

A Platform for Partnerships – Informal Briefing

Summary

An informal briefing was organized by the Vice-chair of the Second Committee of the 70th session of the General Assembly, Reinhard Krapp, Minister Plenipotentiary in the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations and the Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), on 4 November 2015, at United Nations Headquarters. The timing of the briefing timely, as the Second Committee was going to take on the issue of “Global Partnership” in its deliberations that same afternoon.

In his opening remarks, Reinhard Krapp as the chair of the meeting, briefed the participants on the long-standing concept of partnerships in United Nations processes, from the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development, to the more recent United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and finally, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

As stated by Minister Krapp, partnerships are about connecting and bringing out the most innovative solutions for all: governments, intergovernmental organizations, UN system, civil society groups, and people. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 has the potential to mobilize efforts within the international community to work together, share expertise and knowledge, spur further exchange of technological advances, mobilize financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources, and enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building efforts.

Mr. Krapp also reminded participants of the importance the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will play in both spurring the forging of new partnerships and the reviewing of existing ones, and how the forum will be a platform for all partnerships: *“Agenda 2030 encourages major groups and other stakeholders to report on their contribution to implementation to the HLPF. This also opens the door for reporting by partnerships to the forum. The need for encouraging new partnerships and for transparency on how partnerships are delivering on their commitments has been underscored by several delegations during the ongoing negotiations”*.

Following the opening remarks by the Chair, Nikhil Chandavarkar, Chief of the Outreach and Communications Branch from the Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), briefed participants on relevant mandates to partnerships in the 2030 Agenda, as well as the history and timeline of the newly launched Partnerships for SDGs online platform, the partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the context of the Third International Conference on SIDS, and the process for establishing a SIDS Partnership Framework.

After Mr. Chandavarkar's presentation, Mr. Ola Goransson, Partnerships Coordinator from DESA's Division for Sustainable Development, walked the audience through the online platform and reminded participants of the 15 November 2015 deadline for taking the online survey that has been set up for gathering feedback on new functionalities, as well more broadly on how different stakeholders possibly view the online platform as a tool for engaging with various intergovernmental fora, including the HLPF. Results from the survey will guide the development of the projected "full version" (January 2016) in achieving its aim of becoming a tool to encourage global partnerships engagement around the SDGs.

Interactive Dialogue

Among the issues most frequently raised by the audience was the question about due diligence on fact checking for the incoming new registrations of partnership initiatives into the platform. The Secretariat briefed participants about the openness of the founding mandate of the platform, paragraph 283 of the Future We Want, which asked the Secretariat to establish an online registry for all stakeholders to register concrete policies, plans, programmes, projects and actions to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication. The registry was to make information about these initiatives fully transparent and accessible to the public, be periodically updated, and facilitate access to other registries with similar objectives.

Upon registration into the platform, the Secretariat performs a thorough editorial review based on the information provided – and often communicates with the registered focal point of the initiative for supplemental information in order to ensure the initiative adheres to the *SMART* criteria (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-based, and Time-bound) from an *informational viewpoint*. The Secretariat however has no mandate to fact check the information for accuracy and can therefore not officially endorse the registered initiatives. It only provides the tool for allowing stakeholders to show what they are doing towards the support and/or implementation of the SDGs, and provides a platform for networking, in line with its mandate.

If the Secretariat would receive a complaint on any of the initiatives registered in the platform, it would review the information based on the facts of said complaint, and consider removing the information from the website, in line with the *Terms of Use* that guides all websites of the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-website/terms-use/index.html>

The second largest volume of questions that were brought up during the interactive dialogue revolved around the issue of impact and the connection with various intergovernmental fora, such as the HLPF. Participants inquired about existing or planned ways to measure the impact of the registered partnerships, and what the expectations were in terms of the next session of HLPF. The Secretariat assured participants that there will be a concerted effort to measure impact of partnerships, and to inform HLPF on the progress of partnerships, in line with existing mandates. In particular, paragraph 89 of the 2030 Agenda was mentioned as one possible avenue for partnerships to engage with HLPF.

The Secretariat also reminded participants that once the SDG global indicator framework - which is currently being developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators - is agreed by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016, and adopted thereafter by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, it might present partnerships with a way to link their progress and efforts in an aggregated and quantified manner.

Overall, participants expressed gratitude to the United Nations Secretariat for setting up and improving the online platform. As stated by one participant just before the closing of the meeting: *“the Partnerships for SDGs online platform is a great tool to see what others are doing and to find new partners”*.

The Chair then closed the meeting with the final remarks *“Unlocking the vast knowledge and expertise that partnerships and partners collaboratively possess, holds the key to effectively supporting the achievement of the sustainable development goals.”*
