

**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE****Draft DAC Policy Instrument on Enabling Civil Society – Third draft (follows 2 February second draft)****DAC Meeting, 14 April 2021 (Session 2/2)**

This document is submitted for DISCUSSION under Item 7 the Draft Annotated Agenda [DCD/DAC/A(2021)4]. DAC members are invited to review the illustrative draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Annex A.

At the November 2020 High Level Meeting, the DAC committed to develop a new DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society. Taking this commitment into account as well as the views expressed by DAC members in several meetings, this document presents the draft Instrument in Annex A in the form of a draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society so that DAC members can see what the components discussed to date would look like in DAC Recommendation form. To facilitate DAC members' discussion, an Annex B with complementary background information is also provided. In Annex B, the substantive components of the illustrative draft DAC Recommendation are set out in boxes to differentiate them from text providing background and evidence.

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JT03473866

DAC Policy Instrument on Enabling Civil Society

1. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda calls for civil society engagement in localisation, implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To support the discussions of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) has been gathering evidence that demonstrates the need for the DAC to take steps to better enable civil society. Sources of note include the 2018 *Development Co-operation Report* chapter on civil society and leaving no one behind, the 2020 *DAC Members and Civil Society* study, and the 2020 Foresight Policy Paper on *Digital Transformation and the Futures of Civic Space to 2030*. These reports and sources cited in them, including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) *2019 Progress Report*, show that more must be done in this decade of action to enable civil society actors to maximise their contributions to the 2030 Agenda and to inclusive sustainable development more generally, and to help tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. Civil society actors are critical contributors to all of the SDGs. They are especially central to the peaceful and inclusive societies and accountable and inclusive institutions of SDG 16 as well as to protecting and strengthening democracy. Civil society actors are also pivotal to the revitalised global partnership of SDG 17. The necessity of enabling civil society is reinforced in the DAC's April 2020 Covid-19 Global Pandemic Joint Statement.

2. As a forum of many of the worlds' largest and most influential donors contributing significant funds to civil society actors, the DAC can lead by example by committing to more robust actions to enable civil society. Members of the DAC have signalled that they are ready to play a leadership role through an ambitious DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society. The DAC policy instrument will provide a framework to support, guide and incentivise DAC members and others, in their role as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, to advance their policies and practices in ways that reinforce the impact and roles of DAC member country, international, and partner country or territory civil society actors. While a DAC policy instrument will by its nature serve as a flexible tool, it would also support DAC members in working towards fostering coherence in their approaches to civil society where appropriate – coherence within their development co-operation and humanitarian assistance institutions, across their governments, and across DAC members. Further, while targeting behaviour change among DAC members and other donors to enhance how they address civic space and work with civil society actors, the DAC policy instrument will underscore that civil society actors must also take action to enhance their effectiveness and accountability.

3. In follow up to the *DAC Members and Civil Society* study action point for the DAC to develop a DAC Recommendation or guidance, the DAC agreed to consider steps toward an instrument on civil society. At its 25 June 2020 meeting, the DAC agreed that the DCD work closely with the DAC Community of Practice (CoP) on Civil Society to begin drafting a document on civil society, and that the November 2020 DAC High Level Meeting (HLM) would decide, based on an initial draft, on the form the document should take. In the 2020 HLM Communiqué the DAC committed to developing a new DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society, a commitment that aligns well with the OECD DCD 2021-22 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) Expected Output Result 2.8 on civil society. Expected Output Result 2.8 commits to developing an instrument that addresses three pillars of enabling civil society, specifically how DAC members: 1) respect, protect and

promote civic space; 2) support and engage with civil society; and 3) incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

4. These three pillars of the PWB Output Result 2.8 on civil society and of the current draft address a constellation of challenges impeding civil society actors from reaching their full potential as revealed by the evidence gathered. Firstly, DAC members have expressed considerable concern that diminishing respect for human rights and democracy in a context of rising autocratisation around the globe is eroding the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, posing a real threat to civic space. Secondly, DAC members understand that there are gaps and tensions in the way they support and engage with civil society actors that need to be addressed to ensure the most effective use of the resources DAC members devote to their partnerships with these actors. Thirdly, while civil society actors have been playing critical roles in the Covid-19 response, recovery and resilience building, the Covid-19 context has shed a brighter light on shortcomings that at times arise in their effectiveness and accountability.

5. Preliminary, first and second drafts of the policy instrument were circulated in July and October 2020 and February 2021. Inputs were received in writing and discussion, from DAC members through the DAC CoP on Civil Society and DAC delegates, and from CSOs in the DAC-CSO Reference Group. Drafts were also circulated across the DCD. To date, views have been gathered through:

- Four meetings of the DAC CoP on Civil Society (November 2019, May and November 2020, and February 2021)
- Three meetings of the DAC Informal Group on Engagement (now the External Relations Group) (December 2019, April 2020, September 2020)
- The DAC Informal Reference Group on Effective Development Co-operation meeting on Civil Society Partnerships (April 2020)
- Three GovNet plenary meetings (October 2019, June 2020 and February 2021)
- Friends of Foresight meeting launch of the Foresight Policy Paper *on Digital Transformation and the Futures of Civic Space to 2030* (May 2020)
- DCD and Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency co-launch of the *DAC Members and Civil Society* study (October 2020)
- Informal DAC meeting discussion (October 2020)
- Various formal DAC meetings (December 2019, January, May, June, July, September 2020)
- DAC HLM (November 2020)
- Discussions with the DAC-CSO Reference Group at the June 2019 and 2020 DAC-CSO Dialogues, a January 2020 webinar, the October 2020 pre-HLM meeting, and the November 2020 HLM

6. Through the consultation process to date, the vast majority of DAC members have shared their readiness for the policy instrument to be developed in the form of a DAC Recommendation, and have broadly agreed with the three pillar framework. CSOs in the DAC-CSO Reference Group have called for a DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society and have additionally supported the three pillar framework. Against this background, in this third draft the instrument is presented in Annex A in the form of a DAC Recommendation so that DAC members can see what the components discussed to date would look like in DAC Recommendation form. To facilitate DAC members' discussion

of the illustrative draft DAC Recommendation, an Annex B with complementary background, evidence and views gathered from the above-referenced consultations is also provided. In Annex B, the substantive components of the draft DAC Recommendation are set out in boxes to differentiate them from the background and evidence.

2. Rationale for a Recommendation

7. Embodying the commonly agreed policy approaches and good practices for enabling civil society set out in the draft policy instrument in the form of a DAC Recommendation would capture a strong political commitment to enabling civil society. This commitment and the status it would give the instrument would provide a solid foundation for a robust international framework to guide current and future DAC members in their efforts to better enable civil society and maximise its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy.

8. By adopting a DAC Recommendation, DAC members would thus be sending a clear political message and demonstrating DAC leadership on this crucial issue, setting the bar for the wider community of donors, international bodies, and CSOs that may choose to work towards adherence or alignment with the DAC Recommendation. In this manner, the embodiment of the policy approaches and good practices for enabling civil society set out in the draft instrument in a DAC Recommendation would encourage the contribution of many development actors to better enabling civil society, as well as provide a basis for leveraging stronger and more robust actions to enable civil society on their part.

9. While the adoption of a DAC Recommendation does entail a commitment to the policy approaches and good practices contained in it, DAC Recommendations are not legally binding. As such, DAC members would have flexibility as to how they seek to implement these policy approaches and good practices, in particular to account for the important differences that exist across their legal, institutional, and policy frameworks and domestic contexts relevant to their roles in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. In this manner, Adherents have the flexibility to tailor their efforts to their specific circumstances and context.

3. Scope of the draft DAC Recommendation

10. A DAC Recommendation would be the first international commitment focused on the actions of donors, and that is specific to civil society as a contributor to the 2030 Agenda, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy. It would break new ground by addressing together three inter-linked pillars of how development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers enable civil society by: **1)** respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; **2)** supporting and engaging with civil society; and **3)** incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability. DAC members have expressed that the coherence and complementarity between these three pillars is central to the possible DAC Recommendation's strength and character and that the ability to address the pillars together is a particular value-added of the DAC. DAC members have also indicated that now is an opportune time to move forward on all three pillars, as many DAC members, having made swift adjustments to how they work with civil society in the Covid-19 context, are either reviewing and advancing good policies and practices or considering doing so.

