

**High Level Thematic Debate on “Entrepreneurship for Development”
United Nations Headquarters
Wednesday, 26 June 2013**

Summary

Introduction

A one-day high level thematic debate (HLTD) on “Entrepreneurship for Development” took place at the United Nations Headquarters on 26 June 2013. It was convened by the President of the 67th session of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic as mandated by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/67/202. It was the first time that a resolution on entrepreneurship for development was adopted by the General Assembly with an impressive number of countries co-sponsoring.

The thematic debate offered a highly interactive and dynamic discussion format, which included a plenary segment in the morning addressing the promotion of entrepreneurship in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication at the national, regional and international levels as well as the role of the United Nations and the international community in promoting entrepreneurship as a tool for development. The plenary segment was followed by two panel sessions in the afternoon focusing on entrepreneurship as a tool for empowerment, especially for young people and women, and the value and importance of education for the development of entrepreneurial talents and expertise.

Numerous member states, civil society organizations and representatives of the UN system participated actively in the debate, offering examples of their experiences, programmes, lessons learned, challenges and commitment to continue finding practical ways of promoting and supporting entrepreneurship, nationally and internationally.

Opening segment

Opening segment of the thematic debate included statements by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of the 67th General Assembly; H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General; H.E. Mr. Shimon Peres, President of Israel; Mr. Antonio Tajani, Vice President of Industry and Entrepreneurship of the European Commission; Mr. Inderjit Singh, Member of Parliament of Singapore; Mr. Emanuel Hategeka, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda; Mr. Salvador Paiz, Special Envoy of the National Competitiveness Programme of Guatemala and H.E. Ambassador Ron Prosor, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

This distinguished group of renowned speakers concurred that the world faces complex challenges that cannot be resolved by individuals or nations alone, but require a joint and comprehensive action involving the creativity and innovation of a diversity of stakeholders.

They emphasized that entrepreneurship provides many solutions to the challenges of the 21st century, including the corrosive social and economic effects of the persistent global jobs

crisis, and is a powerful driver of sustainable development. The entrepreneurial talent can be found in the most unexpected places, embodied in the most unexpected people. However, all entrepreneurs share the same spirit of driven, committed, talented and highly motivated individuals who continue to advance innovation, finding creative economic and social solutions, and contributing to the wealth and health of their communities.

The committed support of Governments, civil society, academic institutions and international and regional organizations is key for the entrepreneurial spirit to maximize its positive impact in poverty eradication and sustainable development, especially for young people and women.

The significance of entrepreneurship was highlighted by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of the 67th General Assembly in the following manner: “The post - 2015 agenda will largely stand or fall on whether governments will be able to work together with individuals who embody the spirit of socially-responsible entrepreneurship.”

Panel discussion on Entrepreneurship for Development

This panel discussion brought together a diverse and distinguished group of experts, which included Professor Dan Shechtman, Nobel Prize Laureate and Professor at Technion Institute of Technology in Israel; Mr. Martin Bruncko, Senior Director of the World Economic Forum; Mr. Fred Hu, Founder of the Primavera Capital Group, China; Ms. Sherry Tross, Executive Secretary for Integral Development at the Organization of American States (OAS); and Mr. Jose Manuel Salazar, Executive Director Employment Sector at the International Labour Organization (ILO). The discussion was skilfully moderated by Ms. Rita Cosby, Special correspondent for the CBS syndicated program “Inside Edition”.

They identified trends, challenges and opportunities to promoting entrepreneurship as well as advanced ways to create fertile environments for business growth. By showcasing initiatives, sharing strategies and proposing specific policies tailored to promote entrepreneurship, the debate aimed to foster a dialogue on concrete suggestions on how to best harness the entrepreneurial spirit, empower people to establish both business and social enterprises and create enabling environments to encourage much needed support from relevant stakeholders.

