of CSOs in IDC architecture, the supposed acknowledgment is not sufficiently reflected in the Outcome Document, which only mentions civil society once, in the IDC section, in relation to inclusion in national coordination platforms, "when appropriate." In addition, as the negotiations advance in the intercessionals with many intergovernmental sensitivities, there would be less space for CSO influence.

8. The CSO call for a convention on IDC or, at least, a multilateral process to define the mandate and objectives of IDC, while supported by G77, did not gain any traction in the discussions nor recognition in the draft. In the absence of any commitment along these lines, the prospect of a process to effect substantive reforms grows dim.

Next steps

9. In light of the above, the delegation recommends that CPDE continue to engage the FfD4 process, specifically to:

    ● Develop strategies that aim to continue influencing the process to Seville utilising all channels, including:
        o opportunities presented by the CSO-FfD Mechanism
        o position in GPEDC
        o contacts in the UN DESA and DCF
        o maximising relations of CPDE members with member states open to direct inputs of CSOs
        o outreach to developing countries and their groupings (e.g., G77, SIDS, LDC, etc.)

    ● Focus on key thematic areas where we want to influence the narrative and develop policy and communications materials that clearly articulate positions and recommendations. The primary thematic area where CPDE should be offering its interpretation and evidence is effectiveness. Other theme suggestions include the role of MDBs, reframing catalytic role of ODA, and accountability.

    ● Continue to engage in positive discourse to expound on EDC especially the whole-of-society approach. Unpack the place and potential as well as challenges of genuine multi-stakeholder development partnerships, including the legitimacy of

GPEDC as a multi-stakeholder platform for EDC, and even with sceptical elements of the broad CSO community.