

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda: Improving accountability and transparency

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The recent General Assembly resolution under the agenda item entitled “Towards global partnerships” requests the ECOSOC “to hold during its partnership forum to be held in 2016 a discussion on the best practices and ways to improve, inter alia, transparency, accountability and the sharing of experiences of multi-stakeholder partnerships and on the review and monitoring of those partnerships, including the role of Member States in review and monitoring.” (A/RES/70/224, para. 15) Consequently, the main *purpose of this paper* is to inform and stimulate this debate.

The *structure of the paper* is as follows: First, the paper *defines* and differentiates *types* of multi-stakeholder partnerships and then identifies research results regarding their successes and/or failures (part 1). Next, it briefly recaps the *history* of the UN’s involvement in those partnerships and points out *recent developments* in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (part 2). The third part outlines a variety of *options for improving* the overall governance and specifically the accountability, transparency, and measurement of results of multi-stakeholder partnerships at the UN. Each section in this part starts with a review of the status-quo and an evaluation of recent research results and then outlines (alternative) options for further improvement. The last part attempts to stimulate the debate on how an integrated *architecture* and coherent *process* could look like.

The research results presented in this paper benefit from theoretical and empirical work undertaken in the research project “Transnational Partnerships for Sustainable Development,” which has been carried out as part of the Berlin Research Center SFB700 from 2006 to the present (see especially Beisheim and Liese 2014; Beisheim and Simon 2015; and our other publications at www.sfb-governance.de/ppp). We gratefully acknowledge funding provided by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Council) in this regard.

1. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development

a. Definitions and types

In multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs), non-governmental actors (such as civil society organizations and companies) work with governmental actors (such as intergovernmental organizations and public donor agencies). The core idea is to build a *win-win situation* where public and private partners pool their resources and competencies to address common social or environmental aims more effectively. The most recent of the biennial UN resolutions on “Towards global partnerships” defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits” (A/RES/70/224, para. 2). The academic literature defines MSPs as institutionalized interactions between public and private actors, which aim at the provision of collective goods (Schäferhoff et al. 2009). Using this definition with a focus on *multi-stakeholder* partnerships, we exclude cooperative initiatives between public or private actors only – they might nevertheless be relevant for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While MSPs have become a key instrument for implementing sustainable development and are active in a wide range of areas, we have to *differentiate*: MSPs differ with regard to their scope, with some being multi-billion dollar programs (like the Global Fundⁱ), while others focus on more specific issues (such as the Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing). MSPs can be found from the local to the global level and may comprise small or large numbers of partners. The literature (Nelson 2002; Pattberg et al. 2012; Beisheim and Liese 2014) features many *typologies*, mostly focusing on the core function of the partnership, the three main types being:

- MSPs for sharing knowledge (e.g. GWP);ⁱⁱ
- MSPs for providing services (e.g. GAVI);ⁱⁱⁱ
- MSPs for setting standards (e.g. AWS).^{iv}

MSPs differ in their requirements regarding success conditions, guidelines or accountability measures. Knowledge or learning partnerships sometimes need to also include and target “bad guys” in order to change their behavior (e.g. to educate about child labor). The UN, however, would want to avoid such partners in service partnerships. Standard-setting MSPs need to be inclusive towards stakeholders when developing their voluntary standards and will most likely have an inherent interest in strong internal verification and compliance measures (see also Steets 2010).

It is also important to note that these voluntary MSPs are distinct from community-level public-private partnerships (PPPs), which fulfill the tasks that have been delegated to them by state authorities or which serve in contracting-out or build-operate-transfer models of service privatization. This paper will neither deal with these kind of PPPs nor with oversight of procurement.

In some MSPs, UN entities are initiators and/or driving actors (e.g. UN Global Compact, SE4All^v), in others they are present as members of the governing board (e.g. GAVI, REEEP^{vi}). In some MSPs, UN entities are only permanent observers (e.g. GWP), in others they take on a more operational role as implementers (e.g. Global Mercury Partnership). And there are also many (relevant) MSPs without UN involvement (e.g. GAIN^{vii}). UN-led partnerships may be influenced directly by multilaterally devised rules and procedures. Otherwise guidance or oversight by governments, donors, or stakeholders^{viii} might be more appropriate.

b. Lessons learned and success conditions

Research on partnerships consists of analyzing lessons learned, specifically with regard to (1) the effectiveness and legitimacy of partnerships and (2) the success conditions necessary for this. These lessons should inform any future architecture and guidelines, to promote positive elements and prevent and tackle negative aspects of partnerships.

As for the *effectiveness and legitimacy* of partnerships, the literature reflects a longstanding debate between proponents and critics of MSP activities. In a best-case scenario partnerships are all about creating coalitions of the willing and win-win alliances through the pooling of complementary resources. They profit from a greater degree of flexibility, an ability to move quickly, and a high level of innovation. At the same time, they build business cases for implementing international goals and enhancing the collective good. Many case studies show that individual MSPs contributed innovative solutions with an in-depth or broad-scale impact that otherwise would not have been achieved. They also helped mobilize additional investment and resources (Schmidt-Traub and Sachs 2015). In contrast, a study that analyzed all of the 348 partnerships in the database of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at that time (Pattberg et al. 2012) reports that 37 percent of these MSPs produced no output at all in terms of the criteria applied. Furthermore, the output of another 43 percent could not be attributed directly to their stated goals. Hence, *quality* not quantity matters – or as the [official summary](#) of the 2015 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) High-level Symposium states, “There is a strong need for healthy multi-stakeholder partnerships” (DCF 2015).

Critics often question whether partnerships succeed in providing collective goods to a significant degree. A fundamental critique has described partnerships as a neoliberal policy instrument that merely advances the special interests of private business (Richter 2003; Zammit 2003; Utting and Zammit 2009) or aims at “bluewashing” (as an attempt to enhance companies’ reputation by using the UN logo, see e.g. Berliner and Prakash 2015). Other authors point out typical risks and negative side effects of private sector involvement. These include a further fragmentation of global governance and “market multilateralism,” a shift towards non-core and unpredictable earmarked contributions, and the redesigning of public policies according to private interests rather than public needs (Bull et al. 2004; Brühl 2007; Martens 2007; Bull 2010; Adams and Martens 2015).

Another debate focuses on the value of partnerships in improving governance and providing collective goods *in developing countries* (Miraftab 2004; Compagnon 2012). On the one hand, partnerships can successfully provide governance services even in fragile areas (Beisheim et al. 2014; Liese et al. 2014; Schäferhoff 2014). On the other hand, relatively few actually do so. The aforementioned study on the CSD’s partnership database (Pattberg et al. 2012) finds that most partnerships are implemented in OECD countries rather than least developed countries (LDCs) (see also Homkes 2011). The same study shows that about one-third of all partnerships are being implemented within the four BRIC countries, which is more than within the entire sub-Saharan African region itself (Chan and Müller 2012: 50). If the goal is to “leave no one behind,” however, incentives and support for partnerships to become active in LDCs or fragile areas are required.