11. In keeping with the DAC's mandate and DAC member's flows for civil society actors, the draft DAC Recommendation is framed to address DAC member's work with

civil society in development co-operation and in humanitarian assistance. Addressing both of these areas also aligns with the remit of the many civil society actors that work across the development to humanitarian continuum, including civil society actors working on development in partner countries and territories that are often first responders in disasters and crises. Further, the challenges the draft DAC Recommendation would seek to address through its three pillars are common to the development co-operation and humanitarian assistance realms of DAC member's work with civil society actors. By addressing both development co-operation and humanitarian assistance the Recommendation would apply the spirit of the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus [[OECD/LEGAL/5019](#)] by promoting complementary and coherence of approaches across development co-operation, humanitarian assistance and peace-building efforts. The draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society provides that, in its implementation, donors should take into account all relevant existing standards and commitments, including the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

4. Implementation and follow-up

12. In consultations, DAC members requested an iterative approach to implementation of the DAC policy instrument in which peer learning and adaptation would be embedded. Throughout implementation, the DAC CoP on Civil Society would act as the primary forum for peer learning, with its members a source of mutual, practical support to each other's implementation efforts. Linkages with the DAC's work to modernise its narrative on effective development co-operation as relates to civil society partnerships would continue. Further linkages with GovNet, and with the Working Party on Open Government and relevant OECD Secretariat teams would continue to be pursued, especially as relates to protecting and promoting civic space. Engagement with the DCD crisis and fragility team would also continue and outreach to its networks be undertaken. In keeping with the 2018 Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and CSOs, regular dialogue with the DAC-CSO Reference Group and other DAC member country, international and partner country or territory CSOs would also inform lessons learning on implementation.

13. The DCD would also provide practical support for implementation through the potential development of toolkits and/or technical assistance in the form of workshops and/or direct support to individual DAC members as and if requested, in line with the 2021-22 PWB Output Result 2.8. It is also envisaged that the DCD could support the DAC in working to address OECD DAC reporting terminology and directives that may present obstacles to effective implementation, such as the coding of support *to* and *through* CSOs.

14. Follow-up of the implementation of the DAC policy instrument would depend somewhat on the form the document takes, and on the DAC's preference as regards scope and frequency. The DAC CoP on Civil Society would play a key role in identifying the most practical and useful means of follow-up on the instrument's implementation, reporting to the DAC. It is proposed that follow-up would make use of existing processes and data from within and outside of the DAC as much as possible, including:

- DAC peer reviews where, in keeping with the revised (2021) DAC Peer Review Methodology, members may choose elements of their work to enable civil society as an area of concentration. Peer reviews look at members' partnerships with CSOs, including at country level, and consult their partner country, DAC member country, and international civil society partners on members' policies and practices;
- Data on financial flows to and through CSOs in DAC member annual Development Co-operation Report profiles;

- GPEDC monitoring and its learning and follow-up processes;
- Learning exchanges as part of the annual DAC-CSO Dialogue with the DAC-CSO Reference Group and/or at biennial OECD International Civil Society Days; and
- Short survey every five years, based on the *DAC Members and Civil Society* study survey.

15. If adopted in the form of a DAC Recommendation, as with all DAC Recommendations, the review of its implementation would assess the overall state-of-play regarding its impact, with particular focus on gathering information on Adherent's experiences and fostering the exchange of best practices. The review would also be designed to inform consideration of the DAC Recommendation's continued relevance and to gauge whether other actions may be useful to help support DAC members in its implementation and in enabling civil society more generally.

5. Process and timeline

16. The DAC CoP on Civil Society is spearheading development of the draft DAC policy instrument. Consultations with the DAC are taking place in formal DAC meetings and through relevant DAC subsidiary bodies and groups including the External Relations Group. Collaboration with the DCD effectiveness team is ongoing to ensure that the DAC policy instrument is synergistic with the DAC's work on a modernised DAC narrative on effective development co-operation. Collaboration with the GPEDC is also ongoing in order to benefit from lessons from the GPEDC monitoring, with the upcoming reform of the GPEDC's monitoring framework presenting an opportunity to synergise the GPEDC monitoring with relevant elements of the DAC policy instrument. Consultation with GovNet and collaboration with the DCD GovNet team continues to help ensure complementarity and synergies with ongoing work to protect and promote democratic governance in the context of rising autocratisation. Consultation with the DCD crisis and fragility team continues, and will support consultation with relevant bodies such as the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and CSOs in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Other relevant DCD teams will continue to be consulted throughout. Other relevant OECD teams and bodies will also continue to be consulted, for example, the Public Governance Directorate given its work in the Observatory of Civic Space, and at a later stage potentially the Public Governance Committee's Working Party on Open Government, as well as relevant OECD Secretariat teams, to ensure alignment and coherence across the OECD. Consultation with DAC member country, international and partner country or territory CSOs from within and beyond the DAC-CSO Reference Group will continue to be critical throughout the instrument's development as will DAC members' direct consultation with CSOs in their countries.

17. The consultations and drafting of the DAC policy instrument will continue in 2021. It is envisaged that the instrument will be finalised and a decision on its form taken in July 2021. The steps and timeline proposed below may be adjusted as the process unfolds.

Activity	Tentative timeline
Draft circulated to DAC CoP on Civil Society, GovNet, and relevant OECD Directorates	Circulated 02 February for comments by 02 March
DAC CoP on Civil Society meeting	11 February
GovNet Plenary meeting	16 February
Margins of the External Relations Group meeting	April/May (TBC)
DAC CoP on Civil Society and GovNet discussions on draft	April/May (TBC)
Draft circulated to CoP and DAC delegates, GovNet, other relevant DAC bodies, CSO Reference Group, relevant OECD bodies and Directorates and wider consultations through e.g. GPEDC Action Area 2.4 (civil society partnerships), modernised DAC narrative on effective development co-operation, INCAF, IASC CSO members, national level consultations in DAC member countries, other stakeholders	Circulated to CoP and DAC delegates 30 March
DAC meeting discussion on draft	13-14 April (TBC)
Discussions at OECD International Civil Society Days (includes bi-annual DAC CoP on Civil Society meeting and annual DAC-CSO Dialogue)	27 May-4 June (TBC)
Final draft circulated to DAC delegates	22 June (TBC)
DAC meeting discussion and consideration of adopting final draft	5-6 July (TBC)

6. Proposed action

18. DAC members are invited to discuss the illustrative draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Annex A at the 13-14 April DAC meeting.

Annex A: Illustrative Draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society

THE OECD DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE (DAC),

HAVING REGARD to the Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development [[OECD/LEGAL/0381](#)]; the Recommendation of the Council for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption [[OECD/LEGAL/0431](#)]; the Recommendation of the Council on Open Government [[OECD/LEGAL/0438](#)]; the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus [[OECD/LEGAL/5019](#)]; and, the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)];

HAVING REGARD to the Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations [[DCD/DAC\(2018\)/28/FINAL](#)];

HAVING REGARD to the foundation provided by international instruments and documents on various aspects of enabling civil society, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [[United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\) Resolution 217 A](#)]; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [[General Assembly Resolution 2200A \(XXI\)](#)]; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [[General Assembly Resolution 2200A \(XXI\)](#)]; the Declaration on the Right to Development [[General Assembly Resolution 41/128](#)]; the [Humanitarian Principles](#); the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms [UNGA Resolution [A/RES/53/144](#)]; the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise [[CO87](#)]; core international human rights treaties protecting and promoting the rights of individuals and groups that civil society actors serve or represent, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, racialized groups, and indigenous peoples; the UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on Civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment [[A/HRC/RES/24/21](#)] and Civil society space: engagement with international and regional organisations [[A/HRC/RES/38/12](#)]; and, relevant regional human rights instruments;

HAVING REGARD to relevant political commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals [UNGA Resolution [A/RES/70/1](#)]; the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation effectiveness principles [Indicator 2: Enabling environments for civil society](#), and outcome documents agreed in 2016 in [Nairobi](#), in 2014 in [Mexico](#), in 2011 in [Busan](#), in 2008 in [Accra](#) and in 2005 in [Paris](#); the [Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles](#) (2003); the [Grand Bargain](#) (2016); the Financial Action Task Force Best Practices on Combating the Abuse of Non-profit Organizations ([Recommendation 8](#)); and CSO standards including the 2010 [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#) and the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#);

RECOGNISING the diversity of civil society actors and roles they can fill – both as independent development actors in their own right and as donors’ implementing partners – in social, economic, cultural and democratic development and humanitarian assistance, and their role in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, and to inclusive sustainable development;

RECOGNISING that a diverse range civil society actors with connections to people on the frontlines of poverty, inequality, vulnerability and marginalisation, and that support and facilitate participation and inclusion of positive social and/or democratic civil society

voices in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance processes and contexts, are critical contributors to the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy;

