

FORUS POST-2030 VISION PAPER

REGIONAL INSIGHTS NOTE Convergence and Divergence Across Regions

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REGIONAL INSIGHTS NOTE

Convergence and Divergence Across Regions

1) Scenario outlook: Shared realism, different “risk horizons”

Convergence: Across regions, continuity is treated as the “default political gravity,” with fragmentation a credible downside risk; reset is aspirational and contingent on shocks/political entrepreneurship (especially linked to financing and legitimacy debates). Regions share realism about political constraints but differ in optimism regarding the resilience of multilateral cooperation. Few expect a full reset of the development system without significant disruption or risk of losing all progress in the absence of strong political leadership.

Divergence nuances:

- **Europe & North America:** respondents most frequently ranked **fragmentation** as “most likely” (5 of 8 among those who completed the ranking), mirroring FGD concerns about ODA contraction, rights dilution, and regionalised minimum agreements. However, overall sense from FGDs and KIIs is that the region anticipates continuity but fears dilution of rights and ambition (i.e. Finland reinforces “rights/participation can be removed quietly in continuity” anxiety).
- **Pacific:** continuity most commonly selected as “most likely” (3 of 5 among those completing ranking), but with a strong sense that outcomes hinge on implementation and financing. FGD and KIIs captured worries that both continuity and fragmentation could marginalise small and vulnerable states.
- **Africa / Asia / LAC:** scenario ranking completion was patchier in the dataset; where answered, views split — which aligns with FGDs describing uneven sub-regional political conditions and mixed exposure to fragmentation pressures. **LAC and Asia** express stronger concern that fragmentation may dominate, KIIs emphasizing that a fragmentation risk narrative linked to political volatility, weakened multilateral confidence and civic space constraints. Parts of **Africa still** see space for negotiated continuity, especially if aligned with regional frameworks, while for others fragmentation is non-reversible.

2) Financing: Universal priority, but framed through different justice lenses

Convergence: Financing reform is the most “structural” cross-regional demand; without it, members expect “hollow continuity” or intensified fragmentation. Debt, concessional finance, domestic resource mobilisation and predictable CSO funding are consistently elevated. Participants across regions also noted the growing role of private sector actors in development financing. While this trend is widely recognised as

shaping the future development landscape, members expressed differing views on how it should be governed.

Divergence nuance: The demand for financing reform is universal, but its political framing and priority issues vary by region:

- **Africa and LAC** frame financing as structural justice and correction of global inequities. For **Africa** strongest cluster across responses is predictable CSO funding, domestic resource mobilisation, increased concessional finance, and debt relief, while for **LAC** predictable CSO funding, concessional finance, debt relief and tax justice appear together (tax justice much more visible here than in Europe/Pacific). Private sector discussions focused on strengthening regulation and public oversight of private finance flows.
- **Europe/North America** emphasise donor credibility and policy coherence. In the survey, increased concessional finance and predictable CSO funding dominate, with less emphasis on debt than Africa/LAC.
- **Pacific** centres financing around climate adaptation and survival. In the survey, concessional finance is the clearest anchor, with CSO funding next — aligned with vulnerability and adaptation finance concerns.
- **Asia** links financing debates to corporate regulation and digital governance. In the survey, **CSO funding** and **debt relief** are most common, aligning with FGD emphasis on not replacing public obligations with private finance. Central Asia (Kazakhstan) connects financing constraints to civic space and implementation (enabling environment linked to capacity and partnerships)

3) Civic space and CSO participation constraints: Global pressure, regionally distinct threats and bottlenecks.

Convergence: Shrinking or uneven civic space is reported across all regions. Protection of civic space is widely considered a non-negotiable priority and treated as a *condition for everything else* (accountability, participation, implementation), not a standalone issue. CSO participation affected by capacity constraints, exclusion of grassroots/local actors, and reduced civic space, as well as the multiplier effects of shrinking funding (see above).

