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EU-CSO Partnership Strategy Launch event "Shifting Space for Civil Society in Myanmar" in April 2019

Letter from the Team

In this issue we welcome the new EU Ambassador to Myanmar, H.E. Mr. Ranieri Sabatucci, and have interviewed him on his views regarding support to civil society.

We also look back at the last two years of the Partnership Strategy highlighting some of the main activities and achievements.

Finally, we look forward and present upcoming activities, such as consultations on EU Programming and consultations on the next phase of the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy.

Wishing you all a wonderful, safe and healthy end-of-the-year 2020 and much joy and success in 2021!

EU Delegation in Myanmar

INTERVIEW WITH H.E. EU AMBASSADOR TO MYANMAR, MR. RANIERI SABATUCCI

In September 2020 the EU Delegation in Myanmar welcomed its new Ambassador, H.E. Ranieri Sabatucci.

Mr. Sabatucci has worked for the EU for 30 years and has covered thematic areas ranging from trade and development aspects to political and peace and security matters.

Mr. Sabatucci told us that he started his professional career working for an NGO. He stressed that a lot of what drives him today still comes from that experience. Therefore, he is looking forward to have a regular dialogue with civil society in Myanmar.

During our interview we asked him about the role of the EU in Myanmar, the role of civil society and how he sees the partnership with civil society.



Q1: How do you see EU's role in supporting Myanmar's democratic transition?

The European Union is a strong, longstanding and committed partner of Myanmar on its journey towards democracy, peace and prosperity. The EU reiterated this engagement ahead of the recently held general elections and will continue to support a democratic reforms agenda. But democratic reforms are not a one-day job and numerous challenges still lie ahead in order to reach internationally recognised standards. They imply step-by-step approaches and concrete achievements, all requiring sustained efforts and commitment. The EU intends to remain on the side of the people of Myanmar to take up that challenge.

Democracy accompanies the EU wherever it operates in the world. Through its multi-faceted programs of development in Myanmar, the EU plays an important empowering role on the ground, facilitating dialogues with national authorities and civil society. Adherence to democratic values by ensuring a transparent, inclusive and credible election process is a priority, together with the empowerment of NGOs. The EU will continue to work closely with the Myanmar government and civil society actors to strengthen a rights-based and participatory development approach. Let us not forget that democracy is also a substantial pillar in the implementation of the bilateral EU-Myanmar scheme of trade preference.

Mainstreaming the promotion of democracy over the broad spectrum of its engagement in Myanmar is an important objective for the EU, simply because democratic societies with accountable institutions are preconditions of sustainable development. In this context, fragile and conflict affected countries deserve a special focus since democracy and peace are two mutually reinforcing pillars of resilient societies.

Q2: What role do you believe civil society can play in overcoming challenges in Myanmar and building a better future?

A crucial one! Myanmar is a highly complex and diverse society and the EU's engagement on the ground is closely related to the capacity of the civil society to operate. Civil society, especially those organisations and initiatives that work at the grassroots level, can play an important role in identifying the needs on the ground. In representing the interests of these various groups, they act as a bridge between citizens and the government.

Civil society also has a crucial role in advocating for positive social and policy change, both towards the government and towards the overall population. Following participatory and rights-based principles, civil society can encourage institutions at all levels to mainstream participation and respect for human rights.

At this time of democratic transition in Myanmar, the role of civil society in creating evidence-based proposals for change, as well as developing innovative and alternative solutions for the problems that society faces, is extremely valuable.

Thanks to its presence and its networks at grassroots level, civil society has the possibility and also the responsibility of testing, pioneering and documenting new modalities of delivering effective and inclusive support.

Finally, civil society can act as a watchdog, ensuring that policies are implemented, and that the demands of citizens are answered by the government. In this regard, the diversity of civil society, ranging from media actors to trade unions, needs to be engaged.

Q3: How does the EU plan to engage with civil society and to support their work in the future?

Civil society is an essential partner for the EU, should it be in rights-based and participatory development or good governance. The efficiency of our working relationship is a key prerequisite for our engagement to make a difference and reach its objectives. Since 2014 the EU has been engaging with civil society in Myanmar in a structured way. Firstly in the framework of the EU Roadmap 2014 - 2017 and afterwards through the EU-CSO Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership (2018 -2020), which was developed taking into account the lessons learned and recommendations from the Roadmap. Based on the positive feedback we received from our current work under the Partnership Strategy we will therefore continue to engage with civil society in a structured manner, through regular and two-way transparent communication, structured dialogues and other events that are important to civil society actors. . A new EU-CSO Partnership Strategy will be developed in 2021 and we are envisaging extensive consultations with civil society and other actors in order to make this partnership strategy even more relevant.

In recent years we have strengthened our partnership with civil society organisations for their participation in policy-making and policy implementation processes. The engagement of the civil society in the articulation of EU priority areas in Myanmar will be mainstreamed so that civil society will be consulted and informed at all stages of EU engagement in the priority areas.

