



TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum “Partnerships Driving Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs” Thursday, 11 April 2019

Summary

The Economic and Social Council convened its twelfth Partnership Forum on 11 April 2019, under the theme “Partnerships Driving Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs”.

The event brought together representatives of Member States and non-state actors including the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia to showcase how inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships and partnership platforms including those led by national governments can help drive the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those under in-depth review at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, namely SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The Forum also discussed ways to enhance the effectiveness of UN-associated partnerships in the context of the ongoing reform of the United Nations Development System (UNDS).

Opening session

The Opening Session featured remarks from *H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations*, who highlighted the formidable sustainable development challenges of today and the increasingly important role that multi-stakeholder partnerships play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The forum also heard keynote addresses by *H.E. Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon and H.E. Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary*, who highlighted national experiences in this regard.

“The world is facing increasing formidable challenges, such as climate change, growing refugee flows, growing inequalities within and between countries, accompanied by the changes brought by new frontier technologies that are putting SDG implementation under pressure. The ECOSOC Partnership Forum is uniquely positioned to review and provide normative guidance on multi-stakeholder partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.”

*H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King,
President of ECOSOC*





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“To build momentum, Governments, the United Nations, and a diverse group of stakeholders must work together in a more coordinated and integrated way. Everyone is a development actor.... Transformation very much depends on leadership, innovation and strategic collaboration at the local level. We must engage local level to scale up the most promising models.”

*H.E. Ms. Amina Mohammed,
Deputy Secretary-General,
United Nations*



“No single institution or government can achieve the SDGs alone. In addition to global partnership we also need to build momentum through multi-stakeholder partnerships that share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources.”

*H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin,
Under-Secretary-General for
Economic and Social Affairs*



Moderated by *BBC Anchor and correspondent Ms. Laura Trevelyan*, a dynamic High-Level Conversation took place among *Ms. Ann Cairns, Executive Vice Chairman of Mastercard*, *Ms. Alaa Murabit, High-Level Commissioner on Health, Employment and Economic Growth and SDG Advocate*, and *Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth*, on *“the role of partnerships in driving inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*.

Ms. Ann Cairns argued that the private sector must be engaged in the implementation of the SDGs, because there isn’t enough aid or philanthropic dollars to solve global challenges. The 17 SDGs provide a framework for bringing the public and private sector together to develop solutions. She highlighted several Mastercard initiatives that contribute to multiple goals at the same time, including offering scholarships to educate Africa’s leaders of tomorrow, reducing the gender gap in financial inclusion, employing pay-as-you-go models to make solar panels affordable, linking sustainable consumption in the developed world to donation of school meals in Africa, and giving preloaded cards as “digital food” to refugees and letting assistance be guided by consumption data.

Ms. Alaa Murabit urged everyone to recognize our collective contribution to challenges such as climate change, and to face our responsibility. She argued that migration, for example, is not a one-country issue and institutionalized solutions are needed to tackle the underlying issues. She pointed out the changing citizen-government relationship - governments are no longer the only players; corporations have more ability to reach audiences; and non-state actors are being relied upon more and more to deliver information, access, even security - saying the SDGs will not be achieved without partnerships. She also shared the Emerging Women Leadership Lab of her organization to support young female leaders. Fundamentally, collective challenges, she argued, need collective solutions.



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Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake shared the perspectives of young people from the ECOSOC Youth Forum, which had taken place a few days ago. Young people are connecting through technology, social media, and the internet to organize themselves to hold governments and corporations accountable. Young people demand a coordinated approach to respond to the grand challenges that are beyond national borders. They demand more action to speed up transformation, particularly climate action, and are changing their own behaviors such as recycling and reducing air travel. It was highlighted that young women and girls are being left behind. Despite incremental progress towards the goals, the internet gender gap has continued to grow and the number of out-of-school girls has increased. She also mentioned her initiative to recognize 17 young people every two years who integrate SDGs in their day-to-day work.

In the ensuing exchange, speakers recognized the changing political dynamics and urged everyone not to be reactionary to immediate challenges but to rather focus on a long-term vision. It was pointed out that more corporations are stepping up, taking a more active role in providing services of social benefits, and sometimes corporations can act quicker than governments in finding solutions.