Moreover, studies identify other *limits* of MSPs. A report by the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda (UNTT 2013) points out that MSPs have a poor record of promoting systemic change. As they tend to focus on specific short-term quantifiable results and thereby detract funding from long-term investment, their ad-hoc nature and focus on specific issues may make it difficult to link them to the priority needs of developing countries. In addition, the establishment of parallel structures may weaken country ownership. Another recent study supports the view that MSPs have been “ad hoc, voluntary in nature and not always aligned to government’s own efforts” (Bester 2015). The [Global Policy Forum](#) (2014) criticizes the “increasing fragmentation of global governance; the weakening of representative democracy and institutions” and fears that “the role of the state as primary duty-bearer for guaranteeing the human rights of its citizens and ensuring sustainable development is lost through the multi-stakeholder approach.” Future governance of UN-led partnerships should accommodate these concerns, for example, through due-diligence and follow-up measures (see section 3).

Research also shows that making MSPs successful in delivering collective goods effectively is rather demanding. With regard to *internal conditions of success*, the following list of factors is based on recent research papers and reports (Liese and Beisheim 2011; Beisheim and Liese 2014; OECD 2015; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; among many others):

- Have all relevant partners on board – also considering interlinkages and nexus issues across sectors
- Effective leadership and willingness of partners to invest time and relevant resources
- Adequate “best-fit” institutional design and internal governance: board and stakeholder council, decision-making process, conflict mediation, on-going monitoring and evaluation, accountability mechanisms, institutionalized learning
- Process management: clear vision and theory of change, inclusive goal-setting process, precise formulation of roles and responsibilities of partners, transparent communication
- Independent and well-staffed secretariat that takes care of these tasks
- Project management in countries: bottom-up process to develop local ownership and context-specific customized measures, local capacity development for long-term impact, including identifying a business case for local partners
- Funding and resource management (as a basis for all the above)

Research stresses the need to differentiate: the institutional design and process management of a MSP needs to fit the task and context. Projects should not be planned top-down on the basis of one-size-fits-all blueprints. The literature confirms that the design and management of any given MSP must ensure that projects are adapted to fit local conditions (Andonova and Levy 2003; Manor 2007; Compagnon 2008; Beisheim et al. 2010; Beisheim and Liese 2014). The participation of target groups should not only help to achieve goals more effectively; it should also boost recognition and legitimacy of the work of MSPs.

While good design and management might help to cope with many challenges, there are also certain *external success conditions*:

- There should be an enabling environment and country ownership, as well as incentives to engage for global collective goods, especially in least developed countries (where win-win situations might not exist but need to be created).
- The task should be manageable and conducive to a MSP, and not accompanied by too many systemic obstacles (security problems or complete lack of infrastructure).
- Partnership efforts should be complementary and avoid duplication; they should take the overall national and international governance architecture into account.

Building on these lessons regarding success conditions could be achieved through support measures and creating opportunities for learning and knowledge-sharing (see section 3).

All in all, there needs to be a *balance* between nurturing and oversight, enabling and ensuring measures. Engaging potential partners as well into emerging and existing MSPs is critical to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Enabling MSPs to align their goals with the SDGs and to actually achieve impact may require support at various levels. Ensuring measures may encompass principles and guidelines, reporting duties and reviews.

2. The UN’s involvement in multi-stakeholder partnerships

a. History

While the UN’s involvement with non-state partners can be traced back for several decades, a first surge of partnerships took place following the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 and its pioneering role in including “social groups” (Dodds 2015: 6). The engagement of NGOs has likewise steadily increased over time, and in 1996 ECOSOC [Resolution 1996/31](#) specified the consultative relationship between the Council and NGOs (see also UNDESA 2015c).

Table 1: History of partnerships for sustainable development at the United Nations

Year	Event
1998	UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) established; manages US\$1 billion from Ted Turner
2000	Millennium Development Goal 8 (MDG 8) mentions MSPs
2000	UN Global Compact (UNGC) launched; promotes ten principles covering human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption
2000	Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community issued
2000	First resolution of the UNGA “Towards global partnerships” adopted, followed by the second resolution in 2001 and from then onwards on a biennial basis
2001	Bali guiding principles for partnerships established at final PrepCom for WSSD
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) places partnerships prominently as means of implementation, including the announcement of 200 partnerships at the Summit
2003	Building on the Bali guiding principles (2001), CSD11 decides on criteria for partnerships and CSD starts holding Partnership Fairs
2004	UNDESA establishes an online database for partnerships
2006	UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP) created as a hub for collaboration between the UN and the private sector and foundations
2008	ECOSOC starts its annual meeting on MSPs, from 2013 called “Partnership Forum”

2009	First revision of the UNSG’s Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community; greater emphasis placed on impact assessment, transparency, and accountability
2011	UNHRC adopts Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
2012	UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20): partnerships and other voluntary initiatives are again seen as means of implementation
2013	High-level Political Forum established; mandate mentions “platform for partnerships”
2014	SAMOA Pathway adopted at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS Conference); SIDS Partnership Framework established one year later by UNGA
2015	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets; SDG 17.16/17.17 deal with MSPs
2015	Addis Ababa Action Agenda refers to partnerships multiple times as complementary instrument for mobilizing human and financial resources, expertise, technology and knowledge
2015	Second revision of the Guidelines on a Principle-based Approach to the Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector; stronger focus put on due diligence and transparency

Own depiction (see also Dodds 2015; UNDESA 2015c).

Building upon the growing engagement of the UN with non-state actors, partnerships became an increasingly popular tool. The first larger formal involvement was the founding of the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) in 1998, which was established to manage the donation of US\$1 billion from Ted Turner, and the establishment of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) two years later. Following the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, more than 200 so-called “Type II” partnerships were announced as instruments to foster progress on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. While the number of MSPs registered in UNDESA’s database ultimately grew to 349, a wide range of additional MSPs were launched outside of the WSSD framework and numerous other kinds of voluntary commitments were also announced. At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) in 2012, MSPs and other voluntary initiatives were further promoted, for example, at the [Partnership Forum \(2012\)](#). The outcome document “[The Future We Want](#)” (para. 283) asked the UNSG to compile all voluntary commitments in an Internet-based registry that should be periodically updated. Overall, however, the governance of MSPs at the UN level did not keep pace with their growing importance and the increasing knowledge about their success conditions (Hale and Mauzerall 2004).

b. Recent developments in the context of the 2030 Agenda

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (UN General Assembly 2015b) in September 2015. While Governments have the primary responsibility for the implementation of this universal and transformational agenda, MSPs are

seen as an important *means of implementation*. According to SDG 17.16/17.17, they “mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, in particular developing countries.” SDG 17 also points out the *complementary* relationship between the new global partnership for development and MSPs.