Panellists and participants recognized the following issues as key to entrepreneurship:

- The invaluable contribution that entrepreneurs have made to job growth, poverty reduction and wealth creation. Evidence shows that entrepreneurs have contributed to income growth and job creation with impressive positive impact. In particular, the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises has opened avenues of opportunity for women, youth and vulnerable groups. Without vibrant entrepreneurial activity, development would be difficult to transfer to durable sustainable growth.
- The last 30 years has seen an “entrepreneurship revolution”, with a shift from “managerial capitalism” to “entrepreneurial capitalism”. The world’s anxious shift and attention to entrepreneurship has not been an accident. With an alarming number of people currently unemployed, resolving the unemployment “pandemic” has not only become an economic imperative, but also a moral one. However, with public debts at a historic high, especially in developed countries, Governments were no longer able to provide citizens with sufficient employment. Entrepreneurship has become a vibrant force to support development and economic growth by creating opportunities for citizens and communities.
- The impact of the sharing of lessons learned and ideas through electronic means and social media was brought to the attention of participants. The Internet has enabled

the participation of a global audience, demonstrating that in some cases the sharing of entrepreneurship challenges and successes was becoming “borderless”. This in turn has greatly facilitated the consolidation of partnerships between policymakers, businesses and young entrepreneurs. However, for this impressive sharing of knowledge and practical experiences to be sustainable, a supportive environment needs to be strengthened with good educational establishments, vocational training and enabling frameworks.

- The issue of technological entrepreneurship was introduced in the discussion as key to fostering and creating a society where people were not forced to leave their home countries in search of opportunities. Investing outside of cities was also important, as the future workforce was likely to come from villages and the city periphery. In addition, Governments had a very important role in ensuring a free market economy that fostered technological entrepreneurship. The promotion of a socially-conscious entrepreneurial spirit should be seen by Governments as a basic duty.

Panel discussion on Entrepreneurship Education

The afternoon session began with interventions of a distinguished group of panellists, which included Mr. Luke Williams, Executive Director of the Berkeley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation of New York University; Professor Friederike Welter, President of the Institute for SME research in Bonn, Germany; Mr. Thom Ruhe, VP for Entrepreneurship at the Kauffman Foundation and Ms. Princess Jenkins, Founder and Visionary of The Brownstone. The discussion was expertly moderated by Mr. David Price, US Broadcast Journalist.

The importance of high quality education as the foundation from which good entrepreneurship could grow was the focus of the discussion which underscored the following issues:

- Scholarships, dedicated training, charter schools and inclusion of entrepreneurship at the core of educational programmes could help students to identify and follow entrepreneurial behaviours, and develop their talents and necessary skills. Organizations, operating around the world, connecting entrepreneurs at the grassroots with the right mentors, businesses and associations were also identified as a valuable tool.
- Entrepreneurship education should begin in primary school to foster the “wonderfully entrepreneurial attitudes of children” from the outset. Because entrepreneurship is a skill that could be learned, young people who had been taught about entrepreneurship at an early age would have greater confidence when they entered the workforce as they will be cognizant of the uncertainties of the labour market.
- Students were often educated about entrepreneurship, but not for it. Educating about entrepreneurship refers to contents, educating for entrepreneurship refers to pedagogies. Both need to be combined.
- More effective efforts should be devoted in educational programmes to inspire people to become entrepreneurs. In this regard, the training of trainers as inspirational agents to foster and encourage entrepreneurial behaviour was stressed. Many students benefit from learning entrepreneurial thinking, in particular the notion that entrepreneurship is not just about starting a business but could be viewed as an attitude that could

inform other areas of life as well. Mentoring was identified as crucial for the entrepreneurship spirit to take root.

- Innovation and creativity were recognized as essential to economic progress as well as the willingness to experiment and take risks. Getting up and moving on after failure was an essential part of entrepreneurship. It was acknowledged that ideas were an “inexhaustible resource” that could create new value and wealth. Sharing passion and stories of successes and failures were important educational tools, as well.
- Entrepreneurship education should go beyond business education as more and more entrepreneuring is being seen as an attitude, as way of life.

Panel discussion on Entrepreneurship as a tool for Empowerment

The last panel offered a stimulating discussion which began with the words of a distinguished group of experts that included Ms. Helen Marquard, Executive Director of The SEED Initiative; Mr. David Sengeh, Doctoral student at the MIT Media Lab; Ms. Rahama Wright, Founder and CEO of Shea Yeleen International; Ms. Naila Chowdury, CEO of TeleConsult Group and Mr. Roy Thomasson, Founder and Chair, Board of Directors of the Young Americas Business Trust, YABT. Once again, the discussion was skilfully moderated by Mr. David Price, US Broadcast Journalist.

