



## **Expert Group Meeting of the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group to the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum**

**13 November 2025, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (EST) (virtual meeting)**

### **Summary**

#### **Introduction**

The 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will be held on 27 January 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York under the theme, “*Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all*”. The Forum will place a special emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be reviewed at the 2026 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), namely Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

To ensure inclusive preparations, the President of ECOSOC, His Excellency Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, has established a temporary, informal Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group to assist in the preparations for the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

On 13 November 2025, the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Group was convened. During the meeting, the President set out his vision for a Forum that strengthens the broader ECOSOC cycle and accelerates delivery on the SDGs. Members offered reflections on how the Forum can generate stronger momentum, broaden engagement, and scale transformative partnerships - particularly in relation to SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17.

# Members of the Advisory Group (2026)



1. H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor – Permanent Representative of Singapore to the UN
2. H.E. Mr. Ricklef Johannes Beutin – Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN
3. Mr. Leonard Zulu – UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda
4. Ms. Therese Bennich – Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
5. Mr. Roberto Borrero – International Indian Treaty Council / Indigenous Peoples Major Group
6. Ms. Thilmeeza Hussain – UN Regional Commissions New York Office
7. Professor Taikan Oki – University of Tokyo
8. Ms. Walaa ElHusseiny – UN Global Compact Egypt
9. Ms. Renata Juliotti – African Descent Stakeholder Group / MGOS Coordination Mechanism
10. Mr. Riad Meddeb – Sustainable Energy Hub, UNDP
11. Ms. Norine Kennedy – USCIB / Business and Industry Major Group
12. Mr. Darian Stibbe – The Partnering Initiative
13. Ms. Lucie Bringham – UN Office for Partnerships
14. Mr. Danish Tariq – SAARC Youth Platform / Children and Youth Major Group
15. Mr. Elizeu de Oliveira Chaves Junior – UN Youth Office
16. Ms. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi – UCLG ASPAC / Local and Regional Governments Major Group
17. Ms. Gabriela Ivan – International Science Council / Science and Technology Major Group
18. Mr. Chikezie Godwin Anyanwu – UN Development Coordination Office
19. Ms. Kereeta Whyte – Office of the President of the General Assembly (not present)
20. Ms. María del Pilar Garrido Gonzalo – OECD Development Assistance Committee (not present)
21. Ms. Emma Torres – Sustainable Development Solutions Network (not present)
22. Ms. Susanne Salz – Partnerships2030 (BMZ/GIZ) (not present)

## Summary of meeting

### Opening remarks

**H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, President of ECOSOC**, opened the meeting by welcoming members of the Advisory Group and expressing appreciation for their support in preparing for the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, to be held on 27 January 2026 at United Nations Headquarters. The President underscored that the Forum serves as an important starting point for a very active ECOSOC spring, helping to shape the Coordination Segment, the Operational Activities Segment, Financing for Development discussions, the STI Forum, the functional commissions, and the preparations for the HLPF in July.

Recognizing the special significance of the coming year—marking the 80th anniversary of both the United Nations and ECOSOC—the President reflected on the Council’s longstanding role as a platform where Member States, the UN system, civil society, and diverse stakeholders have jointly addressed global challenges, from post-war recovery to advancing the 2030 Agenda.

Turning to priorities for 2026, His Excellency outlined the guiding motto of “Delivering Better,” calling for renewed trust in multilateralism, efforts to bridge divides, the empowerment of those furthest behind, and a sharper focus on delivering measurable change. The President identified key areas of focus: strengthening national capacities and institutions; promoting innovation and entrepreneurship; expanding opportunities for youth; advancing climate resilience; and addressing the specific needs and perspectives of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. The Partnership Forum, he affirmed, plays a central role in advancing each of these priorities across the ECOSOC system.

With respect to the Forum’s design, the President emphasized that preparations should aim to mobilize partnerships capable of delivering tangible results, particularly in areas of greatest need. Ensuring this requires a focused, practical and action-oriented programme, with Action Segments that spotlight real solutions rather than general discussions. The SDGs under review—Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17—provide a strong basis for showcasing progress on water and sanitation, clean energy, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities, and the enabling role of partnerships.

The President invited the Advisory Group to guide preparations along three priority lines:

- Sharpening the focus of each Action Segment to surface concrete, scalable solutions.
- Identifying voices and partnerships that “move the needle,” including those of cities, communities, youth, innovators, the private sector and countries in special situations; and
- Strengthening the link between the Forum and the broader ECOSOC cycle to ensure that discussions feed into coordinated follow-up throughout the year.

In closing, the President expressed confidence in the Advisory Group’s ability to shape a Forum that is ambitious yet grounded in practical pathways for implementation. As ECOSOC marks its 80th year, His Excellency encouraged members to contribute to a Partnership Forum that continues the Council’s legacy of advancing solutions for people and planet.