The 2030 Agenda identifies shared *principles* that are not only central parts of the “revitalized Global Partnership” (paras. 39, 60ff.) but should also be relevant for those MSPs that want to help implement the SDGs (see section 3b). These include the following:

- Full respect for *international law*, such as human rights and the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- A *transformative* vision that aims to bring about fundamental changes towards sustainable, peaceful, just, and inclusive societies
- A *universal* agenda that is to be implemented in all countries, in a spirit of global solidarity and shared responsibility, taking into account different national realities, capacities, and specific challenges, while respecting national policies and priorities
- An *integrated* and coherent approach that takes interlinkages into account and balances the three dimensions of sustainable development
- The normative pledge of *leaving no one behind* with the aim to reduce inequalities and to be beneficiary-focused
- An *inclusive* approach that strengthens the accountability relations between governments (or other governance actors) as duty bearers and citizens as rights holders.

All future MSPs for implementing the 2030 Agenda should be grounded in those principles.

The 2030 Agenda gives the *High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* (HLPF) “a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, working coherently with the GA, ECOSOC, and other relevant organs and forums” (para. 82). The HLPF reviews shall also provide a “platform for partnerships” (Res. 67/290, para. 8c; see section 3f).

In this context, UNDESA revamped the *Partnerships for SDGs online platform*, initially developed in response to a mandate set out by the Rio+20 Conference. This was followed by consultations through an online questionnaire and a briefing on its further development in late 2015. A [report](#) by UNDESA (2015d) presents the synthesis of those consultations that shall inform the full version of the platform (see section 3a).

Already in 2014, the ECOSOC decided to convene a *dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system* (UNDS) in the context of the 2030 Agenda (Res. 2014/14). The [report](#) on the first phase of this dialogue highlights the relevance of partnership approaches

(ECOSOC Bureau 2015). It lists the strengthening of MSPs as one of six strategic priority issues, encompassing both, the capacity to *convene* MSPs – “aligned to normative values, standards, and good governance principles and with strong accountability for results” – and to *ensure* that they “operate in an effective and transparent manner”. In that context, the report points out that “ECOSOC is well-placed to serve as a focal point for intergovernmental review of partnership efforts” within the UNDS. The outcome of the second phase of the dialogue – including a workshop on governance and partnership approaches in May 2016 – will serve as input to the UN Secretary-General report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the UN system to be issued in August 2016.

Moreover, the 2015 General Assembly resolution under the agenda item entitled “Towards global partnerships” requests the ECOSOC “to hold during its partnership forum to be held in 2016 a discussion on the best practices and ways to improve, inter alia, transparency, accountability and the sharing of experiences of multi-stakeholder partnerships and on the review and monitoring of those partnerships, including the role of Member States in review and monitoring.” (A/RES/70/224, para. 15). The following section 3 discusses options for such improvements.

3. Options for improving accountability and transparency

a. Registration

A registration process and accompanying online platform including a publicly accessible database is vital for ensuring transparency of cooperation between the UN system and non-governmental actors. It would also facilitate learning and information exchange across partnerships. The importance of transparency has been highlighted repeatedly in the recent past, for example, through the 2013 and 2015 UNGA resolutions “Towards global partnerships” (A/RES/68/234; A/RES/70/224). Both resolutions requested to “disclose the partners, contributions and matching funds for all relevant partnerships, including at the country level.” Civil society representatives also expressed concern and called upon the “disclosure/description of financial arrangements for each partnership” (Adams and Martens 2015: 116).

Previous processes for registering partnerships go back to WSSD and the subsequent [CSD11](#) decision (2003), which led the UNDESA to launch a database for MSPs in 2004. Rules were established (based on the Bali guiding principles) for continuous maintenance of the database based on voluntary self-reporting of the partnerships. Despite this, many entries were never updated and the information was not checked for accuracy (see section 3d). As a consequence, the database became less and less accurate and thus less useful – a fact that was recognized in the SG [report](#) on lessons learned upon the conclusion of the CSD (2013). It is

therefore crucial that entries are at least generally accurate and at best up-to-date, comprehensive, and validated.

After UNCSD, the database was cleaned up and remaining entries were transferred to the [SD in Action Registry](#). The special 2015 [SD in Action Report](#) (UNDESA 2015e) on these MSPs states an “appetite for registries enabling organizations to publish and compare data in a standardized format, uploaded from a wide range of actors, all in one place and overview of open space data platforms able to map partnerships, ease access to information and measure their progress.”

Recently, building on the previous SD in Action Registry, UNDESA set up the new [Partnerships for SDGs](#) online platform (UNDESA 2015b) that lists more than 1,940 partnerships and other voluntary initiatives to achieve the SDGs. The registration form is oriented on SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, resource-based, with timelines). Published entries reference envisioned achievements, implementation methodologies, arrangements for capacity-building and technology transfer, coordination mechanisms and/or the governance structure, and the partners involved. Information on deliverables including a timeline, a list of resources devoted to achieve these, contact details, and links to relevant SDGs are also referenced. In a survey on the platform’s beta version, UNDESA asked users about their experience with the new database and called for proposals to improve it (see synthesis report on those consultations).

Additional registries can be found in other issue areas. The Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action ([NAZCA](#)), for example, lists more than 10,800 voluntary commitments in the area of climate change. This not only gives an indication as to how many entries a database on partnerships and other commitments to achieving the 2030 Agenda would at least have to comprise in order to count as comprehensive, given that climate change is one of many issues covered in the Agenda. It also demonstrates the challenge to define a meaningful design for such a registry to “[galvanize the groundswell](#)” of climate actions (Chan et al. 2015).

Options for an improved registration process and database/registry:

- The UN should encourage MSPs to register their commitments in the Partnerships for SDGs online platform. Especially enhanced outreach towards MSPs without UN involvement would be helpful to achieve a more complete overview of existing partnerships in sustainable development.
- UNDESA could ask all UN agencies and programs involved in MSPs to provide the required information and register with the Partnerships for SDGs platform. Furthermore, the registry could be linked with information held by private sector focal points, other sectoral or national platforms.

