

Starting with an inspired team of supporters from NGOs, the private sector, governments and international organizations, the GSO was established in April 2004 to reflect their vision of a place for open-ended multi-stakeholder dialogue. Throughout these first ten years, the mission of the GSO has consistently been to facilitate dialogue and disseminate information on social issues in order to encourage stakeholders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence. The evolution of GSO services has encompassed roundtable discussions, workshops, action plans, guidance notes and a growing community of participants who appreciate and keep coming back to this unique space for dialogue and collaboration. Finding the common ground for collaboration and discovering the benefits of being more than the sum of the parts have been the lessons learned that continue to draw participants to the GSO space.

As the GSO Management Committee has recently reaffirmed in the way that the GSO should retain this mission even when it is partnering with others, the GSO's service is based on a participatory process that brings all interested parties together in a neutral space to identify solutions and policies that are coherent. The GSO General Assembly further reiterated and clarified this commitment to inclusiveness by adopting a Statement of Principles for GSO Membership, Support and Engagement in September 2012. GSO members believe that the insights, the solutions and proposed policies that emanate from this fully inclusive framework can then contribute to policy-making breakthroughs at the governmental and intergovernmental levels. Read more:

Principles for GSO Membership, Support and Engagement

Adopted 18 September 2012

The mission of the GSO is to facilitate dialogue and disseminate information on social issues in order to encourage stakeholders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence.

1. The GSO seeks to engage as members of the GSO, individuals and all stakeholders who embrace certain shared values and principles, including:

- A shared commitment to promoting an integrative and holistic approach to sustainable development;
- A shared respect for basic human rights, cultural diversity and gender equality;
- A commitment to engage in areas of existing GSO initiatives, such as health, and emerging dimensions such as food security and water issues.

2. The GSO is committed to organizing and supporting a participatory process that brings all interested parties together in a neutral space to identify coherent solutions and policies in support of its principles. The GSO will welcome all other stakeholders and organizations in order to promote its priorities and the strategic and work plan of the GSO.

- The GSO emphasis is on developing a common vision among the stakeholders which it brings together, to facilitate a multilateral compatibility.

- The GSO facilitates multi-stakeholder engagement with the objective of identifying and developing a clear value added. The engagement should demonstrate value in the public interest, through enhanced understanding among the participating stakeholders and through identifying opportunities to add and create value over and above what could be achieved otherwise.
- Where appropriate, the GSO can engage with others to advance the outcomes of its multi-stakeholder engagement processes.
- The engagement should have an outcome and a lasting impact.
- The GSO insists on impartiality and independence, including objectivity, integrity, and affirmative management of potential or actual, real or perceived conflicts of interest.

3. The GSO will offer no endorsement of specific products or services and award no exclusivity. There should be no unfair competitive advantage to any organization or entity, ensuring a level playing field that is open to all interested parties on the same basis and no endorsement or preference for a particular organization, product or service.

4. The GSO will remain fully transparent in all its activities and will seek to articulate with clarity the benefits of the engagement to all parties, including the nature and scope of activities, the rules of engagement, the mechanisms of decision-making, and the agreed outcomes.