

# Effective multi-stakeholder engagement to realize the 2030 Agenda in Canada

Formal arrangements for effective multi-stakeholder engagement are a key element in ensuring whole-of-society approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Based on a review of good practices emerging from around the world, this policy brief provides a series of recommendations for how the Canadian government can develop effective mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement.

## Key messages

- While consultation on the development of national priorities and in reporting on progress to the United Nations appears to be a widespread standard practice, the extent to which countries are establishing institutionalized mechanisms for long-term, inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation is unclear.
- Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy should include a plan for inclusive and long-term multi-stakeholder engagement, institutionalize engagement mechanisms and set out provisions for periodic consultations and engagement.
- Canada's approach to multi-stakeholder engagement should be informed by the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda such as participation and leaving no one behind as well as principles that ensure engagement is timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed, inclusive, and iterative.

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## Introduction

In 2015, world leaders adopted the United Nations' [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). The 2030 Agenda, which introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sets out a transformative plan for people and planet. It aims to promote shared prosperity, environmental sustainability and progress on sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Realizing the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda requires a whole-of-society approach. Governments, citizens, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector all have roles to play in contributing to sustainable development outcomes.

Nearly four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, many countries have put in place building blocks for its implementation as shown by reviews of government reporting to the [United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in [2016](#), [2017](#) and [2018](#). Many countries have integrated the SDGs into policy frameworks. Institutional and governance mechanisms have been established to oversee and evaluate progress on implementation. Partnerships across sectors are forming, while systems for monitoring and evaluation are being put in place. However, progress has been mixed across countries, particularly in terms of the extent to which countries have localized implementation of the 2030 Agenda, integrated its transformative elements into policies and practices, and developed enabling environments that promote whole-of-society contributions to sustainable development.

A key element in ensuring whole-of-society approaches to 2030 Agenda implementation is the establishment of formal arrangements for effective multi-stakeholder engagement. Mechanisms support the use of transformative elements in the agenda related to inclusivity, leaving no one behind and partnership. They have the potential to create inclusive spaces for ongoing discussions about priorities and progress, knowledge sharing and partnership development.

This policy brief outlines emerging standard and good practices with respect to the establishment of long-term mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda with the aim of informing Canada's approach. It is based on a review of country reporting to the High-level Political Forum over the 2016–18 period through [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#) reports, which collectively serve as a key element of international follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda implementation. Interviews were also conducted with 12 civil society organizations in 10 countries<sup>1</sup> to validate information presented in VNR reports. In addition, the brief provides an overview of key considerations for the Canadian context and concludes with recommendations for Canada. An annex with detailed information on the specific good practices highlighted in this brief serves as a useful resource for the Canadian government and other stakeholders that are interested in the adoption and promotion of good practices for 2030 Agenda implementation.

## What is a good practice?

### TRANSFORMATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA

A good practice is an activity or approach that demonstrates incorporation of one or more of the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda. The agenda is human rights-based and focuses on the inclusion of, and change for, the poorest and most vulnerable by promoting their inherent dignity and human rights through efforts to leave no one behind. Efforts are informed by inclusivity, solidarity and participation. The 2030 Agenda is universal in that it applies to all countries and people. The economic, social and environmental pillars of the 2030 Agenda are of equal importance, with the SDGs being integrated and indivisible—achievements under any one goal are linked to progress on others. Implementation of the agenda should occur with respect for planetary boundaries and inter-generational responsibility, recognizing the need to protect the planet's resources now and for future generations. Importantly, good practices respect the aspirational nature of the 2030 Agenda, demonstrably moving beyond standard practices or business-as-usual approaches. Finally, the 2030 Agenda is grounded in commitments to transparency and accountability.

<sup>1</sup> Interviews were carried out with civil society organizations from the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Nepal, Norway, South Korea and Switzerland. Interviews were also conducted with organizations from El Salvador and India, though practices from these countries are not included in the brief. This brief also includes a number of good practices based on VNR reports for other countries, but it should be noted that information for these countries could not be validated beyond additional Web-based searches.

