

Fifth issue, October 2014 (bimonthly)

Welcome to our fifth issue of the [GSO](#) newsletter. We aim to stimulate multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral dialogue and information sharing. The newsletter has three sections providing: updates on GSO activities; commentary on developments in international organizations and NGOs involved in addressing multi-stakeholder engagement; and upcoming events of interest.

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I. GSO Activities

The Global Social Observatory Special Session on Partnering for a Post-2015 Development Agenda

There is little question that the eradication of poverty by 2030 is a monumental task that will require a concerted effort by a wide variety of individuals and organizations supported by ample resources. The OWG consideration of 17 focus areas or goals, each with an array of specific and quantifiable targets within them, is a useful approach for organizing the effort, provided that it is well understood that the 17 focus areas include numerous inter-related and overarching characteristics, and that the achievement of the goals and targets will require cooperative efforts between and among governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. A special panel of members and friends of the GSO was invited to lead a roundtable discussion for all participants to engage in an interactive dialogue on the prospects for partnering for a Post-2015 Development Agenda. A full report of the session is available on the GSO website. We provide a few highlights here.

Moderator:

Mark Halle, *Executive Director IISD-Europe and Vice President, IISD International*

Panelists:

Cécile Molinier, *former Director, UNDP Office in Geneva*
Christoph Stückelberger, *CEO Globethics.net*



Mr. Halle: The new Sustainable Development Goals are expected to be universally applicable, with real commitments by both developing and developed countries, but there is a real risk of sinking down to the lowest common denominator. Furthermore, the means of implementation will require significant financing and we have not yet found the right format for multi-stakeholder collaboration. The context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda is potentially exciting and we should get behind it, but we need to find ways of working together across the divides of different communities and give partnership a real meaning.

Cécile Molinier: The inclusive process carried out by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) has produced a workable listing of goals and targets for the UN General Assembly to negotiate a Post-2015 Development Agenda. The key will be financing, which will necessarily require a multi-stakeholder perspective, and this includes the private sector. We need to combine the thematic approach with country-level implementation while also retaining a universal framework and global perspective of the SDGs.

Christoph Stückelberger: The terminology in the Post-2015 Development Agenda should be directed to the concept of “transformation” rather than “development”. A culture of fatalism challenges us to create the motivation for people to act positively, which should be done by articulating common values explicitly in the SDGs. Two-thirds of the world’s population follow different religious beliefs and practices, and many governments are now working on the bridge to religious beliefs. The bridging on identifying common values, however, also requires an emphasis on procedural justice, as well as innovation.

The interactive dialogue with GSO members and friends brought out the challenges of honest negotiation over taboo subjects, such as corruption or conflict. There are also barriers for accommodating private sector interests, the interests of consumers and public sector priorities. These challenges suggest that we need a new kind of mechanism for collective governance. The issue of accountability stimulated a lively exchange on options for positively rewarding accomplishments rather than sanctions for not reaching goals. One avenue might be to

adapt the peer reviews in the Universal Periodic Reviews initiated by the Human Rights Council.

Participants and panelists agreed that the accountability issue will be very important for implementation at both the global and country levels and should include multi-stakeholder mechanisms. Multi-stakeholder collaboration will also need to take into account the divisions within stakeholder groups.

The Global Social Observatory will continue with its series on promoting multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral engagement on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in the coming months. Bringing the Geneva perspective on innovative partnerships will be emphasized in the series. See announcements of future events in the series in the *GSO News* and at www.gsogeneva.ch.



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The GSO at the WTO Public Forum

The WTO Public Forum, an annual event, was held at the WTO headquarters on 1 to 3 October 2014 with the overall theme of “Trade Is for Everyone”. There were a variety of dynamic initiatives we heard about in the numerous sessions organized by different civil society and business groups – and by a number of international organizations. Although the WTO negotiating agenda continues to be blocked by the agricultural issues that triggered the July setback, the Forum contained many disparate pieces of a broadening agenda that may help to

reverse this loss of trust. There were sessions directed to the implications for the WTO of the mega-regional trade agreements and the issue-specific negotiations among sub-groups of the WTO on technology, environmental goods, services and government procurement. There were some concerns raised about trade facilitation and Aid for Trade, as well as the Enhanced Integrated Framework for the least developed countries (LDCs).

The Forum was organized around three sub-themes – trade and Africa, trade and consumers, and trade and jobs. Regarding trade for Africa, many of the sessions addressed the role of different trading partners, and especially the role of China as a serious trading partner. Sector-specific attention was directed to environmental goods, natural resources, food security and innovation. The changing nature of trade in value chains and the prospects for regional trade were also featured. Capacity building for implementing the prospective Trade Facilitation Agreement was also mentioned, although there were also critics of the TFA for developing countries.

