

UN75: Strengthen Spirit of Multilateralism and Reinforce local CSOs

- 1. Sustainable Peace is the Genesis of UN:** With the devastating impact of World War I and II, global leaderships led by the United States, United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union formed the United Nations in 1945¹. The main goals of the UN were to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and to maintain international peace and security. It has also a larger mandate to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.
- 2. Expanding UN, interaction with CSOs:** In course of time, the UN has expanded to 15 specialized agencies along with different programs and entities, unofficially called 'UN Family', to facilitate development and humanitarian assistance across the world². People in crisis need this assistance. However, there is also a growing nature of local CSOs, who voluntarily came forward in response to humanitarianism and development. UN Family including specialized agencies, funds and programs recruit a large number of experts to operate across the world and spend several billion dollars every year. Local organizations could be much more low cost, appropriate and sustainable for both humanitarian response and development. They have more scopes of accountability to the affected population at local level. Questions therefore raises, won't it be better to gradually handover the delivery of humanitarian response and development to the local organizations? UN Family have much more important roles to play with the International Peace and Security, Protecting Human Rights, Delivering Humanitarian Aid and Upholding International Laws³. UN also needs to operate at national level for this purpose in some special situation, where civil society sector is not so mature or hardly able to flourish or absent, not in all situation and in all the countries. However, at the local level, the local CSOs could have been reinforced for accelerating development and sustainable peace, as it complies with the UN's mandate of Promoting Sustainable Development. We anticipate visible attempts of UN agencies operating at local level to promote and encourage local organizations to act upon, not to replace them.
- 3. Local CSO is the Key Sustainable Force to Hold the State Accountable:** UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) is one of the fundamental charters of UN. UDHR has two aspects, to promote Human Rights and to implement it. In fact, these two are fundamental for sustainable peace. Human rights education and its promotion is already a popular agenda among local CSOs and they have a great potentiality to hold the state accountable in respect of human rights toward the sustainable peace. In fact in respect of promoting human rights and sustainable peace, except human right council in macro level, there are little investment and effort from UN in country level in this respect. But UN has rigorous implementation role in respect of development aspects, even where local civil societies and the government can play those roles. We want UN to have strong supportive policy for the local CSOs so that at the end the CSOs will play the role and make the state and society accountable for those. In exception, some UN agency especially UNHCR and IOM have policies to make alliances with CSOs, especially to implement GCR (Global Compacts on Refugees) and GCM (Global Compacts on Migration).

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/about-un/>

² <https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/>

4. **Gaps between Policy Declaration and Implementation:** UN agencies have initiated numerous morally obligatory agreements applicable for humanitarian assistance, such as Principles of Partnership (2007) and Grand Bargain commitments (2016). However, there are little reflections to those commitments made at the field level. We wonder if there are directives from the headquarter to practice these commitments at the field level. Moreover, bureaucratic culture and practice at the field level is hardly responsive to adopt these transformative changes. In fact, UN agencies are hardly accountable at the local or national level. Hardly they maintain aid transparency in view of IATI (International Aid Transparency Initiative) at the field or national level and hardly accept any public / affected people's opinion in the frontline.
5. **Multilateralism needs to be upheld, UN is needed by any means.** There are trend of growing authoritarianism, nationalism and protectionism which are not only help increasing inequalities but also becoming threats and de-globalization of humanitarian and development responsibilities. There are growing trend of unilateralism too. Climate Change taught us to be the global citizen. We learned, if the earth doesn't survive, no country will survive. These sorts of unilateralism are the greatest threat to human rights. So, we have to uphold the spirit of Multilateralism that the UN is the most important organization to promote human rights as well as the concept of global citizenship.
6. **So, Where to Draw the Line?** So, we have to realize that (i) Where the boundary should be drawn for the UN role so that local CSOs can play the primary leadership role for promoting human rights, sustainable peace, humanitarian and development, (ii) How much operational or implementation role to be played by the UN agencies not to occupy the space of local CSO, rather to facilitate them to act to hold the state and society accountable especially for human rights and sustainable peace, (iii) How UN could ensure aid transparency at local or national level to ensure accepting more public opinion to rationalize their expenditure, gain respect and to gain effectivity to efficiency. (iv) how UN could create more space for local non-state actors alongside the state to promote human rights and sustainable peace, (v) UN to have a local level participation and accountability policy, so that non- state actors are able to provide opinions on local level accountability on UN systems, aid transparency, and all above (vi) to facilitate local CSO participation in UN system at the local level for better coordination not only on humanitarian assistance and development but also on Development Effectiveness, promoting human rights and sustainable peace.

Note: We will appreciate your comments and opinion on it. Please do send to reza@coastbd.net