

Governance arrangements for the functioning of SDG Watch Europe

-Produced by Ad Hoc Working Group on Governance- (met on 16th & 31st March 2016)

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The SDG Watch Europe Alliance is an EU-level cross-sectoral CSO alliance, currently comprising approximately 100 NGOs from development, environment, social, human rights and many other constituencies and sectors. Its goal is to hold EU institutions and the governments of EU Member States to account for the commitments they made when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The alliance aims to ensure a central role for civil society in the implementation of the SDGs.

I. Work Strands:

- The four work strands of SDG Watch will meet a minimum of **4 times per year**. **These meetings will not take place as part of the Plenary Meetings** but rather immediately before, after, or in the interval between Plenary meetings.
- The facilitators of the four work strands will give a short update on their workstrand's activities and achievements at each plenary meeting. There will be 2 or 3 facilitators of each working strand. In as far as possible the facilitators will be representative of some of the **4 dimensions** of sustainable development- namely environment, social, economic and governance.
- The facilitators of each strand will have both a “facilitation” and co-ordination role. The mandate of facilitators should be for a minimum period of one year. They should be appointed by their strands following an agreed process and their names notified to the SDG Watch Europe Steering Group. The replacement of workstrand facilitators should be staggered (ie not all in the same year) so that some continuity is ensured in relation to experience, expertise and institutional memory.
- Facilitators of Work Strands will present a report on their activities to the full plenary at the General Assembly each year, copies of which will be circulated in advance of the GA. Members will have the opportunity to question Work Strand Facilitators and to provide feedback on their reports.
- The workstrand facilitators will **initiate meetings** of the strand between plenaries and will communicate to the whole strand about agenda, date, time and venue. Facilitators will be expected to attend plenary meetings to report on the activities of their workstrand or, in the event that they are unable to do so, to arrange for a substitute to provide the update in their absence.
- Members of working strands may establish **sub-groups** of a working strand (eg focusing on particular thematic issues). However these sub-groups should first be **officially agreed** by the entire strand if it is to contribute to, and be part of SDG Watch work. A facilitator for each subgroup should also be agreed.
- Minutes should be taken for **all SDG Watch strand meetings, including sub-group meetings**. The facilitators of each strand will have the responsibility for ensuring that a minute-taker has been identified. People other than the facilitators should take the minutes. The strand leads are responsible for ensuring that the minutes for all strand meetings are shared with the members and on the SDG Watch google drive.
- There should be a **mailing list for each strand**. The strand leads are responsible for updating these lists on the shared google drive, and for regular communication with the strand members
- Each work strand should develop its own annual **work plan** by December of every year for the following year. The responsibility for ensuring that this is achieved rests with the Workstrand facilitators. These work plans should be presented by Work Strand Facilitators at

the **January plenary/General Assembly meeting** of SDG Watch. Work plans should also be shared on the SDG Watch Google drive. A common format should be used by all strands.

2. Plenary Meetings

- Plenary meetings of SDG Watch will take place at least **4 times per year**.
- The **standard agenda items** for the SDG Watch plenary meetings will be as follows:
 - Re-cap from previous meetings
 - SDG updates from Global, EU and national levels
 - Update & reports from each of the four working strands
 - Decision- making or business relating to the entire coalition
 - Briefing or input from external speaker, as appropriate
- In January of every year there will be a plenary meeting which is the **General Assembly** of SDG Watch Europe.