On the role of consumers and trade, there were several sessions looking at how international and domestic standards and accreditation systems affect trade. The GSO hosted a session on this theme with the topic: *“Understanding different consumer perspectives and advancing sustainable consumption patterns.”* The key message was that developing countries can benefit from complying with standards but often have more costs with their own domestic regulations. Regional harmonization and an appreciation for the linkages between international, regional and local circumstances were also part of the dialogue at this session. Standards, furthermore, are moving way beyond the earlier focus on environmental and labor standards. A full report of this GSO session will be posted on the GSO website. Other consumer-related sessions identified the growing importance of Internet trade and green economies, and there was also an interesting session on how the sporting goods industry is coping with compliance costs and rules of origin to meet consumer demands.

The third sub-theme dealing with jobs and trade also featured sessions reflecting on specific areas of trade contributing to job creation – the digital economy, the

green economy and other innovation-driven industries. The dynamics of value chains contributing to jobs in multiple settings, and the importance of value chains especially in promoting food security and smallholder farmers were developed in a number of sessions. Some sessions featured criticisms of the agricultural subsidies in developed countries. On the whole, though, the tone was on how job growth can benefit from innovation, skills development and a commitment to decent work and wages.

The GSO benefited from the participation of two interns– Elise Smith and Sarah Higgins – who attended many of the WTO events and prepared their own impressions of the main messages they picked up. Elise identified the strong prevalence of interest in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the proposals for Sustainable Development Goals. This is certainly where there is more momentum on new economic thinking than within the confines of the Doha Development Agenda. She noted both the unique nature and priority areas of the SDGs as well as the underlying tensions regarding the negotiating power of developing countries and the challenges of financing and accountability for the SDGs. Elise also reported on sessions highlighting the benefits of trade liberalization for jobs but was also struck by the observation that “there are no more domestic products any more”. The new economic paradigm and transformation agenda are taking us in new directions.

Sarah reported on sessions that presented the positives and negatives of trade liberalization and sustainability standards, along with some interesting sessions on African economic growth. Sustainability is the word to describe the interests of consumers and the private sector as well as the role of governments to regulate. And finally, Sarah was intrigued by the debates regarding technological innovations and the need to develop new concepts of intellectual property rights to accommodate these trends in innovation.



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GSO Participation at CFS41, 13-18 October and the forthcoming ICN2 on 19-21 November in Rome

The annual gathering in Rome of the Committee on World Food Security took place last week, with representatives from governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector gathering to discuss the latest round of focus issues and CFS work programs. The CFS is a multi-stakeholder group that promotes an inclusive participatory process. There is a well-defined and organized Civil Society Mechanism that speaks for a wide range of non-governmental organizations concerned with every manner of food, agriculture, farming, livestock, fishing and nutrition issues. There is also a Private Sector Mechanism counterpart which acts as a voice for business with interest in all aspects of food security, from "farm to fork". The two groups caucus separately but join together in working groups throughout the year, and engage in debate in the annual CFS meeting plenaries. One very important achievement of the CFS this year was the adoption of Guiding Principles for Responsible Agriculture Investment. Another significant issue area that drew considerable interest is that of nutrition. Interest was heightened by a rumor going around that a new UN agency called UN Nutrition was to be established to address growing global concerns about over and under nutrition.

Rumors aside, nutrition was indeed a focus of discussion at the CFS meetings, both in the plenary and at side events. One side event in particular that we sat in on addressed CFS and the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), both with respect to the upcoming event, to take place 19-21 November, also in Rome, and with respect to how best to handle nutrition issues going forward. ICN2 is being jointly organized by FAO and WHO member states, and secretariat support is shared by these two agencies. There was a Joint Working Group of representatives of WHO and FAO member states organized by regions, followed by an Open-ended Working Group of all FAO and WHO member states, who have negotiated drafts for a Political Outcome Document for ICN2 and a draft Framework for Action. The GSO has been an observer at several consultations and negotiations for ICN2 and plans to be part of the civil society delegation at ICN2.