Speakers also emphasized that fundamentally, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, the only empirically proven solution is to invest in services, such as health care and education. They also stressed the importance of engaging local leaders and local communities when developing local solutions, respecting local norms and realities.

On the issue of migration, speakers emphasized the need to tackle the root causes by investing in creating economic opportunities, dignified job and decent work, including for youth in the countries of origin.

Session I: What It Takes to Build Effective Country-level Partnership Platforms?

Recognizing the need to support national demands for inclusive alliances in the implementation of the SDGs, the session discussed common enablers for building more inclusive and effective country-level partnership platforms. The role of UN Country Teams and UN local networks was also discussed. If well designed, nurtured and transparent, partnership can accelerate SDG progress. However, despite the expansion of partnerships in the development sector, participants noted that partnerships are not mainstreamed or given enough resources. The ensuing discussions focused on enabling factors to enhance partnerships.



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The importance of establishing partnership frameworks was stressed, as they allow to identify the needs and match the needs for optimal results. One example was the intergovernmental SIDS Partnership Framework that came out of the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The SIDS Partnership Framework was designed to monitor progress of existing, and stimulate the launch of new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS. National planning frameworks are another vital tool for identifying national priorities and needs. In Belize for example, the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy, designed in consultation with all government ministries, was instrumental to creating partnerships. It supported the country with resource mobilization, monitoring and review.

Secondly, participants noted the importance of adopting policies that promote an enabling environment and having an inclusive approach to partnerships by involving diverse actors including youth. A stronger commitment to multi-stakeholder partnerships was needed to achieve the SDGs – inclusive partnerships that consider national context and policies and are based on transparency and accountability. An example of platforms that engage multiple stakeholders was the regional forums on sustainable development and their CSO forums, such as the Asia Pacific People’s Forum on Sustainable Development. Participants also welcomed south-south cooperation as a collective endeavour of developing countries and as complement to north-south cooperation.

Thirdly, the need of specific skills and expertise on partnership design and management at country level was emphasized. For the UN, participants encouraged further joint programming. It was also important to create safe spaces to learn from failure.

Participants highlighted the challenge of monitoring and review of partnerships, and the fact that institutional arrangements are normally not in place to facilitate this. **It was noted that aligning the partnership with SMART deliverables - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-based, and Time-bound could enhance the results.** For instance, the [SIDS partnership framework](#) had adopted the SMART criteria to guide genuine and durable partnerships for SIDS. At the regional level, one instrument to review progress and facilitate learning and knowledge sharing was the regional roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. It was developed by countries in Asia and the Pacific to facilitate cooperation at the regional level, supported by the ESCAP Secretariat and other United Nations entities. The road map calls for reviews of its progress to take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

Another challenge was how to reach the most remote areas and how to promote and sustain partnerships that deliver results for the most vulnerable groups. Small Island Developing States for



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example, might not be attractive for business to engage given that the market might be too small or unstable. Participants suggested that public-private partnerships and blended financing could be a solution to fostering private sector investment where businesses might normally not go. It was important to pursue different sources of financing.

It was noted that the UN has a vital role to play as a platform to convene partnerships. Many Member States highlighted the existing work of the UN in building partnerships to achieve the SDGs. However, the UN must rise to unlock the full potential of collaborating with stakeholders, especially with the private sector. UN Global Compact Local Networks - as multi-stakeholder platforms at country level - could be well situated to mobilize the private sector to drive sustainable business, scale up financing for the SDGs, and engage in advocacy efforts at local level. Participants also suggested that Global Compact Local Networks could be the focal point for linking different UN entities in the country to private sector to avoid duplication efforts. Examples from local networks in Indonesia and the Russian Federation were mentioned, promoting corporate sustainable initiatives.

Session II: Multi-stakeholder Partnership as a Lever to Drive Inclusion and Impact

The session showcased the efforts of selected multi-stakeholder partnerships in supporting the implementation of the SDGs under in-depth review at the 2019 HLPF in July, namely SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), with a view to understanding, among others, how multi-stakeholder partnerships can drive inclusion and impact.