RECOGNISING that the diversity of civil society actors and roles they fulfil requires analysis of different development co-operation and humanitarian assistance contexts to assess the potential positive or negative impacts of donor's approaches to enabling civil society in partner countries or territories on the civil society sector and civic space, including on local ownership, power relations, human rights, and public perceptions of and trust in civil society, in order to ensure donor's approaches are appropriately tailored to the context;

RECOGNISING that civil society's ability to manifest the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, to be well informed about the actions and performance of public institutions and officials, and to make demands on governments and contribute to public policy making, monitoring, the management of public goods, and the defence of human rights and democracy, is in jeopardy in many places;

RECOGNISING the rise in restrictions that shrink the in-person and online space for civil society to operate and pose threats and danger to civil society actors in many countries, including but not limited to restrictions implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic;

RECOGNISING that the closing of civic space is part of a broader issue of diminishing respect for human rights and democracy in a context of rising autocratisation that affects the quality and effectiveness of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, and ultimately imperils the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy;

RECOGNISING that effective donor policies and practices related to their support and engagement with civil society actors, in general and especially as relates to enabling partner country or territory civil society actors, including regarding how donors provide and administer financial support and who in civil society receives that support, are critical factors to enabling civil society actors to maximise their contributions to the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy;

RECOGNISING that donor's support for civil society may inadvertently contribute to circumstances that provoke anti-civil society backlash and associated restrictions on civic space, and the imperative of donors taking the necessary steps to ensure that they do no harm in this regard;

RECOGNISING that the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of CSOs is an important objective in its own right, and can bolster CSO's legitimacy with governments and the public, and in turn provide an important counterweight to civic space restrictions;

RECOGNISING the rise of undemocratic actors and actions from some governments, civil society, or other actors that seek to undermine civic freedoms and human rights, present anti-democratic narratives, propagate misinformation and disinformation, harassment and discrimination targeting civil society is increasing the vulnerability of civil society more broadly;

RECOGNISING that donor's policies and practices related to how they respect, protect and promote civic space; support and engage with civil society; and incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability, are interlinked, with efforts to address any one of them potentially affecting the others, and as such, merit being addressed together;

RECOGNISING the importance and responsibility of donors showing leadership and political commitment and taking action to enable civil society to maximise civil society’s contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy;

RECOGNISING that DAC members and non-DAC members having adhered to this DAC Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”) have differing legal, institutional and policy frameworks and domestic contexts relevant to their roles in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance that may shape their implementation of this Recommendation.

I. AGREES that for the purpose of the present DAC Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

- **Civil society** refers to uncoerced human association by which individuals implement collective action to address shared needs, ideas, interests and beliefs that they have identified in common, as well as the formal, semi- or non-formal forms of associations and the individuals involved in them. Civil society is distinct from states, private for profit enterprises, and the family.
- **Civil society organisations (CSOs)** are an organisational representation of civil society and include all not-for-individual profit, non-state, non-partisan, non-violent, and self-governing organisations outside of the family in which people come together to pursue shared needs, ideas, interests, faith and beliefs, including formal, legally registered organisations as well as informal associations without legal status but with a structure and activities.
- **Civic space** is the physical, virtual, legal, regulatory, and policy space where civil society and the persons in it can, among other things, securely exercise their rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, in keeping with human rights.

RESPECTING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING CIVIC SPACE

II: RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, respect, promote and protect civic space, by:

1. Developing clear **policy positions on the value of an inclusive and independent civil society** and on the **importance of respecting, protecting and promoting civic space** in line with rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression.
2. Seeking to **engage in dialogue with partner country or territory governments** on the value of an inclusive and independent civil society and the need to respect, protect and promote the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, while promoting and supporting civil society participation and dialogue between civil society and all levels of partner country or territory governments and, as appropriate, other institutions including parliaments, the private sector and the general public.
3. **Co-ordinating among donors and with international and regional bodies to monitor openings and restrictions of civic space and enhance access to and sharing of information** to foster stronger, more coherent proactive and preventive actions, including emergency funding, to respect, protect and promote civic space and for the physical and legal protection of civil society actors at risk including humanitarian workers and human rights defenders.
4. **Supporting and engaging with international and regional bodies and initiatives** that work to respect, protect and promote civic space.

5. Investing in partner country or territory governments' **institutions of accountability and oversight** and in their **legal and regulatory frameworks and capacities** relevant to enabling civil society, including capacities to provide financial support to civil society actors, in line with human rights and with appropriate application of international counter-terrorism financing standards.
6. **Working together with the private sector, and independent media** where appropriate, to promote and strengthen open civic space as a prerequisite for conducive business and media environments.
7. **Exploring and sharing strategies among donors and with civil society actors to counter misinformation and disinformation, harassment, discrimination and anti-democratic narratives** targeting civil society that emanate from some governments, civil society, or other actors.
8. **Leveraging opportunities for greater civil society participation in public policy offered by digital technologies and data** in partner countries or territories, by, where appropriate:
 - a supporting digital rights across legal and regulatory frameworks as well as international standards; and
 - b strengthening digital and data literacy and access to infrastructure to promote safe and secure digital communications and data, and digital inclusion, particularly of persons in the most vulnerable or marginalised positions.
9. **Exploring how to address challenges associated with digital technologies** including risks related to surveillance, internet shutdowns, online censorship, data abuse and misuse, misinformation and disinformation, harassment, and discrimination, that restrict civil society actors in partner countries or territories, as well as systemic inequalities that lead to digital disenfranchisement of civil society actors.

SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

III. RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, support and engage with civil society by:

1. **Establishing, in consultation with civil society, policies or strategies for working with partner country or territory, donor country, and international civil society** that:
 - a articulate objectives for working with a diverse range of civil society actors both as independent development actors in their own right and as implementing partners;
 - b aim to strengthen local ownership and an inclusive and independent civil society in partner countries or territories;
 - c take into account contextual risks or opportunities for civil society and civic space; and
 - d integrate these policy or strategy positions into wider development co-operation and humanitarian assistance policies or strategies.
2. **Pursuing civil society participation in policy and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** by engaging civil society actors, especially in partner countries or territories, in more structured, institutionalised, inclusive, and accessible dialogue, including with other actors such as parliaments, the private sector, and the general public, and co-ordinating such dialogue with other donors where relevant.

3. **Providing financial support to civil society actors as independent development actors in their own right as well as to civil society actors as implementing partners** including by, where feasible and appropriate, increasing the availability of flexible and predictable support for civil society actor’s “right of initiative”, core support, and/or programme-based support, taking into account the importance of alignment with these actors’ strategic objectives, ideas, and approaches for addressing local priorities.
4. **Promoting and investing in the leadership of civil society actors in partner countries or territories** by, where appropriate:
 - a increasing the availability and accessibility of direct and diverse forms of flexible and predictable financial support for partner country or territory civil society actors, to enhance their financial independence, sustainability and local ownership;
 - b encouraging and supporting civil society strategic alliances, networks, platforms and resource centres at national and sub-national levels, that can
 - i. work to strengthen civil society actors, including their ability to develop local financial resource streams, and
 - ii. represent civil society voices to governments and other stakeholders; and
 - c ensuring civil society actors in partner countries or territories are involved in decision-making based on equal power relations, on the design and implementation of initiatives and programmes undertaken by supported civil society strategic alliances, networks, platforms and resource centres.
5. **Exploring and sharing lessons on how to best enable a broad range of formal and informal, traditional and new types of civil society actors and actions**, at national and sub-national levels in partner countries or territories, such as social movements, social economy actors, faith-based organisations, and civil society actors representing persons in the most vulnerable or marginalised positions (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities), and supporting these civil society actors and actions.
6. **Enhancing partner country or territory level transparency and accessibility of information on funding for civil society** by disaggregating the information by partner country or territory to which it is destined, while balancing transparency with potential security risks for funded civil society actors in sensitive environments.
7. Supporting and working with civil society actors to advance **global citizenship education, raise public awareness and support for inclusive sustainable development, and facilitate people’s and civil society’s active engagement** in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and inclusive sustainable development.
8. Respecting DAC and other international standards related to **the humanitarian-development-peace nexus** and to **ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance** in support and engagement with civil society, while working with civil society actors to help ensure that support enables them to most effectively address these issues in their activities and organisations.
9. Pursuing **co-ordination and dialogue across government, and with related institutions** as appropriate, with a view to ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and respect for the principle of non-discrimination, and to explore how to address obstacles in their own policies and systems to supporting civil society’s work with persons in the most vulnerable and marginalised positions, often in humanitarian or fragile contexts, that may arise due to the misapplication or misunderstanding of

international counter-terrorism financing standards aimed at protecting CSOs from potential terrorism financing abuse.

