



Informal Summary
2015 ECOSOC Partnerships Forum
28 May 2015

***“The role of Partnerships in Achieving the Post-2015 Development Agenda:
Making it Happen”***

The 2015 ECOSOC Partnerships Forum, held in New York on 28 May 2015, brought together leaders from the private sector, philanthropy, civil society and academia, to engage in an interactive dialogue with governments on the role of partnerships in achieving the post-2015 development agenda. The event also featured a keynote address by President Bill Clinton. This year’s Forum included a discussion on how partnerships can help to strengthen health systems and build resilience to pandemics, building on the outcome of the ECOSOC Special Meeting on Ebola: A Threat to Sustainable Development that was held on 5 December 2014. In addition, the Forum explored lessons learned from multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of the MDGs and discussed opportunities for new partnerships in the post-2015 era.



With 2015 well underway, countries and governments are actively working to transform their economies for more inclusive and sustainable growth. To optimize the development work that that has already been done, there is a need for all stakeholders to build on the lessons learned during the MDG experience to evaluate clear progress on goals, and at the same time, recognize critical gaps. The effectiveness of past, present and

future partnerships is also a vital link to help guide the implementation toward the next steps of implementing a successful Post-2015 development framework.

Overall, the Forum’s interactive panel discussions highlighted a number of issues relating to partnerships for the post-2015 period, such as building an adequate framework for development, boosting resources and investment, strengthening national policies and creating a more enabling environment in which multi-stakeholder partnerships could flourish. The

discussions revealed that despite the boom in partnerships linked to the United Nations over the last two decades, effective multi-stakeholder engagement will require broader and more inclusive partnerships with clear oversight and governance going forward. The implementation of the post-2015 development agenda will demand more unified approaches to address long-term structural challenges, including in key areas such as health, education, and science.

The discussions began with a morning session on health systems strengthening which examined policies to safeguard against future emergencies and pandemics that were brought to light this year with the global Ebola crisis. The complexity of cross-cutting health issues such as Ebola reinforced the need to build effective partnerships across all sectors and segments of the global community. In order to catalyse large-scale change and demonstrate tangible progress in global health outcomes, government and other partner institutions will require greater cooperation and need to devote more resources to strengthen health systems by investing directly through countries' national institutions to safeguard against future crises. Partnerships were emphasized as a new model for problem solving in today's world where existential challenges require the mobilization of all actors to achieve effective change. In that context, other development challenges beyond Ebola were highlighted, including the work to be done in achieving an agreement on financing for development during the conference to take place in July in Addis Ababa, as well as adopting a transformative sustainable development agenda and a meaningful, universal climate change agreement.

Dialogue 1: Partnerships in Support of Strengthening Health Systems: Building Resilience to Pandemics

The morning dialogue focused on partnerships required for building resilience to pandemics, using the recent Ebola crisis as a key point of departure. The Ministers of Health from the three Ebola-affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone highlighted their varied priorities in getting and staying at zero transmissions, and the role that all stakeholders could play in support of their national recovery strategies.



In Liberia, for example, the threat of Ebola underlined the importance of generating a resilient health system and the need to expand the capacity of all actors and institutions in order to effectively respond to a growing health crisis. Guinea described its country-level objectives for

eliminating the virus and the work underway to strengthen the functioning of its local health systems with enhanced training and governance. Sierra Leone shared some of the large-scale challenges the country is facing in terms of building greater capacity, offering preventative care and deepening community engagement.

Despite a dramatic increase in health partnerships since the 1990s-within and outside the United Nations-their outcomes have often led to isolated solutions, which are poorly coordinated and hinder comprehensive development strategies and impact. **It would be important, in the implementation of the Post-2015 development agenda, that a different approach be undertaken that addresses some of the long-term structural challenges in health.** The private sector, in particular, could play a key role in that regard, including through helping countries to strengthen in a sustained manner their public health and health delivery systems to ensure they are more robust in addressing epidemics such as Ebola.

National plans should be at the centre of all external support, as evidenced by the success of countries like Rwanda with strong national development plans in place and historic progress in the areas of child and maternal mortality reduction. To provide long term solutions, **the donor community was urged to allocate 15 per cent of any relief, for the next 3-7 years to strengthen health systems.** Without such health systems in place, one ran the risk of regressing to where one was 5 years before. Empowering country-led solutions was vital, as well as greater cooperation and planning in areas lacking basic health services and doctors.

Public-private partnerships could play a vital role in improving access to quality healthcare in resource-poor settings. Those that involve flexible policies-that help countries become self-sufficient by building national capacity-should be pursued. In particular, the business sector could have an important role to play in this regard, especially through the provision of voluntary donations of resources for investment, through the use of CSR, ie., using the capabilities of companies for activities other than for profitable returns, and through aligning corporate business models closely with social needs. In addition, the private sector can help provide innovative financing options such as blended finance, CSR and impact investing.

