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## Online Policy Dialogue on the Impacts of ‘Multistakeholderism’ on Multilateral Governance

2 June 2022 | 14:30 - 16:00 CEST

Co-organized By the South Centre and the Transnational Institute

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### Background

Multistakeholder governance and “networked multilateralism” are displacing multilateralism -built up on States’ deliberations and actions- in key economic, social, environmental, and sustainable development policy matters. The increasing role of ‘multistakeholderism’ runs the risk of marginalizing States, especially those from the Global South, in making key policy and programmatic decisions. In addition, the role of civil society has been negatively affected, as the increasing participation of well-funded business’ associations in multilateral forums have reduced its ability to contribute to the development and implementation of the intergovernmental agenda.

Intergovernmental governing bodies in charge of adopting multilateral policies on health, the environment, food security, digital transformation, sustainable development, among others, are currently facing major challenges as a result of a ‘multistakeholder’ narrative. In the past few years, several multilateral policy decisions were made not by the membership of UNEP, FAO, or WHO for instance, but by public-private multistakeholder groups. Examples are, among many others, the Marine Stewardship Council, the Better Cotton Initiative and, most notably, COVAX -the mechanism that failed to ensure an equitable access to vaccines by the populations in developing countries.

In contrast to the UN System, the center of gravity of a multistakeholder group is not the State but one or more transnational corporations acting as a group of 'like-minded stakeholders', who in turn usually include some civil society organizations or the academia to validate unclear and opaque processes. The new emerging paradigm in global governance -which has consolidated in the last 10 years- means a shift in deliberations and decision making from States, the UN and other intergovernmental bodies to transnational corporations and private actors. One consequence of this is that policy-making and standard setting seem to be tilting towards 'finance-oriented' projects and private sector resource mobilization strategies, rather than identifying and addressing governance gaps in the multilateral system with the ensuing risk for a public welfare approach and democratic accountability.

In view of these developments, the South Centre and the Transnational Institute, with the support of the Peoples' Working Group on Multistakeholderism (PWGM),<sup>1</sup> are co-organizing an online policy dialogue with developing countries' representatives in Geneva and New York and civil society organizations to discuss the characteristic, impact and challenges that multistakeholderism brings to day-to-day multilateral governance.

## Objectives

- Examine, in dialogue with G77 and China member states and CSOs, the day-to-day modalities, impact and challenges posed by the contemporary trend towards multistakeholderism and "networked multilateralism" in the context of intergovernmental process.
- Analyze possible actions on how to address the growing imbalance in multilateral governance in a multistakeholder environment at the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> The following social movements, networks and organizations are members of the People's Working Group on Multistakeholderism (PWGM): Corporate Accountability (CA), FIAN International, Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth International (FOEI), Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2), Global Campaign for Education, IT for Change, People's Health Movement (PHM), Public Services International (PSI), Society for International Development (SID), Transnational Institute (TNI).

# AGENDA

## 14h30 - 14h40 ● Welcome and Introductory Remarks

- Prof Carlos Correa, Executive Director, South Centre
- Fiona Dove, Executive Director, Transnational Institute (TNI)

## First Panel ● 14h40 - 15h15

### What's the situation? Overall analysis and sectorial cases

- **Moderator:** Fernando Rosales, Coordinator Sustainable Development and Climate Change Programme, South Centre
- **The case of Food/Agriculture UNFSS**  
Sofia Monsalve (FIAN International)
- **The case of public health**  
Nirmalya Syam (South Centre)
- **The case of Finance for Development**  
Stefano Prato (SID)

### Open Dialogue

## 15h15 - 15h50 ● Second Panel

### What are the possible actions to rebalance the game field? Potential corrective actions?

- **Strategic and tactical steps to marginalize multistakeholderism in Geneva**  
Prof Harris Gleckman (TNI)
- **Assessment of Multistakeholderism impact on developing countries**  
Shalmali Guttal, (Focus on the Global South)
- **Considerations for developing countries**  
H.E. Maira MacDonald Álvarez, Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva.
- **Moderator:** Fernando Rosales, Coordinator Sustainable Development and Climate Change Programme, South Centre

### Open Dialogue

## Concluding remarks ● 15h50 - 16h00

- Parminder, the Peoples' Working Group on Multistakeholderism (PWGM)

### **Format**

The dialogue will be carried out online via the Zoom platform. All discussions will take place under the Chatham House Rules.

### **Information**

For more information, please contact Mr. Daniel Uribe, Lead Programme Officer, South Centre (Uribe@southcentre.int)

**Register here:**

**[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_M4EtkFkhSpCdxhIrk2LCng](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_M4EtkFkhSpCdxhIrk2LCng)**