-  **HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH**
-  **LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**
-  **INTEGRATED AND INDIVISIBLE**
-  **INCLUSIVITY AND PARTICIPATION**
-  **PROGRESS WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES**
-  **INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**
-  **ASPIRATIONAL**
-  **TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### Principles for effective multi-stakeholder engagement

Multi-stakeholder engagement should be timely, open, transparent, informed, inclusive, and iterative. In addition to the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda, the selection of good practices is informed by established principles for effective multi-stakeholder engagement that aim to ensure meaningful, inclusive, sincere and purposeful whole-of-society approaches to 2030 Agenda implementation.<sup>2</sup>



#### ENGAGEMENT IS TIMELY

Effective multi-stakeholder engagement should be timely. This means that stakeholders are given sufficient time frames for their engagement that are well established and communicated in advance of actual engagement opportunities.

#### ENGAGEMENT IS OPEN AND INCLUSIVE

The pledge to leave no one behind means that engagement mechanisms should be open and inclusive, providing all people and groups with opportunities to participate. Openness, however, is not sufficient to ensure inclusivity. Extra efforts are often needed to ensure the presence and participation of people and groups that are most often left behind. Providing information in local languages and making use of a range of methods for engagement, including both offline and online options, are also important. Inclusivity can be bolstered by working with representative organizations for non-state actors, such as civil society platforms and business associations.

#### ENGAGEMENT IS TRANSPARENT

Multi-stakeholder engagement should be transparent, with information on engagement processes and plans being clear and widely communicated. Moreover, information related to engagement processes should be published in a timely fashion. This means information and documentation that inform engagement processes are published in advance and feedback is provided to participants during the follow-up to engagement processes.

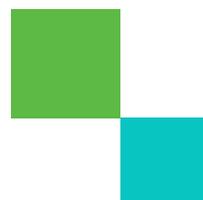
#### ENGAGEMENT IS INFORMED

Effective multi-stakeholder engagement requires that participants are informed about the purpose of engagement, how their inputs will be used and the overall expected outcomes. Documentation should be provided ahead of all interactions with ample time, clear deadlines and appropriate tools to provide feedback. There should also be follow-up reports and documentation on how inputs have been considered.

#### ENGAGEMENT IS ITERATIVE

Lastly, effective multi-stakeholder engagement should be iterative. Engagement is not a singular process or event but rather a continuous process where multiple opportunities for ongoing engagement exist for different stakeholders. Dialogue should be two-way between those hosting the consultations and those in attendance with mechanisms for engagement institutionalized to provide long-term dialogue for continuous input from non-state

<sup>2</sup> These principles have been adapted from [A Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue](#).



actors. Embedding engagement mechanisms within institutions and as part of regular practices is important to ensure their longevity through changes in governments.

## Standard practices

Consecutive civil society reviews of VNR reports from 2016, 2017 and 2018 show a number of emerging standard practices with respect to multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation. Most governments are holding consultations to establish national priorities and targets and consulting with civil society organizations, academia, the private sector and religious groups. Countries are also consulting with a range of non-state actors during the development of their VNR reports, using both online and offline mechanisms. The 2018 civil society review of VNR reports, however, showed limited progress on the establishment of institutionalized long-term mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement, with only 18 of 46 reporting countries presenting information on this topic. While consultation on the development of national priorities and VNR reports appears to be a widespread standard practice, implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires efforts to engage with stakeholders over the longer term. Individual consultation efforts neither capture the views and ongoing needs of different stakeholders nor provide the necessary basis to build trust and partnerships across sectors and promote whole-of-society approaches to implementation.

