

President Clinton calls for broad-based partnerships to empower nations

New York, 28 May 2015 – We must pursue partnerships that help nations become self-sufficient if we are to prevent pandemics, improve well-being and lift people from poverty, President Bill Clinton said today, as he addressed leaders from the private sector, government, philanthropy, civil society and academia at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Speaking at the opening of the UN Economic and Social Affairs Council (ECOSOC) Annual Partnerships Forum, President Clinton said that “many hands lighten the load,” drawing from his experiences in Rwanda, Haiti, and Ebola-affected West Africa to show that donors, governments, researchers, NGOs, multilateral organizations and local communities all have a role to play when it comes to achieving effective sustainable development. The objective, he added, should ultimately be to “help nations become self-sufficient” since “the health of the world depends upon people being able to take care of themselves.” President Clinton also called on the donor community to allocate 15% of any relief, over the next 3 to 7 years, to strengthening health systems..

Significant progress has been made since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, President Clinton stated, highlighting that the number of people who need access to clean water has halved since the year 2000, and that there has been a dramatic improvement in the availability of anti-retroviral drugs for HIV positive individuals. .

However, additional efforts are still needed to ensure basic services such as access to quality education and healthcare. Having recently returned from Liberia, President Clinton – who declared himself “officially Ebola-free” since this morning – called upon UN Member States to consider long-term strategies and sustained funding to ensure that West Africa can also become, and remain, free from the disease and begin rebuilding its communities.

Speaking at the opening, United Nations Deputy-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said that today’s partnership discussions were especially timely since “absolutely crucial” opportunities lie ahead: a July meeting in Addis Ababa to agree on a comprehensive development financing framework, a Summit in September to adopt a transformative new sustainable development agenda, and a chance to reach universal agreement on climate change in Paris this December.

“No single entity – no single nation or Organization, can solve the problems alone,” Mr. Eliasson added, calling for a “new model for problem solving” that puts “the problems at the centre and mobilizes all actors to achieve effective change.”

“This is the moment to partner for the sake of sustainability,” added the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Martin Sajdik, explaining that today’s Annual Partnership Forum would “bring even more fresh thinking and new ideas into the discussion on how we can harness the broadest range of actors in support of the new development objectives.”

Dr. Paul Farmer moderated a high-level panel during the event, highlighting the need to strengthen health systems in West Africa. “There is no mystery about how we got here,” he noted, “We got here because after the last crisis in the region too few resources were invested in building a health care system; we have too often failed to link emergency responses—and there were many during the latter years of the past century and first years of this one—to building local capacity and



professional training programs that draw on the region’s largest goldmine, which is its human capital; because over the last few decades, despite good-will efforts to accompany our partners in West Africa, we have too often failed to invest heavily in national institutions, sometimes skirting them altogether. We need to move from ‘aid’ to ‘accompaniment.’”

At the closing of the event, Ambassador Sajdik stressed that “partnerships between business, NGOs, Governments, the United Nations and other actors will play an important role in the implementation of a new transformative development agenda, which will be put into place this coming September. The agenda, which will include the sustainable development goals, or SDGs, will provide an important framework for the next 15 years within which we can scale up or establish and implement new partnerships aimed at improving the livelihood of those living in poverty around the world.” He concluded by saying that “Experience has now taught us that for partnerships to work, they must be squarely aligned with the new agenda and its new goals”.

This year’s Forum comprises two dialogues; the first focused on strengthening health systems and building resilience to pandemics, and the second a broader discussion of “Partnerships for the Post-2015 Era.” The outcome of the Forum will contribute to an ECOSOC Presidential Statement, to be issued on Friday, 29 May. It will provide a valuable input to the September Sustainable Development Summit.

Furthermore, a new Global Network on Promoting Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization was launched at the Partnerships Forum as an initiative inspired by the 2014 ECOSOC Integration Segment on sustainable urbanization. This 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.

More information

- For event details: <http://bit.ly/partnership2015>
- To watch the event in full via Webcast: <http://webtv.un.org>

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