The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) mobilizes finance and works with 67 developing countries to ensure quality basic education, particularly for the poorest and the most vulnerable populations, and those affected by fragility and conflicts. Since 2002, GPE has evolved into an independently governed partnership of governments, civil society, multilateral organizations, UN system entities, private sector and foundations. Its model is all about national leadership and alignment of all partners behind national strategies, including through a detailed, well-tested education sector plan. It has helped 77 million more children to enroll in primary school, but much more needs to be done, including developing comprehensive solutions to overcome barriers for girls to attend school, especially those in most disadvantaged regions. They need to have trained female teachers as role models, to have text books in languages that empower them, they need accessible and safe schools. The education strategy has to be responsive to the interests of girls too, in addition to boys.



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Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJY) was created in 2015 at the request of the Secretary-General, bringing together the UN system entities that were already working together on youth employment through different mandates to draft a strategy to support the 2030 Agenda and to focus on action. It is led by the ILO, with strong footprint of several UN entities, and endorsed by CEB. In 2017, the partnership opened up to all types of partners. Today, there are 63 partners from governments, social partners, private sector, youth and civil society, regional organizations, academia, parliamentarians, and media. It has 8 key thematic areas on youth employment (green jobs, digital jobs, quality apprenticeships, transition of informal economy to formal economy, entrepreneurship, hazardous occupations, rural economy, youth in fragile situations) and drives inclusion and impact through: 1) strong evidence based value proposition, built on which to form multi-stakeholder partnerships at the national level; 2) core principles, which opens up opportunities for accountability; 3) innovation, including reinventing modality of engagement; 4) engaging young people and focusing on opportunities. Engaging young people adds tremendous value, provides validation to youth and also speaks to the future of work.



Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) was launched in 2010 to accelerate the MDGs that were lagging the most behind and the need of women to have access to healthcare, education, jobs, and to participate in decision-making at all levels of the society. Investing in health equals to investing in human capital, productivity, prosperity and well-being of society. EWEC has mobilized 45 billion dollars and over 650 policies and service delivery commitments from more than 400 different public and private partners. EWEC is also a champion in scaling up innovative solutions to bring quality services to women, children and adolescence in areas hard to reach. Although the world has achieved much progress on maternal mortality and under-five child mortality, much remains to be done and good partnerships are crucial for maximizing impact from investment, including partnerships between countries, partnerships with the private sector, as well as partnerships at the global level.



Global Islamic Finance and Impact Investing Platform (GIFIIP) was established by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in partnership with UNDP, leveraging the pro-investment nature of Islamic finance and contributing to development finance to achieve the SDGs. GIFIIP's pipeline of projects include Islamic Finance Investment for Climate Action, Green Sukuk Initiative, and the Islamic Finance Impact Finance Challenges. Each stakeholder in the value-chain of impact investing has strength and weaknesses. By combining their strengths, GIFIIP aims to achieve comprehensive human development, leaving no one behind, while maintaining human dignity, which is of vital importance, especially for the poor.



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16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies is a partnership of partnerships, consisting of over 40 UN system entities, IGOs, global partnership and other organizations and stakeholder. Under Brazil, Sierra Leone and Switzerland's leadership, with the support of the Center of International Cooperation at New York University, it brings together partners in an effort to develop an actionable strategy for SDG16, including by building on the interlinkages between the 34 relevant targets under other goals (a.k.a. SDG16+). Their work is focused on three grand challenges, including 16.1 on reducing violence by half, 16.3 on access to justice, as well as inequality and exclusion. The partnership has also developed a Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. The Pathfinders is very much modeled on the successful Global Partnership for Ending Violence Against Children, building on an inspiring strategy to mobilize support. The Pathfinders is driving inclusion and impact through the following aspects: having strong substance from the outset, having actionable items, recognizing success stories and making them easily replicable, having a light structure (not having formal joining mechanisms, not having long meetings), to overcome fragmentations to bring all actors together.

Building on these examples, participants demonstrated how multi-stakeholder partnerships can mobilize private and public resources, fully utilizing the skills and expertise of different sectors of society. To drive inclusion and impact, partnerships need to be communicative, engage young people, and take into account people in vulnerable situations. It is important to create local solutions to empower local communities and build their capacity. The private sector has a unique role to play, including leading beyond philanthropy with social impact. It was also highlighted that partnerships can scale up impact by allowing partners to be in the driving seat.