3. Steering Group

- The four working strands will be **represented in the Steering Group** of SDG Watch. Ideally one of the strand facilitators will be mandated by members of the workstrand to represent them on the Steering Group. An active member of the workstrand can be appointed to represent it on the steering group instead of one of the facilitators if this is agreed by other strand members and the facilitators.
- The Steering Group will have a maximum of 10 members and a minimum of 6. One representative will be appointed by each of the four Working Strands and up to six other members will be elected by the General Assembly to fill the vacancies that arise in a given year.
- The members of the Steering Group will in as far as possible reflect an acceptable balance between the **four dimensions of sustainable development**
- The membership of the Steering Group will reflect CSOs that are working both **within the EU, and on its external action**.
- The membership of the Steering Group will reflect CSOs that are working both at a **national and an EU level**.
- The membership of the Steering Group will reflect a fair **gender balance**
- When vacancies on the Steering Group arise, SDG Watch members can put themselves forward for election at the General Assembly at the beginning of each year. Interested candidates should submit a short biography and letter of motivation, including the extent to which their candidacy complies with the criteria required, to the Steering Group and this will be circulated to all members of SDG Watch one month in advance of the General Assembly. Candidates for Steering Group positions will address the General Assembly and a vote will then be taken by members to fill the vacancies in the Steering Group.
- The Steering Group will present a report of its activities to the full plenary at the General Assembly each year, copies of which will be circulated in advance of the GA. Members will have the opportunity to question steering group members and to provide feedback on their reports.
- The membership of the Steering Group will be ratified by the **General Assembly of SDG Watch** in January of each year.
- The mandate of a Steering Group member is for a two- year period and can be renewed once, with the support of the membership. The renewal of membership of the steering group should be done on a staggered basis where possible (ie renewal of half of steering group members every year) so as to avoid loss of institutional memory and expertise.
- Individuals on the steering group hold that position because of their experience, expertise and their link to a specific workstrand or sector, and not purely because of the organization to

which they belong. If an individual who is a member of the steering committee takes up employment with another organization, consideration will be given by the workstrand that appointed him/her whether the option to hold the seat on the steering group should be given to the former organization or to whether the individual who has moved to new employment can retain it. Such situations will be decided on a case by case basis. If, in such cases the person was elected at the GA, then the plenary rather than a working strand will be consulted by the steering group about how the vacancy should be filled .

- If a person appointed by his/her workstrand to the steering group can no longer participate in it, then the workstrand can nominate another person as its representative. If a person elected by General Assembly onto the steering group can no longer participate for any reason, a replacement representative can be agreed. This can be done by plenary vote and the person elected can hold the position until the next General Assembly when the position can be reopened for election if appropriate.
- The Steering Group of SDG Watch should always be made aware of what strands and their sub-groups are **planning to do or to submit externally if the SDG Watch name is to be used in any way**. The Steering Group should identify any incoherence and/or potential conflicts, and advise on whether the action should proceed or not. If appropriate, the issue can be brought to the full plenary for discussion.
- Where conflicts or sharp differences of opinion arise between members of SDG Watch or within its Steering Group, every attempt will be made to resolve the issue within the alliance. If this proves impossible, a vote in the full plenary will be organised or, where this course of action is not appropriate, other options may be explored with a view to settling the issue to the satisfaction of all parties.

4. Membership:

- Existing and new members of SDG Watch will sign a **Member's Charter** outlining clear **values, principles, guidelines and criteria to which** members will be expected to adhere.
- The Steering Group will oversee the **membership approval process**. Each potential member applying should be recommended by a minimum of two other EU-based civil society organisations. If there is any question over a particular organization joining SDG Watch, the issue will be presented to a **plenary meeting** for decision.
- It is envisaged that when SDG Watch Europe is formalized and fully operational, members will be required to make an annual financial contribution to the alliance, the modality of which can be agreed by them and approved in plenary. It is recommended that a fixed scale of potential contributions is agreed, including a minimum amount. This voluntary system will be based on a solidarity principle and will recognise the importance of each member making a financial contribution to the alliance.
- Any perceived failure to adhere to the Member's Charter's values and principles should be reported to the Steering Group. It will have the responsibility for investigating the matter and for reporting back to the full SDG Watch membership. Any member that is found to be in breach of the Charter's principles and values may have its membership revoked.
- SDG Watch's work should focus on the **EU and its Member States** only, and not on wider European countries.
- Member organizations of SDG Watch should be either **(i)** Brussels- based CSOs/CSOs working at EU level focused on influencing EU processes and policy, awareness raising, citizen mobilisation, and knowledge and capacity-building **(ii)** EU level CSO umbrella organizations (eg EYF, EWL, Social Platform) or **(iii)** Nationally-based CSO platforms working on any of the four dimensions of sustainable development in a Member State, or any umbrella organizations. All three categories of membership will have voting rights.
- Any EU or national-level CSO involved in implementing Agenda 2030 that does not belong to any of the above three categories is welcome to **participate in SDG Watch meetings** but will not have voting rights.
- Members of SDG Watch are strongly encouraged to attend **at least 50% of SDG Watch plenary meetings** during any year.