10. Incorporating **adaptive and flexible processes into results management of civil society funding**, that include goals, strategies and indicators, co-defined with civil society where feasible, as well as indicators to assess strengthening an inclusive and independent civil society in partner countries or territories as a result in its own right.

11. **Streamlining administrative requirements for civil society support** to lower transaction costs for civil society and donors including through proportionate, risk-based approaches, harmonising requirements with other donors, and using civil society actor's own or co-defined formats for proposals and reporting.

INCENTIVISING CSO EFFECTIVENESS, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

IV. RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability by:

1. Calling on and supporting CSOs to build on existing good practice and standards in **CSO-led self-regulation, transparency and accountability mechanisms** to broaden CSO participation in such mechanisms at partner country or territory, regional, or international level.

2. Calling on and supporting CSOs to develop **robust internal systems to meet relevant human rights standards** on preventing and responding to discrimination, exploitation, abuse or harassment due to gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, language, age, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, in their activities and organisations.

3. Working with CSOs to invest in **mutual capacity strengthening, especially at partner country or territory level, to address their vulnerability and bolster their resilience and effectiveness**, including capacities **to protect and promote civic space** (paying attention to the distinct barriers and risks faced by particularly vulnerable CSOs such as those working in human rights), to **foster accountability**.

4. Calling for more **equitable partnerships between donor country and/or international CSOs, and the partner country or territory CSOs they work with**, in which the comparative advantages of each type of CSO are appropriately drawn from, capacities are shared, and local ownership and sustainability strengthened, and supporting CSOs to develop tools to better assess equitability of partnerships and local ownership.

5. Promoting **participatory and rights-based approaches for local ownership of CSO's activities** in partner countries or territories throughout programme design, implementation, and monitoring, including instituting rights-holder and constituent feedback mechanisms, while helping ensure that programmes do not exacerbate existing forms of discrimination or inequalities.

6. Fostering **CSO leadership and innovation** in identifying and adapting new approaches **to solving development challenges**, including through partnerships and co-creation with a range of actors and stakeholders, including from the private sector.

7. Encouraging **CSOs at partner country or territory level to collaborate and coordinate among themselves and with other actors**, including private sector actors, multilateral institutions, and **all levels of partner country or territory governments**, with

a view to avoiding duplication and competition, building mutual respect, trust, and accountability, and **supporting** such **collaboration and co-ordination** as appropriate.

8. Requiring, as appropriate, **CSO partners' adherence to relevant legal and regulatory requirements** in the partner countries or territories they operate in where such requirements respect human rights, and requiring CSOs to respect international law.

V. INVITES the Secretary-General to disseminate this DAC Recommendation;

VI. INVITES Adherents to disseminate this DAC Recommendation, particularly throughout their development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding agencies and partners, and across government;

VII. INVITES non-Adherents to take account of and adhere to this DAC Recommendation;

VIII. ENCOURAGES relevant non-governmental partners to disseminate and follow this DAC Recommendation;

IX. AGREES that the DAC will, in line with its programme of work and budget:

- a Provide a forum in which Adherents can share policies, best practices, and innovative approaches to enabling civil society in Adherents' development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, consulting with civil society actors throughout the process, in order to support mutual learning and adaptation, and develop tools to support the implementation of this DAC Recommendation;
- b Review the implementation of this DAC Recommendation, including through the existing DAC peer review mechanism, and support lesson learning, adaptation, and sharing of best practices to build understanding and capability; and
- c Develop a report on implementation of these measures no later than five years following the adoption of this DAC Recommendation and at least every ten years thereafter.

Annex B: Complementary background and evidence supporting Annex A

1. Overall background

1. The 2030 Agenda calls for civil society engagement in localisation, implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Civil society actors are critical for the fulfilment of each of the SDGs, whether in eliminating poverty, achieving gender equality, or protecting and restoring life on land and below water, and to inclusive sustainable development more generally. Civil society's engagement is central to progress toward the peaceful and inclusive societies and accountable and inclusive institutions called for in SDG 16 as well as to protecting and strengthening democracy, while an inclusive and independent civil society is also a characteristic of SDG 16. Further, civil society is embedded in SDG 17 that aims to strengthen achievement of all of the SDGs through a revitalised global partnership for sustainable development bringing together governments, civil society, and other development actors, as well as in SDG target 17.17 that calls on member states to encourage and promote partnerships with civil society actors.

2. It is widely acknowledged that in the context of development co-operation and the provision of humanitarian assistance, civil society actors must be enabled to help maximise the effectiveness and impact of their contributions to the 2030 Agenda and inclusive sustainable development, both as independent development actors in their own right and as donor's partners. The DAC's April 2020 Covid-19 statement recognises the necessity of enabling CSOs to play their varied roles as key partners in tackling Covid-19 and its consequences.¹

3. Evidence indicates however that more must be done to enable civil society actors especially in partner countries or territories, as well as DAC member country and international civil society actors. DAC members have expressed concern that diminishing respect for human rights and democracy around the globe in a context of rising autocratisation is eroding the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, and posing a real threat to civil society, civic space, and civic engagement more broadly. In some countries, the threat has heightened in the Covid-19 context when the need to contain the Covid-19 pandemic is being used as a pretext for, or unintentionally leads to, disproportionate restrictions on civil society space. Illustrative of the growing concern is the UN Secretary General's 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights in which the necessity of taking concerted and collective steps to address shrinking space features prominently.²

4. Further, DAC members recognise that there are gaps and tensions in the ways they support and engage with civil society actors, and that the way they provide financial support and who receives that support has a significant effect on the ability of civil society actors to maximise their contribution to achievement of the 2030 Agenda. DAC members are also interested in ensuring the most effective use of the substantial amount of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance funds that they provide to civil society. On average 15% (USD 21 billion) of DAC members' bilateral official development assistance is allocated for civil society organisations (CSOs) annually, with CSO themselves contributing an estimated 42 billion in private funds for development co-operation and humanitarian endeavours.

5. Facilitated by their anchorage at local levels, civil society actors have been playing critical roles in the Covid-19 response, recovery and resilience building. Even amidst the need to adjust and pivot programs and ways of working, many civil society actors in partner countries or territories have been able to maintain operations amidst Covid-19-related

constraints. At the same time, Covid-19 has shed a brighter light on shortcomings that at times arise in the effectiveness and accountability of civil society actors, with issues such as lack of co-ordination among formal CSOs and with other actors, of inequitable partnerships between DAC member country and international CSOs and those in partner countries or territories, and overall resiliency challenges in evidence.

6. In this context, DAC members have indicated that now is a critical moment to strengthen their ability in their role as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, to take further steps toward enabling civil society.³ To help support them in this endeavour the 2020 DAC High Level Meeting Communiqué committed DAC members to develop a new DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society.⁴

7. Annex A sets out a draft DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society. To complement this, the present Annex B sets out the substantive components of that illustrative draft, together with more detailed background, supporting evidence gathered, and feedback provided since December 2019 by DAC members, including through the DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society, CSOs from the DAC-CSO Reference Group, and from other OECD Directorates and across the DCD. The components of the draft DAC Recommendation are set out in boxes to differentiate them from text providing complementary background and evidence.

8. In keeping with the DAC's mandate, the draft components address DAC member's work in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance with DAC member country, international, and partner country or territory civil society and on civil society-related issues. They focus on three key pillars of DAC member's work in: **1)** respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; **2)** supporting and engaging with civil society; and **3)** incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

2. Existing standards within and outside the OECD

9. Any DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance should also take into consideration existing standards within and outside the OECD. The draft Recommendation in Annex A contains the following list of OECD instruments which address issues of relevance to enabling civil society and would thus appear important to reference:

HAVING REGARD to the Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development [[OECD/LEGAL/0381](#)]; the Recommendation of the Council for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption [[OECD/LEGAL/0431](#)]; the Recommendation of the Council on Open Government [[OECD/LEGAL/0438](#)]; the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus [[OECD/LEGAL/5019](#)]; and, the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)].

10. Beyond OECD instruments, it would also appear important to reference the Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations:

HAVING REGARD to the Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations [[DCD/DAC\(2018\)/28/FINAL](#)].

