

***Summary of Side Event
of the UN Association of Russia:
“NGOs Partnerships and sustainable projects: the impact of COVID-19 and new realities”
in the margins of the 2023 ECOSOC Partnership Forum***

31 January 2023, 8:30 - 9:45 AM (EST, New York time)

Background on the event

Building a sustainable future requires a broad NGO partner network. The voices of civil society should continue to be the focus of attention throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The UN Association of Russia’s side event aimed to reiterate the Russian NGOs commitment to the Agenda-2030 implementation and to promote the participation and involvement of Russian NGOs in the processes related to the exchange of best sustainable practices, accelerating progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and overcoming the impact of the COVID-19.

Participating organizations: UN Association of Russia, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, UN Global Compact Russia, Autonomous Non-Profit Organization Agency for Social Information (ASI), Charity Foundation Peace and Harmony, Institute for Economic Strategies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the International Research Institute of Management Problems, Free Economic Society of Russia, Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development "ECO-Accord", International Department of the National Youth Council of Russia, Association of Citizens and Organizations for Corporate Education Development “MAKO”, Union of Russian Cities, Academic mobility center, Environmental Women's Assembly, ESG Media.

Key Issues discussed

- the role and responsibilities of civil society, especially NGOs, in achieving the SDGs;
- progress and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including those arising at the regional, national and local levels;
- sustainable practices implemented by NGOs;
- partnership practices between civil society organizations along as with international organizations, including the United Nations;
- cooperation of NGOs with business, implementation of socially significant joint projects.

Key recommendations for action

- On the one hand, Russian NGOs have successful sustainable practices and projects to share with foreign partners and civil society organisations, and on the other hand, there is an obvious opportunity to learn and benefit more from the experience of others. At the same time, Russian NGOs are less present and active on international

stages than their colleagues from some other countries. Thus, a greater involvement of Russian NGOs in the work on international platforms, primarily in the UN, is required. Firstly, it is important that more Russian NGOs apply for the Consultative status with the ECOSOC, and the NGOs already with the status to be more active in joining the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies' consultations, submitting oral and written statements, as well as holding side events. For these purposes, it is proposed to develop a relevant, accessible, detailed and up-to-date manual for Russian NGOs.

- The potential of public-private partnerships and non-profit organizations shall be expanded on the ECOSOC platforms in order to increase the effectiveness of efforts and contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially in the current difficult international situation. This will open up new opportunities both for interstate dialogue and for internal discussions at the national level on economic, social and environmental issues. The advantage of such interaction is, first of all, increasing the involvement of civil society in the Sustainable Development Agenda.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the current difficult geopolitical situation, contributed to the intensification of the NGOs work at the national and international levels to support the population, international contacts and practices in new realities and by new possible and safe means. The ongoing crises have also perfectly demonstrated that the NGOs are always at the forefront of social change, responding flexibly and promptly to a changing external environment and new life circumstances. NGOs immediately respond to the problems that arise and restructure their activities to help where it is most in demand. Thus, the authorities and local governmental bodies need to include NGOs in decision-making centers at the earliest possible stages.
- More attention is required to the procedure for public assurance of public non-financial reporting of companies, regional and municipal public authorities in the field of sustainable development and ESG. To this end, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has created a Coordinating Council and is ready to share its best practices in this process.
- Special attention shall be devoted to the participation and the creation of opportunities for the young generation, namely for students, to support their involvement in SDGs practices and projects. Among the suggested activities are introduction of scholarships to support student mobility and education in sustainability, international contests and meetings among students on SDGs to be held in Russia.
- The SDG agenda needs to be more widely publicized in national media.
- More attention and activities shall be devoted to building trust between all SDG processes' participants. It serves as a foundation for determining the best ways and practices for achieving the SDGs as well as supporting their faster realization.