

2023 ECOSOC Partnership Forum ASG Remarks

Drafted: Angus Rennie

Edited: Wendy Jacques

Approved: Wynne Boelt

Excellencies, colleagues, distinguished guests,

It has been such a pleasure to join you here today.

I would like to extend my compliments to the Economic and Social Council, its Bureau, and the leadership of its President, H.E. Lachezara Stoeva (Lay-chee-Zara Stoy-va).

I would also like to thank our colleagues at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the multi-stakeholder advisory group who helped shape this year's dynamic program.

When I last took the podium at the Partnership Forum two years ago, we were still in the worst throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, in the midst of global uncertainty, there was also palpable optimism that we would find opportunity within the crisis - that we would do what it took to build back better.

Today, we continue to face unprecedented and escalating global crises. But what can still give us cause for cautious optimism is the resounding belief, among stakeholders of all sectors, in the power of partnerships.

Partnerships to unlock sustainable finance and advance sustainable development solutions from the ground up. Partnerships to harness science, technology, and the energy of the next generation. Equitable, accountable partnerships that ensure no person or community is left behind.

Friends,

We must acknowledge that actions by business and other stakeholders do not match the pace and ambition needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and prevent a climate catastrophe. The business community can and must do more.

For the 12th time, the UN Global Compact partnered with Accenture on our global CEO study to map trends, challenges, and opportunities from the viewpoint of business leaders. The latest edition, published this month, provides insights from over 2,600 CEOs worldwide.

Overall, the CEOs we surveyed increasingly recognize they can build credibility and brand value by committing to responsible business practices and sustainability – not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because it's just good business.

Our research this year identified a number of measures CEOs view as critical to building resilience. Key among these measures was enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships.

As the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, the UN Global Compact, has spent more than two decades building bridges between business, the United Nations, governments and civil society. In the past year, we have accelerated efforts to mobilize a diverse range of stakeholders through active engagement in a wide range of coalition-building and multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives.

Allow me to share a few examples:

In Latin America, Global Compact Local Networks are working closely with UN Human Rights and other partners such as the European Union, to build a coalition

for business and human rights that can tackle important issues such as building trust between human rights defenders and companies, and advocating for important state-led actions to create stronger enabling environments.

Over the past year, our Global Compact Local Networks in Eastern Europe have joined forces and worked together, in close cooperation with government and UN humanitarian partners, to mobilize business support for war relief efforts in Ukraine - accomplishing more together than they could individually.

In Thailand, our Global Compact Local Network is partnering with the UN Resident Coordinator's office to establish stronger cooperation with the financial sector. Engaging key actors such as the national Securities and Exchange Commission, the government Pension Fund, and other private investors, a coalition is emerging that is committed to financing Thailand's commitment to climate action, protecting biodiversity, and transition to a circular green economy.

Our Global Africa Business Initiative, or GABI, brings together business, non-profit, political, media and cultural leaders to realize the untapped potential of Africa's \$2.5 trillion market. We hope to see many of you at our next major convening of GABI in New York this September.

We also created the Africa Business Leaders Coalition, or ABLC, a CEO-led partnership initiative committed to advancing sustainable growth, prosperity, and development in Africa. Looking forward, we will continue to partner with ABLC signatories across Africa to promote sustainable development and ambitious climate action.

We were also pleased to launch a series of new UN Global Compact Accelerator programs designed to help companies embed SDG-aligned practices deep into business operations and across their value chains.

Addressing issues including human rights, climate action, and gender equality, the Accelerators help translate business ambition into concrete action for sustainable development.

Friends,

We all know that the time for business as usual is over.

The upcoming SDG Summit in September provides a rallying point for us all to reinvigorate existing partnerships and identify new avenues for cooperation.

In March, the UN Global Compact will be calling on companies to join the SDG Movements Campaign to take actions on living wage, climate change, gender equality, water stewardship and sustainable finance to advance the 2030 Agenda, as a whole.

The challenges before us are daunting, but I have seen first hand that when businesses work together for the common good, great change is possible.

We must not forget that the strength of our partnerships will determine the success of the Global Goals.

Thank you.