11. Similarly, standards from outside the OECD, which address issues of relevance to enabling civil society, should also be taken into consideration and would thus be important

to reference. These include standards related to enabling civil society as civil and political actors, and as actors in more effective and inclusive sustainable development, as development actors in their own right, and as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance partners, as follows:

HAVING REGARD to the foundation provided by international instruments and documents on various aspects of enabling civil society, notably the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights [[General Assembly Resolution 217 A](#)]; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [[General Assembly Resolution 2200A \(XXI\)](#)]; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [[General Assembly Resolution 2200A \(XXI\)](#)]; the Declaration on the Right to Development [[General Assembly Resolution 41/128](#)]; the [Humanitarian Principles](#); the General Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms [[A/RES/53/144](#)]; the International Labour Organisation Convention on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise [[CO87, 1948](#)]; core international human rights treaties protecting and promoting the rights of individuals and groups that civil society actors serve or represent, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, racialized groups, and indigenous peoples; the UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on Civil society space: creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment [[A/HRC/RES/24/21](#)] and Civil society space: engagement with international and regional organisations [[A/HRC/RES/38/12](#)]; and, relevant regional human rights instruments.

HAVING REGARD to relevant international political commitments, including the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals [[A/RES/70/1](#)]; the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation effectiveness principles [Indicator 2: Enabling environments for civil society](#), and outcome documents agreed in 2016 in [Nairobi](#), in 2014 in [Mexico](#), in 2011 in [Busan](#), in 2008 in [Accra](#) and in 2005 in [Paris](#); the [Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles](#) (2003); the [Grand Bargain](#) (2016); the Financial Action Task Force Best Practices on Combating the Abuse of Non-profit Organizations ([Recommendation 8](#)); and CSO standards including the 2010 [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#) and the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#).

12. The draft components presented here draw from these existing standards while providing an up-to-date framework that calls for specific policy actions on the part of Adherents. The components complement but are unique from these existing standards in that they focus on the actions of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers (donors) and are specific to civil society as a contributor to the 2030 Agenda and inclusive sustainable development and to protecting and strengthening democracy. The draft breaks new ground by addressing together three pillars of how donors enable civil society by: **1)** respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; **2)** supporting and engaging with civil society; and **3)** incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

3. Contextual components

13. At the outset, it will be important that the DAC policy instrument outline the context behind its development, including recognising key policy issues, challenges, and imperatives. In this regard, the following contextual components are proposed.

14. **To start**, it would appear important to recognise the diversity within civil society and the varied roles civil society actors play. Civil society actors are diverse, including for example community-based organisations, environmental groups, women’s rights groups, human rights groups, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and non-governmental development organisations. In their diversity and based on their connections to diverse people, civil society actors can both engage with and channel varied voices including those of people who are vulnerable or marginalised due to gender, faith, national origin, ethnicity, language, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or other reasons, and as such who are at risk of being left behind.⁵

15. Civil society actors also play varied roles, with many fulfilling more than one role at a time. By providing a mechanism for the expression of diverse voices, civil society actors can be important players to ensure people’s participation toward inclusive democratic processes. Civil society actors can play a critical role in protecting and strengthening democracy and in countering autocratisation. Civil society actors can monitor and advocate in defence of human rights and enable people to claim their rights. Civil society actors can contribute to shaping and overseeing public policies including through research and evidence-based advocacy for inclusive, transparent and accountable governance. The role of civil society actors in providing reliable information and securing public accountability has been shown to lead to improvements in services and resource allocation, and in some instances is associated with lower levels of corruption.⁶ Civil society actors can play an important role as watchdogs of governments and of the private sector.

16. Further, in many contexts, civil society actors are significant service providers in areas ranging from health care to agriculture. They are often first responders to humanitarian needs in crisis contexts, and can play significant roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Civil society actors are reputed to often be flexible and agile, which when combined with their anchoring in particular geographic locations or with particular groups of people that might otherwise be neglected, can provide an important complement to the actions of governments and the private sector. Civil society actors can also be vectors of innovation, especially at local levels, experimenting with approaches that can be scaled up for wider impact.⁷

17. Civil society actors can also fill an important role in global citizenship education. They act as connectors between people and policies, raising public awareness and facilitating people’s engagement on development co-operation, humanitarian needs, the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development and global issues. This function is essential to securing public support for ambitious policies, including development co-operation policies, and to localising the 2030 Agenda. In all countries, civil society actors are critical to engaging people to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political life of their societies.⁸

18. Civil society actors represent all nature of interests and beliefs of wider society.⁹ In their role as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, donors seek to enable an inclusive and independent civil society including through support to bridge diverse civil society actors, and through the respect, protection and promotion of civic space. An inclusive civil society is comprised of civil society actors that hold positive social and/or democratic values. An independent civil society is comprised of civil society actors that are non-state, self-governing, and non-partisan.¹⁰ For donors, the concept of independence also means that civil society actors are independent development actors in their own right with their own priorities and approaches, and not solely donor’s implementing partners.¹¹ Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING the diversity of civil society actors and roles they can fill – both as independent development actors in their own right and as donor’s implementing partners – in social, economic, cultural and democratic development and humanitarian assistance, and their roles in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the pledge to leave no one behind, and to inclusive sustainable development.

RECOGNISING that a diverse range civil society actors with connections to people on the frontlines of poverty, inequality, vulnerability and marginalisation, and that support and facilitate participation and inclusion of positive social and/or democratic civil society voices in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance processes and contexts, are critical contributors to the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive, sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy.

RECOGNISING that the diversity of civil society actors and roles they fulfil requires analysis of different development co-operation and humanitarian assistance contexts to assess the potential positive or negative impacts of donor’s approaches to enabling civil society in partner countries or territories on the civil society sector and civic space, including on local ownership, power relations, human rights, and public perceptions of and trust in civil society, in order to ensure donor’s approaches are appropriately tailored to the context.

19. From that starting point, it would appear important to recognise three challenges that are impeding civil society actors from reaching their full potential. **Firstly**, it would appear important to recognise the alarming growth in restrictions that shrink the space for many civil society actors to operate. In 2020, more than a hundred countries were characterised by closed, repressed or obstructed civic space, with an array of civic space threats such as detention, harassment, and even assassination of civil society actors, attacks on humanitarian workers and assets, and more benign but nonetheless constraining regulatory requirements such as regards registration and reporting.¹² Incidences of legislative and regulatory constraints on civil society actor’s ability to seek, receive and use cross-border funding are another threat to civil society actor’s functioning.¹³ For example, instances are seen of the incorrect implementation of the Financial Action Task Force’s Recommendation 8 in ways that unjustifiably associate some civil society actors with terrorism and terrorist financing and lead to over-regulation including undue restrictions on civil society actor’s access to cross-border funding.¹⁴ The spread of misinformation and disinformation, and anti-civil society smear campaigns are additional tactics applied to repress civil society actors.¹⁵ The UN Special Rapporteur on the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association amongst others, including the OECD, warn that restrictions to civil society space that do not uphold the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression, are undermining the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, are incompatible with the goal of leaving no one behind, weaken efforts to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, and endanger delivery against the commitments to inclusion, equality and sustainability.¹⁶

20. While restrictions on civic space are not new, the Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating restrictive measures, with the pandemic used as a pretext for disproportionate, overly broad and potentially enduring restrictions such as through suspension of access to information legislation and indefinite bans on any form of peaceful assembly.¹⁷ Moreover, digital transformation is affecting the civil society landscape. On one hand, digital transformation is opening online spaces and fostering new and different forms of civil society actors and actions. On the other, unequal access to digital technology is exacerbating systemic inequalities, while digital transformation comes with risks for civil society and civic space with, for example, the use of repressive tactics such as internet

shutdowns and online censorship, mass surveillance, and digital harassment.¹⁸ Seen as part of a broader issue of diminishing respect for human rights and democracy in a context of rising autocratisation, the negative effect of shrinking civic space on civil society's ability to fulfil its varied roles, including that of counter-weight to the diminishing respect for human rights and democracy, cannot be underestimated.¹⁹ Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING that civil society's ability to manifest the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, to be well informed about the actions and performance of public institutions and officials, and to make demands on governments and contribute to public policy making, monitoring, the management of public goods, and the defence of human rights and democracy, is in jeopardy in many places.

RECOGNISING the rise in restrictions that shrink the in-person and online space for civil society to operate and pose threats and danger to civil society actors in many countries, including but not limited to restrictions implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

RECOGNISING that the closing of civic space is part of a broader issue of diminishing respect for human rights and democracy in a context of rising autocratisation, that affects the quality and effectiveness of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, and ultimately imperils the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy.