Divergence nuance: The civic space challenge is global, but the nature of restriction and CSO participation barriers differ significantly

- **Africa and parts of Asia** emphasise security risks and restrictive legislation. **Africa** self-assessed as Closed/Repressive (3/11) and Narrowing/Obstructed (5/11), with security risks highlighted more than in other regions. **Asia** self-assessed as mainly Obstructed (2/3) in the survey, while the FGD sharply emphasised shrinking space and a corporate capture of development dynamics, as well as capacity constraints and tokenistic inclusion in consultation
- **Europe/North America** focus on democratic erosion and civic fatigue of “resisting” governments moving in a different direction to public opinion. The civic space self-assessment is ranked as overwhelmingly Narrowing (7/8), with the FGD highlighting how rights are increasingly “framed as old-fashioned”, and shrinking access. Corporate capture is a more prominent than in other regions, consistent with “parallel private forums” concerns raised in FGD. Concerns about growing corporate influence in development governance spaces, including participation in parallel policy forums and private sector-led initiatives, raising questions about transparency, accountability and civil society participation in global development debates

- **LAC:** highlights political rightward shift and polarisation, self-assessing civic spaces largely Obstructed (5/7), indicating “high friction” environments, operating under strict conditions and scrutiny. Tokenistic consultation features as a consistent concern. KIIs from Central America also highlighted an accelerating trend toward restrictions on civil society, including new laws targeting NGO registration and operations in countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.
- **Pacific:** stresses marginalisation rather than overt repression, self-assessing civic space as predominantly Open (4/5), but participation risks still point to capacity and tokenism rather than overt repression. “Reporting burdens without influence” is comparatively more visible than elsewhere.

4) **Accountability reform:** Shared demand, different focus areas.

Convergence: Across regions, voluntary SDG accountability mechanisms are viewed as insufficient. There is strong support for stronger independent monitoring, transparency and enforcement. Emerging questions around technology and artificial intelligence in development governance were also raised. While these tools may strengthen monitoring and data availability, participants emphasised the need for safeguards to ensure that digital governance systems remain transparent, inclusive and accountable.

Divergence nuances: Agreement exists on strengthening accountability, but regions prioritise different accountability mechanisms.

- **Africa** contributions emphasised accountability to communities, closely linked to concerns about civic space protection, legitimacy and implementation practice. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) were not extensively debated as a standalone mechanism, but related concerns emerged through broader discussions on accountability and implementation.
- **Asia** discussions linked accountability to citizen-led processes and raised concerns about the expanding influence of private and corporate actors in governance spaces. VNRs did not feature prominently as a distinct focus. Where reporting mechanisms were referenced, concerns related to the broader limitations of voluntary structures rather than to the VNR format specifically.
- **LAC** contributions highlighted weaknesses in implementation and voluntary accountability mechanisms, alongside concerns about political volatility and shrinking civic space. Participants described VNRs as largely procedural and presentation-oriented, with limited enforcement value and insufficient follow-up after reporting cycles. Concerns were raised about selective framing, weak integration of civil society inputs in some contexts, and a disconnect between reporting and actual policy correction. Within a broader discussion on accountability gaps and political volatility, VNRs were cited as emblematic of voluntary mechanisms that do not adequately ensure implementation or safeguard commitments. In Chile, however, participants pointed to fruitful collaboration between governments and CSOs in developing past VNRs, although they feared that such collaboration would come to an end under the incoming far-right government.
- **Europe/North America** stress institutional transparency, with Europe emphasising universal accountability and policy coherence, and protecting rights language in continuity scenarios. While VNRs themselves were not heavily scrutinised, the limitations of voluntary reporting structures were acknowledged within a wider debate about strengthening accountability and ensuring that commitments lead to meaningful implementation.
- **Pacific** contributions emphasised implementation feasibility, capacity limitations, and the need for accountability mechanisms that are workable within small administrative systems and

resource-constrained environments. The focus was less on VNRs and more on ensuring that accountability and reporting mechanisms remain workable and proportionate to national capacities.

5) Alliances and stakeholders: Regional fora matter everywhere, but “who” and “why” differs.

Convergence: There is broad agreement that influence will not be confined to UN/New York processes, and that regional bodies, national governments and cross-sector coalitions will be central arenas for engagement and shaping post-2030 outcomes.

