

C20 Working Group 10 Policy Brief

SDG16 - Democratic Governance, Civic Space, Anti-Corruption and Access to Justice

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) is crucial for the Civil 20 (C20) as it promotes peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, essential for sustainable development and effective global governance. The C20 Brazil focuses on three key areas of SDG 16: civic space, access to justice, and anti-corruption. We appeal for global efforts to financially strengthen social organizations, particularly as groups in vulnerable conditions are disproportionately affected by shrinking civic space, lack of access to justice, and systemic corruption.

The G20 faces the challenge of addressing systemic barriers that restrict access to justice and deprive vulnerable and marginalized communities of their rights. Persistent structural inequalities rooted in historical exclusion continue to hinder access to justice. Combating corruption is crucial for the effective implementation of SDG 16, as there can be no sustainable development without reducing illicit financial flows, returning stolen assets, reducing corruption and bribery, and ensuring effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. In 2024, the prospect of a ministerial declaration on anti-corruption and sustainable development provides a critical opportunity to link the G20's anti-corruption agenda with broader sustainable development priorities.

1. Civic Space

- Strengthen the civic engagement of populations in vulnerable conditions or marginalized populations, ensuring their participation and exercise of citizenship.
- Foster a thriving digital ecosystem accessible to all and mitigate concentration and power imbalances between digital platforms, AI enterprises, and users through measures such as: promoting transparent and accountable regulation of social media platforms and AI companies, balancing freedom of expression with the need to address systemic risks, advancing data-protected interoperability, and encouraging diverse and authentic discourse while avoiding undue censorship.
- Develop standards on implementing, acquiring, and developing technological solutions, such as hacking equipment and spy software, whether by States or private entities, that allow the already condemned and well-known practice of vigilantism.
- Enhance legal security for CSOs, especially those dedicated to human rights, safeguarding their registration and operational freedom from arbitrary legal threats or repression and preventing the advancement of restrictive legislation based on combating terrorism.

- Create and enhance formal spaces for civil society participation in public policies decision-making processes, leveraging the voices of civil society organizations, activists and people in vulnerable situations and marginalized communities, ensuring the necessary conditions to enable their meaningful participation in these spaces.
- Review or amend legislation and regulations that require prior authorization for registration as a legal entity, replacing them with simple, accessible, non-discriminatory notification processes that are affordable or free of charge.
- Strengthen mechanisms for protecting human rights defenders, including upholding press freedom and protecting journalists from judicial harassment, legal reprisals, and attacks. .
- Invest in and utilize data from the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) to strengthen civic space. Leverage the GPEDC's monitoring rounds to gain insights into the national status of enabling environments for civil society organizations. Use this information to inform policies that enhance civil society participation in decision-making processes and promote a more open civic space across G20 countries.

2. Access to Justice

- Ensure accessible justice for vulnerable groups, especially those with disabilities, by addressing systemic barriers and promoting structural, communicational, and attitudinal accessibility. Strengthen justice systems to expand accountability measures and promote socioeconomic equality and climate justice. This approach should address poverty, violence, lack of access to basic rights, and other systemic injustices, while ensuring justice serves as a tool for social transformation and equitable development..
- Create and expand inclusive policies, curricular changes in university low courses, and career progression in justice
- Support initiatives that promote reparation and memory of exclusionary processes (e.g., slavery) such as truth commissions globally, especially in countries that have experienced dictatorships, and ensure the opening of justice systems for justice and reparation demands against human rights violations to all individuals. Recognize different manifestations of violence, receive complaints, and ensure a fair trial, aligning domestic justice systems with international justice and human rights mechanisms.
- Strengthen national and international justice mechanisms, including the role of courts and multilateral forums to guarantee access to justice.
- Ensure open and inclusive social participation at all decision-making stages when implementing activities with environmental impact, especially affecting vulnerable communities.

- Strengthen alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, restorative justice practices, and the application of penal alternatives to promote social inclusion for former prisoners. Implement state protection policies aimed at vulnerable populations.
- Strengthen access to information laws, treating information as a public good, particularly state/public information.
- Ensure that governments are held accountable for reducing homicide rates committed by police forces, especially against racial minorities.
- States with Military Justice systems must work to limit their jurisdiction, especially in cases involving crimes against civilians. States without such systems should refrain from establishing them, ensuring that military personnel are held accountable through civilian justice systems

3. Anti-Corruption

- Implement effective and comprehensive laws that provide all whistleblowers with access to reliable, gender-sensitive channels to report wrongdoing and robust protection from retaliation.
- Share information proactively among G20 countries and other counterparts, including suspicious transactions flagged by enablers with potential links to money laundering and predicate offenses in another country.
- Uphold G20 commitments to end financial secrecy by establishing or updating beneficial ownership verification mechanisms, automated checks, and ensuring reported company and trust information is accurate and up to date.
- Strengthen G20 and international cooperation instruments to recover, repatriate and reallocate resources diverted by corruption towards victim compensation, especially for the most socially vulnerable.
- Explore the benefits of artificial intelligence to bolster anti-corruption efforts, enabling swift data analysis to uncover corruption, suspicious transactions, illicit financial flows and to fight sextortion, which aggravates gender inequality and violates human rights.
- Establish transparent and effective minimum parameters for lobbying regulations, mandating the publication of elected officials' meetings with lobbyists and the establishment of a legislative footprint. Authorities should be responsible and made accountable to audit, verify and publish all relevant lobbying data and sanction regulation breaches.
- Require corporate service providers, lawyers, investment fund managers, accountants, real estate agents, luxury goods dealers, and other professionals to conduct customer due

diligence, identify beneficial owners, and report suspicious transactions to authorities to mitigate money laundering risks..

- The G20 should recognize the crucial watchdog role of civil society in fighting corruption and allow C20 members meaningful engagement with G20 ACWG process.
- The C20 request accountability of private sector.
- Promote the integrity of public bodies responsible for climate policy, strengthening their capacities for prevention, detection, investigation, and sanctioning of fraudulent and corrupt practices.