21. **Secondly**, it would appear important to recognise that DAC members are not always working with civil society in the most effective manner.²⁰ Effectiveness gaps and tensions arise in how DAC members provide financial support and who in civil society receives that support. For example, DAC members tend to channel support through civil society actors as implementing partners to meet DAC member-defined priorities and objectives, with minimal support provided to civil society as independent development actors in their own right. Further, OECD statistics show that DAC members' support flows largely to DAC member country and international civil society actors rather than to those in partner countries or territories, with the latter receiving only about 7% of DAC members' civil society funding.²¹ DAC members' funding also tends to reach formal CSOs and not a broad range of civil society actors. Other aspects of DAC member policy and practice in which there is room for improvement include insufficient engagement with civil society actors in structured and systematic policy dialogue, burdensome and varied administrative requirements, and rigid results management. In addition, the Financial Action Task Force's Recommendation 8 promotes a risk-based approach to protect CSOs from potential terrorism financing abuse. However, an incorrect implementation of these risk-based measures by some DAC member countries creates obstacles to their ability to support civil society's work with persons in some of the most vulnerable and marginalised positions, often in contexts of humanitarian response and fragility.²² Overall, the way DAC members support civil society actors may at times divert from the goals and approaches of partner country or territory civil society actors and reinforce their relationships of accountability to DAC members rather than to stakeholders in partner countries or territories, which may in turn be used by governments as an excuse to shrink civic space.

22. Significantly, existing guidance in the form of the OECD's 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society*,²³ while informative, is outdated and lacks the sense of urgency and the necessary commitment to spur behaviour change, and is not being used by DAC members in their decision-making about their civil society-related work. Recently, DAC members have shown remarkable adaptability and flexibility in the ways they support and engage

with civil society to enable their work in the Covid-19 context, demonstrating that change is possible, though sometimes, a signal of urgency is necessary. That DAC members directly contribute annually on average USD 21 billion for CSOs alongside funds received by CSOs via DAC members' multilateral and government-to-government contributions, and that DAC member country CSOs themselves contribute an estimated additional USD 42 billion to development annually, demands that DAC members enable civil society to the best of their ability.^{24,25} Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING that effective donors policies and practices related to their support and engagement with civil society actors, in general and especially as relates to enabling partner country or territory civil society actors, including regarding how donors provide and administer financial support and who in civil society receives that support, are critical factors to enabling civil society actors to maximise their contributions to the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy.

RECOGNISING that donor's support for civil society may inadvertently contribute to circumstances that provoke anti-civil society backlash and associated restrictions on civic space, and the imperative of donors taking the necessary steps to ensure that they do no harm in this regard.

23. **Thirdly**, it would appear important to recognise that there is evidence of shortcomings that arise at times in civil society's effectiveness in achieving development results, and in practicing transparency and upholding accountability to their varied stakeholders (donors, partner country or territory governments, constituents, rights-holders and beneficiaries, amongst others), particularly seen within the organised representation of civil society, CSOs.²⁶ There is great variation in the degree to which effectiveness and accountability issues arise across different CSOs playing different roles in different contexts. Many CSOs, recognising that they tend to be held to a higher standard of accountability than other actors, pursue concerted efforts to address their accountability.^{27,28} Still, outstanding issues include for example, lack of co-ordination among civil society actors and with partner country or territory governments, which is considered an impediment to more inclusive, coherent and impactful efforts.²⁹ Further, inequitable partnerships between donor country and/or international civil society actors, and those in partner countries or territories, are seen as halting progress toward local ownership and inclusive sustainable development.³⁰ Organisational transparency including regarding CSO's objectives, approaches, operations, and financing is an area of policy and practice to which CSOs have been called on to pay further attention.³¹ Although civil society's active response to Covid-19 may help reaffirm the civil society sector's significance and particularly the critical role of civil society actors in partner countries or territories, Covid-19 has also shed a brighter light on some CSO vulnerabilities such as in planning and financial sustainability and in some cases also lack of transparency.^{32,33} In addition, concerns about CSOs' ability to uphold safeguarding standards are heightened amidst recurring incidences of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment involving CSOs that work in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.³⁴

24. Increasingly severe and widespread restrictions on civic space also point to the need to bolster civil society's resilience, and to address real or perceived shortcomings in CSO's accountability, which are often used by governments to justify civic space restrictions and to fuel anti-civil society narratives.³⁵ Further, the growing number of undemocratic actors and actions that seek to undermine civic freedoms and human rights, present anti-democratic narratives, and propagate misinformation and disinformation, harassment and

discrimination targeting civil society and that emanate from some governments, civil society, or other actors, further puts the civil society sector in a vulnerable position.³⁶ Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING that the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of CSOs is an important objective in its own right, and can bolster CSO's legitimacy with governments and the public, and in turn provide an important counterweight to civic space restrictions.

RECOGNISING the rise of undemocratic actors and actions from some governments, civil society, or other actors that seek to undermine civic freedoms and human rights, present anti-democratic narratives, propagate misinformation and disinformation, harassment and discrimination targeting civil society is increasing the vulnerability of civil society more broadly.

25. That the three challenges summarised above of how DAC members respect, protect and promote civic space, support and engage with civil society, and incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability, are interlinked, and that donors have a role to play in addressing these challenges through their policies and practices, is increasingly evident.³⁷ For example, how donors support and engage with civil society actors affects these civil society actor's effectiveness and their accountability to their constituencies, rights-holders and beneficiaries they work with in partner countries. Shortcomings in civil society actor's effectiveness and accountability in turn provide rationale for governments to place restrictions on civic space, and for donors to support civil society actors in ways that reinforce upward accountability to donors sometimes to the detriment of civil society actor's accountability and pursuit of local ownership in partner countries or territories. The ability of civil society actors to fill their varied roles effectively and be responsive and accountable to their constituencies, rights-holders and beneficiaries is contingent to a degree on the openness of civic space. Addressing one of these three challenges alone will not be sufficient to enable civil society actors to maximise their contribution whether to the Covid-19 response and resilience building, the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy. Addressing them together in one DAC policy instrument can help donors to address these interlinked challenges coherently in their policy and programming choices. Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING that donor's policies and practices related to how they: respect, protect and promote civic space; support and engage with civil society; and incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability, are interlinked, with efforts to address any one of them potentially affecting the others, and as such, merit being addressed together.

26. Finally, it would appear important to recognise the responsibility of donors taking action to enable civil society by addressing the constellation of challenges that is impeding civil society actors from reaching their full potential. Donors have a responsibility to address these challenges based on existing standards within and outside of the OECD to which they have previously committed. As a unique forum of many of the world's largest and most influential donors, the DAC has a leadership role to play in offering an ambitious DAC policy instrument specific to enabling civil society that sends a clear political message and a signal of urgency on the necessity of reinvigorating commitments for more robust actions on the part of donors. Leadership from the DAC is also justified given the volume and share of their official development assistance that DAC members contribute to civil society actors, as well as the volume of private resources contributed by civil society actors. Such leadership will help DAC members demonstrate their commitment to accountability

for public resources, to supporting civil society actors to safeguard the private funds they raise, and to helping promote operating environments characterised by open civic space, all towards enabling civil society actors to maximise their effectiveness and impact. Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING the importance and responsibility of donors showing leadership and political commitment and taking action to enable civil society to maximise civil society’s contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the pledge to leave no one behind, inclusive sustainable development, and protecting and strengthening democracy.

27. Just as there is diversity in civil society, there is diversity among DAC members and other donors. This diversity extends to the size of their development co-operation and humanitarian assistance budgets, the position of their development co-operation and humanitarian assistance bodies within government, and their broader legal and regulatory frameworks and domestic contexts, including the types of civil society actors that are active in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. Accordingly, in the DAC policy instrument it would appear important to recognise:

RECOGNISING that DAC members and non-DAC members having adhered to this DAC Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”) have differing legal, institutional and policy frameworks and domestic contexts relevant to their roles in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance that may shape their implementation of this Recommendation.