## Good practices

The VNR reports and interviews with civil society organizations highlight a number of established good practices around mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement. These good practices include developing formal plans that detail how there will be engagement with stakeholders. Mechanisms that are jointly established between a government and other stakeholders, or established for the longer term, are also good practices. Planning regular meetings that are widely publicized in advance, supporting non-state actors to participate through their own platforms, and hosting meetings in local languages are all good practices. Other good practices include developing mechanisms for engagement that ensure no one is left behind, bring together views from a wide cross-section of society and include special efforts to improve accessibility, using multiple forms of engagement. Finally, a good practice is establishing long-term mechanisms for engagement but also including specific multi-stakeholder initiatives for participation at key moments in 2030 Agenda implementation, such as during VNR reporting or drafting of national strategies.

## ENGAGEMENT IS TIMELY

Developing a multi-stakeholder engagement plan early and scheduling regular meetings ensure that there is commitment to a long-term plan for engagement from the planning and implementation stages through to monitoring and evaluation. Both **Colombia** and **Uganda** established national development plans that detail their respective strategies to achieve sustainable development and how they will include stakeholders in the process. **Sri Lanka** developed a plan dedicated to multi-stakeholder engagement that details how, when and where stakeholders will be engaged throughout the implementation process. Not only do these efforts contribute to timely engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation, they also contribute to other principles for effective engagement—ensuring engagement efforts are transparent, informed and iterative.

In terms of regular meetings, **Ireland** hosts an [annual national forum](#) where representatives across all sectors come together to work on policy coherence and action towards the SDGs. **Vietnam** also holds an annual conference to engage with a range of stakeholders, including those from the private sector.

Finally, **Canada's** approach to preparing [Federal Sustainable Development Strategies](#) is grounded in legislation that sets out an obligation for the government to carry out extensive consultations according to a predetermined timetable. This approach provides a legal basis for ensuring that consultations are timely.

## ENGAGEMENT IS OPEN AND INCLUSIVE

Having an open and inclusive process for engagement contributes to ensuring that no one is left behind and domestic efforts reflect the needs of a country's diverse population. Even when engagement processes are open in terms of who can participate, inclusion is not automatic. A good practice from **Ireland** shows that governments and other stakeholders can actively work to ensure inclusivity. At each annual national forum, participants discuss who is missing and who needs to be included the following year.

Establishing long-term engagement mechanisms for non-state actors can contribute to an environment of inclusiveness. A government's engagement with stakeholders is critical not only because it aligns with the underlying transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda, but also many non-state actors are closer to communities and therefore better able to engage with marginalized groups. **Nepal** has developed a national forum for the government to consult on SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions that includes discussion and partnership with civil society. In this context, it is

important that such a mechanism respects and supports the right of non-state actors to organize among themselves how they will engage. In the **United Arab Emirates**, youth councils have been established in local communities to identify local priorities and provide inputs on SDG implementation.

Where and how engagement occurs also impact inclusivity. Engagement mechanisms must reach rural areas—consultations and forums cannot only be held in urban centres. Using offline and online forms of engagement and providing opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the language of their choice are also important. In **Germany**, stakeholder consultation processes occurred throughout the country and moved beyond large cities. In **Benin**, the government's engagement initiatives were implemented in indigenous languages to reach all communities. Such efforts contribute to ensuring that groups are not left behind and everyone can be included in engagement opportunities.

### ENGAGEMENT IS TRANSPARENT

Multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms must be transparent to ensure that all stakeholders know who is involved, when engagement is happening and the platforms through which they can get involved. **Cameroon** has focused on enabling constructive dialogue between civil society and the government on specific themes through Common Working and Collaboration Platforms. The effectiveness of these platforms has been bolstered through the [Civil Society Engagement Charter](#) and Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework that, among other things, clearly lay out how stakeholders can work with the government to participate in national SDG implementation. In **Finland**, a network of experts from statistics, research, evaluation, policy and other stakeholder groups monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the mapping of associated indicators. The inclusion of a range of stakeholders in formal SDG working arrangements is important to transparency regarding who and how stakeholders are engaged. These approaches also support efforts to ensure that engagement is timely, inclusive, informed and iterative.

