



NGO Oral Statement by GFDD during the 53rd Session of the Commission for Social Development on 4-13 February 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York, focused on: “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”.

Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD) and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE) are private, non-partisan, not-for-profit institutions, created by His Excellency Dr. Leonel Fernández, former President of the Dominican Republic.

FUNGLODE and GFDD are dedicated to formulating innovative and strategic proposals on global issues of national interest with the purpose of contributing to the creation of effective public policies related to the governance and social and economic development of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (the Foundation) I would like to extend our sincere and full support to you, the esteemed Bureau at this Commission and its members, as well as our best wishes for successful consultations and outcomes.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, in today's globalized world, social inequalities and political discontent have spurred citizens to gather. From Ukraine to Turkey, income-inequality, poor governance and low levels of social provision have all led to the erosion of people's trust in governments and institutions. To reestablish this trust and achieve sustainable development, then decisions at all levels must consider the three interconnected pillars of sustainable development – socio-cultural, economic and environmental systems.

Putting people at the center of sustainable development should be the focus of all efforts to move towards a green economy, one that will deliver benefits to the international community in addressing food, energy and water security, and the future Sustainable Development Goals. Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration provides that “environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens at the relevant level.” Mirroring this principle, the Foundation calls for a new social development agenda, where public participation of communities is enhanced and economic decisions are conditioned by social and environmental outcomes. Under this new agenda, the social considerations are key to economic prosperity as the system seeks to:

- strengthen the local productivity and social fabric of communities;

- offer sustainable development education and professional development to communities on a local level; and
- promote decision making that enhances public participation and keeps sustainability at its core.

The Foundation's ReCreate program is a good illustration of how local productivity and social inclusion can easily be combined to have a positive impact on the sustainable development of the Dominican Republic. Developed in 2012, this program is a unique recycling scheme, which offers women, youth and children across the Dominican Republic workshops in art recycling. It demonstrates how recycling waste into art can empower individuals and communities alike. Upon graduating from the workshops, the program then equips individuals and their communities with the opportunity to launch their own ventures, turning this educational project into a source of income and entrepreneurship.

Offering reliable sustainable development education and professional development programs is another key part of this new agenda. Through the continuation of its Eco-Huertos program, the Foundation is supporting the creation of organic and sustainable vegetable gardens in schools and communities throughout the country. The series of workshops and sessions included in the program educate members on the principles of sustainable agriculture and how to create and maintain a vegetable garden. With the aim of developing this program on a national scale, the Foundation is helping local families learn sustainable agriculture practices that can then be applied at home. This will enable them to not only supplement their diets, but to generate income for the community as well.

The third and final part of this agenda is the active engagement of civil society, in any development effort, so that they may be truly sustainable and lead to the creation of long-term collaborative relationships. By way of example we would look to our Caribbean neighbors and refer to the example of the Natural Resources Conservation Association of Jamaica, which created a framework permitting non-governmental organizations to manage nationally designated protected areas. Under this system an NGO, The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (the Foundation), was granted oversight of the Portland Bight Sustainable Development Area. The Foundation partnered with local fisherman associations to create a fisheries Management Council (the Council). Drafting regulations for land and marine resource use, this council later successfully resolved a dispute with a local petroleum facility over the use of marine space in Portland Bight. The speed with which this NGO made use of its position to create space for public participation in local development decisions is a model for the way participation can be carved out by government agencies and by civil society organizations, and should serve as inspiration for this Commission.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, the active education and engagement of communities contributes to the sustainable development of local economies, a vital component for ensuring the promotion of sustainable development in both developed and developing countries across the world. However, as can be seen from the actions and examples put forward by the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, this transition will only be effective with the active participation of all relevant stakeholders at every level of decision making.

We therefore invite the delegates gathered at this Commission to explore the role that these stakeholders can play and make this new social development agenda a reality in the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Thank you.