



Expert Group Meeting on SDG 17

“Harnessing the Means of Implementation through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships”

12 June 2018, New York

Summary¹

The Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) convened the first Expert Group Meeting on SDG 17 on the theme of *“Harnessing the Means of Implementation through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships”* on 12 June 2018. The meeting brought together the representatives of the Member States and a wide range of non-state actors including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations and academia to explore concrete ways in which multi-stakeholder partnerships can be utilized to strengthen and harness the means of implementation (Mols) for the achievement of SDGs, in particular the Goals 6,7,11,12 and 15 which will be under review during the 2018 High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Building on the recent outcome of the Financing for Development (FfD) Forum; Development Cooperation Forum (DCF); and Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for the SDGs, the discussion was premised on the understanding that while the main responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda lies with national governments, multi-stakeholder partnerships that harness the contribution of all actors, can play an essential, complimentary role to fast track the implementation of 2030 Agenda. The meeting aimed to shed light on the “context-specific” Mols challenges different countries face and the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in effectively supporting to address these obstacles.

This Official Summary presents the key policy messages around the five areas: **(i)** unpacking multi-stakeholder partnerships; **(ii)** role of different stakeholders for strengthening Mols; **(iii)**

¹ This Summary of the Expert Group Meeting will help inform the 2018 HLPF review of SDG 17, as well as the 2018 Partnership Exchange

recommendations for unlocking the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships for MoIs; and (iv) contributions of the UN in catalyzing optimal multi-stakeholder partnerships for MoIs.



KEY MESSAGES

Enhancing the MoIs through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

The Meeting highlighted the need for conceptual clarity for the term ‘*multi-stakeholder partnerships*’ and the importance of clearly defining different types of multi-stakeholder partnerships listed in SDG 17 for more structured discussion.

The Meeting advanced discussions on the role of multi-stakeholder partners – both state and non-state actors – in strengthening and harnessing the MoIs, noting the need for “consensual partnerships”, in which all stakeholders align their vision and strategies with those of the 2030 Agenda and respective national sustainable development priorities. Experts emphasized the strategic roles of local governments and beneficiaries, in particular in pushing forward more demand-driven and country-owned sustainable development.

To unlock the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships for enhancing MoIs, the experts stressed the importance of: coherent financing and partnerships framework; institutionalized dialogue and engagement mechanism; robust review and accountability system; enhanced policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD); and optimal use of innovation as an incentivizing and scaling tool.

Participants referred to the critical role of the UN in (i) setting overarching principles and guidelines for different types of multi-stakeholder partnerships at the global level; and also in (ii) fostering an enabling environment for results-based multi-stakeholder partnerships at the country level.

The Expert Group Meeting on SDG 17 was welcomed as a space for a candid, critical and action-oriented policy discussions among all stakeholders, generating key policy messages on the relationships between multi-stakeholder partnerships and MoIs to directly feed into the thematic review of the HLPF.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Unpacking multi-stakeholder partnerships...

Conceptual clarity is needed for the words “stakeholder” and “partnership”: both terms are vague and loosely used, which have hindered more structured discussion towards concrete, results-based and accountable multi-stakeholder partnerships. The UN is well positioned to provide a space to forge a working definition for both terminologies.

Different types of partnerships should be clearly defined. SDG 17 calls for promoting effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships. Currently, most of the multi-stakeholder partnership efforts of the UN focuses mostly on the partnerships with the private sector: this should be broadened to include a wider range of partners in line with the cross-sectoral nature of the SDGs.

The scope of partnerships should not be limited to dealing with delivery of projects, but encompass the entire policy processes. Holistic view of multi-stakeholder partnerships from policy formulation through monitoring and review stages can speed up the integral implementation of the SDGs.

Human rights are at the core of multi-stakeholder approach. The UN is well positioned to more firmly anchor the multi-stakeholder partnerships on overarching principles of inclusiveness and equality.

More attention should be accorded on home-grown multi-stakeholder partnerships at country level. Too much focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships at global level can increase the risk of expanding monopolies and of developing countries becoming more dependent on foreign actors. Also, the MoIs landscape at the country level is growing increasingly complex and dynamic with diversified actors to be mapped out and partnered with. There is a pressing need for capacity building (e.g. diagnostic and contractual capacities) for enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships at country level.

