

Position Paper

Presented by CECI

For Canada's International Assistance Review
Consultation

To Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| Human Rights and Governance | 3 |
| Women’s Rights and Gender Equality | 5 |
| Recommendations | 5 |
| Sustainable Development for Clean Economic Growth | 7 |
| Recommendations | 7 |
| Recommendations for Sustainable Agricultural Development | 8 |
| Recommendations on Environmental Challenges and Economic Opportunities | 9 |
| Concerted Actions in Times of Humanitarian Crisis for Peace and Security Throughout the World | 11 |
| Recommendations | 11 |
| Recommendations for an Emergency, Reconstruction and Development Continuum | 11 |
| Recommendations for a Complementary Network of Actors and Donors | 12 |
| Recommendations on Resilience, Dialogue and Violence Prevention | 13 |
| To Get Results, Target Stability and Longevity and Accept the Risks of Innovation | 14 |
| Recommendations on Delivery Mechanisms | 14 |
| Recommendations on Innovation | 15 |
| Recommendations for Fruitful Partnerships | 16 |
| Recommendations on ODA Transparency and Canadian Involvement | 17 |
| Closing Remarks | 18 |

Introduction

The Centre for International Study and Cooperation (CECI) sincerely thanks Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for inviting Canadian civil society organizations to take part in a review consultation on Canada's international assistance.

Created in 1958, CECI is the longest-standing international cooperation organization in Quebec and one of the most prominent in Canada. CECI's mission is to combat poverty and exclusion by mobilizing key change agents in the global South and North to promote sustainable socio-economic development, reduce poverty, establish egalitarian gender relations and increase the security of the most vulnerable populations.

CECI was thrilled to learn of GAC's undertaking of a consultation process and its publication of the document, *International Assistance Review – Discussion Paper*. We were very pleased with the openness of this document, particularly around themes and issues that have dropped off the radar in Canadian international assistance over the past ten years, such as human rights, women's rights and governance—all building blocks for just world that is free of poverty and inequality.

It is our view that all of the strategic matters put forth in the International Assistance Review are interrelated and of utmost importance. We believe that development must be democratic and equitable, that it must respect human rights, including those of women and minorities, and that it must be ecologically sound. This is only possible in a society where public institutions demonstrate good governance and where civil society is active, represents the various segments of a population and participates in governance.

We would like to emphasize that CECI adheres to the set of suggestions and recommendations submitted to the permanent Foreign Affairs Committee last spring by the *Association québécoise des organisations de coopération internationale* (AQOCI) and the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), of which CECI is a member.

Human Rights and Governance

CECI actively contributed to the incorporation of human rights into the bilateral programs of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We were among the first to develop human rights and democratic development projects in the early 90's and provided training to CIDA staff on rights-based development.

In 2008, the Canadian government adopted the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act requiring all initiatives to **1)** contribute to poverty reduction, **2)** take into account the perspectives of the poor, and **3)** be consistent with the international human rights standards to which Canada subscribes. Canada use the Act as a basis for implementing Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to promote peaceful, inclusive societies, secure access to justice for all people and establish effective, inclusive, accountable institutions at all levels.

With nearly 60 years of experience in the field, CECI would now like to share with you the following thoughts and recommendations for Canada to make an effective, lasting contribution to the implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda:

