TAP Network HLPF Strategy Meeting – Friday, 15 July 2016

Organizations present:

Africa Platform for Civil Society	CIVICUS
Amnesty International	International Disability Alliance (IDA)
Article 19	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
Asia Development Alliance	Nonviolence International
ATD Fourth World	Restless Development
Baha'i International Community	Saferworld
Center for Human Rights and Climate Change Research	Transparency International
CARE International	World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)

Chaired by:
Mr. Savio Carvalho, Amnesty International, co-chair of TAP Network Steering Committee

Provide your inputs for the TAP Network Questionnaire:

English: http://bit.ly/TAPQuestionnaire

Spanish: http://bit.ly/29PtUFX

French: http://bit.ly/29D47RI

Deadline for inputs: Friday, 5 August 2016

Timeline and Next Steps for TAP Consultation on Strategic Direction:

Friday, 29 July: Consultation Webinar on TAP Network Strategic Direction for 2017 and Beyond

Friday, 5 August: Deadline for TAP Questionnaire Inputs

Mid-August: TAP Secretariat to circulate summary of questionnaire inputs to TAP Network

Friday, 29 August: Webinar on Questionnaire summary for TAP Network Members

August/September: TAP Network Steering Committee to draft and finalize Strategic Plan and funding proposal

Meeting Summary

Agenda:

1) Introduction and overview of consultation and questionnaire

2) Overview of the TAP Network Independent Evaluation

3) Discussion on TAP Strategic Direction

4) Timeline and next steps

1) Introduction and overview of consultation and questionnaire

Colleagues from the TAP Network Steering Committee and TAP Network Secretariat provided an overview of the consultation with the TAP Network on the strategic direction in 2017 and beyond, and introduced the TAP Network Questionnaire, which is now available in English, Spanish and French.

The Questionnaire is a central focus of the strategic direction consultation, which organizations are encouraged to provide inputs into. In addition to the TAP Strategy Meeting at the 2016 HLPF, the TAP Steering Committee will convene multiple webinars which will provide additional opportunities for TAP Network Members to discuss TAP's future work.

This broad consultation on TAP's future, including the TAP Questionnaire, will provide a foundation for the TAP Network Steering Committee to draft a Strategic Plan for TAP for 2017 and beyond, as well as a budget and proposal for funding on behalf of the Network. For more on the timeline and next steps,

2) Overview of the TAP Network Independent Evaluation

Colleagues at the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) provided an overview of the TAP Network Independent Evaluation for 2015, which was commissioned to take stock of TAP's work and examine areas where the Network provided significant inputs and added value, as well as challenges, shortcomings and opportunities for improvement going forward.

It was highlighted that the TAP Questionnaire is partially structured to respond to various questions that were posed by the Independent Evaluation, including particularly around challenges such as:

1) Scope of work for TAP Network going forward, and where we go from here and prioritize activities/work streams at different levels?
2) Positioning and approach of TAP's work, and how we go about work around various work streams?
3) Structure and architecture of TAP more broadly, how we go about our work going forward at various levels (global, regional, national, local, etc), how the Network itself can be made more "fit for purpose", and governance of the Network itself.

The discussion that followed largely aimed to solicit answers to address some of these key challenges, as well as to provide insights into some of the questions asked in the TAP Questionnaire.

3) Discussion on TAP Strategic Direction

Scope of work

A key question that was posed to the group was around the scope of TAP's work: Do we consider ourselves a Network focusing on the issues of transparency, accountability participation and broader "governance" issues, or are we a Network that focuses on SDG16 issues more broadly. To respond to this question, there were varying responses, including discussion on if focusing on SDG16 limits our focus to just working on issues around the SDGs, or if it expands the scope of our work to issues beyond just governance issues. Questions were raised around not only needing to decide which "issues" we work on, but also which "processes" or "levels" (global, national, etc) we work on as well.

All members agreed that the option of focusing on "TAP" issues or SDG16 issues were not mutually exclusive, with many highlighting that we have worked on these simultaneously since the Network's inception. A variation of that perspective, some highlighted that the issues of "transparency, accountability and participation" inherently includes work around SDG16. Many highlighted the positive work that the Network has done to work on both fronts, including broader SDG accountability issues at the global level, as well as around SDG16 through the Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit. Many expressed strong support for maintaining the global level of work where all agreed that TAP had added significant value in the past. It was then expressed that there was significant value that TAP could add going forward to focus on broader accountability issues across the entire Agenda at the global level, in addition to work at the national level through the Goal 16 Toolkit.