The Role of different stakeholders in strengthening MoIs...

SDGs require pro-active leadership and intervention of national governments in economic, social and environmental policies. The horizontal nature of multi-stakeholder partnerships should not dilute the special lead and accountability role of the national government in promoting the strong political will and undertaking policy and institutional reforms in line with the 2030 Agenda, while government-centric approach should become more a whole-of-a-society approach. Strong government institutions and processes inclusive of all including vulnerable groups are essential for enhancing the quantity and quality of Mols.

“Experience shows that the best partnerships are those in which partners are well known to the government and have a long track record of legal, regulatory and tax compliance across the board. ‘Know your partner’ is the first rule of any new partnership.”

-- Mr. Alessandro Motter, Inter-Parliamentary Union

Local governments play a strategic role in facilitating bottom-up approach for effective distribution of Mols based on local demands. It is critical for the local authorities (cities, municipalities, districts, etc.) to play an effective bridge role and facilitate the information flows between the public and the national government. Local governments should have sound understanding of the SDGs and align their development efforts with the national sustainable development priorities.

The private sector is expected to play an increasingly strategic role in raising both financial and non-financial Mols through aligning their business models with the SDGs. The enabling public policies incentivize the investment and innovative engagement of the private sector;



in some countries including China, Germany and Spain, the effective government policies on energy have helped to attract greater private capitals and create more robust renewable energy markets. Some trans-national technology companies also show the enormous potential to improve the public access to clean water and energy including through providing both funding and technical cooperation towards commercially viable projects in developing countries. Equally important is to also examine

whether any policy changes would result in inadvertent outcomes that deter the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including in reducing overall corruption; tackling income inequality; protecting human rights; etc. More research should be undertaken with a focus on the “influences of private investment on the SDGs-related public policies” to see if it is the real case that the push for private sector financing is bleeding into policy influence.

The fuller representation of civil society organizations (CSOs) is paramount in achieving the SDGs and their engagement should be better supported through enabling legal, regulatory and operational environments. This includes the need to put in place viable policy frameworks (e.g. national development cooperation policy) and institutional mechanisms (e.g. dialogue and information management mechanism) to address the various impediments that keep the CSOs from receiving the available cross-border Mols. It is also critical to: examine the supply chains of both developing countries and development partners; re-align the available development cooperation resources based on the sustainable development needs

of developing countries; and make sure the Mols are optimally utilized for beneficiaries on the ground in most cost-effective manner. CSOs in both developing countries and development partners should be meaningfully engaged from consultation, to negotiation, to mutual assessment and review processes of development cooperation for enhanced domestic and mutual accountability.

Parliamentarians play a key role in creating an enabling legislative and regulatory environment for viable multi-stakeholder partnerships to thrive. More specifically, through their budgetary oversight role, parliamentarians are also well positioned to influence the policies and decisions of the government on Mols in accordance with the needs of people they represent. In Costa Rica, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office also promotes the 2030 Agenda and Addis Agenda with political parties, making them a part of big election issues.

Academia and think-tanks should shed more light on complex and diverse realities of Mols and differentiated multi-stakeholder partnership strategies to strengthen them. There is a pressing need for building further evidence on the complementary role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in enhancing Mols. In this connection, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) supported the establishment of global correlation of think-tank networks for South-South Cooperation that involves 250 think tanks and other multi-stakeholder partners with the aim of tackling the critical issues related to South-South cooperation and co-create the evidence-based solutions.

International financial institutions (IFIs) need to be more engaged in the implementation of the SDGs. The UN should encourage the IFIs to align their agenda with the 2030 Agenda and Addis Agenda.



Participation of beneficiaries or grassroots is crucial for genuinely country-owned sustainable development process and effective use of Mols. It is important to put in place a government-supported mechanism for systematically mobilizing and engaging the beneficiaries and the public in decision-making and feedback-collecting processes for Mols.

Towards unlocking the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships for Mols..