Participants highlighted several factors that contribute to the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships:

- *Agreed core principles*
- *Strong evidence-based value proposition*
- *Actionable items*
- *Lean structure*
- *Inclusive with low entry barrier*
- *Engaging the local level, respecting local norms and realities*
- *Engaging young people*
- *Recognizing and replicating successes*

Session III: Raising Ambition for UN-associated Partnerships

The session discussed ways to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of UN-associated partnerships, including the role of Member States and the ECOSOC Partnership Forum. It also touched



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upon UN Development System reform and the opportunity to do partnerships differently, in particular with the private sector.

Participants noted that the ongoing UN development system reform was an opportunity to make UN-associated partnerships more effective and make the UN fit for partnering. It had not been in the UN's DNA to partner with the private sector before. One obstacle was the outdated guidance on private sector partnerships, while another challenge was the risk averse approach of the UN towards partnerships, which has led to inaction rather than taking a proactive approach. Moreover, participants noted that the UN's procedures were cumbersome, which made the organization incompatible in keeping up with the speed of the private sector.

It was recommended to revise the UN's partnership guidelines and create a system wide framework on partnerships. This could include a system-wide database of partnering companies, as well as common procedures and principles for due diligence. There was a call to Member States to legislate and give a stronger mandate to allow the UN to scale up partnerships with the private sector, including allowing different funding modalities, such as blended finance. The importance of having the right tools was also emphasized, which should not be agency specific but rather UN-wide, for example promoted by the secretariat.

Several participants underlined that the 2030 Agenda allowed for a different way of doing partnerships, including for the UN at the national level. For instance, the new UNDAFs will have to integrate partnerships, not just traditional partnerships with CSOs, but also private sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Participants mentioned that the UN was strong on forging partnerships around SDGs 1 – 6 but needed to give more weight to partnerships focusing on SDG 7-16. The shifting role of the UN from being an implementor to have more of a broker role was also encouraged.

Regarding private sector partnerships, many participants underlined the need to shift away from seeing the private sector as a source for funding of the 2030 Agenda only. Rather, the private sector should be considered as a long-term partner in accelerating SDG progress, enhancing innovation, contributing to climate action, and finding new solutions to achieve the SDGs. The importance of responsible business and the respect for human rights was emphasized. Due diligence should focus on both risks and opportunities and find the win-win situations.

Participants highlighted the importance of understanding the different country contexts, including different national, regional and local dynamics. Government leadership and ownership of partnerships were seen to be critical. In Senegal, for example, the UN was setting up a program on localizing the SDGs



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with local communities, in combination with local planning, to stimulate local economic and social development. It was also recommended to focus on the low hanging fruits in each country in the area of partnerships and focusing on industries and sectors where the UN can make a difference. In India for instance, partnerships with the textile industry which was the largest employer in India, was mentioned.

Many participants mentioned the potential of the UN to be a stronger convener of partnerships and act as a broker between private sector and the government. UN Global Compact Local Networks were seen as an example in this regard. This is further elaborated under session 1. Lastly, it was underlined that partnerships should not be seen as an end in themselves, rather, it was important to also assess the impacts that partnerships have on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Closing session

Ms. Lise Kingo, Executive Director, UN Global Compact noted that Global Compact, DESA and UNOP were pleased to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss partnerships. She noted that partnerships between the UN and business were still at the experimental level but there was potential; Global Compact had seen a rising interest by companies to work with the UN. It was important however, to make sure that the UN is accountable to its own values and that companies respect the ten guiding principles that outline fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

H.E. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden, He briefed participants on the political declaration of the SDG Summit in September and the consultations held with a multiple range of actors. The political declaration should be concise, action-oriented and evidence-based. H.E. Mr. Skoog further noted that the broader context was concerning; nationalism, polarization, international agreements being questioned and shrinking space for civil society. It was therefore vital to understand how interdependent we are on each other and promote stronger partnerships.

H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC summarized the meeting as an opportunity to reflect on how multi-stakeholder partnerships can contribute to the 2030 Agenda and its means of implementation. It was important to know what has worked and what has not. She further noted that UN associated partnerships should follow distinct high standards and that Member States had an important role to play in this process.