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II. Commentary on International Organizations and NGOs

Ebola vaccines and the WHO

In the midst of the demagoguery fanning the flames of hysteria in response to the Ebola epidemic, we are encouraged that accelerated progress is being made on the development of Ebola vaccines. This is one of the areas where the World Health Organization is well suited to use its convening power to bring the diverse actors together. On 24 October 2014, the WHO convened a meeting with top Government officials from Ebola-affected countries, regulatory agencies, vaccine manufacturers and funding agencies to discuss and agree how best to fast-track testing and the deployment of vaccines in sufficient numbers to slow down the spread of the deadly virus. "As a group, said Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO assistant director general of health systems and innovation, "we are accelerating in a matter of weeks a process that typically takes years, ensuring that safety and effectiveness remain the top priorities with production speed and capacity a close third." This is

clearly multi-stakeholder collaboration in action. The pharmaceutical industry is ramping up production capacity, and regulatory authorities are committing to approving the manufacture and distribution of these vaccines with extremely short deadlines. Participants also agreed that “Community engagement is also vital and work should be scaled up urgently in partnership between local communities, national governments, nongovernmental organizations and international organizations.” But more funds are urgently needed to keep the assistance coming and the coordinated efforts working. We encourage all to contribute whatever they can. Here are two possibilities: The UN Foundation has a fund [here](#), and MSF has one for your contributions [here](#).

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An Investment Jamboree sets the stage for 2015

The World Investment Forum 2014 was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 13 to 16 October 2014 with the theme “Investing in Sustainable Development”. The Forum was an impressive “investment jamboree” to set the stage for the negotiations on financing of the Post-2015 Development Agenda next year. This particular Forum was preceded by the UNCTAD 2014 *World Investment Report* on the same theme and was frequently praised by speakers at the Forum. Its proposals for engaging more of the private sector to meet the \$2.3 trillion gap in financing the Post-2015 Development Agenda in developing countries – and to link investment to responsible actions by the private sector – were indeed strengthened by the deliberations and outcomes of the multiple parallel events at this Forum.

Two plenary sessions on 14 and 15 October 2014 featured high-level dialogues on investment policies and sustainable development. The figure of \$2.3 trillion was repeated several times as the projected gap if one compares what is needed for the SDGs with what is available from existing domestic resource capacity and overseas development assistance. Speakers agreed that this gap can only be covered by bringing in private sector financing for sustainable development, but it would seem that new financing models or even an oversight body to

monitor and promote such financing are needed to make this happen.

Some speakers, including Jeffrey Sachs from the Earth Institute at Columbia University, proposed multi-stakeholder negotiations to include the private sector directly, along with other non-state actors, in the three summits of 2015 – financing in Addis Ababa in July, Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York in September and Climate Change in Paris in December. The Forum concluded with a ministerial roundtable and a “High-Level Action Plan for Investing in Sustainable Development Goals” which will serve as part of UNCTAD’s contributions to the third International Conference on Financing for Development that will be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015.

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An Existential Challenge to the International Labour Organization

The ILO Director-General Guy Ryder delivered a lecture at the Graduate Institute on 20 October 2014 on “The ILO: The Next 100 Years”. Mr. Ryder modestly refrained from being a forecaster of the future but did speak about the four challenges/crises facing the ILO today – jobs, social justice and equality, values and multilateralism. He also described seven major initiatives to reinforce the contemporary and relevant mandate of the ILO, including one initiative dealing with its traditional mandate to promulgate and interpret international labour standards. At the Governing Body in November, he observed, the ILO will be addressing a major controversy on whether existing standards include legal recognition of the right to strike and more broadly, on legal scope and authority of its supervisory mechanism. Mr. Ryder described this as a very worrying debate and an existential challenge to the organization. This controversy has been before the ILO for close to two years now, but there is an expectation that action needs to be taken with the ILO Governing Body meets in early November 2014.

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III. Upcoming Events

GSO events

- GSO Participation in the SUN Movement Global Gathering, 16 to 18 November 2014 in Rome
- GSO Participation with Civil Society Delegation to Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), 19 to 21 November 2014 in Rome
- Fourth Enhanced Learning Exercise in the [GSO-SUN Project](#) – December 2014 in Jakarta. Date yet to be finalized.
- GSO Management Committee, 16 December 2014

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Key upcoming events of interest to the GSO