There is a need for developing integrated national financing frameworks² to leverage the full potential of diverse portfolio of finance and partnerships. Developing countries are facing greater challenges in assessing and harnessing all financing inflows (international, domestic, public and private) and their mixes and linking them with sustainable development needs. Aligning resources and expertise from different stakeholders with concrete sustainable development results requires more coherent financing and partnerships

² Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Op. 9

framework. There are existing efforts³ to support developing country governments to systematically leverage all sources of available finance and expertise and help adjust the national institutions and systems accordingly for more holistic management of development finance and partnerships.

Policy and institutional arrangements for filling capacity gaps are essential for capitalizing on the strengths of multi-stakeholder partners and enhancing Mols.

Robust dialogue mechanisms and engagement system should be in place to harness the expertise of different stakeholders in enhancing Mols. For instance, there is an urgent need to inter-connect different data communities – those of traditional statistics, big data, satellite technology, etc. – to bring various data sources together and facilitate the optimal use of data including through cross-fertilization across the governments and stakeholder groups in support of the SDGs. In case of South-South Cooperation, the government capacity for ensuring broad-based country ownership through the full engagement of citizens is also a key to its success.



“The key to sustainable financing strategy is to establish a local fund – managed and owned by communities.”

-- Ms. Seomi Kang, Korean International Cooperation Agency

In order for partnerships to raise sustainable Mols, it is crucial to create a good incentive structure in line with the national sustainable development priorities while addressing externalities and ensure partnerships activities are locally owned. In this connection, a number of experts also noted a pressing need for robust capacity building – financial, institutional and human resources, in particular – at local level for more self-sustained partnerships. Participants also noted the

importance of putting more emphasis on engaging the national development banks, domestic private sector and research entities to enhance the local capacities.

Major efforts are needed to enhance the transparency and accountability of all Mols actors.

The normative role of the UN in developing global standards, guidelines and regulatory frameworks for different types of multi-stakeholder partnerships, including those for public-private partnerships (PPPs), was underlined. The importance of putting in place concrete monitoring and review mechanism, which is inclusive of all stakeholders including beneficiaries and vulnerable groups, was highlighted to measure the sustainable development outcomes of different partnerships and ensure the discussion on the contributions of multi-stakeholder partnerships goes beyond a narrative of quantity, but also includes the quality aspects of Mols. One expert pointed out the ongoing discussion at the Human Rights Council concerning the

“Any partnership has to be reviewed through ex-ante and ex-post community-based assessment.”

-- Mr. Marwan Bishtawi, Youth Representative

³ [“Maximizing Finance for Development” \(MFD\)](#) of the World Bank Group and [Asia Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility \(AP-DEF\)](#) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others.

legally-binding treaty on trans-national corporations as a potentially useful means to promote more accountable partnerships with the private sector. There was a conflicting view on the oversight role of the UN in regulating multi-stakeholder partnerships, calling for a balanced approach.

It is important to include multi-stakeholder partners in decision-making process for policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). PCSD provides an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder partnerships to bring in complementary and synergistic contributions. More systematic and consistent dialogue and engagement across the government and with multi-stakeholder partners are critical for identifying common challenges, setting priorities and aligning policies and actions towards enhanced Mols.⁴ The capacity-building efforts in closely related field(s) can positively influence the achievement of the other sectoral goal(s): as 4 million people are dying from cooking smokes every year, the Ministry of Health, for instance, can be engaged in setting higher standards to make the technology catch up and promote the renewable energy solutions. The recent efforts of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁵ also show how governments and stakeholders can strengthen their capacities for addressing policy trade-offs and leveraging synergies; and adapting institutional mechanisms for policy-making, monitoring and reporting to the needs and vision of the 2030 Agenda.



Innovation unleashes the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilise and scale up Mols, while there is a need for better coordinating the existing innovation initiatives across all SDGs. Participants introduced the innovative strategies to enhance the Mols using emerging technologies, including cryptocurrencies. For instance, a new generation of South-South Cooperation can possibly be driven by social media and big data, which will bring to the surface all the local demands, challenges and possible solutions: this could scale up the scopes and impacts of South-South Cooperation drastically and rapidly. There is

a need for mapping ongoing innovation initiatives for each SDG with a view to promoting better coordination and synergies.

Contributions of the UN in catalyzing optimal multi-stakeholder partnerships for Mols..

⁴ Example of “Africa Regional Data Cube” was referenced, which had brought together space agencies, NASA, communities on earth observation satellite, five African governments and universities to harness the power of satellite and earth observation data for the application of agriculture, food security, water use and land management.

