

Developing Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals in support of the reviews of the High-level Political Forum - Asia and Pacific

Organized by the Division for Sustainable Development (UN-DESA) in collaboration with Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and United Nations Office for Partnerships

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Introduction

The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on *“Developing Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals in support of the reviews of the High-level Political Forum - Asia and Pacific”*, on 28 November 2016 at United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand.

The meeting, which being organized on the margins of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) SDG Week, which runs from 28 November – 2 December, will examine various elements of a partnership, which might include, but not limited to, governance structures, leadership roles, consultation processes with communities and beneficiaries, management, monitoring, reporting, evaluation, learning, knowledge management, as well alignment with national strategies and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The meeting will bring together relevant sustainable development partnerships, partnership experts, government officials, United Nations entities, and local authorities to examine successful partnership models, as well discuss challenges in different phases of a partnership. The meeting will specifically target and invite experts from countries that are part of upcoming national voluntary reviews at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and will provide an opportunity to learn about what has worked, and not worked, from several partnerships in those countries.

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, United Nations central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will in 2017 review, in depth, Sustainable Development Goal 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. On the occasion of HLPF in 2017, DSD will for its second year organizing a Partnership Exchange special event, reviewing partnerships around these SDGs. The Expert Group Meeting will have a specific focus on these SDGs and also aim to contribute to the HLPF National Voluntary Reviews by articulating the linkages of partnerships and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, both at the regional and national level.

Structure of meeting

The full day meeting will include four inter-related sessions.

Session 1 - Innovative approaches of partnerships in tackling the SDGS

Through its broad range of expertise and partner composition, multi-stakeholder partnerships embody the integrated approach needed for driving the Sustainable Development Goals. They offer the potential for intensive, innovative and sustained collaboration from all sectors on issues that are imperative for driving sustainable development both locally, nationally, and on a global level.

Unlocking the vast knowledge and expertise that partnerships and their partners collaboratively possess, is the key to effectively supporting the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Science, technology, and innovation are key elements for developing, implementing and optimizing effective and sustainable partnerships. In the emergence of today's knowledge societies, sharing of information, availability of big data growing exponentially, expertise, technology, and financial resources has the potential to drive entrepreneurship, connect a geographically diverse range of stakeholders and communities in order to find the best solution for any given problem, and attract funding from multiple sources.

This session will take a closer look at existing, and emerging, innovative approaches of partnerships towards support the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Guiding questions

- What are some of the existing, and emerging, innovative approaches of partnerships in tackling the SDGs
- How partnerships can leverage the use of science, technology, and information sharing tools, for driving the SDGs

Session 2 - Governance models of partnerships, accountability and stakeholder engagement

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was the result of the largest, and most inclusive, consultation the United Nations has ever convened, with input and buy-in from all member States of the United Nations, the entire United Nations system, scientific communities, business leaders, civil society organizations, and millions of people. This has ensured that the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs is a fully integrated action plan for addressing the most pressing issues of our generations – a plan which we can achieve by 2030, as long as it is tackled with the same impetus as it was conceived – together, working in true partnership.

Partnerships working towards sustainable development and in support of the SDGs, aimed at spurring economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity, should be consistent with national laws, be fully aligned with national development strategies and the priorities of countries where they are implemented, bearing in mind the relevant guidance provided by governments.

In addition, a partnership should aim to include a broad spectrum of stakeholders from various sectors into its own governance models, structures and stakeholder and community engagement efforts. This will not only ensure accountability and transparency to its

beneficiaries, but also allow the partnership to draw expertise and solutions to its problem while addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Managing partnerships means building mutual understanding, fostering respect, focusing on solving a common challenge, and driving a productive relationship. In order for a partnership to have a lasting impact, they require long-term stakeholder commitments, sustained funding, ongoing resourcing and consistency of personnel to help ensure their success.

A single-sector leadership of a partnership implies a variety of benefits, but also risks. The main concern is that the lead sector's view would dominate (intentionally or otherwise), which runs counter to the spirit of trust, and openness, which is required to foster collaboration and innovation. On the other hand, a multi-stakeholder approach to a governance structure could offer a model for preventing and managing conflict of interest.

This session will look at various governance models for partnerships, including how to most effectively engage all stakeholders from various perspectives.

Guiding questions

- What are some of the processes, and tools, which ensures feedback and ownership from partnership stakeholders and beneficiaries?
- What are some of the existing, and successful governance, structures and models for accountability for multi-stakeholder partnerships, and how can these models be improved?
- How do partnerships engage various constituencies, including local communities, in shaping/planning its objectives and deliverables?

Session 3 - National enabling environments for fostering effective partnerships

In order for partnerships to effectively contribute to the SDGs through national development priorities, it is crucial that there is a national enabling environment which allows multi-stakeholder platforms to fully engage with all sectors of society.