**Indonesia** developed a set of principles related to multi-stakeholder engagement for its most recent VNR report. The principles contribute to transparency regarding how stakeholders can expect consultations to unfold. **Latvia** reported in its 2018 VNR report that transparent processes for multi-stakeholder engagement have been established through which citizens can send opinions and ideas on how to achieve the SDGs to the government for consideration. Draft SDG documents are published on the government's website under a

section titled "Public Participation," which provides transparency on the policy-making process and an open opportunity for engagement. Citizens have the right to comment and make suggestions on all draft SDG documents.

### ENGAGEMENT IS INFORMED

Stakeholders should be properly and sufficiently informed to be able to provide input and feedback on SDG implementation. **Ireland** used a stakeholder consultation workshop during its VNR process where participants representing national civil society and private sector stakeholder groups could learn about the proposed VNR report and provide feedback on it. A summary of this workshop is included in the VNR report to ensure transparency and accountability. This mechanism allows stakeholders to verify government reporting. By providing an opportunity to provide feedback, like confirming or identifying areas in need of improvement, stakeholders are directly engaged in the VNR process. In **Benin**, stakeholders are also engaged in the VNR report drafting process and helped identify national priorities. The government acknowledged the need to continue capacity-building initiatives at the local level for greater informed participation. A platform called [Futuro en Común](#) was created in **Spain** to promote learning among and mobilization of stakeholders, ensuring that they are well informed before forums.

### ENGAGEMENT IS ITERATIVE

For it to be successful, multi-stakeholder engagement must be a continuous process with diverse mechanisms that are institutionalized at the government level. In addition to the long-term engagement mechanisms mentioned above, other countries have institutionalized multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation. **Brazil** has institutionalized the [CSO Working Group for the 2030 Agenda](#), an advisory body made up of various civil society organizations. This working group monitors progress on the SDGs in the country and is responsible for disseminating information on the SDGs among different stakeholders at both the national and sub-national levels. Brazil has also institutionalized its National Commission, which provides continual engagement with many different stakeholders. It is a permanent body that is directly responsible for implementing and monitoring progress on the SDGs in the country. Both are long-term engagement mechanisms to ensure that diverse inputs are used throughout implementation.

**Finland** has a permanent [National Commission for Sustainable Development](#) that was created to reflect the diversity of its

population and therefore includes civil society organizations, minority groups, academia, Indigenous peoples, refugees and government officials. This commission is responsible for many aspects of SDG implementation including developing the SDG agenda, monitoring and reviewing, and supporting multi-stakeholder engagement throughout society. **Cameroon** has developed a Monitoring, Review and Accountability Framework that institutionalized dialogue between civil society organizations and the government and outlines how stakeholders can interact with advisors, government officials and others to ensure that they know their responsibilities.

## Multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda in Canada

### TRANSFORMATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND CANADA

The transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda have implications for how Canada engages stakeholders in realizing progress on sustainable development. Ensuring no one is left behind involves establishing engagement opportunities for and with historically marginalized groups that address key barriers to meaningful participation faced by particular groups. In Canada, marginalized groups include women, youth, newcomers to the country, single parents, seniors, racialized minorities, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ and non-binary individuals.<sup>3</sup> Engaging youth pertains to intergenerational responsibility and the notion that there is an additional, invisible stakeholder deserving consideration in every engagement process. There is a particular need to recognize Canada's history with Indigenous peoples to create an opportunity for deeper consultation and partnerships moving forward for reconciliation.

Canada is a regionally and demographically diverse country. Ensuring inclusivity and participation means that multi-stakeholder engagement must reflect the diversity of stakeholder groups whose backgrounds and identities must be fully recognized. In creating meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement opportunities, much of the action will be the responsibility of the provincial, regional and municipal levels. These government levels are responsible for engaging citizens, community groups and youth at the local level. Moreover, effective multi-stakeholder engagement in Canada must ensure that engagement occurs in both official languages, through online and offline formats, and with in-person engagements held outside of the Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal regions to include other urban centres, rural areas and especially northern communities.

### BUILDING ON EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES

In Canada, there is currently no long-term mechanism or plan for multi-stakeholder engagement to specifically implement the 2030 Agenda. An opportunity exists for the government to establish strong provisions for inclusive engagement going forward. The government is developing Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy, with the aim of releasing a draft version before July 2019. An [engagement website](#) has been launched to consult Canadians on the strategy. An opportunity exists to strengthen engagement in the development of the strategy as well as include provisions for ongoing multi-stakeholder engagement within the strategy. Moreover, according to Canada's SDG Unit housed at Employment and Social Development Canada, the government plans to establish an External Advisory Group in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

The inclusion of provisions for multi-stakeholder engagement should build on lessons learned from previous efforts as well as existing good practices that provide templates for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda. While there is no long-term mechanism or plan, there has been some progress in the multi-stakeholder engagement process for the SDGs that was highlighted in [Canada's 2018 VNR report](#). Among other examples, this progress includes the year-long national consultation processes for the development of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017, the ongoing consultation for the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and its triennial updates, and particularly the development of the revised [Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance](#) in 2017 and Canada's model of engagement with civil society since then.

[Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) was developed by Global Affairs Canada in 2017 after an extensive consultation process with over 15,000 participants, including through diplomatic missions overseas. Global Affairs Canada used both online and offline mechanisms for engagement and published a report titled [What We Heard](#) at the end of the process. This engagement on policy was open, inclusive and informed. The process made use of multiple mechanisms for participation, included a broad range of stakeholders and invited feedback from participants.

By law, Canada is required to prepare a [Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#) on a regular basis every three years for parliamentary approval. The strategy is tabled by the minister of environment and climate change. Each strategy sets out environmental sustainability priorities for the country including goals,

<sup>3</sup> Canada's 2018 VNR report submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development noted key marginalized groups in the country.

<sup>4</sup> As noted by Gail Mitchell, Director General, Employment and Social Development Canada, in [March 2019](#).

targets and actions. Consultation on a strategy is legislated through the 2008 Federal Sustainable Development Act,<sup>5</sup> which ensures that the consultation process is timely, transparent and informed. Previous consultations have had demonstrable impacts on Federal Sustainable Development Strategies as well as the consultation process. For example, consultations for the 2016-19 strategy led to the inclusion of more ambitious targets for the government and greater linkages to the SDGs, particularly the integration of the social and economic dimensions of sustainability. The 2019-22 draft strategy is now out for consultation. To improve the accessibility of the consultation process based on feedback from the consultations for the previous strategy, the government has prepared a portal that enables citizens to more easily search and sort information in the draft strategy for commenting. Finally, Canada's approach is iterative. A Sustainable Development Advisory Council that comprises representatives from across the country, including Indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and trade unions, provides advice on draft strategies.

Canada's [Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance](#) also shows good practices in multi-stakeholder engagement. Global Affairs Canada launched a revised policy in 2017, which was accompanied by the establishment of a [Civil Society Policy Advisory Group](#) that is mandated with developing a clear implementation strategy. This is an important precedent-setting advisory group that could inform a multi-stakeholder approach to SDG implementation and Canada's approach to developing an External Advisory Group.

