

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

on the occasion of the 2016 ECOSOC Partnership Forum

From commitments to results: Leveraging partnerships for the 2030 Agenda

31 March 2016, UN Headquarters, New York

The 2016 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, convened in New York on 31 March 2016, has come at a time when the United Nations is beginning to consider how to turn the commitments made last September to eradicate poverty, fight inequality and injustices and tackle climate change by 2030 into action. It is generally agreed that multistakeholder partnerships are a “must” for bringing about a truly universal transformation of sustainable development. With that in mind, the Council convened leaders from across the business sector, philanthropy, civil society and academia to engage in a dialogue with Member States on how to leverage partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.

The ECOSOC Partnership Forum focused its attention on ways of leveraging the power of integration through cross-sectoral partnerships for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also addressed, at the request of the General Assembly, ways to improve transparency and accountability of partnerships in which the United Nations is engaged. The following key messages and recommendations emerged from our discussions during the Forum:

- Partnerships need to be galvanized to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They should, however, complement national efforts and the work of the United Nations system. The new Agenda calls for the breakdown of traditional silos for more cross-sectoral decision-making and solutions. Breaking silos takes time, commitment, trust and systemic approaches.
- Multistakeholder partnerships must leverage the inter-linkages existing between the SDGs to enhance their effectiveness and impact and accelerate progress in achieving the goals and targets. It is important to foster implementation of all the goals through partnerships that are aligned with national priorities, without leaving any goal behind.
- The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda offers opportunities to promote and encourage cross-sectoral partnerships that can deliver concrete actions with strong results. The SDGs are the “glue” that brings the partners together to work towards a shared vision.
- Cross-sectoral partnerships are vital for addressing the development challenges faced by vulnerable countries.
- Cross-sectoral multistakeholder partnerships are, however, much more complex to manage. Partners would need to agree on priorities and resource allocations. They need to be flexible and mobilize resources and capacities quickly. Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms would be essential for ensuring results.
- The UN-Business Partnership Hub and the SDG Compass of the Global Compact could be good examples and have great potential for catalyzing cross-sectoral partnerships for the SDGs. Their use could be scaled up to promote a nexus approach to partnerships at local and global levels.

- Despite good intentions, partnerships sometimes fail due to a range of factors. We should take the opportunity to learn from such failures.
- Successful multistakeholder partnerships have a clear vision, effective internal governance structures and commitment by all actors. Building trust among the partners, including the beneficiaries, is crucial for success. Tools for monitoring and evaluation need to be an integral part of partnerships from the start. The availability and use of data would strengthen accountability and transparency.
- We must strive for a fine balance between nurturing and monitoring partnerships. Partnerships differ in purpose and scope. We, therefore, may need different guidelines. We already have existing principles and guidelines that could be our starting point. These, however, would need to be updated to reflect the integrated, participatory and inclusive approach of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their implementation must be a priority.
- Multistakeholder partnerships should be inclusive, transparent and accountable. We must ensure that the integrity and values of the United Nations system are upheld. While the UN should play a catalytic role in facilitating partnerships and setting norms and standards, we should avoid being overly prescriptive on what should be done at the national level.
- We must strengthen the capacity of the UN to monitor and review UN-associated partnerships. Coordination and due diligence within the United Nations system would need to be enhanced for coherence. We must build on the existing structures in the United Nations, rather than duplicate efforts in engaging with partners. A mapping of partnerships could help identify which SDGs are being promoted by multistakeholder partnerships and identify gaps.
- Civil society organizations have been providing extra impetus to forging multistakeholder partnerships. They are willing partners to help us hold multi-stakeholder partnerships accountable.
- We must seize the momentum of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to also explore innovative follow-up activities for partnerships.
- The General Assembly, ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum, within their respective mandates, should contribute to the review and monitoring of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Given its role, the Economic and Social Council would be well-placed to review lessons learned, including failures, and provide guidance on partnerships to support the implementation of UN mandates, with inputs from its regional commissions. The High-Level Political Forum could provide countries an opportunity to share their partnership experiences at the national level.

I call on Member States to build on the momentum of the discussions at the Partnership Forum to further consider these proposals to galvanize cross-sectoral partnerships and to find the right balance between nurturing and monitoring of partnerships. Effective partnerships are essential but we will only be successful if we can implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the SDGs by 2030.