- 1) A true democracy is rooted in people's ability to avail themselves of their rights and fulfill their responsibilities toward the common good, and in the commitment of skilled administrative authorities and their elected officials. *We encourage the Canadian government to build the capacities of local civil society so they can support citizen participation (with the active participation of women and youth), and so they can advocate for dialogue with authorities.*
- 2) Local development is a necessary step toward building democratic societies in which the rule of law and good governance prevail. It is a process by which a community, including men, women and youth, becomes a driver of change at the local level, with a view to improving the community's living conditions. It is founded upon two major pillars: local governance and socioeconomic development. *We encourage the Canadian government to support local initiatives that coordinate administrative and political structures with regional and national structures.*
- 3) Laws and regulations define the roles and powers assigned to the various levels of decentralized structures. Sectoral policies provide directions and guidelines for local actions. Networks of lobbyists or political representatives revolve around geographic or sectoral representations, such as when associations of local elected officials at the national level depend on regional associations. *We encourage the Canadian government to support programs that aim to give people in positions of power and authority the skills needed to fulfill their mandates, that put appropriate local management mechanisms and processes into place, and that ensure strong command of said mechanisms and processes.*
- 4) Women and girls are both actors and beneficiaries of social, political and economic transformations, and CECI considers their full participation vital to human development and democracy. *We encourage the Canadian government to pay close attention to gender equality issues in terms of women's equal representation, active participation, and access to and control over resources. Further, we encourage the adoption of laws and effective policies targeting gender equality.*

- 5) One key factor to success is establishing a dialogue and cooperation between local elected officials, agents of the State and private businesses. This promotes inclusion, builds respect for diversity and makes it possible to protect human rights. *We encourage the Canadian government to prioritize substantial, long-term funding of approaches rooted in human rights and innovation.*
- 6) It is future generations that will make the difference. Education is a fundamental right far too often denied, especially to girls as well as cultural and ethnic minorities. Education is the key to every person's ability to fully exercise their rights. *We encourage the Canadian government to place particular emphasis on initiatives that promote education such as socio-professional training, especially for women, girls and youth, and for all marginalized groups.*

Last but not least, we commend the government for its commitment to the underprivileged people of the world, such as indigenous people, lower castes, ethnic and sexual minorities and persons with disabilities. We believe that Canada can once again play a leading role on the international scene to ensure that the rights of all people are upheld. To achieve this, it must first look inward to its own lands and people and align its domestic principles with those it promotes abroad. We congratulate the current government its commitments toward the indigenous peoples of Canada and encourage it to continue in this vein by recognizing transgressions, making reparations and changing its policies and the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. We also applaud the government for at last agreeing to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, unconditionally.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

For many years, Canada has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality. Whether by its own convictions or in response to constructive dialogue with Canada's civil society, it has played an important and recognized role throughout the world through its initiatives promoting the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. We were thrilled to read that *"empowerment of women and girls and the promotion and protection of their rights through the advancement of gender equality will be a central theme of Canada's international assistance. This feminist lens will be applied throughout all of Canada's international assistance programs."*

We were, however, disappointed to read the title of the section, *Health and Rights of Women and Children*. This title is confusing and, unfortunately, confines women to the role of a mother and emphasizes only maternal and reproductive health issues, when, in fact, it has been widely shown that women play multiple roles in their communities and societies. It is important that GAC reframe this strategic issue so that gender equality and women's rights are presented as a specific development objective through which social, economic, political and cultural factors that affect women's rights can be addressed holistically and inclusively and be acknowledged for the influence they have on the progression of a society. Gender equality and women's rights, including joint actions with local partners to address tough issues like violence against women, must be approached from an angle that is comprehensive and holistic, yet specific and cross-sectional.

CECI commends GAC for daring to use the term feminist to describe the approach it intends to employ. However, it is not easy to use this word in all the countries to which Canada sends international assistance.

Recommendations

In 1992, CECI made the institution-wide decision to champion the cause of women's rights. In 2008, we renewed this commitment by updating our Gender Equality Policy to reflect our feminist approach, with the statement "Firmly committed to women's rights." Based on our wealth of experience, we share with you the following thoughts and recommendations for ensuring that the Canadian government's stated feminist approach and support for the gender equality goal under the 2030 Agenda effectively bring about change:

- 1) Numerous recent studies have shown that women's empowerment is only possible when we address all gender inequalities that exist in societies, e.g., access to health care, justice and education. *We encourage the government to fully incorporate women's rights into its development strategies, at the social, political and economic levels, while prioritizing quality education for girls.*
- 2) In a recent study, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that violence against women in the world is a public health issue and a violation of human rights. USAID has made this a cross-cutting component of its economic growth initiatives. We were pleased to learn that GAC is taking a fresh look at the issue of violence committed against women throughout the world. *We encourage the Canadian government to go the extra mile to make violence against women and girls a cross-cutting component of its actions while continuing to support initiatives specifically working to end violence.*
- 3) The Canadian government must also reinforce organizations in the global South working for women's rights. These organizations defend, monitor, support and stimulate the

process of change, often in tandem with other civil society actors. They play a prominent role that must be recognized and supported. Sadly, we have seen funding for these organizations cut back in recent years, particularly in Canadian cooperation for gender equality. These funds had allowed for some flexibility in the way local organizations were supported and had served as a major lever for promoting women's rights. *We encourage the Canadian government to restore funding for initiatives such as those promoting local gender equality and strengthening women's organizations and women's movements around the world, which are crucial to the defense and promotion of women's rights.*

- 4) Strategies fostering a change in behaviours among men will bolster efforts to promote women's rights and gender equality. This means working with men so that they understand and join the process of moving away from unequal gender relations and leaving behind their own behaviours that engender discrimination, injustice, violence and inequalities for women. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote development strategies for gender equality that involve men.*

These four points are opportunities for the Canadian government to demonstrate its return to its long and widely recognized role as a leader in women's empowerment and gender equality.

Sustainable Development for Clean Economic Growth

Economic growth is measured by the increase of real gross domestic product (GDP). This makes equitable distribution of that growth to all people the cornerstone of a more just and equitable world.

Economic growth must improve the skills and knowledge of the workforce and provide greater opportunities, particularly for youth, to put those assets to use in high-quality jobs. It must create the right conditions for launching new activities and more democratic processes at every step of the decision-making process, starting at the local level with women and youth.

For the people it affects, sustainable and equitable economic development means:

- access to quality services and infrastructures
- new jobs and sustainable income, especially for women, young women and young men
- empowerment of local actors, including young women and young men
- accountable citizens and businesses (e.g., paying taxes and obeying laws)
- equal access for men and women to services, infrastructures and economic opportunities
- women's ability to control their own resources
- equitable participation and representation of women and men, including youth, in participative decision-making bodies and processes
- sound management of natural and environmental resources, rooted in inter- and intra-generational equity.

For governing bodies, it means:

- quality public services and infrastructures
- effective, sustainable protection of the environment and natural resources
- measures fostering growth in the private sector, creation and equitable distribution of wealth, and promotion of social and solidarity economy
- mobilizing internal funding (individual and corporate taxes) and external funding (donor agencies) to carry out local development as well as regional and national plans.

Recommendations

Economic development is a core component of CECI's mission. The organization has been working for 60 years to combat poverty and exclusion. Our background now positions us to share with you our thoughts and recommendations for Canada to create added value by promoting clean sustainable economic growth.

- 1) To contribute to clean economic growth, we must act in favour of sustainable, inclusive development. It must be democratic, equitable and environmentally sound, with consideration for human rights, including those of women and marginalized groups, and for the needs and interests of younger generations. *We encourage the Canadian government to focus on programs that foster and strengthen sustainable, inclusive development.*
- 2) Women are both actors and beneficiaries of social, political and economic transformation and, as such, must be allowed to fully participate and given

equitable control over resources (including land) and benefits. *We encourage the Canadian government to back the development of measures that reflect women's specific needs and interests: equitable access to services and infrastructures, business and job creation, full control of income and participation in decision-making bodies.*

- 3) The agriculture and agri-food sector is of utmost importance. It feeds the economy and keeps it running, provides jobs and necessitates clear, innovative, smart management. *We encourage the Canadian government to make agriculture an area of excellence and focus.*
- 4) Our world faces a host of environmental challenges, which are exacerbated by economic development and accelerated economic growth. *We encourage the Canadian government to support initiatives that aim to turn environmental challenges into economic opportunities.*