- The database should feature a disclaimer, clarifying that the UN welcomes all voluntary action for implementing the SDGs but that registration does not imply any endorsement by the UN. In addition, the disclaimer should indicate that the UN logo may not be used, and that there is no check of the accuracy of the information given during the self-registration process.
- To further develop the database, enhanced search and sorting functions would increase transparency and usability, including the possibility to clearly distinguish between MSPs and other initiatives. This would also allow users to get a quick overview of partnerships relevant for each SDG or active in specific regions.
- A regular update of existing entries is critical for maintaining the database's usefulness for all actual and potential partners as well as for other interested parties, including researchers. To keep entries up to date, a regular reporting mechanism should be established or existing ones should be utilized (see section 3d).
- If a MSP did not report for two years, the secretariat should delist these non-reporting partnerships or at least flag them accordingly (using e.g. a traffic light system).
- Partnerships and independent observers could be given the opportunity to comment on an entry and to link relevant information and reports about the partnerships. This could enhance user activity and the overall usefulness of the database. Also, presumably inaccurate, out-of-date, or incomplete information could be flagged by registered users to mark it for further review and possible delisting.
- While the registry should link the MSPs to the SDGs/targets, it should also pay attention to interlinkages between these goals.

b. Principles, guidelines, and due diligence

A whole range of principles and guidelines already exist for MSPs between the UN system and non-governmental actors: the [Bali guiding principles](#) and the principles laid out in the [CSD11 decision](#) based on the former; the most recently revised UNSG [Guidelines on a Principle-based Approach to the Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector](#) from 2015, based on the original Business Guidelines from 2000 and their 2009 revision; the Human Rights Council's [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) from 2011; moreover, since 2000, nine UNGA resolutions "Towards global partnerships" established additional principles. Although differing in details, these documents lay out the following general *guiding principles*, according to which MSPs should:

- Serve the implementation of internationally agreed goals, nowadays especially the SDGs;

- Be coherent with national law and priorities, respect international law, and be in line with agreed principles and values;
- Be transparent and accountable;
- Be new, provide an added value, and complement rather than substitute commitments made by governments;
- Have a secure funding base;
- Be multi-stakeholder driven, with clear roles of the different partners.

In recent years, a stronger focus has been put on *transparency and due diligence* procedures, i.e. screening practices for potential partners to manage the ensuing risks, for example, with the UNGA resolutions from 2013 (A/RES/68/234) and 2015 (A/RES/70/224) as well as through the most recent UNSG report (A/70/296). Both UNGA resolutions request from UN agencies and programs engaged in MSPs to strengthen their due diligence measures before entering into partnerships, and to disclose all associated partners, contributions, and funds. Furthermore, the 2015 resolution seeks to make sure these elements are reflected in reports prepared by MSPs with UN involvement (see section 3d), in addition to the request in the 2013 resolution that this be done in system-wide reports on partnership activities.

While some UN Agencies and Programmes conduct their own *due diligence* procedures, others, with the help of the UNGC, pool their requests and contract an independent provider. This can help to reduce costs, as a potential partner has to be screened only once instead of repeatedly by each UN entity that seeks to engage in a partnership. It can also help to prevent a conflict of interest for those entities which are in higher need to acquire third party funding.

Options for further developing principles, guidelines, and due diligence are:

- Differentiate clearly between *principles* based on a strong normative consensus among all stakeholders, and more flexible and action-oriented *guidelines* to operationalize these principles throughout the UN system. There is need for *differentiated* guidelines for different types of partnerships given the diverse nature of multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- Take agreed and existing principles and guidelines as a starting point (the Bali guiding principles and CSD11 decision, the UNSG's Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community, and the UNHRC's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) and reflect the newly introduced principles of the 2030 Agenda (see section 2b), discuss these in the ECOSOC Partnership Forum, and decide in GA/ECOSOC on their content and implementation, including providing sufficient capacities for the secretariat to do so.

- Also consider *success conditions* when establishing principles and guidelines. This could make them more relevant to MSPs especially in their planning stage, yet also for their daily operations.
- Have *reporting rules* reflect these principles and guidelines (see section 3d).
- Implement the 2015 revision of the Business Guidelines, including the due diligence measures on the human rights record of all partners, and assess the results, possibly with the help of independent entities.
- Further *pool due diligence procedures* to realize efficiency gains and to avoid conflicts of interest for UN agencies and programmes. The screening itself could be done either by an impartial UN entity or an external contractor.

c. Coordinated support and follow-up by the UN Secretariat

The recent UNGA resolution “Towards global partnerships” (A/RES/70/224) “encourages the United Nations system to continue to develop, for those partnerships in which it participates, a *common and systemic approach* [...]” This involves *coordinating the UN Secretariat activities* on partnerships and *aligning partnership activities with the 2030 Agenda* and country priorities.

Today, several UN entities deal with MSPs, such as UNDESA, the UN Office for Partnerships, the Global Compact Office, and the UN entities’ private sector focal points (for intergovernmental bodies such as GA and ECOSOC, see section 4). The resulting overlaps have led to some duplication of efforts and unclear responsibilities (Fall and Zahran 2010).

UNDESA has in the past few years provided both coordination and analytical support to the work of MSPs, acting as the Secretariat to the Rio+20 Conference, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS Conference) and the post-2015 development negotiations which culminated in the UN Summit for Sustainable Development for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. It has also, since 2008, organized for ECOSOC its annual Partnership Forum which has brought leaders from the private sector, philanthropy, civil society, and academia to discuss ways in which to mobilize support for the international development agenda (see also A/Res/68/1, para. 24).

The *UN Global Compact* serves as a forum for collaboration between the UN system and businesses. Its prime task is to promote the 10 principles for corporate sustainability on human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. It fosters and supports the establishment of MSPs through practices such as knowledge-sharing and capacity building, for example, through information material (Hoxtell et al. 2013), in the form of workshops, and through the

online UN-Business Action Hub. Inter-agency coordination on UN-business interaction is fostered through *Private Sector Focal Point Meetings*, whereas improved collaboration on the national and local level is achieved through the Global Compact Local Networks (Hoxtell et al. 2010). The Global Compact Office (GCO) has recently brought the private sector focal points and the local network meetings closer together by organizing these meetings back-to-back, thereby exploring opportunities for partnering in a bottom-up fashion.

The *UN Office for Partnerships* (UNOP) is tasked with strengthening system-wide coherence and supporting partnership initiatives to engage public and private sector stakeholders to foster sustainable development. UNOP oversees the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UN-FIP) and the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF), while also providing Partnership Advisory and Outreach Services (PAOS). The PAOS assist non-UN institutions in dealing with UN procedures and in the design of programs and projects to enhance implementation of the MDGs and presumably also the SDGs.