In carrying out its work, multi-stakeholder partnerships interact with various international, national, and local institutional frameworks. Therefore, national political and social context could in large determine its effectiveness, and by extension, its success.

In order for partnerships - in all its forms - to thrive, they should be consistent with national laws, be fully aligned with national development strategies and the priorities of countries where they are implemented, bearing in mind the relevant guidance provided by governments, as well aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Similarly, governments should strive to create an enabling environment – a set of interrelated local and national conditions that allows all stakeholders to fully engage in national development processes in a sustained and efficient manner, for all types of partnerships to be able to fully contribute to national development priorities.

Mapping the governance architecture and the social and political context in which a multi-stakeholder partnership is situated is crucial to understanding the opportunities and challenges to its implementation. It increases the possibility for tailor-made solutions rather than a “one-size fits all” approach.

This session will explore which existing national environments foster the most effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, and aims at creating a dialogue of known challenges and solutions.

Guiding questions

- What are some of the examples of existing inter-related institutional national conditions that foster effective multi-stakeholder partnerships

Session 4 - Partnership engagement with 2030 Agenda follow-up and review processes

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is underpinned with a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework. This follow-up and review framework is intended to assist countries maximize and track progress in its implementation, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

Reviews on a national level is voluntary, country led, and takes into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respect policy space and priorities.

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is United Nations’ central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda on a global level. HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, carries out national voluntary reviews of all countries. These reviews include relevant UN entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The reviews are state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants, and provide a broad platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

In 2016, 22 countries took part for the first time in the national voluntary reviews. In 2017, HLPF will conduct these reviews for the second time, with 30 countries planned to take part.

This session will feature presentations from government experts and partnership practitioners, aimed at fostering a dialogue on how multi-stakeholder partnerships best can contribute and

engage in the national review process at both the national, regional and global level. The session will also include a brief look ahead at the upcoming 2017 HLPF and some partnership experiences relevant to its theme of “eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.”

Guiding questions

- How can the review process of partnerships - on local, national, regional and global level - be improved, to better support, and engage with follow-up and review framework which is centralized around the High-level Political Forum

Expected outcome

- a) Review of strategies and guidelines for successful partnership models, aligned to national circumstances and strategies in the Asia and Pacific region to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including recommendations for improvement to enrich the HLPF deliberations on national reviews.
- b) Increased understanding of the “inner workings” of a successful partnership, including, but not limited to, governing structures, consultation process with communities, tools;
- c) alignment to, national strategies of the partnership deliverables; and
- d) alignment to, Sustainable Development Goals, of partnership deliverables
- e) Development of a Learning module “*Developing Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals – Asia and Pacific*”

Open online consultation

As an input to the meeting, an open online discussion forum has been created on the Partnerships for SDGs online platform, aiming at getting views from all stakeholders on the various sessions of the meeting. Inputs and comments received through the forum, will be synthesized and presented at the meeting, as well be part of the outcome and the “Learning module”, to be developed after the conclusion of the event.

Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/forum/?forum=39>

Background

Partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development refer to initiatives voluntarily and collaboratively undertaken by various stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development in line with relevant internationally agreed goals. The United Nations General Assembly defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative

relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits.”

In today’s world, the implementation of sustainable development is more and more characterized by the mixed collaboration among state and non-state partners, including international organizations, development banks, aid agencies, governments at all levels, businesses, philanthropic organizations, academia, think tanks, civil society organizations, among others.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals at its core presents an immense opportunity for collaboration among all stakeholders and for successfully driving its implementation.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development* – recognizes partnerships as important vehicles for supporting the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries. This is highlighted in target 17.16, which reads *“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”*, as well in target 17.17, which reads *“Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”*.

The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) has provided coordination and analytical support to voluntary partnerships and commitments for sustainable development for many years, acting as the Secretariat for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Rio+20 Conference, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, which adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, DSD is the Secretariat for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, as well the manager and developer of the *Partnerships for SDGs online platform* – a platform for showcasing and examining the work partnerships undertake across the SDGs and its targets, and for networking among partners and stakeholders. The platform brings together a range of over 2,000 small, medium and large partnerships working towards sustainable development.

Over the coming 15 years, the international community will shift its attention and energy to transforming the world by fully realizing the 2030 Agenda and the 17 inter-linked Sustainable Development Goals. This transformation will require an intensified collaboration between governments, the United Nations system, all sectors of society, and all people, working in

innovative partnerships and channeling the expertise needed for making the difference on the ground.

In support of this process, it is expected that many new partnerships, in all its different forms, will be forged. It is therefore imperative to examine what it is that makes a partnership successful, sustainable, and most impactful for its communities and beneficiaries, and to ensure its deliverables are aligned to the SDGs and national strategies.

More information: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdinaction/Developing-Partnerships-for-SDGS-Asia-Pacific>

Interested in participating? RSVP **before 18 November 2016** (limited seating) at: <https://goo.gl/1cNu4F>

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