Recommendations for Sustainable Agricultural Development

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, *"Sustained and accelerated development of agriculture is the key to economic development and poverty reduction in the least-developed countries. [...] [These countries] have considerable agricultural potential, [that has] not been realized for a number of reasons, including structural and technological constraints, inappropriate domestic policies and an unfavourable external economic environment. As a result, the growth of these economies has been slow, undernourishment has been increasing and the marginalization of these countries in the global economy has continued."*

The World Bank claims that agricultural production would satisfy the world's actual demand for foodstuffs. Yet the FAO estimates that more than a billion people in the world suffer from food insecurity. How can this be explained? We suggest the following explanations, in no particular order:

- increased cost of production due to higher oil prices
- the diversion of agricultural land away from food production (i.e., bio-fuel production and mass acquisitions of land by multinational businesses and countries like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and China)
- climate change causing a surge of natural disasters and desertification, destabilizing crop schedules

Based on these factors and our wealth of experience, we have several thoughts and recommendations to share with you on how Canada can create added value:

- 1) With a view to sustainable, inclusive development, the Canadian government must focus on agriculture that produces nourishment, without producing pollution, and that enables producers to earn a decent living. *We encourage the Canadian government to support programs and partnerships that drive it to reconcile consumer and producer interests by adopting fair strategies, even in times of food crisis, that promote farming at the household level.*
- 2) Development of the agri-food sector must focus on strengthening economic actors, who are best placed to harness the potential of rural and urban spaces. *We encourage the Canadian government to adopt the ultimate goal of attaining equitable, sustainable development by putting measures into place that foster*

strong participation of women and youth and that takes into account their specific needs and interests.

- 3) A strategy that works to create market-based, specialized, local agricultural systems will be successful for countries receiving assistance as well as for Canada. This includes: **a)** rural production, **b)** domestic consumption to ensure food security, **c)** surplus exportation, **d)** processing in urban centres. *We encourage the Canadian government to support initiatives that leverage the most productive agricultural systems for each country.*

Recommendations on Environmental Challenges and Economic Opportunities

Our world faces a host of environmental challenges, which are exacerbated by economic development and by the promotion and accelerated pace of economic growth. We identify three such challenges as: **A)** weak application of the law on the part of States, if not their inability to collect solid waste and waste water, sanitize water, enforce their policies protecting natural heritage, etc., **B)** lack of resources to enforce the law, and **C)** States' limited access to resources stemming from scientific and technological advancements in the areas of natural resource management and environmental protection.

Based on these challenges and our wealth of experience, we present the following thoughts and recommendations through which Canada can create added value:

- 1) Good governance in the management of natural resources is crucial for sustainable development with a view to clean economic growth. *We encourage Canada to work to strengthen good governance of natural resource management by supporting local and Canadian civil society organizations and by taking inspiration from Mali's Decree 08, which clearly stipulates that businesses or promoters have the duty to conduct and pay for studies on environmental and social impact.*
- 2) As Canadians, we are fully aware of the important role that natural resource development, especially ore, plays in a region's local development and economic growth. Conversely, we also know the disastrous effects that resource development can have on these same communities when it is poorly planned or not planned at all, when carried out independently of local populations and actors, without respect for the environment, and when implemented as part of a diversified economic plan for the region that will change when the resource is depleted or no longer listed on the market, with no promise of real payoff for the community. *We encourage the Canadian government to back programs and partnerships that hold Canadian corporate citizens to the same standards in the countries where they operate as they would be held to in Canada, and that require them to demonstrate societal responsibility.*
- 3) Ethical, transparent behaviour contributes to sustainable development and a society's health and well-being. It accounts for stakeholder expectations and is compliant with the laws in effect and consistent with international standards. *We encourage the Canadian government to back programs and partnerships that increase the capacity of Canadian businesses, especially mining companies, to adopt and practice ethical and transparent behaviours in their business relations.*

We believe that Canada in prime position be an inspiring leader on the international scene. Canada can, without a doubt, create added value by promoting inclusive, sustainable development that fosters equally inclusive and sustainable economic growth. All these things are possible if the government's actions at home are consistent with the principles and values it promotes abroad, and if it works in partnership with the following departments: Environment and Climate Change Canada, Trade Canada, Status of Women Canada and, especially, Natural Resources Canada.