Divergence nuances

- **Asia** framed alliances beyond traditional civil society spaces, highlighting the role of regional policy platforms (i.e. ASEAN), reform-minded state actors and the corporate sector, reflecting a more complex power landscape.
- **Pacific** discussions focused on regional cooperation as a mechanism for collective voice and influence, highlighting the centrality of regional forums in amplifying small-state voices and avoiding marginalisation in global negotiations.
- **Europe & North America:** framed alliances around safeguarding universal standards and ensuring credibility of commitments, particularly under fiscal and geopolitical pressure. Engagement in EU processes and transatlantic policy spaces through reform-oriented states, CSO coalitions (issue specific, cross-sector platforms) and multi-lateral champions seen as essential for maintaining universal commitments and policy coherence. This will ensure that high-income countries remain accountable for domestic and international impacts of development approach, including policy coherence beyond ODA. Participants noted that high-income countries’ domestic policy choices have cross-border consequences.
- **LAC** narratives stress regionally uneven political cohesion and the need to counter anti-SDG and anti-rights sentiment with coalitions and accountability pushes. Some KIIs highlighted the potential role of key regional actors—particularly Brazil and Colombia—in shaping the global development agenda. Brazil’s growing diplomatic ambitions and Colombia’s historical role in advancing the SDGs were noted as potential sources of leadership in future negotiations.
- **Africa:** alliance building framed around regional civil society platforms, youth and women networks, and issue-based coalitions. Collective advocacy should be grounded through regional frameworks (i.e African Union frameworks such as Agenda 2063), engagement with sub-regional bodies (e.g. ECOWAS) and national-level coordination mechanisms

6) Localisation: Strong support, varied interpretation

Convergence: Localisation is widely supported and seen as unfinished SDG business.

Divergence nuances: While this is a shared aspiration, operational priorities vary by governance context

- **Africa** emphasises youth inclusion and sub-national empowerment.
- **Asia** connects localisation to citizen-generated data and community resilience.
- **Pacific** emphasises community survival and disaster preparedness.
- **Europe** links localisation to participatory governance.
- **LAC** stresses alignment with national political realities.

7) Expectations of Forus: Shared functions, context-specific modalities

Convergence: Across instruments, members expect Forus to combine convening, strategic sense-making, advocacy/amplification, alliance-building, and support for members in constrained contexts.

Divergence nuances:

- **Africa:** the strongest signalled expectation is national-level member support, with global advocacy next, consistent with FGD emphasis on capacity building and representation/quiet diplomacy.
- **Europe & North America** responses show strong demand for strategic analysis and political sense-making, followed by regional coordination and national-level support. This aligns with qualitative discussions highlighting concerns about dilution of rights and accountability commitments, fiscal pressures, and the need for careful positioning within EU and transatlantic policy processes. Forus can play the role of “bridge builder” and narrative translator.
- **LAC** responses show a strong prioritisation of global advocacy and positioning, alongside national-level member support. This aligns with regional discussions highlighting political volatility, shrinking civic space, and the need to safeguard rights and accountability commitments in both regional and global arenas.
- **Pacific** responses prioritise global advocacy, alongside regional coordination and strategic analysis. This reflects regional discussions emphasising the importance of collective regional positioning, maintaining visibility in global negotiations, and ensuring that implementation and accountability mechanisms remain feasible within existing capacity constraints.
- **Asia** responses indicate emphasis on both global advocacy and alliance-building beyond civil society. This aligns with regional discussions highlighting the importance of engaging a broader range of actors, addressing growing private-sector influence in governance spaces, and navigating complex state-centred policy environments

8) Additional region-specific thematic issues of importance

Beyond the shared cross-regional priorities (financing, civic space, accountability, localisation), several themes emerged with clearer regional concentration.

- In **Europe and North America**, discussions highlighted erosion of public trust in institutions as a contextual factor shaping post-2030 engagement. Europe FGD contributions referenced political polarisation, shrinking civic space in established democracies, and risks of dilution of rights language under fiscal and geopolitical pressure. North America KIIs further emphasised structural economic responsibilities of high-income countries and the need to safeguard universal commitments and policy coherence. There was a regional concern with maintaining institutional credibility, normative standards and generational specific solutions for public needs.
- In **Asia**, discussions raised concerns about the expanding influence of private and corporate actors in development governance. Participants linked accountability to citizen-led processes and grassroots monitoring, while also noting increasingly state-centric and security-oriented policy

environments. This positioned alliance-building and oversight of governance spaces as particularly salient regional considerations.

- In **Africa**, participants raised concerns about the securitisation of development agendas and shifts in financing priorities, alongside strong emphasis on youth inclusion and localisation. Engagement with continental frameworks was discussed as strategically important in shaping post-2030 positioning.
 - In **the Pacific**, regional discussions centred on ensuring visibility of small states in global negotiations and maintaining workable implementation mechanisms within limited administrative capacity. Regional coordination was seen as essential to amplifying collective voice in multilateral processes.
 - In **LAC**, discussions highlighted political volatility, backlash against rights-based agendas, and weaknesses in voluntary accountability mechanisms. Safeguarding normative commitments in fluctuating political environments emerged as a distinctive concern.
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