Both UNGC and UNOP have their unique strengths, but to a considerable degree their tasks overlap, and this leaves room for improvement. There are various *options* for achieving a more coherent and coordinated handling of MSPs:

- In a [report](#) from 2010 the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) recommended “grouping” the GCO and UNOP “under the same umbrella”, and in the process establishing a clearer division of labor between the two secretariats in which “the GCO can focus on the implementation of the ten principles by businesses, and UNOP on developing United Nations business partnerships and related capacities” (Fall and Zahran 2010: 8).
- Even without an organizational merger, the tasks of the two offices could be delineated more clearly: The GCO could focus more on building and maintaining cooperation with the private sector for implementing the ten principles (while an impartial third entity should be tasked with integrity measures and impact assessments). UNOP could concentrate on bringing partners together and supporting the process of building MSPs through training and capacity building.

The comprehensive *SIDS Partnerships Framework* can be seen (and has been utilized) as a test case for global MSPs. It was established during the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS Conference in September 2014) through paragraph 101 of the [Samoa Pathway](#). The framework should ensure that partnerships are in line with the priorities of SIDS as well as identifying opportunities to enhance sustainable development, all in line with agreed-upon goals. UNDESA has built an accompanying online database, the [SIDS Action Platform](#), containing 302 partnerships (as of March 2016). Based on recommendations from a multi-stakeholder dialogue (UNDESA 2015a), the UNGA established the accompanying *SIDS*

Partnerships Framework in December 2015. This includes a Steering Committee, an annual partnership dialogue, and a standardized partnership reporting template.

There are several *options* for enhancing the alignment of MSPs with the 2030 Agenda:

- The ECOSOC Partnership Forum could help *inform MSPs about the 2030 Agenda* and engage them towards implementing the SDGs in light of national priorities in that context, so that MSPs could align their deliverables accordingly or launch new initiatives in line with the new Agenda (UNDESA 2015a).
- To avoid a silo approach, set up *inter-agency committees or task forces*, building on the positive experiences with the UNTT and TST. These would be responsible for follow-up and review of each SDG (Dodds 2015), including monitoring the global indicators, identifying successful policies, as well as reviewing the means of implementation, including MSPs. These entities could also support MSPs in working across sectors and in applying a nexus approach towards implementing the SDGs.

d. Reporting

The 2030 Agenda invites relevant actors to *report* on their contributions to the implementation of the SDGs to the HLPF, including civil society, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders (para. 84, 89). Already the Bali/CSD11 Guidelines asked MSPs “to submit a regular report, preferably at least on a biennial basis.” UNDESA was “requested to produce a summary report containing synthesized information on partnerships.” Since there were neither incentives nor a sanctioning mechanism, the compliance of MSPs with these reporting requirements was low. In the early years, only a fraction of the MSPs in the CSD’s database responded to the request from the secretariat to update information. A reporting mechanism, however, is necessary to keep the information in the database up-to-date and useful. Reporting is also the basis for follow-up and review (see section 3f). At the same time, there are reporting costs for partnerships that might discourage them to register in the first place.

Hence, one might want to *differentiate* reporting requirements: UN-led MSPs might need more oversight, especially when resources are being transferred, in order to preserve the integrity of the UN. For MSPs without UN involvement a self-reporting process combined with transparency and public scrutiny might be sufficient. In general, monitoring and reporting systems should not be too complex and expensive for those (local) partners who have only limited capacities. For that reason, duplicate reporting should be avoided.

Regarding internal monitoring *within* MSPs, the most reliable kind of monitoring process is one that is managed by an external third party. For example, for the SG’s initiative “Every Woman Every Child,” the UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and

Children's Health has created a system for global reporting, oversight, and accountability. A time-limited *independent Expert Review Group* (iERG) was tasked to regularly report to the UNSG on the results and on progress in implementation. The [2015 report of the iERG](#) (WHO 2015) points out the value of independent accountability and opts for a more integrated global and national accountability mechanism, working across all 17 SDGs.^{ix} Moreover, the WHO has launched a website on results, resources, and oversight. Independent external monitoring has proven essential for those MSPs that have to deal with typical collective action problems like free-riding or cheating (Beisheim and Campe 2012). In that context, the debate on aid effectiveness calls for a "managing for results" approach. MSPs' projects would certainly benefit from a performance assessment that is transparent and can be monitored using indicators. In a number of partnerships, incentive systems with performance-based funding have proven effective: Once a project phase has ended, additional funding is only provided if the phase has achieved measurable, proven successes. On the other hand, a participatory bottom-up approach and local capacity development measures often need more time and resources than expected, especially in fragile areas (Beisheim/Liese 2014) – thus, there needs to be a certain flexibility.

Last but not least, the UN needs to work with the reports received, and they need to feed into meaningful evaluation and learning (see section 3e), follow-up and review processes (see section 3f).

Possible options for better reporting mechanisms are:

- *Mandatory regular reporting of UN-led MSPs* to the Executive Board of the relevant UN agency, to ECOSOC, to HLPF, or to the General Assembly (depending on the kind of MSP).
- Uphold the practice of *voluntary self-reporting* for all MSPs registered in the Partnerships for SDGs online database on at least a biennial basis through the submission of short reports to the platform.
- Develop a short, succinct *template for progress reports*, aligning deliverables with the SDGs/targets/indicators, while also taking into account cross-cutting linkages. To avoid adding to the reporting burden, one could consider accepting reports that MSPs (only those without UN involvement) prepare for their boards or for donor organizations if these fulfil certain minimum criteria.
- To ensure the *validity* of information, MSPs could be encouraged to use standardized reporting formats developed, for example, by the [Global Reporting Initiative \(GRI\)](#). Moreover, there could be some kind of "flagging" process if information is inaccurate (possibly through a Wiki-style template or another type of comment function).

- MSPs that would still fail to provide written information on their progress could be *delisted* from the database or at least *flagged as non-reporting* (traffic light system).
- The private sector could be encouraged to see that their standards for sustainability reporting are adapted for use in reports produced in the framework of the 2030 Agenda; the [SDG Compass](#) being a first step in that direction. The UN Global Compact could align its “Communication on Progress” reporting to the SDGs.
- Take note of existing *third-party reports* and commission them if deemed necessary in particular cases.
- Have UNDESA or an independent expert (panel) prepare a *synthesis report* or commission an *independent third-party evaluation* of all progress reports submitted by MSPs through the Partnerships for SDGs online platform.
- On this basis, the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could discuss lessons learned and evaluate the effectiveness of established guidelines and policy frameworks. A report on the results of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could inform the HLPF reviews (see section 3f).
- As a basis for reporting, MSPs should establish a built-in mechanism for *internal monitoring and learning* from the start (see section 3e). Larger MSPs might want to think about setting up an independent expert review group.

e. Learning and knowledge-sharing

Starting in 2003, the CSD’s five-day *Partnership Fair* provided a venue for registered partnerships to showcase progress, network, identify partners, learn from each other, create synergies between partnerships, and find opportunities for replication and scaling-up. In 2008, [ECOSOC](#) started its one-day “special event” on MSPs (that would become the Partnership Forum in 2013) as a preparatory meeting for the ECOSOC’s Annual Ministerial Review (AMR). In 2012, a [Partnership Forum](#) was organized at the Rio+20 UNCSO that discussed lessons learned and opportunities for scaling-up best practices in sustainable development. Learning and knowledge-sharing are also important goals of the new UN-Business Action Hub and the Private Sector Focal Points meetings (see section 3c). At the SIDS Conference in 2014, six multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues were held where MSPs for advancing sustainable development in SIDS were discussed.