4. Definitions

28. Following background, context, and related standards, to ensure clarity a DAC policy instrument on enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance would need to define a number of key terms. The following terms would appear important for a draft DAC policy instrument [footnotes are illustrative and would be removed from the final instrument]:

AGREES that for the purpose of the present DAC Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

- **Civil society** refers to uncoerced human association by which individuals implement collective action to address shared needs, ideas, interests and beliefs that they have identified in common, as well as the formal, semi- or non-formal forms of associations and the individuals involved in them.³⁸ Civil society is distinct from states, private for profit enterprises, and the family.
- **Civil society organisations (CSOs)** are an organisational representation of civil society and include all not-for-individual profit, non-state, non-partisan,³⁹ non-violent and self-governing organisations outside of the family in which people come together to pursue shared needs, ideas, interests, faith and beliefs, including formal, legally registered organisations as well as informal associations without legal status but with a structure and activities.⁴⁰
- **Civic space** is the physical, virtual, legal, regulatory, and policy space where civil society and the persons in it can, among other things, securely exercise their rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, in keeping with internationally agreed human rights.⁴¹

5. Enabling civil society in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance: Three pillars

29. The following sets out draft elements of the main body of a DAC policy instrument on Enabling Civil Society. These are arranged in three pillars that address donor's work in: **1)** respecting, protecting and promoting civic space; **2)** supporting and engaging with civil society; and **3)** incentivising CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability. As noted in the Contextual Components section, these three pillars are interlinked and may directly or indirectly affect each other. With this in mind, the various elements are located under the pillar deemed most appropriate for the purposes of this DAC policy instrument, even as due to the interlinkages between the pillars an element located under one pillar may be relevant to another pillar. In addition, while the instrument addresses donor actions in relation to civil society broadly, the third pillar is focused on incentivising the effectiveness and accountability of the organisational form of CSOs given as stated that the backing evidence on civil society effectiveness, transparency and accountability has tended to focus on the organised form of civil society, CSOs.⁴²

RESPECTING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING CIVIC SPACE

RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, respect, promote and protect civic space, by:

1. Developing clear **policy positions on the value of an inclusive and independent civil society** and on the **importance of respecting, protecting and promoting civic space** in line with rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression.
2. Seeking to **engage in dialogue with partner country or territory governments** on the value of an inclusive and independent civil society and the need to respect, protect and promote the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, while promoting and supporting civil society participation and dialogue between civil society and all levels of partner country or territory governments and, as appropriate, other institutions including parliaments, the private sector and the general public.
3. **Co-ordinating among donors and with international and regional bodies to monitor openings and restrictions of civic space and enhance access to and sharing of information** to foster stronger, more coherent proactive and preventive actions, including emergency funding, to respect, protect and promote civic space and for the physical and legal protection of civil society actors at risk including humanitarian workers and human rights defenders.
4. **Supporting and engaging with international and regional bodies and initiatives** that work to respect, protect and promote civic space.
5. Investing in partner country or territory governments' **institutions of accountability and oversight** and in their **legal and regulatory frameworks and capacities** relevant to enabling civil society, including capacities to provide financial support to civil society actors, in line with human rights and with appropriate application of international counter-terrorism financing standards.
6. **Working together with the private sector, and independent media** where appropriate, to promote and strengthen open civic space as a prerequisite for conducive business and media environments.

7. **Exploring and sharing strategies among donors and with civil society actors to counter misinformation and disinformation, harassment, discrimination and anti-democratic narratives** targeting civil society that emanate from some governments, civil society, or other actors.

8. **Leveraging opportunities for greater civil society participation in public policy offered by digital technologies and data** in partner countries or territories, by, where appropriate:

- a supporting digital rights across legal and regulatory frameworks as well as international standards; and
- b strengthening digital and data literacy and access to infrastructure to promote safe and secure digital communications and data, and digital inclusion, particularly of persons in the most vulnerable or marginalised positions.

9. **Exploring how to address challenges associated with digital technologies** including risks related to surveillance, internet shutdowns, online censorship, data abuse and misuse, misinformation and disinformation, harassment, and discrimination, that restrict civil society actors in partner countries or territories, as well as systemic inequalities that lead to digital disenfranchisement of civil society actors.

SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, support and engage with civil society by:

1. **Establishing, in consultation with civil society, policies or strategies for working with partner country or territory, donor country, and international civil society** that:

- a articulate objectives for working with a diverse range of civil society actors both as independent development actors in their own right and as implementing partners;
- b aim to strengthen local ownership and an inclusive and independent civil society in partner countries or territories;
- c take into account contextual risks or opportunities for civil society and civic space; and
- d integrate these policy or strategy positions into wider development co-operation and humanitarian assistance policies or strategies.

2. **Pursuing civil society participation in policy and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** by engaging civil society actors, especially in partner countries or territories, in more structured, institutionalised, inclusive, and accessible dialogue, including with other actors such as parliaments, the private sector, and the general public, and co-ordinating such dialogue with other donors where relevant.

3. **Providing financial support to civil society actors as independent development actors in their own right as well as to civil society actors as implementing partners** including by, where feasible and appropriate, increasing the availability of flexible and predictable support for civil society actor's "right of initiative", core support, and/or programme-based support, taking into account the

importance of alignment with these actors' strategic objectives, ideas, and approaches for addressing local priorities.

4. **Promoting and investing in the leadership of civil society actors in partner countries or territories** by, where appropriate:

- a increasing the availability and accessibility of direct and diverse forms of flexible and predictable financial support for partner country or territory civil society actors, to enhance their financial independence, sustainability and local ownership;
- b encouraging and supporting civil society strategic alliances, networks, platforms and resource centres at national and sub-national levels, that can
 - i. work to strengthen civil society actors, including their ability to develop local financial resource streams, and
 - ii. represent civil society voices to governments and other stakeholders; and
- c ensuring civil society actors in partner countries or territories are involved in decision-making based on equal power relations, on the design and implementation of initiatives and programmes undertaken by supported civil society strategic alliances, networks, platforms and resource centres.

5. **Exploring and sharing lessons on how to best enable a broad range of formal and informal, traditional and new types of civil society actors and actions**, at national and sub-national levels in partner countries or territories, such as social movements, social economy actors, faith-based organisations, and civil society actors representing persons in the most vulnerable or marginalised positions (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities), and supporting these civil society actors and actions.

6. **Enhancing partner country or territory level transparency and accessibility of information on funding for civil society** by disaggregating the information by partner country or territory to which it is destined, while balancing transparency with potential security risks for funded civil society actors in sensitive environments.

7. Supporting and working with civil society actors to advance **global citizenship education, raise public awareness and support for inclusive sustainable development, and facilitate people's and civil society's active engagement** in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and inclusive sustainable development.

8. Respecting DAC and other international standards related to the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus** and to **ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance** in support and engagement with civil society, while working with civil society actors to help ensure that support enables them to most effectively address these issues in their activities and organisations.

9. Pursuing **co-ordination and dialogue across government, and with related institutions** as appropriate, with a view to ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and respect for the principle of non-discrimination, and to explore how to address obstacles in their own policies and systems to supporting civil society's work with persons in the most vulnerable and marginalised positions, often in humanitarian or fragile contexts, that may arise due to the misapplication or misunderstanding of

international counter-terrorism financing standards aimed at protecting CSOs from potential terrorism financing abuse.

10. Incorporating **adaptive and flexible processes into results management of civil society funding**, that include goals, strategies and indicators, co-defined with civil society where feasible, as well as indicators to assess strengthening an inclusive and independent civil society in partner countries or territories as a result in its own right.

11. **Streamlining administrative requirements for civil society support** to lower transaction costs for civil society and donors including through proportionate, risk-based approaches, harmonising requirements with other donors, and using civil society actor's own or co-defined formats for proposals and reporting.

INCENTIVISING CSO EFFECTIVENESS, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RECOMMENDS that Adherents, when acting in their roles as development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers, incentivise CSO effectiveness, transparency and accountability by:

1. Calling on and supporting CSOs to build on existing good practice and standards in **CSO-led self-regulation, transparency and accountability mechanisms** to broaden CSO participation in such mechanisms at partner country or territory, regional, or international level.

2. Calling on and supporting CSOs to develop **robust internal systems to meet relevant human rights standards** on preventing and responding to discrimination, exploitation, abuse or harassment due to gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, language, age, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, in their activities and organisations.

3. Working with CSOs to invest in **mutual capacity strengthening, especially at partner country or territory level, to address their vulnerability and bolster their resilience and effectiveness**, including capacities **to protect and promote civic space** (paying attention to the distinct barriers and risks faced by particularly vulnerable CSOs such as those working in human rights), **to foster accountability**.

4. Calling for more **equitable partnerships between donor country and/or international CSOs, and the partner country or territory CSOs they work with**, in which the comparative advantages of each type of CSO are appropriately drawn from, capacities are shared, and local ownership and sustainability strengthened, and supporting CSOs to develop tools to better assess equitability of partnerships and local ownership.

5. Promoting **participatory and rights-based approaches for local ownership of CSO's activities** in partner countries or territories throughout programme design, implementation, and monitoring, including instituting rights-holder and constituent feedback mechanisms, while helping ensure that programmes do not exacerbate existing forms of discrimination or inequalities.

6. Fostering **CSO leadership and innovation** in identifying and adapting new approaches **to solving development challenges**, including through partnerships and co-creation with a range of actors and stakeholders, including from the private sector.