Since 2019 the EU has embarked on consultations to define the priority areas for future EU support to Myanmar. We already received very relevant feedback from civil society organisations especially through the on-line pre-programming consultations and survey which were organised in June 2020 with over a 100 organisations. Further consultations with civil society regarding future EU engagement will take place in January. Civil society organisations will be asked to contribute their views on what they see as the key issues/challenges and possible solutions/approaches that can be supported by the EU under the specific thematic priority areas.

In the coming 7 years, the EU will continue to organise regular thematic structured dialogue sessions with civil society representatives, to hear their views on the key issues, needs and challenges as well as their proposed recommendations and solutions.



LOOKING BACK

In the course of the past two years the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy developed and implemented activities grounded in the idea of providing civil society organisations in Myanmar better conditions and an enabling environment to become active contributors to policy-making and policy implementation at the grass-roots, local, regional and the national level. The overall objective was to offer civic actors the opportunities to network and exchange information on various, and sometimes difficult topics, to improve their skills and to work more closely with the EUD in Myanmar. We are taking this opportunity to look back at what difference it has made in Myanmar.

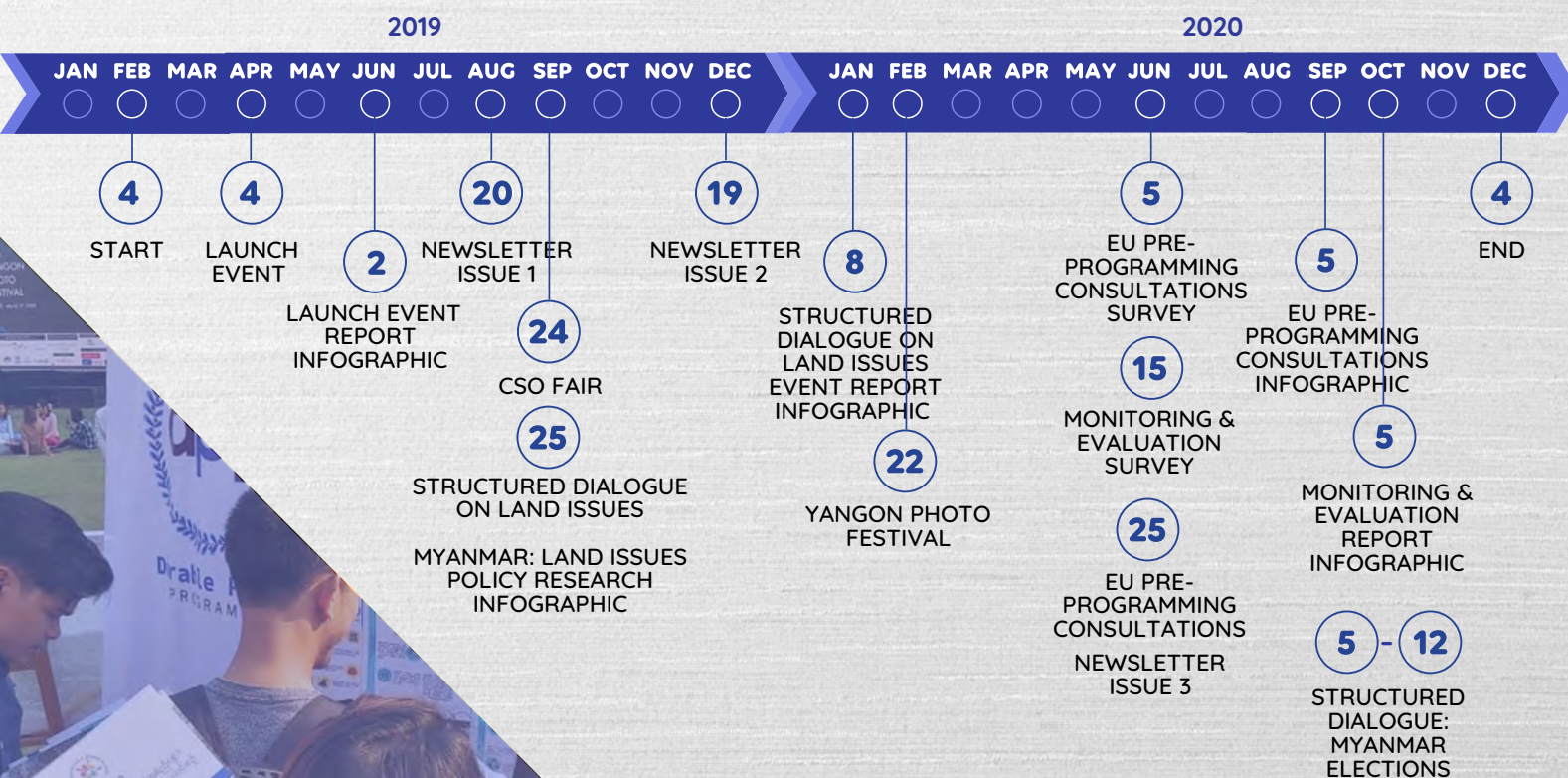
EU-CSO Partnership Strategy was implemented using a three-pronged approach:

- Organisation of EU-Civil Society Structured Dialogues (SD) to ensure a planned, regular dialogue about how to optimise EU support to address issues important to civil society and citizens in Myanmar.
- Carrying out policy research to support and advance policy change.
- Reaching out to relevant stakeholders to nurture communication, networking and information-sharing.



