

Introduction to the “Charter on the role of business, civil society and cross-sector partnerships in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”

2015 ▶



Why?

In 2015, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the most important international agreements aimed at combating poverty and promoting development, will expire and the United Nations are slated to adopt a new ‘post-2015’ Framework for a Global Development Agenda (GDA).

This new agenda, that will unite traditional economic development with sustainable development, provides an important opportunity for many initiatives of Dutch businesses and civil society organizations to connect to a truly global multi-stakeholder movement, thereby leveraging their efforts to contribute to development. In addition, by getting involved at an early stage, Dutch businesses and civil society actors can take on a formative role in this GDA. The new agenda will be driving many policies, at the national, global and EU levels from 2015 onwards and will inspire many new global partnerships.

At the same time, there is also an urgency to show at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014 that the business sector and civil society actually have an important role to play in global development. At the United Nations an active role of these sectors in the post-2015 GDA remains highly controversial. It is not unlikely that businesses and civil society will only play a minor role in the new agenda, which would greatly undermine the agenda’s effectiveness. After all, shaping and executing a successful global agenda for sustainable development in the 21st century cannot only be an intergovernmental initiative but must be a multi-stakeholder effort.

What?

A charter that outlines an active role for businesses, civil society and cross-sector partnerships can provide the starting point to unite and connect Dutch business and civil society initiatives to a powerful global agenda. In addition, a charter signed by a multi-stakeholder coalition can contribute to the inclusion of an active role for these sectors in the new United Nations GDA, by showing that a well-defined role for these sectors in global development can be formulated.

Signatories to the charter sign up to the following:

- They acknowledge the importance of an active role of business and civil society in a global development agenda
- They endorse the contents of the Charter as to what the role of business, civil society and cross-sector partnerships can be in global development
- They express the intention to contribute to shaping a national multi-stakeholder strategy to further the new goals of the United Nations GDA and join national and global partnerships to further these new goals once these been adopted in September 2015

In addition to signing the charter, each signatory is requested to provide one case (in a 1-page template) to illustrate the contents of the charter with concrete examples.

Signatories do not enter into a legally binding agreement. Signatories also do not propose a specific set of goals, as this would prejudice the on-going process at the United Nations.

How?

Signatories are invited to sign to the Charter before September. In September 2014, a multi-stakeholder coalition will organize an official event where the charter and the case repository will be presented and next steps will be discussed. A consultation process has preceded the current charter. Stakeholders were presented with several drafts to provide input. Two formal sessions were held, one hosted by the Worldconnectors (May 14) and one by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 19).

The charter was initiated by the ‘post-2015’ working group of [Worldconnectors](#), a network of representatives of business, civil society and academia. The working group includes Alexander Rinnooy Kan (Co-chair Worldconnectors), Fokko Wientjes (DSM), Adrian de Groot Ruiz (True Price), Rene Grotenhuis (former Cordaid), Teresa Fogelberg (GRI), Hans Eenhoorn (former Unilever), Andre Veneman (AkzoNobel), Zita Schellekens (Heineken), Paul Hoebink (Radboud University), Ton Dietz (Africa Studies Centre, Leiden University), Jan Willem van den Braak (former VNO-NCW), Frans van der Boom (Topsector Life Sciences & Health NWO), Sayida Vanenburg (Cargill), Cristina Valencia (Novartis), Laure Heilbron (NewForesight), Nanno Kleiterp (FMO) and Herman Mulder (GRI).

Organizations can sign the charter by having an authorized signatory send an email to roundtable@worldconnectors.nl expressing the organization’s agreement to the charter and providing permission to use the organization’s logo on the charter. For more information, please contact Reinier van Winden (RvanWinden@ncdo.nl) or Alba Tiley (alba.tiley@dsm.com).

Foundations

The content of the charter is based as much as possible on existing frameworks and is heavily indebted to the work of the United Nations General Assembly’s Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda as well as work from the Global Compact, the Dutch Social Economic Council and the World Economic Forum.

A few specific points are relevant to highlight:

- The dimensions mentioned in article 2 are based on the report “A New Global Partnership” from the United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the zero draft document “Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development or the Post-2015 Development Agenda” of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.
- Article 10 mentions the OECD Guidelines as a source for normative frameworks as this is a comprehensive set of guidelines that is endorsed by the Dutch Social and Economic Council (see the 2012 report “Eindevaluatie SER-initiatief IMVO”). Note that the OECD Guidelines refer to amongst others the “Tripartite declaration of principles concerning multinational enterprises and social policy” (2006) of the ILO and the “United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” (2011) of the United Nations.