

# Multi-stakeholder panel Investing in Partnerships: Catalyzing Action for SDG 17 -

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



03.20 - 03.50 PM

5 February 2025

Trusteeship Council Chamber, UNHQ

[sdgs.un.org/2025ECOSOCPartnershipForum](https://sdgs.un.org/2025ECOSOCPartnershipForum)

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**ECOSOC**   
**Partnership  
Forum**

# Background

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, engaging the resources and levers of all societal sectors, are essential to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Partnerships can address the root causes of complex issues, create innovative, sustainable, and equitable solutions, and deliver transformation at scale through innovative finance models and catalyzing private investment.

However, effective funding of partnerships can be hindered by a lack of familiarity of the unique needs of partnerships (including the need for equitable, local participation), short-term funding cycles, rigid accountability frameworks, and underutilization of innovative financing mechanisms.

This session will spotlight the pivotal role of strategic investments in partnerships as a cornerstone for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will explore how funders are optimizing their funding modalities to more effectively support partnership development and what else needs to be done to support a more enabling environment for multi-stakeholder collaboration.

## Objectives:

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- **Highlight Innovative Financing Models:** Explore examples of tools such as blended finance, social impact investments, SDG bonds, and crowdfunding platforms that are catalyzing private and public sector engagement in SDG implementation.
- **Identify Barriers and Solutions for Effective Partnership Funding:** Address systemic challenges, such as short-term funding, hierarchical structures, and rigid accountability, that hinder partnership development.
- **Promote Inclusive Practices:** Emphasize the importance of funding modalities that support local ownership, equitable participation, and context-appropriate solutions.
- **Demonstrate the investment required to enable effective partnering:** Discuss how to build the institutional capabilities and policies to support all-of-society collaboration.

# Programme

## Moderator

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- **H.E. Mr. Bob Rae**, President of ECOSOC

## Panelists:

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- **H.E. Mr. Niels Annen**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
- **Ms. Heather Grady**, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
- **Mr. Darian Stibbe**, The Partnering Initiative

## Guiding questions:

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- **Innovative Financing Models:** Can you share examples of innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance or impact investments, that have shown the most promise in advancing multi-stakeholder partnerships? How could those be scaled to achieve broader SDG impact?
- **Overcoming Funding Barriers:** What are the most critical challenges in current partnership funding models, and what practical steps can funders and partners take to address them?
- **Equity and Inclusion in Financing:** How can funding strategies ensure that smaller, under-resourced organizations and local communities are equitably included in partnerships?
- **Balancing Flexibility and Accountability:** What innovative approaches can funders adopt to maintain accountability while enabling the flexibility necessary for partnerships to adapt and innovate?
- **Cross-Sector Resource Mobilization:** What strategies have proven successful in mobilizing resources for partnerships, particularly in SDG sectors with significant funding gaps, and how can collaboration among public, private, and civil society stakeholders be scaled?
- **Harnessing Digital Technologies and Crowdfunding:** How can digital platforms and crowdfunding be leveraged to unlock new streams of funding and enhance transparency, inclusivity, and innovation in partnerships?

## Panellists

### **H.E. Mr. Niels Annen, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany**

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Niels Annen is a German politician who has been serving as Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in the coalition government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz since 2021. He served as Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office from 2018 to 2021 in the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Mr. Annen has served as member of the German Bundestag from 2005 to 2009 and since 2013. As a long-time member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Annen established himself as a foreign policy expert, focusing largely on the German engagement in Afghanistan and the Middle East. As a Spanish speaker, he is also well versed in the history and politics of Latin and Central America. Within the Committee on Foreign Affairs, he has served on the Subcommittee for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation as well as the Subcommittee for the United Nations. From 2014 to 2018, he served as the Foreign Policy Spokesperson for the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

Mr. Annen was a Senior Transatlantic Resident at the German Marshall Fund in Washington between 2010 and 2011. From 2011 until 2013 he worked for the department for International Policy Analysis of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Berlin. He holds a master's degree in International Public Policy of the Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., USA.



## **Ms. Heather Grady, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors**

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Heather is Vice President of Collaboratives (+Global Asia) and leads the practice area of Environment and Climate Change. This portfolio includes a range of sponsored projects and donor collaboratives as well as advisory engagements, research and publications. She also leads the Shifting Systems initiative that encourages funders to place longer-term, more adaptive resources with grantees who are tackling systemic challenges from the local to the global level. Heather has served as an adjunct professor at the China Global Philanthropy Institute and frequently publishes on philanthropy.



Heather's approach to this work has been shaped in part by two decades living and working in countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, managing development and humanitarian programs focused on a range of themes including livelihoods, environment, agriculture, health and education, and gender equality. Heather was previously a vice president for Foundation Initiatives at The Rockefeller Foundation where she oversaw an annual grantmaking budget averaging \$65 million. Prior to that, she served as the managing director of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, a decade-long partnership between Columbia University, The Aspen Institute, and the International Council on Human Rights Policy founded by former Irish President Mary Robinson. During this period, she also served as an adjunct professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Heather has a master's degree in public administration from the Kennedy School at Harvard and a B.A. from Smith College. She is conversant in Chinese. She serves on boards and advisory councils including the Dropbox Foundation, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Forum for the Future, the Wildlife Justice Commission, Doc Society, and was a founding advisor to the B Team.

## Mr. Darian Stibbe, The Partnering Initiative

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Darian Stibbe is an internationally recognized pioneer of multi-stakeholder collaboration, working extensively with governments, multi-national companies, INGOs and the UN to drive effective collaboration at scale. He is a major contributor to much of the theory and practice being integrated into partnerships and organizations around the world and has instigated a wide range of ambitious programmes to help make collaboration the 'new normal'.

His cutting-edge work makes sense of complexity, building much needed clarity, and codifying everything from the 10 forms of collaborative advantage that enable partnerships to deliver more than the sum of their parts, to how organizations must adapt to become institutionally 'fit for partnering'. Darian is lead author of the United Nations' SDG Partnership Guidebook, now becoming the 'standard text' for in-country partnering around the world.

He has had considerable impact in helping to shift the UN system to become more collaborative, particularly with business. As well as training over a thousand UN staff, he has developed the partnering strategies of multiple agencies, as well as analyzing and supporting them to optimize their partnering.

He plays a significant role influencing governments and international policy through engagement with the UNGA / HLPF and through his representation of the private sector at the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (for which he developed the seminal Roadmap for the effective engagement of business as a partner in development). He is the co-founder

Darian works extensively with the private sector – both supporting multi-national companies and foundations to maximize their partnering impact, as well as driving wider change through collaborating with membership organizations including the ICC, WBCSD and ICMM.



The Annual Review of Social Partnerships has recognized him for his inspirational work as a 'Thexis Leader': the ability of people to move to an evolved understanding in any field by merging theoretical and practical insights, theories and experiences. The award noted: "One nomination referred to Stibbe as 'a bit like the partnering Oracle, offering a wealth of practical delivery experience and an amazing ability to generate knowledge capital that quickly becomes international best practice.' Another stated that 'Darian is steeped in partnership theory and practice. His depth of knowledge inspires you to go beyond what you thought possible.'"

Darian began his career as a theoretical quantum physicist, including as a NASA scientist before segueing into sustainable development.

He lives in Oxford and plays the keyboard in a local indie covers band, with far more enthusiasm than talent.