

## **The Paris Accord on Volunteering for Sustainable Development**

**Representatives of volunteer groups and volunteer involving organisations from around the world were gathered in Paris 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> October 2013 for the annual meeting of The International Forum for Volunteering in Development. Acknowledging that our world demands innovative mechanisms and dynamic spaces for public-private-citizen connections, we want to see the importance of volunteering recognised as one of the key movements supporting the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as well as a single set of Sustainable Development Goals beyond 2015.**

### **We therefore:**

- Reconfirm the importance of volunteerism to engage people in shaping, implementing and monitoring a truly inclusive and sustainable development agenda for the future that is characterised by inclusive growth, human rights, good governance, gender equality, peace, well-being, environmental responsibility and the fight against all inequalities.
- Reaffirm the importance of the genuine involvement of all social groups for the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms on sustainable development and welcome the acknowledgment of the wider diversity of non-state actors that want to be engaged with Member States in the definition of the new agenda.
- Support three key United Nations (UN) resolutions, representing the different strands of discussion for a post-MDG/SDG<sup>1</sup> framework that have recently recognised the importance of “volunteer groups”: the Rio+20 Outcome Document, the resolution establishing the High Level Political Forum as well as the Secretary General Report prepared for the MDG Special Event in September 2013<sup>2</sup>.
- Welcome in particular, paragraph 98 of the SG Report "A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015" which recognises that the transformative actions of the post-2015 development agenda should be supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships, including volunteer groups (SG Report A/68/202) and paragraph 16 of UN GA Resolution A/RES/67/290 which recognises the role of “volunteer groups” and other stakeholders to ensure effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum to provide their expertise to Member States.
- Welcome that a number of official key documents framing the post-2015 discussions have also strongly referred to the relevance of volunteerism within the debate at a substantive level highlighting its relevance in the delivery of development outcomes and in strengthening accountability.

### **We affirm that:**

- Volunteering is about action and service; it is about active citizenship, social cohesion, partnership and relationships. As a result, the effect of volunteering across many critical areas of people's lives, and on local, national and global development can be transformational.

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<sup>1</sup> Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/66/288 PP 43, A/RES/67/290 PP 16 and A/68/202 PP 98.

- Volunteers from all walks of life choose to give their time and talents because they share a commitment to human well-being. Collectively they have contributed to the MDG's, building human and social capital and a strong foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- With its people-to-people approach, volunteering draws on the ethos of shared humanity and universal values. It is integral to participatory democracy, to social justice, to fair, inclusive growth, and to environmental protection. At its best, it is a cornerstone in the creation of strong, healthy, vibrant communities which in turn foster well-being and resilience.
- Volunteerism is universal in nature and applicable to all countries and should therefore be central for the conceptualisation and implementation of the emerging development framework, based on these same principles and focussing on the eradication of poverty and sustainable development.
- Volunteerism continues to play a key role in contributing to sustainable development beyond the MDG's and volunteers should continue to seek the space and opportunity to engage with governments, decision makers and other key stakeholders, to be involved in the decisions that shape their lives, just as millions have done by responding to the UN's unprecedented consultation on the post-2015 framework.

**In recognition of the importance to seize the spaces and opportunities that are now available, we will commit to the following key actions:**

- Continue to implement and scale up the recommendations outlined in the Forum Ottawa Declaration 2012, including accelerating our work to achieve the MDGs;
- Proactively contribute to strengthening and widening the network of organisations engaged in volunteering, involving both those that are IVCOs<sup>3</sup> as well as those that deliver their programs primarily through volunteers. This should build on the efforts of the multi-agency Volunteering Task Force, newly established at the time of the Special Event in September 2013;
- Engage in people-to-people reciprocal exchanges, encourage stakeholders at all levels, from the UN system to regional, national and community partnerships and across sectors, in order to achieve a holistic and systemic approach to comprehensive volunteerism policy development and demanding an enabling environment;
- Urge the UN system, Member States, international organisations, development banks and development agencies to integrate volunteerism as a cornerstone element in their policies, programmes and implementation mechanisms to ensure that the concrete contribution and value of volunteering is amply recognised in the global development framework to follow post-2015 and is reflected in the related narrative and indicator framework;
- Engage in national level multi-stakeholder partnerships to aggregate positions on volunteering for development in order to collectively engage with national governments as they develop their positioning within the inter-governmental negotiations. Support the efforts to engage all people in the discussion about and monitoring of the sustainable development framework (e.g. through the

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<sup>3</sup> IVCOs are international volunteer co-operation organisations.

My World initiative<sup>4</sup>). Focus efforts to facilitate volunteer voices from the south and representatives from poor and marginalised groups to engage in discussions about and monitoring of the sustainable development framework;

- Involve stakeholders and partners from all sectors, including the private and academic sectors, to support associations in their work through volunteer placement and involvement, to increase their social involvement and impact, and to strengthen the evidence base of the specific contributions of volunteerism toward sustainable development;
- Promote volunteerism throughout the life course as a catalyst for human and social development, locally and globally;
- Acknowledge that youth are engaged and have demonstrated their contribution and commitment as agents of change today, and are essential for the successful delivery of the post-2015 agenda. Youth volunteerism has the potential to engage volunteers from a young age, encouraging a life long commitment to volunteerism.

**We firmly believe that the power of volunteering is both a means and an end to the creation of healthy, vibrant societies and to the achievement of future sustainable development goals.**

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<sup>4</sup> My World is an options survey, encouraging people to define the issues that “would make the biggest difference in their lives”. It is rolled out online, via mobile technology and through offline conversations at community level through a massive volunteer effort.