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DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE  
Development Assistance Committee

## Working Party on Aid Effectiveness

### THE OPEN FORUM FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND THE ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES

Istanbul, Turkey, 28-30 September 2010

*Following the Accra Agenda for Action's invitation to CSOs "to reflect on how they can apply the Paris principles of aid effectiveness" (para 20.a), the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness was launched. This forum, which includes CSOs from all levels of engagement, began over 60 regional, sectoral and national consultations worldwide to discuss the principles for CSO development effectiveness. The resulting principles were endorsed in the first Open Forum Assembly in Istanbul, and will be an important input for the HLF-4 to be held in Busan, Korea in 2011.*

*This document is available in PDF only.*

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## **THE OPEN FORUM FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND THE ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES**

The Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness is a unique space for CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) worldwide to engage in a global participatory process towards defining and introducing a framework of mutually shared development effectiveness principles. Through the Open Forum, which will be operating from 2009 until the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, CSOs are striving to **build a consensus** on commonly accepted **principles to improve their development effectiveness (AAA, para. 20 a)** and on **minimum standards for enabling environment (AAA, para 20.c)** where CSOs can fully apply and strengthen their specific roles in development.

This framework will take into account CSO development visions, approaches, relationships, and impacts of their actions. To develop this framework, the Open Forum is also facilitating **multi-stakeholder dialogues** between CSOs, donors and governments on these issues at country, regional and international levels.

The first Global Assembly of the Open Forum was held in **Istanbul, Turkey** from **28-30 September, 2010**, and welcomed more than 190 participants from almost 80 countries, including stakeholders from civil society organisations at all levels of engagement, as well as representatives from government and donor agencies.

Based on the inputs and content generated from over 60 regional, sectoral and national consultations organised by CSOs over the past six months to discuss the principles for CSOs development effectiveness, the mechanisms for their implementation as well as minimum standards for enabling conditions, eight principles were drafted and presented to the Global Assembly for endorsement. After further discussion, debate and refinement at the event, the Open Forum Global Assembly endorsed eight development effectiveness principles for CSO Development Effectiveness (referred to as the Istanbul Principles).

The development and endorsement of these eight principles is a very important step in the process towards CSOs defining and introducing a complete Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. The Draft Framework and Synthesis Report of the national consultations will be further developed and debated in the coming months, through a series of regional seminars, thematic consultations and multi-stakeholder engagement. Much of the upcoming work in finalising the Framework will focus around refining and gathering more inputs to further develop the guidelines, mechanisms and indicators that CSOs can use to measure their adherence to the Istanbul Principles.

Another important task ahead will address the relevance of these principles as they relate to the existence of an enabling environment for CSO development work. Therefore, the Open Forum will also be undertaking further CSO and multi-stakeholder discussions to clearly enunciate and define the minimum standards for an enabling environment for CSOs across the globe.

These principles were presented in a special meeting at the OECD Conference Centre on 25 October 2010 in the fringes of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness plenary.

## **Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles<sup>1</sup>**

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. CSOs collaborate with the full diversity of people and promote their rights. The essential characteristics of CSOs as distinct development actors – that they are voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, autonomous, non-violent, working and collaborating for change – are the foundation for the Istanbul principles for CSO development effectiveness. These principles guide the work and practices of civil society organizations in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

### **1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

### **2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl's rights**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

### **3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

### **4. Promote Environmental Sustainability**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

### **5. Practice transparency and accountability**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

### **6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

### **7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

### **8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change**

**CSOs are effective as development actors when they ...** collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Guided by these Istanbul principles, CSOs are committed to take pro-active actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. Equally important will be enabling policies and practices by all actors. Through actions consistent with these principles, donor and partner country governments demonstrate their Accra Agenda for Action pledge that they "share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential". All governments have an obligation to uphold basic human rights – among others, the right to association, the right to assembly, and the freedom of expression. Together these are pre-conditions for effective development.

Istanbul, Turkey  
September 29, 2010

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<sup>1</sup> **Please note**, the Istanbul Principles, as agreed at the Open Forum's Global Assembly in Istanbul, September 28 -30, 2010, are the foundation of the Open Forum's Draft *International Framework on CSO Development Effectiveness*. These principles are further elaborated in Version 2 of this *Framework*, which is being updated and will be found on the Open Forum's web site, [www.cso-effectiveness.org](http://www.cso-effectiveness.org).