7. Encouraging **CSOs at partner country or territory level to collaborate and co-ordinate among themselves and with other actors**, including private sector actors, multilateral institutions, and **all levels of partner country or territory governments**,

with a view to avoiding duplication and competition, building mutual respect, trust, and accountability, and **supporting** such **collaboration and co-ordination** as appropriate.

8. Requiring, as appropriate, **CSO partners' adherence to relevant legal and regulatory requirements** in the partner countries or territories they operate in where such requirements respect human rights, and requiring CSOs to respect international law.

Endnotes

- ¹ OECD (2020), [Joint Statement by the OECD Development Assistance Committee on the COVID-19 Crisis](#).
- ² Guterres, A. (2020), [The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights](#).
- ³ The necessity and urgency of pursuing action to enable civil society were stressed by DAC members at the DAC meetings of 10 Dec. 2019, 23 January, 28 May, 25 June, and 15 July 2020; the informal DAC meeting of 22 October 2020; the 9-10 November 2020 DAC HLM; the 28 November 2019, 14 May and 27 November 2020, and 11 February 2021 Community of Practice (CoP) on Civil Society meetings; the 23 April 2020 DAC Informal Reference Group on Effective Development Co-operation meeting; and at the 7 June 2019 and 4 June 2020 DAC-CSO Dialogues in which over 30 CSOs participated, as well as at the 21 October pre-HLM meeting with CSOs.
- ⁴ OECD DAC (10 November 2020), [DAC High Level Meeting Communiqué 2020](#).
- ⁵ OECD (2010), [Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice](#).
- ⁶ ITAD (2016), [Macro Evaluation of DFID's Policy Frame for Empowerment and Accountability](#).
- ⁷ OECD (2010), op. cit.
- ⁸ UN (2020), [United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#), pp. 2-3.
- ⁹ OECD (2010), op. cit. and Edwards (2011), "Introduction: Civil society and the geometry of human relations", in Edwards, M. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, amongst others.
- ¹⁰ Non-partisan civil society actors may voice positions on public policy issues but maintain political independence by not engaging in party politics by, for example, endorsing or mobilising support for particular political parties or candidates, see e.g. Frumkin, P. (2005), *On Being Non-profit: A Conceptual and Policy Primer*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 54-55.
- ¹¹ See OECD (2010), op.cit. as well as the outcome documents on aid and development effectiveness from the 2008 [Accra Agenda for Action](#) to the 2016 [Nairobi Outcome Document](#).
- ¹² See for example CIVICUS (2020), [People Power Under Attack 2020: A report based on data from the CIVICUS Monitor](#); International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) (2016), op. cit.; and ICNL [Civic Freedom Monitor](#) for specific country examples.
- ¹³ UN (2013), [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Maina Kiai A/HRC/23/39](#); Dupuy, K, J. Ron and A. Prakash (2016), "Hands off my regime! Governments' restrictions on foreign aid to non-governmental organizations in poor and middle-income countries", *World Development*, Vol. 84, pp. 299-311.
- ¹⁴ Global NPO Coalition on FATF (2020), op. cit; McGregor-Lowndes, M. and B. Wyatt (2017), "Conclusion". In McGregor-Lowndes, M. and B. Wyatt (2017), *Regulating Charities: The Inside Story* (pp. 261-292). New York: NY, Routledge, p. 276.
- ¹⁵ International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (2016), op. cit. and OECD (2020), [Digital Transformation and the Futures of Civic Space to 2030](#).
- ¹⁶ UN (2019), [Civil society participation in the implementation of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/41/41/Add.2](#); OECD (2018), [Development Co-operation Report 2018: Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind](#); ActAlliance and Institute of Development Studies (2019), [Development Needs Civil Society – The Implications of Civic Space for the Sustainable Development Goals](#); Fowler, A. and K. Biekart (2020), [Activating Civic Space for Sustainable Development](#).

[Helping and Hindering Factors for Effective CSO Engagement in the SDGs](#); UN (2020), [Covid-19 and Human Rights – We are all in this together](#).

¹⁷ International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (2020), [Coronavirus and Civic Space: Preserving Human Rights During a Pandemic](#).

¹⁸ OECD (2020), op. cit.

¹⁹ See Alizada, N. and R. Cole, L. Gastaldi, S. Grahn, S. Hellmeier, P. Kolvani, J. Lachapelle, A. Lührmann, S. F. Maerz, S. Pillai, and S. I. Lindberg (2021), [Autocratization Turns Viral. Democracy Report 2021](#), University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute; Lührmann, A., S.F. Maerz, S. Grahn, N. Alizada, L. Gastaldi, S. Hellmeier, G. Hindle and S. I. Lindberg (2020). [Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows. Democracy Report 2020](#), Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute; Varieties of Democracy (2018), [Democracy for All? V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2018](#) as cited in Brechenmacher, S. and T. Carothers (2019), [Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck?](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

²⁰ OECD (2020), [Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society](#).

²¹ OECD (2020), [Creditor Reporting System \(database\)](#).

²² Global NPO Coalition on FATF (2020), [Issues: International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law \(2016\), “Closing civic space: Impact on development and humanitarian NGOs”, Global Trends in NGO Law, 7 \(3\)](#).

²³ OECD (2012), [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#).

²⁴ This figure underrepresents the total amount of DAC member flows reaching CSOs, as it does not include DAC member funding CSOs receive through multilateral institutions and partner country governments.

²⁵ This estimate for 2018 is based on figures in OECD (2020), [Creditor Reporting System \(database\)](#). The figure is based on amounts reported by DAC members, not by CSOs themselves, and is considered to under-represent the total amount of such private contributions as noted in OECD (2011), [How DAC Members Work with CSOs](#).

²⁶ To date, evidence and initiatives on civil society effectiveness and accountability in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance have tended to focus on the organised form of civil society, CSOs, which are also the form of civil society actor that donors have tended to support and engage with. Evidence and initiatives on CSO effectiveness and accountability include for example the GPEDC Indicator 2 progress reporting, the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Effectiveness](#), and academic literature such as e.g. Burgher, R. and S. Dineo (2014), “NGO accountability in Africa” in *The Handbook of Civil Society in Africa*, Springer, London, UK. It is more difficult to place boundaries around and assess the effectiveness and accountability of wider and more amorphous civil society.

²⁷ See Naidoo, K. (2004), “The end of blind faith? Civil society and the challenge of accountability, legitimacy and transparency”, [Accountability Forum](#), Vol. 2, pp. 14-25. The tendency toward higher standards of accountability for CSOs is implied in the (former) UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to peaceful assembly and associations 2015 report call for “sectoral equity” between the legal and regulatory treatment of CSOs and businesses, see UN (2015), [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association](#), A/70/266.

²⁸ Examples of collective efforts include the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#), the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#), and countless national-level initiatives.

²⁹ GPEDC (2019), [2019 Progress Report](#), pp. 67-68.

³⁰ GPEDC (2019), op. cit., p. 68.

³¹ OECD (2020), [Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society](#) and see contributions in Brechenmacher, S. and T. Carothers (2018), [Examining Civil Society Legitimacy](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

- ³² Brechenmacher, S., T. Carothers and R. Youngs (2020), [*Civil Society and the Coronavirus: Dynamism Despite Disruption*](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- ³³ Worsley, W (2020), [COVID-19 reveals weak spots in NGO contingency planning](#); LINC (2020), [How Civil Society Organisations in the Global South are Impacted by COVID-19](#).
- ³⁴ See for example Deutsche Welle (30 Sept, 2020), [Aid workers accused of sexual abuse in DR Congo](#).
- ³⁵ See INSPIRES [Resiliency+ Process](#).
- ³⁶ Youngs, R. (ed.) (2018), [The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- ³⁷ Recent studies and donor policies in which how donors support civil society, CSO accountability, and civic space, are shown as interlinked include Brechenmacher, S. and T. Carothers (2019), op. cit.; Bossuyt, J. and M. Monceray (2020), [Claiming Back Civic Space: Towards Approaches Fit for 2030?](#); Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (2020), [Responding to the Contested Space for Civil Society](#); Sida (2019), [Guiding Principles for Sida's Engagement with and Support to Civil Society](#); and OECD (2020), op. cit..
- ³⁸ Based on Edwards, M. (2011), op. cit., p. 4.
- ³⁹ See endnote 10.
- ⁴⁰ Drawing from OECD (2010), op. cit., p. 26 and European Commission (2012), [The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations](#), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions, p. 3.
- ⁴¹ Based on UN (2020), [United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#), pp. 2-3.
- ⁴² See endnote 26.