Additionally, **partnerships that support countries in building up their national capacities for more resilient health systems should be encouraged.** Partners in Health was cited as an excellent example of this. An important component of its work has been in investing in “building blocks” and working to track donor funding and to encourage multi-year plans that prioritize building effective health systems at the national level. There was a need to pursue partnerships that could help countries move from “aid” to “accompaniment”. Moreover, **partnerships, especially with the business sector, aimed at promoting and compensating community health workers,** would not only help provide essential and efficient care delivery, but also create links from the community to the larger health care system. Over the course of the past fifty years, experience has shown that compensated community health workers are the foundation for an effective health care system.

The international community, including the United Nations, must support the response to the Ebola crisis led by national governments in each affected country so as to get to zero cases, as well as in their recovery efforts. Staying at zero will require putting in place a strategy for pandemic prevention which is only possible through health systems strengthening. **Academic and research institutions can help establish high quality training programmes and career paths to build greater capacity** and provide the necessary number of physicians, nurses and health care workers for Ebola-affected countries. There is also a need to strengthen and build facilities that are properly equipped and strategically located, such as community-based clinics and regional and urban teaching hospitals, in order to prevent future epidemics. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships could play a vital role in supporting such capacity building.**

Partnerships for the Post 2015 Era: Reality Check

The afternoon dialogue focused on the lessons learned from MDG partnerships and identifying new opportunities for generating new partnerships in the Post-2015 period. It built on the outcome of discussions held by the Council of a special event on “Multi-stakeholder



partnerships: Making them work for the Post-2015 Development Agenda” on 27 February 2015.

With multi-stakeholder partnerships set to play an integral role in the implementation framework of the Post-2015 development agenda, **the success of the Sustainable Development Goals will hinge on new and existing partnerships.** Such partnerships will need to have

concrete actions in order to deliver an effective means of implementation of those goals. Moreover, it would be important to draw on and incorporate lessons learned and best practices from partnerships undertaken in support of the MDGs. GAVI and Every Woman Every Child were cited as excellent examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships that have helped to support concrete actions and strengthen collective priorities on global and maternal health.

One of the most important lessons learned from the MDG period is that **multi-stakeholder engagement are key for achieving development objectives, and that leveraging the power of partnerships is vital for the success of development initiatives.** While the successful implementation of the Post-2015 development agenda will rely heavily on a multi-stakeholder approach engaging a variety of stakeholders, the **private sector in particular will be an**

important collaborator for achieving the SDGs as it brings, knowledge and expertise to the table, helps drive innovation and technology transfer, and promotes new and innovative financing. However, a view was also expressed that caution needed to be exercised in regards to partnerships with the private sector, as currently, no adequate framework existed for realizing such partnerships which needed to be properly carried out in full observance of UN mandates and the UN Charter.

It was highlighted that in many instances, the benefits of partnerships are multi-faceted and include the potential for creating cost-sharing efficiencies as well as the possibility for generating new solutions and devising best practices. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially with the private sector, **could be instrumental in supplementing traditional ODA**. One important example was cited by Save the Children which is hoping to establish a new financing facility for child education and maternal health efforts through a partnership with donor governments and the World Bank for strengthening data collection for improved policy making.

The discussions also highlighted **the need for partnerships to be aligned with the goals of the Post-2015 development agenda**. They should be streamlined and build on already existing and successful mechanisms and processes, have monitoring and review mechanisms, and show they can achieve results. It was also important for partnerships to have greater system-wide accountability and shared responsibility amongst stakeholders. **ECOSOC, in conjunction with the High-Level Political Forum, under the auspices of the Council, could be instrumental in delivering a framework for the effective review of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Post-2015 development agenda**. In moving towards the Post-2015 period, ECOSOC could play a central role in advancing the legacy of the MDGs and provide a platform for the review of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Given its coordinating role within the UN system, the Council 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. Putting in place such an architecture could **provide legitimacy and promote trust**, including amongst Member States. The HLPF could benefit from the Council's work when it undertakes thematic reviews.

The afternoon session concluded with the announcement of the ***Global Network on Promoting Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization*** which was showcased as part of a new initiative inspired by the 2014 ECOSOC Integration Segment on sustainable urbanization. The proposed network, to be co-convened by UN-HABITAT and TAG-Org, will be instrumental in harnessing the transformative force of digital technologies to deliver sustainable urbanization. The proposed network will also explore the potential intersect between climate change and creating healthier and safer urban spaces for all. The aim is to eventually create a network of such hubs and provide the necessary tools to build on best practices and expertise.