Concerted Actions in Times of Humanitarian Crisis for Peace and Security Throughout the World

In the past, Canada has demonstrated strong leadership in promoting world peace, conflict resolution and international justice. In the past decade, however, Canada's withdrawal from the Blue Helmets corps and the Human Rights Council has greatly diminishing its prestige, credibility and expertise. Yet it is still possible for Canada to restore its role as an international leader on matters of peace and security, and CECI is proud to learn of its intent to do so.

Climate change and the havoc it wreaks, natural disasters, poor management and pillaging of natural resources (Sierra Leone, Liberia and the DRC) all bring serious consequences for the stability and development of States and increase the risk of conflict. As explained under Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda, it is possible to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies when “[t]he rule of law and development have significant interrelation and are mutually reinforcing, making them essential.”

Recommendations

CECI provides guidance to communities in their climate change risk prevention and reduction programs, carries out operations related to natural disasters and human conflict, and operates violence prevention projects, particularly in Central America, in the African Great Lakes region and in Mali. Based on our wealth of experience, we present the following thoughts and recommendations for Canada to support needs-driven, effective and timely responses to humanitarian crises with predictable yet flexible support:

- 1) If swift, effective action is needed in response to disasters and conflicts, it must be carried out in a way that does not harm the development of societies receiving assistance. *We encourage the Canadian government to take inspiration from the new approach for an emergency, reconstruction and development continuum.*
- 2) Having a coordinated international network of complementary actors and donors is a key factor to successful humanitarian interventions, all the more so when local actors are included. *We encourage the Canadian government to place particular importance on skill-building and on consulting and cooperating with local actors, both at the civil society and State levels.*
- 3) We must focus on causes in order to prevent violence from erupting or continuing, to prevent impunity and acts of revenge, and to safeguard against the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters—and we must do so with the safety and needs of women and girls as our first priority. *We encourage the Canadian government to prioritize support for risk-reduction initiatives on climate change, natural disasters and conflict, and to support communities through violence prevention, detection and referral programs for women and girls, in addition to programs for social dialogue, impunity eradication and reparations.*

Recommendations for an Emergency, Reconstruction and Development Continuum

Over the years, CECI and other development organizations have developed an innovative approach for humanitarian assistance and emergency response that applies sustainable

development principles to emergency situations. This is what we call the emergency, reconstruction and development continuum.

Based on our experience and the strong, long-lasting results we have achieved, we present the following thoughts and recommendations to facilitate a coordinated, comprehensive response to the needs of people affected by crises, and to optimize the impact of humanitarian, development, peace and security initiatives:

- 1) Our actions must be guided by the principle of inclusion for victims and vulnerable persons, particularly women and girls, but also young men, as soon as their needs have been assessed. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote an approach that includes victims and encourages them to participate in humanitarian assistance programs.*
- 2) We must include local authorities in our emergency response process so that they can continue efforts when teams leave. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote an approach that strengthens the role of local authorities in coordination and disaster prevention through its humanitarian assistance programs.*
- 3) The key to successful, long-lasting humanitarian assistance programs lies in building the people's capacities and resilience. *We encourage the Canadian government to support initiatives that promote a strong civil society, rule of law and democracy.*

Recommendations for a Complementary Network of Actors and Donors

CECI agrees with GAC's statement, "*Donors need to engage with a broader range of partners—particularly local partners—in regions affected by crisis.*" Based on this statement and our experience, we present the following thoughts and recommendations to ensure that Canada supports needs-driven, effective and timely responses with predictable yet flexible support:

- 1) When major humanitarian crises arise, large humanitarian organizations and development organizations can take coordinated, complementary, flexible action to provide an effective, timely response that saves lives and restores a state of normalcy. In such situations, cooperation and development organizations that are already well established on the ground can use their geographic position and cultural ties to take over humanitarian actions and help populations recover from crisis. *We encourage the Canadian government to make full use of complementary partnerships with development organizations that are well established on the ground, for comprehensive actions that are better suited to the needs of a population.*
- 2) Canada often has a weak local presence in humanitarian assistance projects and this can negatively affect results, as opposed to development projects that are carried out in cooperation with local actors. *We encourage Canada to pursue complementary relationships with local actors in its humanitarian assistance actions, and to grant local partners a significant portion of the "additional \$331.5 million in humanitarian assistance" it promised at the Istanbul Summit in May 2016.*

Recommendations on Resilience, Dialogue and Violence Prevention

It is possible to work in unstable countries and achieve sustainable development results. We have shown this in recent years in Mali, where we have successfully pursued our commitments to development, peace and security, despite security concerns. Canada demonstrates leadership when it listens to local communities. Based on these observations and our experience, we share with you the following thoughts and recommendations for facilitating more comprehensive and coordinated responses in order better meet the needs of populations affected by crises and optimize the impact of initiatives:

- 1) Women and girls are the first to suffer the consequences of a weakened social, economic or political environment. They are particularly affected by violence and are vulnerable in times of disaster and conflict. *We encourage the Canadian government to place special importance on security and the specific needs of women and girls by actively empowering them to take action and fully participate in decision-making processes on issues of peace and security.*
- 2) Young people are particularly vulnerable to violence when they face a lack of economic prospects. They are more likely to join armed groups that threaten world peace and security. *We encourage the Canadian government to support peaceful initiatives that work to combat violence, specifically focusing on young people's needs and interests and on rehabilitation for a peaceful return to society.*
- 3) World peace and security requires improved dialogue at the national level, between civil society and governments. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote and take action through upstream political and diplomatic solutions, while strengthening relations and dialogue between local civil societies and their governments; this is essential for societal development.*
- 4) Maintaining Canadian presence in countries in crisis is crucial for reaching a security solution. If Canada must withdraw from a country for diplomatic reasons, it can nonetheless continue acting through Canadian civil society, which may maintain its relationship with local civil societies. This has worked in the past, such as with Guatemala and Nepal during their long periods of civil war. *We encourage the Canadian government to support Canadian organizations so they can continue to act in support of local civil societies and help them reach their development goals, especially those involving conflict resolution, peace, justice and security.*

To Get Results, Target Stability and Longevity and Accept the Risks of Innovation

The international component of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has changed, with Canada subscribing to the 2030 Agenda sustainable development objectives, as well as to the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change. In 1969, a UN commission of experts, directed by former Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson, set a budgetary goal for ODA amounting to 0.7 % of gross domestic income (GNI). Canada was committed to reaching that goal, but never fully managed to do so. For 1986-1987, Canada did manage to reach 0.5% for ODA. Then, in 2008, Canada adopted the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act.

By adhering to its own Act and international commitments, Canada will successfully restore its position as a leader in providing effective, efficient and innovative ODA. CEI presents the following thoughts and recommendations for delivery mechanisms, transparency, partnerships and innovation to make Canada's international assistance delivery approaches and mechanisms more efficient, effective and innovative:

Recommendations on Delivery Mechanisms

- 1) Consistent support from international donor agencies are important if Canada's policies, strategies and initiatives are to bring about real change. *Taking inspiration from Scandinavian ODA policies, we encourage Canada to take the necessary means to ensure that political shifts have little impact on Canada's ODA policy. Canada can do this by adopting a policy with development assistance projections extending far beyond the next five years, so it has the necessary means to truly make a difference.*
- 2) Currently, only Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom set aside at least 0.7% of their GNI for ODA. Canada can join the ranks of this exemplary group of donor countries and become the first country in the Americas to honour this commitment. *We encourage the Canadian government to honour the 2030 Agenda Goals by committing to a plan to immediately increase the international assistance budget and to continue increasing it on an annual basis so that it reaches 0.7% of GNI in the next ten years.*
- 3) For Canada, multilateral assistance administered by GAC could facilitate its rise as a donor; however, bilateral funding and partnership are also needed for Canada to truly make its mark and stand out as an innovator. *We encourage the Canadian government to see that a fair balance is struck between funding provided by multilateral authorities and via partnerships and bilateral mechanisms by determining when and for what causes Canada truly benefits from multilateral assistance. This will ensure the government provides effective assistance while maintaining a minimum level of control and a distinct, extraordinary role.*
- 4) The UN system is budget depleting, not very efficient and even less operational due to its heavy administrative costs and the fact that it sub-contracts its programs to international development organizations, weighing down the value chain of efficient program implementation. *We encourage the Canadian government to accept the UN's funding system only for politicians' duties and coordination, and*

not for implementing programs that Canadian development organizations and local organizations can carry out with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

- 5) Adequate long-term project funding is necessary for sustainable change to occur at the levels of individual behaviours and capacities and within partner organizations. *We encourage the Canadian government to make its funding mechanisms more predictable by issuing more flexible annual or multi-year calls for proposals so we can build upon our knowledge and ensure continuity.*
- 6) Canada's OPD will be more efficient if it ensures long-term, stable funding in the countries where it operates, and if it promotes a regional approach, particularly on themes like adapting to climate change or regional market access, which require solutions that involve more than one country. *We encourage the Canadian government to secure funding for countries targeted by Canada's OPD and to promote a regional approach.*

Recommendations on Innovation

For the purposes of this position paper, we define innovation as an influential process leading to social change and that results in the rejection of existing social norms and the proposal of new ones. Innovation is also about building upon successful formulas by reproducing and improving upon them. Innovation must be inspired by the knowledge and know-how of both local and Canadian partners.

Based on this experience, CECI puts forth the following thoughts and recommendations for Canada to promote innovation in development:

- 1) One of our biggest successes in the past 40 years has been that Canadian international solidarity organizations (ISOs) have gradually shifted toward a model that has local actors developing and implementing projects. Canadian cooperation now takes on a role of facilitation, guidance and exchange of knowledge and know-how, for example, through the Volunteer Cooperation Program. *We encourage the Canadian government to back initiatives that promote and support a cooperation model that relies on local actors and taps into their capacity to innovate.*
- 2) Innovation is partly about taking risks. Nothing can guarantee success in the beginning. Yes, even when results are inconclusive, we still learn from these experiences and take lessons from them that will lead to future success. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote innovation by agreeing to assume part of the risk, and by supporting Canadian organizations that carry out pilot projects, take on new partnerships and embrace new methods, even if there can be no initial guarantee of results and success.*
- 3) By failing to build upon the positive results of a project in a timely manner, we lose opportunities to confidently build upon lessons learned and good practices developed in the early phases. Lack of continuity is often an obstacle to successful international assistance, as it limits results and even jeopardizes the lasting effects of the first results obtained. *We encourage the Canadian government to show less resistance to funding the second phase of projects.*

Recommendations for Fruitful Partnerships

By adopting a generous ODA policy, Canada can influence international discussions and respond to real concerns about equality on an international scale; it can also contribute to two of Canada's key objectives: peace and stability.

Drawing on this statement and on our experience, we would like to share the following thoughts and recommendations to enable GAC to engage a wider range of partners to leverage the resources and expertise necessary to achieve the sustainable development goals:

- 1) Canada can play a leading role by coordinating assistance efforts in conjunction with all executing agencies of Canadian programs, while giving pride of place to local partners. *We encourage the Canadian government to follow the lead of other donor countries by transferring a significant portion of ODA funding directly to local partners.*
- 2) Cooperation between Canadian ISOs, and between Canadian ISOs and those in countries where we operate, is a success factor. *We encourage the Canadian government to promote cooperation between Canadian and local ISOs.*
- 3) Consistency with national ODAs is of central importance to achieving sustainable development results. *We encourage the Canadian government to engage a wide range of partners, not just Canadian executing agencies, to create a consensus between political parties and the general population on the orientations and ODA budgets; this should be done with a long-term vision, over a generation.*
- 4) According to UN [Resolution 70/129](#), *Integrating volunteering into peace development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond*, reaching the sustainable development objectives will be largely dependent on volunteerism. The Resolution encourages governments and other stakeholders to incorporate volunteerism into their development strategies at the local, national and international levels. *We encourage the Canadian government to explicitly recognize in its international assistance policy that Canadian volunteerism abroad plays an important part in sustainable development, especially in the area of gender equality.*
- 5) International Canadian volunteers have a range of specific skills and expertise that can make meaningful contributions to well-structured, bilateral volunteer cooperation programs to reach the development objectives. *We encourage the Canadian government to refer to the position paper presented by the Volunteer Cooperation Agency group (VCA), of which CECI is a member. This paper contains statements and recommendations from which the government can take inspiration on effectively incorporating volunteerism into its international assistance policy.*
- 6) CECI firmly believes in the power of volunteer cooperation as a development tool, which we use to align our actions with our values of solidarity, equity, social justice, gender equality and respect for the environment. By recognizing various types of knowledge and know-how and the intercultural exchange of these assets, we can face the enormous issues that challenge populations and national sovereignty. These are also opportunities to build new relationships built on solidarity. *We encourage the Canadian government to consider volunteerism as a development tool in projects and programs other than PCV.*

Recommendations on ODA Transparency and Canadian Involvement

By ensuring Canadians' buy-in of the country's international assistance policy, Canada holds all of its citizens accountable for the policy's results. One of the main determinants of ODA progress in Scandinavian countries is the strong public support for their development assistance policies, which are a testament their values of solidarity and sense of national pride.

Considering this, we have several thoughts and recommendations to share with GAC for fostering greater buy-in from Canadians for our international assistance efforts:

- 1) Having the media, schools and unions stand beside Canadian civil society organizations, especially ISOs, is a powerful tool for informing public opinion and increasing awareness about our actions. *We encourage the Canadian government to be a driving force in reaching a public consensus by setting aside a substantial portion of its ODA budget for using ISOs to promote and raise Canadians' awareness about Canada's international assistance efforts.*
- 2) Canadian volunteer cooperation is very effective tool for increasing Canadians' buy-in for our international assistance efforts. Volunteers are strong mobilizers within their networks. They help garner support for ODA, promote Canadian initiatives and raise awareness about development issues. They help build reciprocal learning relationships between people and organizations, and between the public and private sectors of civil society. *We encourage the Canadian government to use the power of volunteerism to increase buy-in for our international assistance efforts.*

Closing Remarks

Development is at times a long, slow process whereby a community reaches a certain level of material well-being, in addition to social justice, equity, security, respect for the environment, etc. It involves an individual's or a group's capacity to make their own decisions and participate in citizen dialogue. Development is not possible without the participation of the people, meaning democracy. We can make it happen, however, by working together to reach the goal of eradicating poverty by 2030, and *"leaving no one behind."* We and 193 other countries agreed to this in September 2015, when the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted.

CECI firmly believes that Canada can help *"help create a world that is peaceful, prosperous, just and inclusive—a world where human rights are protected for all,"* just as the Minister of International Development, the honorable Marie-Claude Bibeau, hopes. It is by supporting a wide range of Canadian and local actors who have long been committed to solidarity, cooperation and international development that we can best make this happen.