**Mr. Navid Hanif, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development**, underscored a central challenge facing the international community: how to galvanize action at the speed and scale required to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Referencing what he described as “noises from all over the world,” he noted that growing public protests reflect deep frustrations related to poverty, hunger, jobs, and climate change.

Building on this context, the Assistant Secretary-General emphasized that incremental approaches will not be sufficient in the years ahead. The need for transformative action, he stressed, is becoming unmistakably clear. Partnerships, in particular, have yet to reach their full potential; too many remain fragmented, small in scale, or insufficiently aligned with national strategies.

The Assistant Secretary-General encouraged the Advisory Group to avoid endorsing a business-as-usual mindset and instead help shape a Forum that “provokes, challenges and accelerates.” In doing so, he set out a series of guiding questions intended to frame the discussion and support the development of a more ambitious and impactful programme for 2026.

- What is one assumption about partnerships that we need to abandon if we are serious about systemic change?
- If the 2026 Partnership Forum could deliver one breakthrough that meaningfully shifts implementation on the ground, what should it be?
- How do we make partnerships more accountable, more equitable, and more reflective of the world as it is today—not as it was a generation ago? Especially in the context of technological disruption and shifting power dynamics.
- How do we ensure partnerships reach those furthest behind—not because it looks good on paper, but because it reshapes real opportunities for these groups?

### **Forum Preparations**

The Secretariat, represented by Mr. Ola Göransson, then provided an overview of preparations for the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum. Mr. Göransson outlined the structure of the one-day programme, which has been designed to maximize engagement. The four SDG Action Segments will spotlight innovative partnerships and practical solutions and are organized with UN system entities and stakeholder groups to ensure diversity of perspectives. Current organizing partners include:

- **Goal 6:** UN DESA / UN Water, Volunteers Stakeholder Group, Women’s Major Group, and Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Goal 7:** UN DESA / UN-Energy and Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Goal 9:** UNIDO, UN DESA, Business and Industry Major Group, NGO Major Group, and Scientific and Technological Community Major Group
- **Goal 11:** UN DESA, Local2030, Local Authorities Major Group, and Stakeholder Group on Ageing

He also noted that a limited number of high-level side events will take place in three formats: (1) in-person at UN Headquarters during the lunch break; (2) off-site events across New York City; and (3) virtual events on 26 or 27 January. Expressions of interest are now open, with deadlines of 28 November 2025 for in-person events and 5 January 2026 for virtual and off-site events. Advisory Group members are invited and encouraged to consider organizing or supporting side events.

Mr. Göransson wrapped up by outlining three components that supports the Forum’s objectives and its preparatory process:

1. Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group, serving as the Forum’s main consultative mechanism.

2. UN DESA’s Global Online Stakeholder Consultation, held from 15 September to 31 October 2025, which received 148 responses from 49 countries—primarily NGOs, with strong participation from Africa; and
3. Partnership Snapshot publication, capturing innovative collaborations across the SDGs in focus.

### **Key messages from dialogue with members**

The open dialogue with members of the advisory group was moderated by Ms. Naiara Costa, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA. Ms. Costa framed the dialogue by reminding members of the guiding questions posed:

- How can the ECOSOC Partnership Forum generate momentum, foster engagement and build excitement for the broader ECOSOC cycle, its related meetings as well as contribute to the follow up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- How can partnerships drive transformative action and scale up successful initiatives on SDGs 6, 7, 9, and 11?
- What are the key barriers to impactful partnerships, and how can enabling factors such as accountability and diverse stakeholder engagement address these challenges? How can the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum facilitate a discussion on how to overcome those barriers?
- In the context of the ongoing ECOSOC/HLPF review, how can the Partnership Forum contribute perspectives on strengthening the UN’s central platforms on sustainable development — ECOSOC and the HLPF — to enhance coherence, coordination, and impact in advancing the 2030 Agenda?
- In a world of growing uncertainties and evolving multilateral cooperation, how can partnerships reinforce trust, solidarity, and collective action to deliver for the SDGs?
- What would be one concrete action you would recommend to strengthening partnerships in the remaining years of SDG implementation?

The following key messages synthesize insights, priorities, and recommendations emerging from the Advisory Group’s dialogue. They reflect areas of broad convergence across members and collectively these messages are intended to inspire the design of the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, ensuring an event that is focused, action-oriented, inclusive, and strategically aligned with the broader ECOSOC cycle and the UN’s 80th anniversary. They highlight not only what the Forum should aspire to achieve, but also the enabling conditions, partnerships, and approaches needed to mobilize transformative impact on SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17.