The discussion emphasized the following issues:

- Entrepreneurship has the power to help build societies in which people have the confidence, skill, and desire to solve the problems that they see around them. As entrepreneurs become more self-sufficient and empowered, they are more likely to seek higher levels of education and better living conditions for themselves and their families. Entrepreneurship has helped communities and individuals to raise their voices and visibility.
- The small- and medium-sized (SME) business sector can empower the most vulnerable people and help them to break out of poverty. Small and medium sized enterprises are considered as the “backbone of economies”. Their work not only creates economic benefits but also benefits for local communities. However, the current economy was making it harder for them to operate, in particular facing increasing challenges with access to dedicated lines of financing.
- Proper investment in fostering enabling environments for youth entrepreneurship was seen as essential to offer them the possibility to become productive members of society as well as unique agents for impact and change. In some countries, youth represents the majority of the population; the need to focus on their personal development and skills development becomes more imperative. Additional efforts should be devoted to build the capacities of local institutions, provide career counselling, facilitate access to finance and coach young entrepreneurs beyond the start-up phase.
- Once more, entrepreneurship education was identified as a critical component of empowerment, in particular investments in improving population’s technical skills and education levels towards building an entrepreneurship culture. Only if entrepreneurship is seen as a viable option would people follow that path.
- Triple bottom line entrepreneurship – directed towards the simultaneous provision of economic, social and environmental benefits - at the local level was recognized as a

vehicle for empowerment and resilience. In particular, triple bottom line entrepreneurship was considered a major contributor to the creation and building of unique partnerships with a range of stakeholders; raising community awareness of environmental concerns and how to deal with them; enabling members of the community to acquire skills; helping to promote the interests of women and youth; supporting participatory decision-making, providing access to information and stimulating the formation of community structures.

- The need to enhance partnerships between entrepreneurs, private sector, governments and research institutions was identified as crucial for the sustainability and impact of entrepreneurship as these partnerships facilitate sharing of experiences, lessons learned of successes and failures and usually advance shared social, environmental and business goals building communities of practice to strengthen resilience.
- The need for a heightened focus on empowering women and youth as entrepreneurs for development was stressed; in particular, more work was needed in education and raising awareness about the benefits of business in these groups as well as in addressing and eventually removing the stigma around failure. It was emphasized that entrepreneurship has given women and youth a social platform, a voice and decision-making power to define their own future.
- Entrepreneurship and supporting businesses at a micro level was recognized as the catalyst to enable sustainable communities.

Concluding messages and recommendations

- Panellists and participants concurred that entrepreneurship can have a transformational impact in developing productive capacities, finding practical business solutions and unleashing creativity and innovation to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Most entrepreneurial activities and opportunities begin with courageous individuals. Some social and environmental entrepreneurs are already leading the way in shaping an environmentally innovative, resource-efficient economy that delivers greater social justice and quality of life. More should be supported.
- National and regional policy frameworks that stimulate, nurture and reward enterprises at the grassroots level are essential. This could include enhanced opportunities for start-up entrepreneurs to have access to formal training programmes as well as adequate financing and market opportunities.
- A systemic multistakeholder approach to promoting entrepreneurship is necessary to prepare aspiring entrepreneurs to solve complex, interlinked and fast-changing problems. A coordinated multi-stakeholder strategy could create the necessary synergies to achieve greater impact and maximize the benefits from entrepreneurship. Governments, the scientific and research community, the private sector, the financial sector and academic institutions all play a crucial role in enhancing entrepreneurship and in building capacities. In this regard, conducive and productive partnerships could have a transformational effect and play a critical role to advance entrepreneurship, by providing a vehicle for more effective engagement of different actors and the necessary structure for delivery and accountability.
- The establishment of dedicated training programmes to inspire entrepreneurial innovation and the development of centres of excellence to support technological

entrepreneurs could be powerful tools to advance entrepreneurship. Closer collaboration among academics, researchers and entrepreneurs can offer valuable opportunities to leverage cutting-edge scientific and engineering technologies into paradigm-changing products and services. This may include facilitating the undertake of pre-commercial trials which would potentially empower academics to partner-up with enterprises and assist in bringing products to market.

