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Implementation of the mandate and programme of work –
Focused thematic discussion and interactive dialogue
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Engaging the Unengaged: Building inclusive development through a meaningful civil society participation

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Transcript of the statement by Ms. Siân Bagshaw,
World Scout Bureau Europe

Good morning everybody, thank you fellow panelists and members of the Mechanism, and you all here and online.

For me it is truly a privilege to be joining you at this table on a topic that closely aligns with our mission at World Scouting, the world's largest non-formal educational youth movement, it is present in 176 countries and territories worldwide and my work as a diversity culture and inclusion professional. We heard from my colleague about doing things differently and engaging in certain ways, and I would like to do that this morning with you to navigate this conversation.

If you would indulge me, I just want to see shortly who is in the room with me here today because we are not formal educators so it is a very different context to where I would normally be sitting on a Tuesday morning. If you would indulge me, just raise your hands if you are aged 18 to 25. Now let us widen it a little bit from 18 to 30. What about those of you who work with or engage with young people on a regular basis, civil society organizations, educator parents, youth workers, volunteers, raise your hand if you have one of those kinds of roles. I will not ask anyone to identify as part of an underserved or underrepresented group, but you can see where I am going with this.

The point is what are the limitations in discussing meaningful development without being able to engage everyone around the table that we need and in likely all cases and why we are here, is that the people who will be most affected by what we are talking about here today are not here or able to be engaged directly with any kind of dialogue. Engagement does not have to be hard; see, just quickly asking a few questions was my way of engaging with you all differently this morning. It is not groundbreaking, it is all about intentionality and tailoring our approaches and so today I hope that we together here and with comments from the floor, we will share some simple yet effective ways to ensure that our discussions and approaches are truly inclusive.

We must maintain the principle that the right to development includes improving the well-being of every member of society. However, development is not always positive, and sometimes can have a disproportionate consequence. Genuine progress requires social justice, reducing inequalities and safeguards the rights of all.

We must emphasize that inclusive processes are essential, not just beneficial, and therefore we must cultivate a deep understanding of why those processes matter, prioritizing them over

economic growth, project measurements and KPIs or even political affiliation. From our organization's experience we predominantly work on the right to education, but that is the right to development. It is the avenue, it is one of the doorways in which we can facilitate that. But communities worldwide with increasing low trust in government and political structures are further disengaging youth at all levels, particularly among marginalized communities or groups in situations of vulnerability.

This mistrust stifles civic participation and volunteerism, which are essential for raising awareness and addressing social issues, and if we are truly to engage the unengaged, we must tackle this barrier, these barriers head on.

First, to examine the primary barriers for civil society participation from our perspective, a significant hurdle is the pervasive distrust in local capacities. While there is a rational understanding of the need for participation of youth or for those who do not yet have a seat at the table, many actually remain unconvinced that inclusive, albeit lengthy engagement processes yield better sustainable development outcomes rather than that quick fix. Often, the approach to communities is with predetermined metrics rather than listening to their unique needs. Instead, we must adapt our approaches to local realities, go to where people are and allow them to shape their own indicators for success stories, be to allow them to be the authors of their own development.

Secondly, to localize approaches is essential to effective development. As Scouts, we serve as pillars of our community, modelling a different approach that emphasizes active listening community engagement. Civil society organizations and those of you in the room who represent those really have a unique and crucial role in creating a safe environment. Ours is by utilizing alternative systems and tools beyond formal education processes. For example, through non-formal education, we welcome and equip young people with the skills, confidence and understanding necessary to engage actively in their communities. Often these life skills and competencies needed for development or overlooked in traditional education systems, which already reinforce the disadvantage and limited capacity of the unengaged. By focusing on resources of grassroots, initiatives will not only enhance community involvement but also build a stronger foundation for sustainable development that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of all members of our societies.

In addition, it is crucial to ensure that voices of the marginalized and underrepresented groups are genuinely included in decision making processes, establishing consultative mechanisms that incorporate community feedback into development designers essential, we should create co-management systems that empower community representatives with real decision making, authority of budgets and development outcomes.

Non-formal educational approaches can play a vital role in empowering young leaders, building trust and belonging and ensuring youth voices influence the future. By putting youth at the center of our efforts, we advocate for policies that support their engagement inclusion and decision-making processes, pushing for systemic changes that recognize their rights and contributions.

At the same time, it is equally important to establish clear policies that ensure the inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds, while regularly reviewing our definitions of underrepresented groups to remain responsive to the societal challenges and changes. Through these efforts, we can foster meaningful participation in civil society and work towards a more equitable future.

Lastly, we cannot overlook the role of governments, international organizations and the private sector alongside CSOs in the collective endeavor. We need clear strategies and mandates that hold us all accountable for progress and a cross-sectoral, intersectional approach by design is essential.

In conclusion, to build a more inclusive future we must engage the unengaged with sincerity and determination. Active inclusion requires intentionality, it is about working with communities, not working for them or without them. By emphasizing inclusive processes removing barriers to participation making sure that underrepresented voices are at the center of decision-making processes and actively listening to our communities, we can create a development landscape that represents the needs and goals of every young person in their particular reality.

Thank you.