### HARNESSING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER NETWORKS AND REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Canada's approach to multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda will also need to consider existing efforts by Canadians to organize around sustainable development. Canada has well-established networks for civil society, academia and the private sector. There is the [Canadian Council for International Co-operation](#) and eight [provincial and regional councils](#) that connect and represent nearly 400 civil society organizations within the country. [Alliance 2030](#) is a platform that provides organizations, institutions and individuals with an opportunity to connect and collaborate on the SDGs. The [United Nations Global Compact Network Canada](#) is another organization that acts to engage the private sector in achieving the SDGs. Through their work, companies are able to share good practices and build capacity to implement sustainable business

practices. The [Sustainable Development Solutions Network Canada](#), based at the University of Waterloo, promotes practical solutions for sustainable development. [Community Foundations of Canada](#), a national network for Canada's 191 community foundations, is working with communities across Canada to support sustainable development. Lastly, the [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#) has been working to engage Canadian municipalities on the 2030 Agenda and provides an important entry point to working with local governments. An important element going forward will be making use of these networks and respecting how these stakeholders have self-organized.

### LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND IN CANADA

Leaving no one behind is as much about achieving results that accelerate progress for marginalized and vulnerable groups as it is about people and their inclusion in the process. Although Canada has much to be proud of, including its strong democratic and social institutions, and a high average standard of living, many people in Canadian society are at risk of being left behind. Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2S+ communities, refugees and diaspora communities, people with disabilities, youth and seniors are particularly marginalized and vulnerable. Strong multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation is key to addressing gaps.

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Following the release of several reports in 2015 by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)—including 94 Calls to Action—and publication of Canada's 2018 VNR report, Indigenous leaders in the country stated a need for First Nations to be considered as full partners in achieving development that is truly sustainable. To realize the 2030 Agenda and close the gap in the quality of life between First Nations and other Canadians, the [Assembly of First Nations](#) has proposed working with the government to achieve the SDGs. This proposition includes developing a robust National Strategy co-developed with First Nations that includes mutually agreed mechanisms to share Crown revenue. It also includes working with First Nations on inclusive ways to collect and analyze data and evaluate progress on the SDGs.<sup>6</sup>

Renewing focus on engagement with Indigenous stakeholders is pivotal for achieving both the 2030 Agenda and reconciliation. Indigenous peoples across the world have a shared history of marginalization and weak socio-economic outcomes compared to their non-Indigenous neighbours. Indigenous peoples also tend to

<sup>5</sup> Recently, the government agreed to [strengthen this legislation](#), creating an obligation to take into account comments received through consultation, increase Indigenous peoples' representation on the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, and incorporate principles related to intergenerational equity and sustainable development.

<sup>6</sup> The Assembly of First Nations [participated at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July 2017 and spoke about achieving the 2030 Agenda in Canada and the need to develop a national strategy in collaboration

be disproportionately affected by food insecurity, poor health and substandard housing. Since none of the SDGs directly focus on Indigenous peoples, an Indigenous lens needs to be applied across the full spectrum of the SDGs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of this stakeholder group.

### LGBTQ2S+

At home and abroad, Canada promotes human rights to ensure that all people are free from discrimination regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Although the government has made this commitment, 40% of LGBTQ2S+ youth experience homelessness in Canada according to the [Homeless Hub](#). Many of these youth experience homelessness due to discrimination and abuse. Ensuring openness and inclusivity in multi-stakeholder engagement in the country necessarily means identifying ways to strengthen and encourage engagement with LGBTQ2S+ communities. Due attention is also needed to ensure that opportunities for engagement are safe and secure in light of the discrimination that LGBTQ2S+ communities face.

### REFUGEES AND DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

Canada is well known for its diversity and large diaspora communities. However, diaspora communities do not consistently share in the same standard of living as other Canadians. Moreover, diverse diaspora communities are often not sufficiently consulted by different levels of government. [Diaspora communities in Ontario](#), for example, have called for the use of a range of principles to inform and deepen engagement, including: voice, participation and inclusivity; transparency; partnership; differentiation (recognizing diversity within each diaspora community); knowledge- and evidence-based

engagement; and innovation (ensuring that engagement harnesses the innovative work of diaspora communities).

### PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Canada is striving to remove barriers for people with disabilities to ensure their success in communities and workplaces, including through legislation, policies and specific programs at federal, provincial and municipal levels. Deepening engagement with them on the 2030 Agenda necessarily means working with disability organizations to ensure that opportunities for engagement, including institutionalized engagement mechanisms, are accessible and barrier-free, respecting the approaches to engagement preferred by people with disabilities.

### INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Canada's 2018 VNR report identifies youth and seniors as at risk of being left behind. Youth face increasing employment, social and environmental pressures in a changing world. Canada is seeing an increase in mental health problems among youth, with youth unemployment being a concern. Seniors in Canada have faced high levels of poverty in the past. The government has taken a number of steps to ensure that youth and seniors are not left behind, as outlined in the country's VNR report. As it develops Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy, engagement with youth and seniors, alongside the other stakeholder groups mentioned above, is critical to ensure that the needs and priorities of those most at risk of being left behind are included. Moreover, the principle of intergenerational responsibility signifies not only considering the impacts of actions for future generations, but also ensuring meaningful inclusion of youth in efforts to engage stakeholders on the 2030 Agenda.



Photo Credit: Suzanne Ure, CCIC 2018 Annual Conference.



## Recommendations

Canada has demonstrated good practices in terms of multi-stakeholder engagement in the past and plans to improve such engagement going forward. An opportunity exists for the government to draw on international good practices and ensure a principled approach as it develops Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy and sets out provisions for multi-stakeholder engagement. Five key recommendations emerge from this review of international good practices and in light of the Canadian context.

### **The development of Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy should be extensive and inclusive.**

From the beginning, the process should set out clear opportunities for engagement in both official languages, include online and offline elements, and be undertaken across all levels of government in partnership with civil society networks, Indigenous peoples, the private sector, youth, diaspora communities and academia.

### **A plan for long-term institutionalized multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda should be established.**

Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy should include a plan for inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement that sets clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for engagement of a range of non-state actors and government bodies. In addition to setting out provisions for long-term institutionalized multi-stakeholder engagement, the plan should outline how Canada will make use of existing multi-stakeholder engagement opportunities, such as consultations on Federal Sustainable Development Strategies and coordination mechanisms that include different levels of government, and ad hoc or periodic engagement opportunities, such as reporting on progress in Canada and to the United Nations.

### **The planned External Advisory Group should be comprised of a range of stakeholders and make use of existing representative coalitions of stakeholders.**

The External Advisory Group should include civil society networks, Indigenous groups, refugee and minority groups, people with disabilities or their representatives, youth, the private sector, academia and local government associations. The mandate of the External Advisory Group should include engagement in policy development, coordination, monitoring and reporting on 2030 Agenda implementation, including partnering on the development of VNR reports. Moreover, members of the External Advisory Group should be supported to consult with their respective constituencies in order to ensure that the inputs they provide are representative of a wide range of stakeholders.

### **Provisions for multi-stakeholder engagement should include efforts to ensure that those most at risk of being left behind in Canada—Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2S+ communities, women, refugees and diaspora communities, racialized minorities, people with disabilities, youth and seniors—are supported to participate.**

In the spirit of reconciliation, the government should formalize a partnership with Indigenous peoples using methodologies for effective engagement that respect their approaches. Indigenous peoples

should be consulted independently throughout all SDG planning and implementation stages and as members of the External Advisory Group.

It is important that all engagement mechanisms are open, accessible, safe and inclusive of all groups. Accessibility for different groups includes location, how information is presented to make it accessible for people with disabilities and seniors, and safety and security concerns for people from communities that experience discrimination. Groups face specific concerns that should inform engagement opportunities and must be addressed to ensure that no one is left behind.

**Stakeholder engagement—formal and ad hoc—should adhere to the principles for effective multi-stakeholder engagement and be timely, open, inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative.**

This means establishing clear timelines and provisions for engagement with appropriate lead times, using varied and inclusive approaches, engaging stakeholders from across regions and outside of large metropolitan areas, actively working to include marginalized and vulnerable groups and their representatives, and providing feedback on how inputs received from stakeholders have been used.