For effective knowledge-sharing and learning *between* partnerships, it is important that there is an institutionalized learning mechanism *within* partnerships. Internal learning needs to be organized in a bottom-up way, starting with local needs and conditions. The literature presents various tools for these multi-stakeholder processes (see e.g. The Partnering Initiative 2011; Bezanson and Isenman 2012; Patscheke et al. 2014; Brouwer et al. 2015; Hazlewood

2015; Hemmati and Rogers 2015). In July 2015, a special “[Sustainable Development in Action](#)” [report](#) (UNDESA 2015e) reviewed MSPs with a particular focus on how knowledge and expertise are aggregated, managed, and ultimately shared. The related background paper (Atkisson 2015) recommends the so-called TOLKA framework: Determine the type of partnership, develop its ontology, identify learning loops, set up knowledge-sharing processes, and activate stakeholders.

Options for improving learning and knowledge-sharing are:

- Facilitate an *annual meeting* with a specific focus on learning and knowledge-sharing between partnerships for implementing the SDGs (Atkisson 2015) – this could be a task for the ECOSOC Partnership Forum.
- Facilitate a *network of knowledge managers* working in partnerships to improve the inter-partnership relationships in between the conferences (Atkisson 2015) – this could also be a task for UNOP, bringing them together not only during the ECOSOC Partnership Forum but also for the HLPF.
- The *Partnerships for SDGs online platform* could serve not only as a forum for sharing knowledge between MSPs, but also as a means of informing Member States, UN entities, major groups, and other stakeholders, especially if further improved (see section 3a).
- Additionally, learning and knowledge-sharing could be supported by setting up or using existing *(cross-)sectoral thematic platforms*. It is important to support MSPs in thinking in a more cross-sectoral way, in paying attention to *cross-cutting issues and interlinkages*, and in adopting a nexus approach. For example, SDGs and targets on water, energy, and food are interdependent as part of the *water, energy, and food security nexus*.^x MSPs have so far tended to focus on water, energy, or food issues while testing and evaluating promising concepts, tools, and pilot projects. The UN should incentivize and support these existing MSPs in considering nexus linkages in their work and should also foster and support new cross-sector MSPs.
- Since the SDGs need to be implemented at the local level, *national platforms for partnerships* could be useful (Freeman and Wisheart 2014; see also Gilbert and Jenkins 2014; Freeman and Wisheart 2015; Reid et al. 2015: 4). Where they exist, National Councils for Sustainable Development ([NCSDs](#)) could serve this function and facilitate effective citizen engagement (Osborn et al. 2014). The UN should help Member States to set up such multi-stakeholder platforms for effectively handling MSP’s.
- Informal preparatory meetings or external platforms could help to create a “safe space” and an environment that allows for open exchange and reporting also on negative results, thus providing a basis for *learning from failure*.

f. Reviewing

The Bali/CSD11 guidelines asked the CSD to discuss the secretariat's report on the contributions of partnerships during its *review years*, "with a view to sharing lessons learned and best practices, identifying and addressing problems, gaps and constraints, and providing further guidance." The CSD's reviews, however, as well as the UN's partnership database, registry, fair, and forum have been criticized for not delivering on that in a satisfactory way (Glasbergen et al. 2007; Bäckstrand et al. 2012; Beisheim 2012; Bäckstrand and Kylsäter 2014; Abbott and Bernstein 2015; Beisheim 2015; Beisheim and Simon 2015). Instead of comprehensive monitoring and reviewing there has been more showcasing and collecting of anecdotal evidence. This is not to be confused with systematic monitoring, evaluation, and reviewing which would require a proper preparatory process. It is, however, a big challenge to bring MSPs "into the ambit of a global monitoring and accountability framework without undermining the flexibility that is a critical success factor of these partnerships" (Bester 2015). And it is also a huge challenge to put the local-level performance of MSPs at the center of reviews, focusing on broader and long-term impact rather than output only.

ECOSOC is the main platform for reviewing the UN system's contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the [Informal Summary](#) of the 2015 Partnership Forum, *ECOSOC*, given its coordinating role within the UN system, is "uniquely situated to provide oversight of partnership initiatives and commitments in which the UN is involved, including establishing a partnerships framework with principles and guidelines, as well as a review process for assessing impact and results" (ECOSOC 2015). The reviews of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) through the new ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FfD Forum), and the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation (STI), a component of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), could have a section reporting on relevant MSPs. Each of these forums should focus on its specific mandate, reviewing MSPs' contribution to financing (FfD Forum) or to science, technology, and innovation (STI). This could also inform the review of SDG 17 at the HLPF (see below).

Up to 2015, ECOSOC has convened the (former) *Annual Ministerial Review* (AMR) and used its Partnership Forum in the preparatory process. Now, with resolution 67/290 and the 2030 Agenda, the GA has tasked the *High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC to conduct reviews (replacing the AMR), with the HLPF being the "culmination of a network of follow-up and review processes" ([UNSG Report 2016](#)). In July 2016, the HLPF will hold its first round of reviews. In addition to the annual SDG Progress Report and the Global Sustainable Development Report, there will be *thematic reviews* on cross-cutting issues and *regular reviews with reporting* by countries, relevant UN entities, and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, also providing a "*platform*

for partnerships.” ECOSOC’s Partnership Forum and the new Partnerships for SDGs platform could be part of a *preparatory process* for reviewing MSP’s contributions at the HLPF (see also [SG’s report on follow-up and review](#), A/70/684, paras. 104–107).

