Statement by Civil Society FfD Group (including the Women’s Working Group on FfD) to General Debate

Delivered by Stefano Prato, Society for International Development (SID) on May 23, 2017

FfD Forum 2017

1. We appreciated the efforts to achieve a substantive outcome document. However, the negotiations exposed the lack of shared understanding and adequate planning of the FfD Follow-up. If restating previously agreed formulations is our maximum ambition, the FfD follow-up risks remaining an exercise of rhetoric. We therefore reiterate the call for a fifth additional day to this year’s 4-day Forum in the last quarter of this year to explore the opportunities and feasibility of a multiyear plan with respect to themes and key areas of future focus;

2. The outcome document lacks proper contextualization within the human rights framework and appears to be overconcerned with investors’ rights, exposing a covert attempt to establish a normative hierarchy that favours investors over people. We unambiguously reject this. Furthermore, women’s human rights and gender equality are fundamental principles per se and we strongly resist any formulations that appear to subordinate them as means to the pursuit of an economic end. Similarly, we lack adequate recognition of the human rights and agency of young people and the challenges confronted by people with disabilities continue to remain hidden and therefore unaddressed by policy interventions;

3. The conventional growth narrative and the overreliance on the private sector permeates the outcome document, despite the increasing evidence of the unsustainable social and environmental implications of the current business model. The outcome focuses on promoting an enabling environment for business without emphasising the need for strong policy measure to regulate private sector activities and realign them to the imperatives of sustainable development. Moreover, the narrative on blended finance and PPPs is highly inconsistent with the Addis commitment to developing principles and standards to safeguard the public interest;

4. Despite some rhetoric, there is no sense of urgency on the need to take concrete and immediate measures to counter the risk of another financial crisis, promote policy coherence with human rights and re-align economic, monetary and financial frameworks to the sustainable development agenda. The necessary governance reform to manage the alarming risk of new potential debt crises continues to lag behind. The migration crisis and climate change remain underestimated systemic risks;

5. The document barely touches on the role of the FfD Follow-up as one of the central pillar in advancing the 2030 Agenda. In fact, the latter is hardly mentioned and little emphasis is put on how to remove the structural obstacles that continue to relegate developing countries within commodity traps at the lower end of the global division of labour. Hence the paradox of a 2030 Agenda that pushes for national implementation of development objectives, while the FfD process does not enable the policy and fiscal space to really advance the pursuit of the SDGs;

6. A fundamental dimension of the FfD process has always been the overt attempt to strengthen the role of the United Nations - with its universal membership, inclusive nature and human rights foundations - in global economic governance, promoting a more democratic global system. With respect to international tax cooperation, one of the most important priorities of developing countries, we are deeply concerned with the encouragement to strengthen existing not-inclusive institutions as opposed to the establish institutions that are better fit for purpose, including an intergovernmental UN tax body with universal membership. Similarly, the Global Infrastructure Forum should be clearly accountable to and guided by the FfD Follow-up process.

7. Despite these serious concerns, the Civil Society FfD Group remains deeply committed to work collaboratively with UN Member States in advancing the FfD agenda.