- UNOHCHR [Universal Periodic Review / 20th session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 27 Oct – 7 Nov
- UNOHCHR [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women / 59th session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 27 Oct – 7 Dec
- ILO [322nd Session of the Governing Body](#) Geneva 30 Oct – 13 Nov
- UNCTAD [Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation, third session \(small island developing States\)](#) Geneva, Switzerland 3 Nov – 7 Nov
- UNEP [Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries \(LLDCs\)](#) Vienna, Austria 3 Nov – 5 Nov
- ITC [2014 Trade Promotion Organizations Network World Conference & Awards](#) Dubai 3 Nov – 5 Nov
- UNESCO [Stakeholder Meetings of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development](#) Okayama, Japan 4 Nov – 8 Nov
- WHO WIPO WTO [Fourth Trilateral technical symposium WHO, WIPO and WTO on “Innovation and access to medical technologies: challenges and opportunities for middle income countries”](#) Geneva 5 November
- WMO [Conference on the Gender Dimensions of Weather and Climate Services](#) Geneva, Switzerland 5 Nov – 7 Nov
- WIPO [Committee on Development and Intellectual Property \(CDIP\): Fourteenth Session](#) Geneva 10 Nov – 14 Nov
- UNOHCHR [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights / 53rd session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 10 Nov
- UNOHCHR [WG on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas / 2nd session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 10 Nov – 14 Nov
- IAEA [International Symposium on Nuclear and Related Techniques for Food Integrity Traceability Safety and Quality](#) 10 Nov – 14 Nov
- UNESCO [World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – Learning Today for a Sustainable Future](#) Aichi-Nagoya, Japan 10 Nov – 12 Nov
- WFP [Second Regular Session of the Executive Board](#) Rome, Italy 10 Nov – 14 Nov
- WIPO [Intellectual Property and Socio-Economic Development](#) Geneva, Switzerland 11 Nov
- G20 [L20 Summit](#) Brisbane, Australia 12 Nov – 14 Nov
- CMMD [OECD New Directions](#) 12 Nov
- OECD [Conference on Innovating the Public Sector: from Ideas to Impact](#) Paris, France 12 Nov – 13 Nov
- UNCTAD [Expert Meeting on the Impact of Access to Financial Services, Including by Highlighting Remittances on Development: Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth](#) Geneva, Switzerland 12 Nov – 14 Nov
- IEA , [Launch of World Energy Outlook 2014](#) London 12 Nov
- G20 [B20 meeting](#) Brisbane, Australia 13 Nov – 14 Nov
- OECD [Green Growth and Sustainable Development Forum 2014: Addressing the Social Implications of Green Growth](#) Paris, France 13 Nov – 14 Nov
- G20 [G20 Summit](#) Brisbane, Australia 15 Nov – 16 Nov
- ECOSOC [Coordination and Management Meeting](#) 17 Nov – 18 Nov
- Codex [Codex Committee on Food Hygiene](#) Lima, Peru 17 Nov – 21 Nov
- WTO [Dispute Settlement Body](#) Geneva, Switzerland 18 Nov

- ILO [Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations](#) Geneva 19 Nov – 6 Dec
- WHO, FAO [Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\)](#) Rome, Italy 19 Nov – 21 Nov
- UNESCO [9th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) Paris 24 Nov – 28 Nov
- WIPO [Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs, and Geographical Indications: Thirty Second Session \(SCT/32\)](#) Geneva 24 Nov – 26 Nov
- UNCTAD [Single-year Expert Meeting on Social Inclusive Programmes and Their Impact on Sustainable and Inclusive Development and Growth](#) Geneva, Switzerland 24 Nov – 28 Nov
- UNCTAD [Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation, third session \(small island developing States\)](#) Geneva, Switzerland 24 Nov – 26 Nov
- Codex [Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses](#) Bali, Indonesia 24 Nov – 28 Nov
- UNOHCHR [Forum on Minorities Issues / 7th session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 25 Nov – 26 Nov
- CMMD [Food Security and Nutrition](#) 26 Nov
- UNCTAD [Commission on Science and Technology for Development 2014-2015 Inter-sessional Panel](#) Geneva, Switzerland 26 Nov – 28 Nov
- IGF Open Consultations and MAG Meeting Geneva, Switzerland 1 Dec – 3 Dec
- FAO [FAO Council 150th Session](#) Rome 1 Dec - 5 Dec
- IAEA [International Conference on Occupational Radiation Protection](#) Vienna, Austria 1 Dec - 5 Dec
- UNOHCHR [Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination](#) Geneva, Switzerland 1 Dec - 5 Dec
- UNFCCC [Twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties and the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol](#) Lima, Peru 1 Dec - 12 Dec
- UNOHCHR [Forum of Business and Human Rights / 3rd session](#) Geneva, Switzerland 2 Dec - 3 Dec
- WIPO [WIPO Advanced Workshop on Domain Name Dispute Resolution: Update on Precedent and Practice \(ARB/DN/AWK/14\)](#) 4 Dec - 5 Dec

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IV. Who We Are

The Global Social Observatory (GSO) is an international organization founded in the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland in April 2004. The mission of the GSO is to initiate dialogue on social issues in order to encourage leaders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence. This service is based on a participatory process in a neutral space that brings all interested parties together across national boundaries to identify solutions and policies that are coherent. These solutions can then contribute to policy-making at the governmental and intergovernmental levels. Visit our [website](#) for regular news and project updates.

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