### **The 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum as a Strategic Milestone**

- The Forum will serve as an early anchor in the 2026 ECOSOC cycle, informing the Coordination Segment, Operational Activities Segment, the STI Forum, Financing for Development discussions, functional commissions and, ultimately, the HLPF.
- Marking ECOSOC’s 80th anniversary, the Forum offers an opportunity to reaffirm the Council’s legacy of “delivering better” through inclusive multilateralism and partnership-based action.
- The Forum must be focused, practical and action-oriented, mobilizing partnerships that deliver measurable progress on SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17.

### **A Call for Transformative, Scalable and Accountable Partnerships**

- Incremental and fragmented approaches will not meet the urgency of the 2030 Agenda; partnerships must operate at speed and scale.
- Partnerships need to move beyond one-off projects and announcements to long-term, institutionally anchored collaborations that tackle structural barriers such as regulatory bottlenecks, procurement obstacles, fragmented governance and data gaps.
- The Forum should elevate partnerships with demonstrable or clearly articulated potential to shift trajectories on water and sanitation, clean energy, industry and innovation, sustainable cities and cross-cutting SDG 17 enablers.

### **Inclusiveness**

- Inclusiveness must go beyond symbolism: local communities, youth, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, local private sectors and SMEs, and actors outside traditional multilateral circles must be meaningfully involved from design through implementation.
- Partnerships should explicitly address racism, discrimination, structural exclusion and power imbalances; equity must be a core design principle.
- Youth should be engaged as co-leaders and co-designers of partnerships, not only as consultees or observers.

### **Aligning Partnerships with National Priorities and Local Realities**

- Partnerships are more likely to succeed when they are embedded in national development plans, aligned with national and local priorities.
- Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and local authorities hold critical knowledge of what works to deliver partnerships on the ground, including capacity and legal constraints that shape what can be scaled.
- The Forum should highlight national and subnational experiences, including from LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and avoid assuming that solutions conceived in global spaces automatically translate into local impact.

### **Elevating Evidence, Learning and Accountability**

- Partnerships should be grounded in scientific evidence, independent evaluation and clear results frameworks, not aspirational claims of impact.
- There is a need for stronger monitoring systems, transparency mechanisms and learning loops that explicitly include lessons from failure.
- Universities, research institutions and scientific networks can help provide rigorous assessment, debunk misconceptions and serve as neutral conveners within complex partnership ecosystems.

### **Creating Enabling Environments for Private Sector Contribution**

- Businesses—particularly local enterprises and SMEs—require predictable regulatory environments, reduced bureaucracy and clear, accessible entry points to engage in partnerships.
- The Forum should showcase models that mobilize private finance and innovation while remaining aligned with national strategies and community needs.

## **Strengthening Partnership Infrastructure and Ecosystems**

- Effective partnering is demanding work that requires time, skills, resources and appropriate governance structures; these elements are often underestimated or unfunded.
- The UN and partners should invest in partnership “infrastructure,” including platforms, intermediaries and dedicated champions or “sherpas” who can accompany promising initiatives through design, scaling and problem-solving.
- The Forum can play a connecting role across ecosystems—linking innovators, funders, public institutions, local authorities, community actors and youth-led initiatives.

## **Linking the Forum to Broader Multilateral Processes and Restoring Trust**

- Discussions and outcomes of the Forum should inform follow-up across the ECOSOC system, including the ECOSOC/HLPF review and implementation of the Pact for the Future.
- In a context of growing frustration and distrust, especially among youth and civil society, the Forum must help demonstrate that partnerships can deliver tangible improvements in people’s lives and livelihoods on a healthy planet.
- As ECOSOC enters its 80<sup>th</sup> year, the Forum should reaffirm partnerships as a central mechanism for advancing the 2030 Agenda and for rebuilding confidence in multilateral action.

## **Closing remarks**

H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa closed the meeting by thanking members of the Advisory Group for their thoughtful contributions, practical recommendations, and sustained commitment to strengthening the Partnership Forum. He noted that the insights shared will play an essential role in shaping a focused, action-oriented Forum capable of mobilizing transformative partnerships for the SDGs under review at the 2026 HLPF, while reinforcing trust and cooperation across the ECOSOC cycle.

The President informed members that the Secretariat will prepare a summary of the discussion, to be shared in the coming weeks, and will follow up on specific proposals raised during the meeting. He encouraged members to continue supporting the Forum—through outreach, participation in sessions, and the organization of side events.

Looking ahead, he recalled that the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will take place on 27 January 2026 at UN Headquarters and noted that a follow-up meeting of the Advisory Group will be convened shortly afterward to review outcomes and consider next steps. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration to ensure that the Forum, and ECOSOC more broadly, “deliver better” for people and planet.