- Each SDG Watch participating organization will nominate **one main and one substitute representative** where attendance at plenary meetings is concerned. These people must be mandated by their organisations to vote on their behalf.
- The **participation of national level CSOs in plenary meetings** of SDG Watch will be organised at least once a year in January following the General Assembly and if needed on a second occasion in the early autumn (September) of any given year. This will not include the funding of travel costs for the moment.

5. Decision-making

- In as far as possible, the decision-making processes of SDG Watch will be as **flexible and consensus-based as possible**, recognizing the diversity of membership. Majority voting on issues will be avoided and every attempt will be made to reach a common understanding and agreed way forward through discussion and negotiation.
- Certain types of decision-making will however be **subject to majority voting**, including decision-making relating to (i) Governance/Representation (ii) Financial Issues (iii) Issues concerning the overall direction of the alliance
- If such decision-making is to be part of any SDG Watch plenary meeting, notice of same must be sent out to all members **one month in advance** of the meeting. This will allow EU and national platform or umbrella organizations to consult properly with their members. Online voting will be facilitated as well as voting in person on the day.
- A **quorum** for any SDG Watch plenary meeting will decision by voting will be 35 % of the total SDG Watch membership.
- A vote during an SDG Watch plenary is carried if **75% of those entitled to vote**, vote in favour of a proposal

6. External Communication & the use of the SDG Watch Logo

- An **SDG Watch logo** will be developed and will be used to accompany statements made on behalf of the entire SDG Watch or for campaigns that have the support of all (for example Working Strand statements or communications that have been through the formal approval process).
- For smaller advocacy and other initiatives, organizations should use their **individual logos** rather than the SDG Watch logo, and this will be the case also for awareness-raising campaigns etc.
- For other initiatives organizations can sign a document with the specific name of their initiative eg. *“Working group on oceans”* (if the specific issue they are working on is oceans) and with their individual organisation logos, but can also mention that the group is part of SDG Watch. This process supports the **sensitivity of other SDG Watch members** who may not wish to be associated with particular issues.
- The SDG Watch logo will only be used on documents expressing **positions that are unanimously supported** by all of the SDG Watch membership. This will usually require the assent of all members by electronic means and/or in person during a plenary session. Organisations can absent from voting. There must be minimum one-week (5 working days) time for organisations to vote and silence will be assumed to imply consent.
- The Steering Group must be informed in advance of all material intended to be shared externally which carries the SDG Watch name.
- The SDG Watch logo will only be used on documents expressing **positions that are supported** by all of the SDG Watch membership. This will usually require the assent of all members by electronic means and/or in person during a plenary session. If consensus cannot be achieved, 75% of SDG Watch members with voting rights must support the use of the SDG watch logo.
- If the Steering Group wishes to engage in external communication on issues of relevance to its mandate, it should draft the initial letter or document and then circulate to all members for

information and yes/no sign-off before sending it out. The letter/document should be signed by the Steering Group and the names of the individual members should be visible.

- If a Work Strand or Sub Group wishes to communicate externally, it should (i) draft its initial letter/document in consultation with relevant members (ii) share the draft document with the Steering Group that includes other WS facilitators for a “coherence check”, (iii) send the document out to full working strand membership (or to full plenary membership if the steering group deems it appropriate) for comment and amendment. (iv) All relevant changes should be incorporated (v) A final draft of the document/letter should be sent to Steering Group for last coherency check and then to all Work Strand members (or to full plenary members if the steering group deems it appropriate) for Yes/No sign off before the document is sent externally.

Procedures for amending the Governance Proposals

- *It is possible to propose amendments or changes to the SDG Watch Europe Governance arrangements by submitting those amendments to the Steering Group in writing, or electronically, one full month in advance of the General Assembly. These draft amendments will be circulated to all SDG Watch Europe members in advance of the GA. The amendments must be seconded and must receive the support of a majority of 75 % of those entitled to vote in order to be adopted.*