

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

on the occasion of the 2015 ECOSOC Partnerships Forum

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 business sector, philanthropy, civil society and academia to engage in a dialogue with Governments on the role of partnerships in achieving the post-2015 development agenda.

This year's Forum addressed 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*](#) held on 5 December 2014. In addition, the Forum addressed lessons learned from partnerships in support of the MDGs and opportunities for new partnerships or opportunities in the post-2015 era.

The Ebola outbreak brought attention to the issue of preparedness of countries to respond to pandemics. The worst-affected countries are also among the least developed countries, with healthcare systems that are not equipped to handle a health crisis of such magnitude. The Ebola outbreak further weakened the health systems of these countries as a result of loss of health personnel, divergence of funds and capacity to stopping the Ebola outbreak, and loss of services and access to healthcare.

The international community, including the United Nations, must support the response led by national governments in each country 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 by strengthening health systems. I applaud the decision by the affected countries to prioritize health systems strengthening in their recovery plans to provide essential health services for the population as well as make them resilient to future outbreaks.

While there has been a boom in health partnerships since the 1990s within and outside the United Nations, they often lead to isolated solutions, which are poorly coordinated and hinder comprehensive development strategies and impact. The implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, however, would require a different approach that addresses some of the long-term structural challenges in health. For such an approach, a diversity of actors, with clear roles and responsibilities, will need to be involved through partnerships.

The following key messages and recommendations emerged from our discussions during the Forum:

- We need to invest more resources in strengthening health systems by investing directly through countries' national institutions in order to safeguard against future crises. National plans must be at the centre of all external support, as evidenced by the success of Rwanda's national development plans and its historic progress in the areas of child and maternal mortality reduction. I welcome the call by President Bill Clinton to the donor community to allocate 15 per cent of relief, over the next 3-7 years to strengthening health systems.



- Highest quality of care must be aimed in all health systems strengthening policies and programmes. A people-centred approach with integrated disease-focused strategies must be incorporated into the general health system.
- Employing and compensating community health workers will not only help provide essential and efficient care delivery, but also create links from the community to the larger health care system. We have learned over the last 50 years that compensated community health workers are the foundation for an effective health care system.
- Academic and research institutions can help establish high quality training programmes and career paths to provide the necessary number of physicians, nurses and health care workers for the Ebola-affected countries.
- We must strengthen or 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.
- Tracking of development assistance is essential for transparency and informed policy-making that can lead to public sector strengthening and effective delivery of public services.
- The African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention will be instrumental in reducing the communicable disease burden of the region and must be provided with necessary technical support and capacity building.
- Public-private partnerships play an important role in improving access to quality healthcare services in poor-resource settings. We must pursue partnerships that involve flexible policies that help host nations become self-sufficient by building national capacity. I welcome the call by the Dr. Paul Farmer, Secretary General's Special Adviser on Community-Based Medicine and Lessons from Haiti, to move from "aid" to "accompaniment".
- We must ensure that the business sector and foundations are fully engaged in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is important for partnerships to be aligned with the goals of the post-2015 development agenda to achieve results. They should be streamlined and build on already existing and successful mechanisms and processes, have a monitoring and mechanism for review and show that they can achieve results.

I welcome the launch of the Global Network on Promoting Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization as an initiative inspired by the [2014 ECOSOC Integration Segment on sustainable urbanization](#). This Network, to be co-convened UN-Habitat and TAG-Org, will be instrumental in harnessing the transformative force of digital technologies to deliver sustainable urbanization.

Given its role of coordination and oversight of the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Council can serve as a platform for a global review of partnerships, including establishing a framework for the multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the United Nations system, including principles and guidelines and a review process that could assess impact and results.

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