- High quality entrepreneurship education should begin in early childhood which will be a crucial component in creating a culture of entrepreneurship. This will have a direct impact in seeing entrepreneurship as a lifestyle rather than a subject matter.
- The benefits of entrepreneurship extend beyond pure economics. By creating new businesses that provide desired goods and services, or by using entrepreneurial principles to create social ventures, entrepreneurs have the unique ability to find sustainable solutions to poverty, improve social conditions and address environmental degradation.
- A proactive role of governments in supporting entrepreneurship is critically needed. Regrettably, this does not always takes place with the urgency required. In many countries around the world, particularly developing countries, aspiring entrepreneurs can face overwhelming challenges when they start up a business. This could be due to difficult regulatory frameworks, high administrative burdens, a lack of financial support and/or entrenched social barriers. Key to finding solutions is to create enabling environments that help entrepreneurs expand their activities, as well as to share best practices, identify gaps and develop new ideas and initiatives.
- Although entrepreneurship has made an impressive contribution to job creation and economic growth, inequality was seeing as a concern with the potential to reverse the gains. Therefore, inclusion should be an integral component of any development matrix. Give dedicated attention to opening avenues of opportunity for women, youth and vulnerable groups will be crucial. Consideration should also be given to the “massive pool of talent” provided by migrant entrepreneurs.
- Several entities of the UN system were already supporting countries in developing appropriate frameworks for the promotion of entrepreneurship. Among them, UNCTAD has developed a comprehensive entrepreneurship policy framework which aims to help developing country policy makers to design initiatives, measures and appropriate institutions to promote entrepreneurship. ILO’s Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and its Youth Entrepreneurship programmes are assisting women and youth around the world to acquire the necessary skills and training to start, develop and formalize their own enterprises. UNIC (the UN Information Centre) in Beirut recently partnered with the Modern University of Business and Science in that city to promote entrepreneurship among Lebanese high-school students. The Global Compact is continuing to mobilize and support youth entrepreneurs. Such programmes have proven to be powerful tools for economic and social empowerment and should be further supported.
- The adoption of the General Assembly resolution 67/202 was seeing as a positive step in the right direction. The resolution requested the Secretary General to prepare a report for its 69th session on the progress made in implementing that resolution, including highlighting best practices and identifying possible measures which could be taken at all levels in support of entrepreneurship. The guidance and recommendations from the thematic debate would be of immense value for the preparation of that report. Panellists and participants also emphasized that more

opportunities for dialogue and exchanges of lessons learned and good practices to support entrepreneurship should be further facilitated.

- Small, micro and medium-sized enterprises account for the largest share of enterprises and employment across the world. Further efforts should be made to support small and micro enterprises at the grassroots level which may include: a) assistance with technology transfer and developing skills at community level to create products of sufficient quality that they are competitive in the marketplace; b) reduce the gap in connecting small and micro-enterprises to research and innovation bodies; c) assist not-for-profit organisations to move into the social and environmental entrepreneurship space, bringing their development skills to the benefit of communities; d) recognition and removal of gender-based barriers so women could gain better access to business development skills, to markets, to finance, and to research and technical experts; e) enhance capacity building programmes that provide triple bottom line planning, and nationally/internationally recognised reporting mechanisms, suitable for small and micro enterprises; f) new approaches to providing financial resources to address the unique needs of hybrid – not-for-profit/for-profit – enterprises.
- Supporting more effectively aspiring entrepreneurs by funding technology start-ups, investing in innovative companies and providing tax incentives to venture capitalists to encourage them to invest.
- Fostering entrepreneurship and competitiveness should be included into national development agendas, strategies and plans.
- As the international community looks towards elaborating the post-2015 development agenda, entrepreneurship can have a transformational impact in developing productive capacities and unleashing creativity and innovation to support the future sustainable development goals and achieve greater economic, social and environmental benefits.

For further information, including the programme of the thematic debate and copies of the statements of panellists, please refer to the following link:

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/>