Civil society as a driver for change towards sustainable societies

Models empowering civil society

18/7/2017
6.15 pm – 7.30 pm

Conference Room 11
United Nations Conference Building
New York

European Economic and Social Committee's side-event *"Civil society as a driver for change towards sustainable societies"* on 18 July was organised together with the EU delegation, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and SDG Watch Europe as cooperating partners and benefited from a wide audience.

In the context of the High-level Political Forum focus this year on the theme of "eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", this side-event aimed at contributing to the debate by looking into the broader experiences with civil society involvement in the EU and other world regions and defining enabling conditions for a strong and active role of stakeholders.

As the body representing organised civil society at EU level, the European Economic and Social Committee felt well positioned to provide this opportunity for knowledge exchange on this important aspect. By promoting the concept of participatory governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the event has also contributed to SDG 17, which was among the set of SDGs under review during the HLPF 2017.

Empowering citizens and civil society groups has been underlined as key in ensuring that "no one is left behind". As underpinned during the event, without civil society, the SGDs become void of meaning. Hence, raising public awareness is among strategic priority issues in SGDs implementation. Trade unions have started to make their own analysis on the implementation of some of the SDGs in several countries.

Citizens have a major role to play in addressing the issue of climate change. But their involvement must be facilitated and not prevented by prohibitive regulations and policies.

The event stressed the importance to mobilize civil society at large in the move towards sustainable societies. Empowering citizens and civil society groups is the best way to move people out of poverty and achieve sustainable prosperity for all. _____