



ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event

Partnerships, UN Reform, and a New Multilateralism to Build Forward Better

The side event, co-organized by the Baha'i International Community and Together 2030, and sponsored by Cepei and the Coalition for the UN we need (C4UN), took place on 2 February 2022 at 2.00 pm EST.

The event was opened by a short introduction to the themes to be discussed by the event moderator, **Daniel Perell** from the Baha'i International Community.

The first speaker, **Patti Londoño** (Cepei, former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia), took the floor to present Cepei's main findings based on extensive research on the UNDS reform at the regional level, connecting them with the Our Common Agenda (OCA) Report.

She explained that Cepei has been producing reports and making recommendations to the Secretary General (S-G) on new partnership tracks at the regional level, including partnerships among all entities of the UN at global, regional, and national levels as well as with non-UN stakeholders.

She stated that the success of the process initiated by the OCA would require partnerships between UN and non-UN stakeholders, explaining that the S-G report provides ample opportunity to emphasize the importance of partnerships. She provided concrete examples relating to the knowledge hubs, the establishment of Regional Collaborative Platforms, and the work carried out by regional Issue-Based Coalitions. She highlighted that engaging non-UN stakeholders is critical for those three new elements arising as a result of the UNDS reform at the regional level.

She underlined the relevance of OCA paragraph 112,¹ reminding participants that the SG has positioned this suggestion as part of the UN reform.

Regarding the Summit of Future, she affirmed that 'the future is now,' calling for concrete actions to accelerate the implementation of existing commitments.

Referring to the OCA proposal to reactivate the Trusteeship Council (paragraph 125), by repurposing it to enhance the governance of the global commons, she shared her experience: 'As soon as you approach the reform of a major organ, you get into a lot of difficulties. Any reform will have the ghost of UNSC reform, and everything will be blocked. If you put global goods within the Trusteeship Council, you will lose it'. She called to make global goods a major track (paragraph 135), but not as a part of a reform of the Trusteeship Council.

Her final advice was 'Own the whats, resolve the hows and prioritize the whys.'

The moderator highlighted Patti Londoño's intervention as an invitation to consider collective action and delivery using an entirely different mindset, rather than using one that delivers as it currently stands. Then, he gave the floor to the second speaker, **Nudhara Yusuf** (C4UN Global Youth Coordinator & GGIN Facilitator, Stimson Center). She spoke to the critical juncture highlighted by the SG in the OCA: breakthrough or breakdown.

She explained that 'Trying to fix the same pair of glasses, again and again, isn't going to work anymore' and we need to create new glasses to see our future clearly and take action. What are the resources at our disposal to venture into this transition?

We have the OCA 90 recommendations along four pillars. That is where partnerships become so important because no one entity can take on so much. However, OCA proposals should still be debated,

¹ The United Nations development system reforms have positioned the Organization to offer more cohesive support to Governments. Building on this, Member States could consider steps to bring the governance bodies and funding of development agencies closer in alignment to maximize impact, while leaving each agency its separate brand and operations...

reinforced, and improved: For example, should the proposed UN Youth Office be run by policy practitioners for young people or run by young people for young people? 'This decision will set the trajectory into the future,' she said.

She stressed that multistakeholder action requires us to keep two things in mind. First, transcending silos and bringing more seats to the table, and second, having a plan of action once everyone is at the table. She reminded participants that even when we have a common agenda, we have different priorities, an issue that came to light at C4UN regional discussions last June. The Asia-Pacific, Africa, LAC regions each had their own focus. 'We need a representation of these priorities across the table,' she affirmed.

Nudhara then offered an anecdote. In consultation with young people about OCA and other agendas, someone said: Don't these agendas all want the same thing? Let us know what needs to be done because we don't understand all of the nuanced differences between UN agreements.

As a consequence, she explained that a role for civil society is to help to engage new allies, clarify messages coming from international dialogues, and bring new concrete ideas into old debates, as currently happens in the discussions on the reform of GDP as a development measure, but also abstract ideas, like the New Agenda for Peace.

The moderator took the floor and, bearing in mind the broken glasses metaphor, shared his thoughts on the need to find new lenses to see the world. Then, he introduced the third speaker, **Grant Cameron** (Director at TReNDS).

Mr. Cameron started by mentioning that he was struck by opening remarks which offered important points for reflection, raised issues around the current challenges of democracy at the international level, and the opportunities arising from Covid-19.

He called participants to imagine a simple framework that governments could use to keep the confidence of their constituents and change how they form partnerships.

He highlighted performance and trust as critical in that work, and data was introduced as a tool to reinforce them. He explained that the pandemic catalyzed data improvements that contributed to performance and trust.

He provided examples of the adoption of new technologies, like phone-based surveys and new ways of collaboration to generate data.

In particular, he affirmed that changes in methods and collaboration would help to establish partnerships between government and non-governmental stakeholders to improve data management that could break an existing tendency to work under thematic silos.

Moreover, he said, considering civil society as a partner in developing data as a tool for trust opens new doors for establishing partnerships, becoming a step forward to move beyond the traditional partnering thematic universe of work.

After the third speaker, a Q&A session was opened by the moderator.

As part of the answers and debates, the speakers highlighted the following issues:

Patti Londoño called to prioritize sequencing and acceleration. Prioritize among groups with different perspectives. Sequencing what we can do straight away. Acceleration and integration permit us to look at issues through different lenses.

Nudhara Yusuf reminded us that there is a need for a significant change and to improve partnerships and dialogue is necessary to that end: 'The world is wireless, but somewhere in the bureaucracy of it all, we are still using telephone lines.'

Grant Cameron stressed that it takes time to build trust when you develop new forms of collaboration. Using citizen-generated data could considerably contribute to facing trust deficits.

Finally, Daniel Perell closed the session, pointing out that it has provided very optimistic messages on the possibility of changes and how important partnerships are to that end. He closed the session by encouraging the UN to maintain and build on the space of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum.