



## BACKGROUND NOTE

### “Partnering for Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development”

Wednesday, 24 April 2013, ECOSOC Chamber

#### Background and Context

It has become apparent that addressing current and future global challenges requires a common vision as well as a collective and concerted commitment and effort, involving all actors. Partnerships have enabled the United Nations to become increasingly innovative and sophisticated in its attempts to leverage the skills and resources of civil society and business towards achieving the goals of the Organization, including the MDGs.

Rio+20 reaffirmed the need for full participation of civil society in renewing a commitment to sustainable development and ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations. Moreover, it highlighted the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The Economic and Social Council has played an increasingly important role in engaging civil society, the private sector and philanthropic community in its work as its contribution to the efforts for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. To that end, the Council has held, over the course of the past five years, an annual partnerships event linked to the theme of the Council’s Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to be considered that year. The AMR examines progress made, and challenges to, achieving the targets set out in the MDGs. These events have attracted large numbers of senior representatives from the private sector and foundations for a dialogue with Member States on ways in which partnerships could be scaled up and strengthened in support of the MDGs.

#### Special Event

In April 2013, ECOSOC will once again host a Partnerships Forum in support of its 2013 AMR theme of “*Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*”. As the international community prepares to review progress in achieving the MDGs and begin a reflection on what the post-2015 development agenda should include, it is clear that science, technology, innovation as well as culture will remain central to improving the lives of billions of people, especially as the world moves towards a “sustainable development” model that integrates economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection..

Partnerships involving Governments, the private sector, foundations and research institutes/academia, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes can foster co-creation of knowledge, technological, social and institutional innovations to meet key sustainability and developmental challenges in the area of job creation, food and water security, green growth, clean and renewable energy, sustainable cities and urbanization, effective health care delivery systems, better education systems, competitiveness and sustainable

production and consumption. With each partner leveraging their core competencies, partnering activities can create synergies by bringing information, research and development, marketing, supply chain management, funding, and distribution to the table, reducing risks for launching innovative products and processes aimed at achieving sustainable development goals and expanding global economic and social opportunities.

The one-day event will be organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with WIPO, ITU, UNESCO, UNICEF, the UN Global Compact, the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP) and the Global Partnerships Forum. A number of organizations, both from within and outside the United Nations system will serve as co-convenors of the event.

### **Objectives**

Building on the progress already made in meeting some of the key MDGs, the special event will focus on how and why partnerships are crucial for sustaining these gains by harnessing the power of science, technology, innovation as well as culture within the context of the promotion of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. To that end, the event will aim:

- To facilitate a public-private dialogue where member states, business leaders, innovators and other stakeholders can address national and global strategies that shape a culture of innovation.
- To identify new trends in innovations that can help accelerate the achievement of the MDGs and help spur transformative solutions for sustainable development challenges that includes, amongst others, the elimination of extreme poverty, job-creating growth, protection of the environment and equity at all levels.
- To promote concrete and innovative initiatives and new partnerships for addressing sustainable development challenges and that integrate the three pillars of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

### **Structure and format**

The one-day event will feature two separate sessions, with policy dialogues held in the morning and “partnerships clinics”--that will focus on potential solutions to development challenges facing Africa--in the afternoon.

#### **Morning session**

The event will be opened by the President of ECOSOC, the Secretary General and a Keynote Speaker. Following that, the morning session will consist of a two and a half hour interactive dialogue between the panelists and with the audience which will be conducted by a moderator. The policy dialogue will focus on how new technologies and innovation, and the potential of culture, can help support the integration and promotion of economic and social transformation as well as environmental sustainability for sustained and inclusive growth at the local, national and global level, and how partnerships can be mobilized in support of this transformative agenda.

The first dialogue will focus on trends in innovations that have the potential to transform lives and reduce poverty. It will explore the most effective policies that would create an ideal environment favourable to innovation, creative outputs and entrepreneurship. It will also explore partnership models and initiatives that can help trigger and build innovation capacity and infrastructure in a range of countries.

The second dialogue will examine the changing face of innovation - highlighting innovations from the South for the South, and ways of deploying them to solve local, and even global problems, including food and water insecurity, sustainable energy challenges, lack of effective health care delivery systems and education systems

and unemployment. It will also discuss how partnerships between Governments, the private sector, foundations, donors and others can help to convert innovative ideas into business opportunities that could help start-ups from the South participate in global markets. The session will highlight those innovative solutions that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### Afternoon session

The afternoon session will move from policy to action and will feature 4 simultaneous two hour “Partnerships Clinics”, each focusing on a particular thematic area that could help Africa benefit from new game-changing partnership ideas. Each Clinic will bring together representatives from private sector companies, foundations, technology and R&D experts, individual entrepreneurs and innovators, with representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in a dialogue format to discuss a specific development challenge facing that continent.

Session 1: Innovative partnerships to address research and treatments for neglected tropical diseases - NTDs [WIPO]

Session 2: Mobiles for midwives: An innovative approach for better health information systems [ITU]

Session 3: Innovation and Technology: Development and dissemination of innovative design solutions to address extreme poverty [UNESCO]

Session 4: Breaking barriers: Innovative partnerships creating exponential change in access to quality learning [UNICEF in collaboration with the Government of Denmark]

The annex to this note contains a description of the partnership clinics.

#### **Concluding Session**

The key messages from the policy dialogues, luncheon and “partnerships clinics” will be reported back to the plenary which will be chaired by the President of the Council, and will feature a keynote speaker prior to the conclusion of the special event.

#### **Outcome**

A summary of the event’s outcome will be prepared for the President of the Council which will capture the “key messages” from the dialogues, including policy options Member States may wish to consider when formulating their national development strategies, as well as practical initiatives and possible solutions to development challenges from the partnership clinics. These key messages and possible solutions would be reported back to the Council’s high-level segment during its 2013 substantive session in July.

## ANNEX: Partnership Clinics

### WIPO

WIPO will hold a Clinic on **“Innovative partnerships to address research and treatments for Neglected tropical Diseases (NTDs)”**. WIPO Re:Search provides access to intellectual property (IP) for pharmaceutical compounds, technologies, and – most importantly – know-how and data available for research and development for neglected tropical diseases, tuberculosis, and malaria. By providing a searchable, public database of available intellectual property assets and resources, WIPO Re:Search facilitates new partnerships to support organizations that conduct research on treatments for neglected tropical diseases in that continent, ultimately improving the lives of those most in need. The Clinic will seek to address the challenge of identifying the critical steps needed to facilitate more partnerships for research into NTDs.

### ITU

ITU will hold a Clinic on **“Mobiles for Midwives: an innovative approach for better health information systems”**. The WHO/ITU Health Accountability Commission determined that more than 30% of developing countries lack proper birth and death registration systems, and recommended that by 2015, all countries take significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death, and have well-functioning health information systems that combine data from facilities, administrative sources and surveys. Given that Midwives are the primary health care provider available to women in the developing world, these health professionals are essential to capturing valid birth as well as assisting in improving child and maternal health survival rates in order to achieve MDG #5 (reduction in Maternal mortality by three-quarters) and MDG #4 (reduction of mortality rate of children under 5 by two-thirds).

The clinic will identify necessary technological and policy obstacles to provide an eHealth mobile platform that could provide birth registration and vital maternal and child health information. It will also identify existing eHealth projects and eHealth technological platforms that focus on maternal and child health information and could be scalable across developing countries and which would benefit from provision of a global mobile platform solution that engages midwives and responds to their needs.

### UNESCO

UNESCO will hold a clinic on **“Innovation and Technology: Development and dissemination of innovative design solutions to address extreme poverty”**. Drawing on the wealth of innovative ideas and experiences that the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum explored in their research project entitled “Design for the other 90%”, this clinic will explore how innovative industrial design, that allies science and creativity, can effectively and at low cost, contribute to answering the needs of communities that live in extreme poverty. The clinic will draw on the necessary and resourceful alliance between creative industrial designers, artists, architects, engineers, environmental specialists, agronomists, educators, etc., and industrial design enterprises, to work together in order to address the challenges faced by communities living in poor and remote areas.

### UNICEF (in collaboration with the Government of Denmark)

UNICEF will hold a clinic on **“Breaking barriers: Innovative partnerships creating exponential change in access to quality learning”**. For decades, innovative partnerships and approaches have enabled sustainable solutions to challenges in child survival and development. UNICEF and partners continue to support efforts to develop national capacities to improve learning quality for girls and boys everywhere, reduce gender and other disparities and discrimination in an effort to raise the percentage of children who stay in school and graduate with a solid education. How can recent advances in technology and innovations in products, processes, partnerships and programmes surmount the barriers for children and their families to

fulfilling their rights for access to and quality learning - particularly in resource-limited settings? The clinic will bring together a distinguished panel from the private and public sectors, funders and academia in an informal and interactive setting to: share experiences and identify potentially scalable interventions that help children have access to learning opportunities; explore co-development to support the successful delivery of end-user driven and innovative services, products and systems; stimulate exchange and innovative thinking on new types of collaboration between UNICEF and partners to overcome these challenges and to discuss the barriers and solutions to scaling up innovations