Challenges to taking on additional work around SDG16 were also raised, including on how we prevent ourselves from creating "siloes" within TAP working on various issues, or siloing our work to just work on SDG16, where many agreed that TAP could also explore the interlinkages between SDG16 and many other related issues such as human rights.

TAP Activities and Positioning

Similar to discussions around TAP's "scope of work", the discussion around TAP activities focused largely on a reflection of where TAP has provided significant value in the past, and looking at how to expand the Network's work on various fronts. Questions that were posed throughout discussions focused on how we're ensuring that TAP is filling gaps where we're most needed, and take stock of and utilize existing activities from TAP Network Members to better fulfill its ambitions. It was also highlighted that if TAP was to begin working at the national-level, working with existing platforms will help magnify its work.

It was again highlighted that the TAP Secretariat's intimate engagement with the global SDG processes was a significant added value for TAP Network members, with unanimous agreement within the group that the information/intel gathered at this level was invaluable for the work of organizations that didn't have the capacity to follow these processes. The convening power of TAP at the global level was also seen as a much-needed approach to this work at the global level. Most agreed that the global-level coordination was something that was still very much needed, and that TAP should harness existing activities and reach of its members to undertake national-level work. It was highlighted that work at the global and national levels cannot happen without the other; global coordination and information sharing is necessary to enable national-level members to undertake national-level work, and this national-level work was critical to inform collective positions at the global level.

Challenges in undertaking these sorts of activities at the global and national levels were also discussed, including having a well-resourced and staffed secretariat to enable the Network to take on this work at many levels, as well as the challenge of mobilizing national-level Members to undertake work.

Approach and Positioning

Discussions on approach and positioning of TAP focused largely around the question of TAP's approach to advocacy and work at the global and national levels, and the right balance between being "constructive" and engaging positively with governments, and also being critical to hold governments accountable when action and ambition is lacking. It was highlighted that TAP's work to date has largely fallen in the former category, with advocacy centering largely around working with "supporters" of TAP's work, which was necessary for global-level advocacy to date. However, many highlighted that a more "critical" approach will be needed at times to hold governments and stakeholders accountable. While discussions first began around seeing these options of "positive" or "critical" engagement as mutually exclusive, it was eventually agreed by all that a "mixed" approach could be employed by TAP going forward – offering constructive and positive engagement with governments when needed, but also taking a critical approach when governments fall behind or fail to meet their commitments.

TAP Structure, membership and governance

Discussions around the structure and governance of TAP's work centered largely around questions of how TAP could ensure that it is responsive to the evolving nature of its work and membership. It was highlighted that the independent evaluation raised the issue of general lack of engagement by some members, with a small percentage of members taking on a disproportionate amount of work around TAP position papers and advocacy documents to date. It was noted that TAP's "informal" membership structure, a flexible arrangement overwhelmingly preferred by TAP members, has largely contributed to this varied engagement, with some members wishing to engage deeply in substantive work, and others joining the Network to receive its valuable updates, information and intel shared. Despite this challenge of informal membership, most agreed that a "formal" membership structure might not solve some of these challenges, and that it might only work to exclude those that are interested in TAP's work but not able to substantively contribute.

Many disagreed with the perception that there was a "lack of engagement" of most members, and that "engagement" can be measured in many ways. It was highlighted that the work of the Secretariat to provide information, analysis and intel to the members is a prerequisite for many members to engage in the process at all, and that many rely on TAP to undertake advocacy on their behalf throughout many of these processes – which many feel should be reflected in the measurement of "engagement." It was also mentioned that the TAP Secretariat has done a lot of work to ensure that "no one is left behind" in TAP's work.

It was suggested that a potential way forward was to solicit concrete commitments from TAP Network members on how they would contribute to TAP's work going forward, which could then be made publicly available to encourage transparency and accountability. This would work to enhance engagement, and encourage members to contribute in different ways once they see how others have committed to the Network's work. It was also suggested that the Network could explore other options to distribute responsibilities amongst members, including through working groups, which would also work to reduce the work burden on the TAP Secretariat. Finally, it was agreed that the "voluntary contributions" for TAP Network members can go a long way to prove that members are "engaged" in TAP's work and see that it provides significant added value to them, despite a perceived "lack of engagement."