

11 April 2019

Deputy Secretary-General's remarks to ECOSOC Partnership Forum [as prepared for delivery]

Your Excellency, Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon,

Your Excellency, Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of the Economic and Social Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs for coordinating.

I thank the United Nations Office for Partnerships and the United Nations Global Compact for their support in the preparation of this important annual gathering.

Today's Forum highlights the theme of "Partnerships Driving Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs". I would like to thank our business partners for your engagement since 2015 and for your support to the Secretary General's High-level meeting on Financing of September 2019.

It provides a timely platform to reflect on how to further strengthen our collective efforts to enhance multilateral, multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We face multiple challenges to achieving the SDGs, and the clock is ticking.

Climate change is ravaging the planet -- with a particularly brutal impact on many of the world's most vulnerable people, communities and nations.

Staggering numbers of children and youth -- especially girls and young women -- still lack access to basic education and healthcare services.

People in many countries are starved of economic opportunities, decent work and social protection measures.

And, around the world, inequalities deepening and fraying the fabric of peaceful societies.

These are some of the challenges to be addressed at the July High Level Political Forum.

Our task is immense, but many of the pathways to change are in plain sight.

Success is still possible.

It is widely recognized that sustainable development with its three dimensions -- economic, social and environmental -- calls for a fully integrated approach, engaging all stakeholders.

Partnerships are critical for achieving progress across the full agenda.

In many ways, Goal 17 is the 'connective tissue' which will ensure an integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development.

Today, I would like to share four points for discussion.

First, to build greater momentum, governments, the UN, and a diverse range of stakeholders from both private sector and civil society must all commit to working together in a more coordinated and integrated way.

The transformation we need requires us to acknowledge that everyone is a development actor.

Governments alone cannot achieve the SDGs.

Second, to achieve the scale and impact needed to achieve the SDGs, we have to prioritize investments in platforms and coalitions that engage and harness a much larger ecosystem of partners, including Small and Medium Enterprises and local actors.

We will not fully address the interlinkages of the SDGs if we remain in the narrow siloed-approaches of sectoral interventions and partnerships.

Investments in cross-cutting, high-return priorities have strong potential to unlock progress across multiple SDGs.

These areas range from quality education and health services to zero-carbon energy and environmental conservation.

Third, transforming our world to achieve the 2030 Agenda very much depends on leadership, innovation and strategic collaborations at the local level.

We must draw on the knowledge and experience of local communities and actors on the ground to ensure that we replicate and scale up the most promising models.

Fourth, socialize the SDGs and strengthen ownership, we have to make sure the process is inclusive, transparent and accountable.

All stakeholders, big or small should find a place to play their role and make their contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our conversations today, I hope we will not be afraid to reflect honestly about where we are falling short -- because those shortcomings are also where the opportunities lie to make a difference.

We shouldn't shy away from difficult conversations around the need to fill partnership skillset gaps, tackle financing shortfalls, and address data deficiencies.

Only with this kind of pragmatic approach will we realize our aspiration of leaving no one behind.

Promoting equitable access and equal participation by all, including the most marginalized, is a fundamental ethic of the SDG era.

Before I conclude, let me address the need for capacity building for vulnerable groups.

When we talk about capacity-building, we should always be applying a lens of inclusion and empowerment.

We must ensure the world's most vulnerable people are put in the driver's seat for SDG implementation.

Young people, particularly young women and entrepreneurs, are at the forefront of SDG progress.

Let's make sure we listen carefully to their vision and draw inspiration from their determination and commitment to creating a better world.

I wish you all a fruitful exchange and insightful dialogue.

Thank you.