

NGOs lead by example: World's international NGOs endorse accountability charter

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**ActionAid International
Amnesty International
CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Consumers International
Greenpeace International
Oxfam International
International Save the Children Alliance
Survival International
International Federation Terre des Hommes
Transparency International
World YWCA**

(London) The heads of 11 of the world's leading human rights, environmental and social development international organisations have today publicly endorsed the first global accountability charter for the non-profit sector.

International NGOs play an increasingly influential role. Global public opinion surveys show higher trust in NGOs than in government and business. In addition to an internal desire to be transparent and accountable, the Accountability Charter also seeks to demonstrate that NGOs deeply value public trust, do not take it for granted and are committed to sustaining and deepening that trust. This initiative comes at a time when the non-profit sector is coming under closer scrutiny, both from those who want it to flourish and those who seek to curtail NGO activities.

ActionAid International, Amnesty International, CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Consumers International, Greenpeace International, Oxfam International, the International Save the Children Alliance, Survival International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, Transparency International and World YWCA today endorsed the first international, cross-sectoral code of conduct for NGOs.

In an unprecedented step, international civil society organisations have come together to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and accountability. This initiative builds on the individual, national and sectoral initiatives taken by international NGOs to set standards of accountability and codes of conduct. Although NGOs are subject to national regulations within the countries in which they operate, the International Non-Governmental Organisations Accountability Charter is the first such initiative to set out international, cross-sector standards for the non-profit sector.

The Accountability Charter sets out core values and operating principles for international NGOs. These include good governance and management; fundraising and multi-stakeholder engagement. It also makes specific reference to respect for universal principles (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), independence, responsible advocacy, effective programmes, non-discrimination, transparency and ethical fundraising.

The Accountability Charter shows that international NGOs are, and are committed to remain, transparent and accountable, and merit the respect and support they have. All international NGOs -- across different sectors -- will be invited to sign-up to the Accountability Charter.

The Accountability Charter is only the first step. Next steps will involve putting in place a robust system for reporting and review of the Charter so that it can be improved and updated in light of experience.

Note to editors

The following attributable quotes are available for use:

Ramesh Singh, Chief Executive of ActionAid: "It will further strengthen our own accountability systems and deepen and strengthen the trust we have built with supporters and the communities we serve. I hope other organisations will join and contribute to improving standards across all NGOs."

Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International: "The legitimacy of international NGOs to act is based on universally-recognised freedoms of speech, assembly and association, on the trust people place upon us and on the values we seek to promote. NGOs are playing an increasingly prominent role in setting the agenda in today's globalised world. This places a clear responsibility on us to act with transparency and accountability. The Accountability Charter clearly shows that NGOs are willing to adhere to a code of conduct, lead by example and encourage others to follow."

Kumi Naidoo, Secretary-General of CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation: "This is a true landmark initiative for the international NGO community. An amazing diversity of organisations have united around this charter, which is being developed at a time, when the public trust in NGOs is already at an all time high and significantly higher than the ratings for government and business. This clearly shows that NGOs have decided not to take this trust for granted, but to continue to strive for excellence and even higher standards of accountability in the crucial work they do around the world."

Richard Lloyd, Director General of Consumers International: "Consumers International has long supported the principles of accountability and transparency as fundamental to the consumers' right to clear and credible information. This Charter sends a message to governments and business that civil society will not only hold them to account, but also lead by example."

Gerd Leipold, Executive Director of Greenpeace International: "In today's world international NGOs represent stakeholders and supporters across the world from all walks of life. This landmark Charter reminds us of the ultimate responsibility we have collectively for transparency and accountability, which are crucial to ensure the highest standards in our work; the same standards that we demand of the world's governments and industries."

Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International: "What is unique about this Charter is that it is both global and covers all sectors: environment, human rights, humanitarian and development, women's organisations, indigenous and disability groups. The Charter asserts the rights of NGOs to freedom of speech and freedom of association but also outlines our responsibilities to the people we serve, the people who support us and the broader community."

Burkhard Gnärig, Chief Executive Officer of the International Save the Children Alliance: "With the Charter we want to strengthen accountability across our sector. We want to establish an efficient system which allows us to focus our resources on the causes we serve while being fully accountable for the work we do."

Stephen Corry, Director of Survival International: "Governments and corporations often abuse both individuals and entire peoples. This has always been so. The NGO sector is now the formal expression of many public movements which have always sought justice and truth in the face of these crimes. In our world of mass media and mass destruction, NGOs must grow to meet higher expectations and tougher challenges. The Charter is a vital step in this growth, defining what unites these movements, how they operate, and what they stand for."

David Nussbaum, Chief Executive of Transparency International: "International NGOs have an essential role to play in global governance. To do so with legitimacy requires that we be accountable. This Accountability Charter sets out specific ways in which we demonstrate what our accountability means in practice. Transparency International advocates for open disclosure of relevant information to maintain trust and credibility -- for NGOs as well as for companies and governments."

Peter Brey, Vice-President of the Board of the International Federation Terre des Hommes: "To be transparent and accountable is an essential basis for relevance and sustainability. This charter reflects that experience. It underlines our commitment to attitude and results."

Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, General Secretary of the World YWCA: "Accountability and transparency in all aspects of our work are fundamental to our mission to improve the lives of women and girls around the world. Through this Charter, a wonderfully diverse group of NGOs have joined forces to express their commitment to striving for the highest ethical standards."

For a full copy of the International Non-governmental Organisations Accountability Charter, and for further information, please contact Judit Arenas +44 (0) 7778 472 188 (jarenas@amnesty.org) or Josefina Salomon +44 (0) 7778 472 116 (jsalomon@amnesty.org)