There are various *options* for improving the review of MSPs:

- *ECOSOC Partnership Forum*: Discuss synthesis report or an independent evaluation of all reports by/on MSPs, especially all with UN involvement and with a focus on the annual ECOSOC/HLPF theme (see section 3d). Moreover discuss review input from *inter-agency committees or task forces* on relevant MSPs in their area of work (see section 3c). Produce a summary report with recommendations.
- *HLPF review of overall progress*: Discuss summary report and other input on MSPs’ performance, for example, during a dedicated multi-stakeholder session on MSPs; provide opportunities for further reporting and reviewing on the sidelines of the HLPF.
- *HLPF thematic review*: Discuss also transnational and national MSPs that are relevant to the annual theme of the HLPF and draw on input from the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, including the specialized agencies.
- *HLPF national reviews*: Member States could be invited to select *national* MSPs for inclusion in their voluntary national reports and presentations. A national preparatory process or platform could help evaluate national MSPs’ contributions. This would correspond with the suggested indicator 17.16.1 that looks at the “number of countries reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that support the achievement of the sustainable development goals”.
- *Regional reviews*: Discuss relevant MSPs during regional reviews (e.g. UN regional commissions, APRM, OECD reviews) and report results to ECOSOC Partnership Forum and/or HLPF.
- *Private, business, and civil society reporting*: Make use of *independent* reviews of MSPs and allow complementary input at side events and other meetings on the sidelines of the HLPF through shadow reports, interventions in official meetings, and all other types of participation that resolution 67/290 foresees for Major Groups and other stakeholders (Strandenaes 2014). The outcomes of participatory monitoring and accountability processes led by local civil society organizations (e.g., citizen reviews) could be taken into consideration.^{xi}
- *Political guidance by HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC*: Based on all this, the *ministerial declaration* could request either the GA/ECOSOC and/or the secretariat to further develop

and amend guidelines, criteria, and support for MSPs. In any case, the GA could discuss, review, amend and/or endorse these guidelines when the Second Committee drafts the biennial resolution on “Towards global partnerships” and ECOSOC could discuss them during the Partnership Forum and give guidance to the UN system on MSP.

- *Political guidance by HLPF under the auspices of the GA*: Every four years, when Heads of State and Government reflect on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the *negotiated political declaration* could also review the contribution of relevant MSPs and possible needs for adjustment, thereby giving political guidance at the highest level.
- Beyond that, one could *mainstream* the issue of MSPs into other reviews: The *ECOSOC FfD Forum* could review MSPs’ contribution to financing. The *STI Forum* could review MSPs’ contribution to science, technology, and innovation. The *Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)* could give guidance to funds, programmes, agencies, and resident coordinators on how to manage MSPs. One could also check whether it is useful to integrate the issue of MSPs into the QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework. Independent bodies such as the *Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)* could help with advice whether it comes to budgetary matters and the further development of the accountability system in the UN Secretariat. The *JIU* and the *Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)* could help with independent evaluations and with enabling UN agencies to improve their oversight function.

If all this is to be done, the *UN Secretariat* would need more staff or even a unit for screening, monitoring, and evaluating MSPs and for preparing Member State-led reviews properly.

4. An integrated multi-level architecture and a coherent process

Researchers call for a *coherent governance* that supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (see e.g. Bernstein et al. 2014). The recent [UNSG report \(A/70/684\)](#) on “critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level” presents recommendations on an *integrated and coordinated* implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The flow chart (see below) could stimulate the debate on how a more *integrated multi-level architecture* and a more *coherent process* for improving the accountability and transparency of MSPs could be developed. We would suggest to strengthen capacities from the national to the global level and to integrate the complementary contributions of the various institutions into an *ongoing learning process* on how to make the most of MSPs for implementing the 2030 Agenda - drawing on the UNSG report and taking into consideration the different roles of the GA, ECOSOC, HLPF, national governments and platforms, Major Groups and other stakeholders, as well as some of the aforementioned options.

The starting point for improving the accountability and transparency of MSPs could be an *intergovernmental norm-setting process* that reviews and identifies *principles and guidelines*. This could be, for example, part and parcel of the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations on the global follow-up and review framework. The outcome of the 2016 ECOSOC Partnership Forum could inform these negotiations. The corresponding GA resolution on follow-up and review could have a section on the UN’s governance of MSPs. In the future, one could review and further develop these principles and guidelines in the biennial GA resolution “Towards global partnerships”, the next one to be adopted in December 2017. UNOP and the network of private sector focal points within UN agencies and programs could help disseminate the principles and guidelines throughout the UN system.

The new set of guidelines could build on existing ones and should differentiate between MSPs with UN involvement and MSPs outside the UN system. Accordingly, when it comes to *monitoring and reporting*, for the former there need to be robust due diligence and mandatory reporting procedures. While these MSPs should be required to report to the UN bodies in charge, the latter could be asked to self-report to the Partnerships for SDGs online platform. In any case, there should be a concise template for reporting.

It is vital that the UN actually works with the reports it will be receiving in the future, distilling lessons for further improving the UN’s work with and governance of MSPs. The annual *ECOSOC Partnership Forum* could be a platform to discuss lessons learned, to evaluate the effectiveness of and to further develop the established principles and guidelines, especially those that apply to the entities of the UN system. The basis for this could be the aforementioned reports,

first of all those from UN bodies, but also a synthesis report on all MSPs in the Partnerships for SDGs online platform, taking into account also reports from national level platforms, reports from business and civil society, or other third-party reports. The Partnership Forum could take stock of trends, innovations, and financing of MSPs and of MSPs' contributions to advancing sustainable development (also analyzing and learning from failures) with a special focus on the annual ECOSOC/HLPF theme.