Structured Dialogue on Land Issues, Kachin, September 2019

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY TIMELINE



Since its launch in April 2019, EU-CSO Partnership Strategy organised:

This is the first really broad-based CSO event on land we have seen in the last three years in Kachin.

- Three Structured Dialogue (SD) events:
 - Shifting Space for Civil Society in Myanmar, April 2019 [Launch event], Yangon.
 - Structured Dialogue on Land Issues, September 2019, Myitkyina.
 - Structured Dialogue: Myanmar Elections, October 2020, series of five online workshops.
- Three accompanying and ad-hoc events:
 - CSO Networking Fair that accompanied the Structured Dialogue on Land Issues, September 2019, Myitkyina.
 - Yangon Photo Festival as a follow-up on the Structured Dialogue on Land Issues, February 2020, Yangon.
 - EU Pre-Programming Consultations, June 2020, as an online event.



In preparation for the Structured Dialogue on Land Issues in Myitkyina, EU-CSO Partnership Strategy carried out desktop research into the body of publications on the issues concerning land in Myanmar available at the time of its preparation. This research was then presented in a visual report and an infographic that served as a basis for further discussion during the event.

The Strategy published a total of six infographics, including visual reports for three Structured Dialogues, that were distributed using Strategy's communication channels, such as e-mail blasts, Facebook and EUD website. The infographics received 193 total "Likes" on Facebook, and were shared 120 times.

We also prepared and distributed four issues of our newsletter, in which we kept our stakeholders informed of our activities' progress, and also used this forum to share information on tools and financing opportunities available for civil society in Myanmar. Newsletters were distributed to 250 - 300 e-mail addresses, but also in hardcopy format and were published on our Facebook page and EUD website.

EU-CSO Partnership Strategy also used YouTube, TV broadcasting and press media to disseminate information relevant for CSOs in Myanmar, as well as online surveys to seek targeted feedback from the civil society, such as mid-term monitoring and evaluation survey carried out June-July 2020 to seek stakeholders' input on EU-CSO Partnership Strategy's activities. We've learned that:



LOOKING FORWARD

Consultations with Civil Society on EU Programming

The EU will be supporting Myanmar's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to become a middle income country by 2030 under the external assistance envelope of its upcoming Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The programming for this new financial cycle is currently in progress, and the EU gives great importance to the perspectives of CSOs on how best to make use of the EU's added value in the support it provides.

As part of the pre-programming process, in June 2020, the EU carried out an online survey and a series of online consultations to hear the views of national and international civil society on the EU globally identified priority policy areas for the period 2021 - 2027. Over 90 civil society organisations responded to the online survey, and 40 organisations participated in the online consultation workshops.

As a result of these and other consultations, the policy areas that have been identified as priorities for Myanmar are the following:

- The Green deal
- Human Development/Education
- Peace and Governance

To further refine the future programme for Myanmar, the EU will carry out additional consultations with national authorities at central and decentralised level, EU Member States, the Private Sector, both national and international civil society actors, and a multitude of other bilateral and multilateral partners.

Consultations with civil society will take place mid-January 2021. Civil society can contribute to the process by further developing concrete areas appropriate for EU support as well as identifying ways in which civil society participation can be mainstreamed across EU - Myanmar cooperation at all levels.

Consultations on the next EU-CSO Partnership Strategy

The next phase of the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy will begin after June 2021. The Partnership Strategy will continue to engage with civil society through Structured Dialogue, ad hoc meetings and existing communication channels, such as Facebook and a newsletter.

In order to ensure that the implementation of the next phase continues to respond to the needs of the people of Myanmar, and ensures an even more effective dialogue of the civil society with the EU on key issues concerning Myanmar, civil society representatives will be invited to participate in consultations with the EU beginning in March 2021.

These consultations will seek to identify:

- Ways in which EU-CSO Dialogue can be strengthened.
- Needs of CSOs that can be responded through a Partnership Strategy.
- Thematic focus areas that would benefit from civil society engagement with the EU.
- Ways in which civil society can be engaged in the programming priority areas.

There will be an open call for CSOs to participate in these consultations.



If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us by telephone +95 9 762 630003 or by email eucsostrategy.communication@gmail.com. You can find more information about our work at EU-CSO Partnership Strategy Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y3974mft> and on EU Delegation in Myanmar webpage <http://www.euinmyanmar.eu/>