

# Summary of the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda virtual townhall with civil society

## 28 April 2020

On 28 April 2020, the High-level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) organized a virtual global townhall with civil society organisations (CSOs). The consultation, held virtually due to COVID-19 related restrictions around the world, was the first dedicated civil society interaction of the Panel. More than 150 people attended the meeting, and about 15 civil society representatives made statements.

### Opening

The meeting was chaired by **H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki**, former Prime Minister of Niger, Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency, while the FACTI Panel Co-chair **H.E. Dr. Dalia Grybauskaitė**, former President of Lithuania, observed due to technical difficulties. In his opening remarks, **Dr. Mayaki** provided the participants with highlights of the Panel's substantive work since the launch, including the review of the background paper, agreement on three clusters of work, the holding of the first virtual consultation with United Nations Member States, and the intention to deliver the full interim report in September 2020.

He also introduced the purpose of the meeting, hearing about civil society's key priorities and challenges related to financial accountability, transparency and integrity as well as ideas for how the Panel can advance work in those areas. Dr. Mayaki pointed out that deliberations and inputs will feed into the interim report of the Panel. Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki then started the conduct of the consultation with the help of the Secretariat.

### Discussion

The consultation started with an initial round of interventions from CSOs active in the areas of financial accountability, transparency and integrity: Daniel Eriksson (Interim Managing Director of Transparency International's International Secretariat), Alvin Mosioma (Executive Director of Tax Justice Network Africa, speaking also on behalf of the Stop Bleeding Campaign), Sargon Nissan (Director of the Financial Transparency Coalition), Caroline Othim (representative of the Civil Society Financing for Development Group), and David Banisar (Chair of the UNCAC Coalition).

After these initial interventions, Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki opened the floor to all other CSO representatives. The Panel also received written inputs through the Q&A available online. All speakers welcomed the establishment of the Panel, as well as the opportunity to intervene and expressed the wish that the Panel continues to work in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

Among the many inputs, the following priorities were heard from CSO's representatives:

With respect to cluster 1 on improving cooperation in tax matters:

- Addressing the lack of global governance (and, especially, the under-representation of developing countries) by fostering universal participation in international legal instruments on tax matters including through the upgrading of the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body with experts representing their respective Governments;
- Promoting the creation of a United Nations Tax Convention, with universal participation, and coverage beyond transparency rules;
- Exploring the political and practical obstacles to automatic exchange of information for tax purposes;

- Enhancing tax transparency measures like public beneficial ownership of legal entities and arrangements, public country-by-country reporting and disclosure requirements on the complexity of corporate structures;
- Enhancing the sanctions against tax evasion and considering the possibility to consider it as a violation of human and environmental rights; and
- Reconsidering the official lists of tax havens because they can be used to sanction countries that are not abiding by norms that they were not a party to setting.

With respect to cluster 2 on accountability, public reporting and anti-corruption measures:

- Addressing the lack of independence of prosecuting authorities especially in the context of weak institutions;
- Considering the establishment of an International Anti-corruption Court to curb impunity;
- Exploring ways to ease the establishment of corruption offences including through the adoption of laws providing for the reversal of the burden of proof;
- Enhancing open data including access to all documentation pertaining to public procurement and contracting, the funding of public campaigns and political parties and judicial cases;
- Investigating the role of facilitators including audit, accounting, advisory and legal services providers and developing concrete measures to enhance AML obligations of these professions;
- Fostering the adoption of comprehensive domestic whistleblowers protection laws and developing international minimum standard of protection for human rights defenders and journalists.

With respect to cluster 3 on cooperation and disputes

- Exploring ways to enhance asset recovery and return, including through the possibility of a protocol to the UNCAC on the following issues: (i) ways to accelerate the asset recovery process; (ii) standards and procedures for ensuring reparations to state and non-state victims in foreign bribery cases; (iii) standards for accountable asset return; and recognizing the role of non-governmental organizations' stakeholders in asset recovery processes;
- Encouraging dispute resolution mechanisms that are public, transparent and accountable to all parties, and resist capture by one interested group of actors, public or private.

Cross-cutting issues pertaining to all topics:

- Incorporating a human rights framework into the Panel's work including inequalities and climate change and paying due attention to the situation of the most vulnerable;
- Incorporating gender issues into the Panel's work, recognizing that illicit financial flows have a larger impact on women because of existing inequalities;
- Taking into account the consequences of COVID-19 including the corruption challenges that are posed by it and the ultimate impacts community-based organizations and MSMEs;
- Addressing secrecy and anonymity by enhancing transparency through bringing the dispersed frameworks together into a common agenda;
- Promoting "trade integrity", trade transactions that are legal, properly priced and transparent;
- Considering the establishment of a Global Asset Registry;
- Giving specific attention to recommendations relevant to developing countries;
- Building on the outcomes of the High-Level Panel on IFFs from Africa.

## Closing

**Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki** thanked all participants for their valuable inputs. He then invited all CSO's representatives to engage in the Panel's future activities highlighting that their participation will help the Panel present proposals that would enable the global economic and financial systems to work better for everyone and everywhere. He concluded the consultation by wishing participants and their beloved continued health.