



2018 PARTNERSHIP FORUM, 4 APRIL 2018

“Partnering for resilient and inclusive societies: Contributions of the private sector”

Opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General

President of the Economic and Social Council,
Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2018 ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

We are now three years into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and expectations are high, as they should be.

In order to deliver on this ambitious agenda, the United Nations must continue brokering a new generation of partnerships.

This Forum provides an important opportunity to deliberate together on how partners at all levels of society can come together with a common purpose to achieve the SDGs.

Business as usual approaches won't work.

We need action — and bold action — to build an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

Let me begin by sharing a quick snapshot of our world.

Today, more than 8 per cent of the world's people live in poverty.

192 million people are unemployed.

Over 300 million workers live in poverty.

Young people are three times more likely to be jobless.

Their voices in many places are stifled and leading to a greater sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment.

Billions of people lack the tools and access to connect and participate in our digital and globally connected world.



Women continue to systematically face obstacles in the workplace. And the global gender pay gap is 23 per cent.

Gender based violence and discrimination continue to hold back women's rightful place and voice and place in governments, private sector, academia and the home.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to work together to reduce inequalities, end discrimination, empower people and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all.

Yes, it will take major investments to achieve the SDGs. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda shows the way, but Governments alone cannot meet these unprecedented needs.

The private sector is an indispensable partner.

We not only need partnerships with the private sector to pursue common goals, but we count on the private sector to align their business models with the 2030 Agenda.

Sustainable business makes business sense.

Better engagement with the private sector requires an enabling policy environment and dialogue mechanisms that encourage firms to do business in a way that works for global good, and for the bottom line.

We call on the business sector to innovate market-based solutions that drive inclusion and provide opportunities for women, young people and vulnerable groups.

We commend the companies that are already taking steps to remove barriers that keep women, youth, indigenous people, persons with disabilities and refugees on the margins of our societies.

These companies are implementing inclusive corporate strategies and reaping positive business and development outcomes, creating robust markets that work for societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a critical part of the reform of the UN development system, we are looking into a stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.

The UN development system has a unique convening power that can help countries broker the diverse partnerships needed.

But this cannot be done in a piecemeal fashion.



We need to step up our efforts and scale up our partnerships to generate results and to reach the furthest communities and villages.

We also need to ensure the full transparency and accountability of UN partnership engagements, through the UN Global Compact and its 10 Sustainability Principles, as well as on the local level.

We need the private sector to step up its efforts too.

SDG target 12.6 calls on governments to ‘encourage companies, especially large and trans-national companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle’.

We are encouraged by reporting initiatives, such as the World Benchmarking Alliance.

We need Member States to be engaged and informed so that they can encourage companies to improve their reporting and align their businesses with the priorities of national governments.

Governments have an important role to support, incentivize and nurture business to make this transition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today’s meeting comes at a pivotal moment to build on the progress of the past and the promise of the future.

Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies remains an unfinished business of the 21st century.

Our ambition is nothing less than ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

Today, I invite you to listen, think and share ideas on how the private sector can help us as we endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.

I wish you a productive discussion and look forward to the outcome of your discussion.

Thank you.