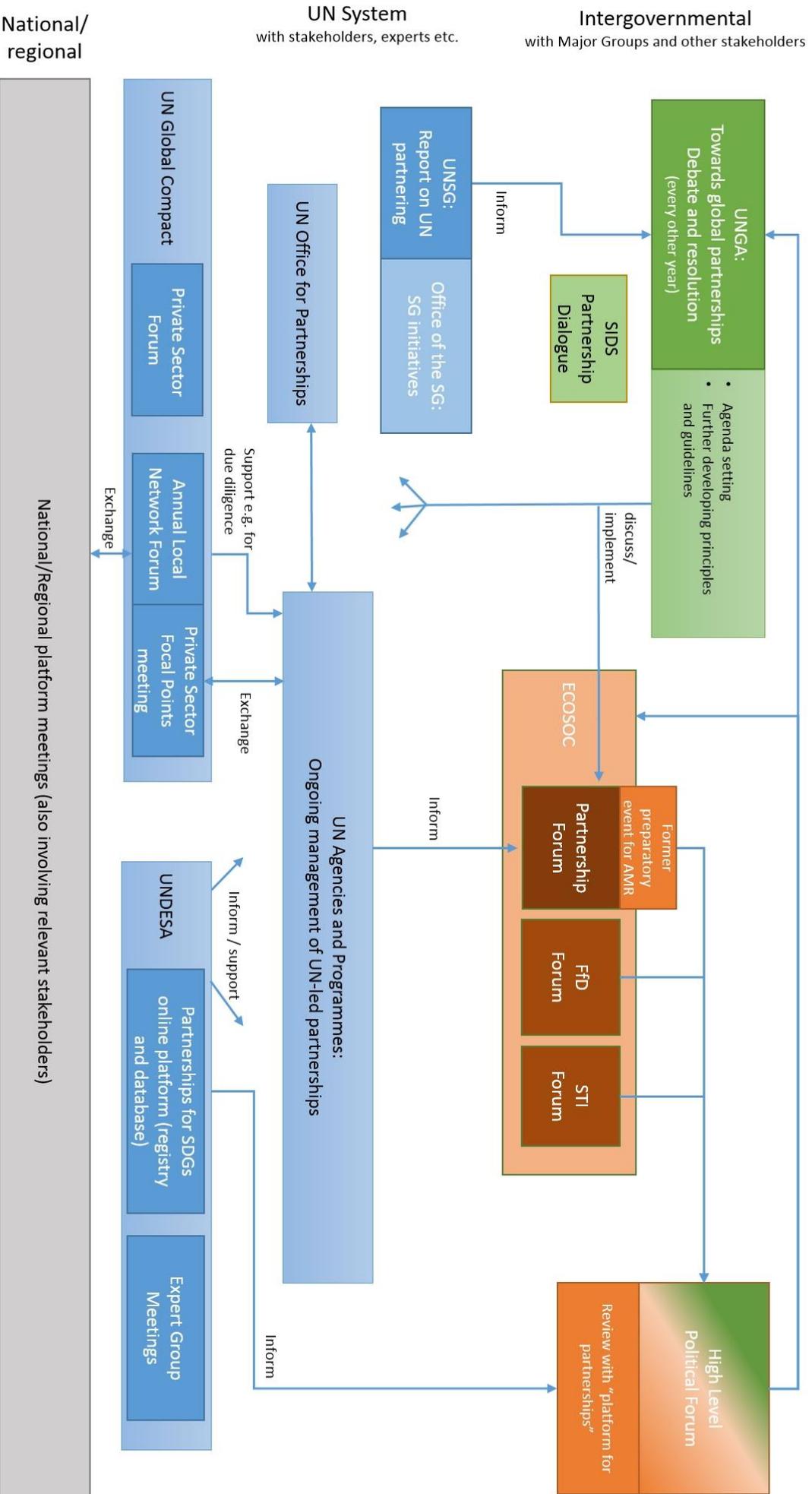
The summary of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could inform the *HLPF thematic reviews* and also the *review of the means of implementation* during the FfD Forum, the STI Forum, and the HLPF. For *showcasing successful MSPs* at the HLPF, there needs to be a sound preparatory process. While the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could help detect effective MSPs with UN involvement, Major Groups and other stakeholders could be invited to help identify champions among those MSPs listed in the Partnerships for SDGs online platform.

Beyond that, the *national reviews* at the HLPF could highlight specific national-level partnerships and/or invite stakeholders to build them according to country needs. The UN could support this by expanding *capacity development measures* for governments and for multi-stakeholder platforms at the national level, to enable strengthening and follow-up of MSPs in a bottom-up fashion, putting local needs and people first.

Member States could consider devoting a paragraph of the *HLPF's Ministerial Declaration* to recommendations on MSPs and their governance at the UN. They could, for example, request the UNGA, ECOSOC or the Secretariat to further develop and amend principles and guidelines for MSPs. Every four years, when Heads of State and Government reflect on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the *negotiated political declaration* could also reflect the contribution of relevant MSPs and possible needs for adjustment, thereby giving political guidance at the highest level.

While the plan of setting up a more centralized UN Partnership Facility did not find support, the need to properly assist, examine and follow-up MSPs, measure results, and prepare reviews remains a challenging task. This could form the basis for further considerations by Member States on what a more decentralized architecture for improving the accountability and transparency of MSPs could look like.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and multi-stakeholder partnerships at the UN



List of abbreviations

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AMR	ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DCF	ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EMG	Environment Management Group
FfD	ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GA	General Assembly
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
GCO	Global Compact Office
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
iERG	Independent Expert Review Group
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LDCs	Least developed countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSP	Multi-stakeholder partnership
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAOS	Partnership Advisory and Outreach Services
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
REEEP	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
SAMOA	Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE4All	Sustainable Energy for All
SIDS	Small Island Developing States

STI	Science, technology and innovation
TFM	Technology Facilitation Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNFIP	United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNOP	United Nations Office for Partnerships
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UNTST	United Nations Technical Support Team
UNTT	United Nations System Task Team
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

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Endnotes

ⁱ The Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector, founded in 2002, to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics. It raises nearly US\$ 4 billion a year to support its programs.

ⁱⁱ The Global Water Partnership (GWP), for example, supports the implementation of integrated water resources management through a tool box and regional and country partnerships.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) wants to bring together public and private sectors with the shared goal of creating equal access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.

^{iv} The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) develops an international standard on the socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically beneficial use of water resources.

^v In 2011, UNSG Ban Ki-moon launched Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) as a global initiative to mobilize action from all sectors of society to achieve universal access to energy, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy.

^{vi} The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) is a MSP that attempts to advance markets for clean energy in developing countries and has run nearly two hundred clean energy projects in the developing world.

^{vii} The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) was launched in 2002 to tackle malnutrition by building alliances between governments, business and civil society and by fortifying staple foods and condiments with essential micronutrients in more than 30 countries worldwide.

^{viii} We define "stakeholder" as a person, group, or organization that has interest or concern in an organization, and more specifically as all those that might be affected by a partnership's activities or can influence it, but are not directly involved in its work, including, for example, donors, local target groups, civil society, and businesses.

^{ix} The report also states: "All stakeholders seem to agree that independent accountability has value for improving the oversight of results and resources globally and in countries. Again, not surprisingly, there is vigorous debate about the details. Where should this group be hosted? What should be its exact terms of reference? Who will fund it? Who should it report to? How should its recommendations be acted upon? These details matter."

^x The agricultural sector, for example, consumes 70 percent of all freshwater worldwide. This water goes mainly into the production of food, but it is also increasingly used to grow biomass for energy. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Water Association (IWA) have initiated the Nexus Dialogue on Water Infrastructure Solutions to identify innovative approaches to the use of infrastructure, technology, and finance to deal with challenges in the water energy and food security nexus.

^{xi} The World We Want, Participatory Monitoring and Accountability (online), <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/accountability2015>.