⁵ For more information on its PCSD Partnership, please see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=12066>

The UN should set the clear overarching principles and guidelines for multi-stakeholder partnerships, which carefully balance the risks against the innovation at the global level. As the preeminent norm-setting body, the UN should focus more on leading in standard-setting process, than getting involved as an implementing partner. With regards to emerging technology and data, the UN is best positioned to advocate for and take lead in developing much needed standards and principles for data partnerships to establish the sound governance model with a view to protecting data ownership, privacy and human rights.

“There is a general lack of agreed upon normative frameworks and guidelines on partnerships including on public-private partnerships.”

– Mr. Andrew Wilson,
International Chamber of
Commerce

The UN should support to foster an enabling environment for results-based multi-stakeholder partnerships at the country level. At the country level, participants noted that the UN is well positioned to provide contextualized policy advice for institutionalizing multi-stakeholder mechanism for sustainable development and broker opportunities for systematic dialogue and engagement with various stakeholders.

Experts highlighted the need for consensual approach to partnerships. The minimal criteria for the UN-associated partnerships should include: (i) partnership objectives coincide with the SDGs; (ii) partnership aims for supporting all SDGs; (iii) partner should demonstrate the vision and leadership in including the voice of those impacted by the partnership efforts; (iv) there should be a regular disclosure of budget; and (v) additionality.

Ways forward and next steps

Multi-stakeholder partnerships play a strategic, complimentary role in enhancing both quantity and quality of MoIs in the implementation of the SDGs. Building on the discussions of the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 17, further evidence should be accumulated on how to best harness the potential contributions of multi-stakeholder partnerships in various contexts to improve the lives of people and reach the farthest left behind first.

ANNEX 1: Programme for Expert Group Meeting on SDG 17

Morning Session: **CLOSED MEETING**

10:00 am – 1:00 pm Round Table Discussion

Take stock of good practices in mobilizing and managing partnerships to enhance the quantity and quality of MoIs for the implementation of SDGs 6,7, 11, 12 and 15 and share innovative examples in inter-linked areas of MoIs

Afternoon Session: **OPEN TO ALL**

3:00 pm – 3:20 pm Opening Keynote Address

- Mr. Elliot Harris, Assistant-Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Dr. Alex Halliday, Director, Earth Institute, Columbia University

3:20 pm – 3:30 pm Debrief from Round Table

- Mr. David O'Connor, Permanent Observer of IUCN to the United Nations International Union for Conservation of Nature
- Ms. Jonahkriza Aglupus, Program Officer, Office of the Vice President of the Philippines

3:30 pm – 5:45 pm Panel Discussion on “*Enhancing and harnessing the means of implementation through effective multi-stakeholder partnerships*”

- Ms. Alice H. Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator for Costa Rica
- Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, Deputy Director, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)
- Ms. Jenna Slotin, Senior Director of Policy, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
- Ms. Ana Blanco, Director, Public Policy & International Relations, Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA)
- Mr. Marcel Alers, Head of Energy, UNDP- Global Environment Finance Unit
- Mr. Wade Hoxtell, Head of Operations, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI)

Moderator: Mr. Tomas Christensen, Chef de Cabinet to the President of the 71st session of General Assembly

Focus Questions:

- *What concrete contributions can multi-stakeholder partnerships bring to ensure that MoIs are effectively mobilized and managed and that systemic changes are facilitated in support of the implementation of SDGs 6,7,11,12, and 15?*
- *How can the UN play more effective roles – at global, regional and country levels –in promoting more demand- driven, results-based and accountable partnerships and discouraging unnecessary parallel structures and fragmentation for the effective implementation of SDGs 6,7,11,12 and 15?*

Closing Session

5:45 – 6:00 pm Closing Remarks (UNDESA)

ANNEX 2: Participants of Informal Round Table Discussion

No	Sector	Name	Title/ Contact
1	National Govt Ministry for SDG 17 (Asia & the Pacific)	Ms. Jonahkriza Aglupus	Program Officer, Office of the Vice President of the Philippines
2	Bi-lateral development cooperation org	Ms. Seomi Kang	Attache, Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)
3	Mission	Mr. Evans Maturu	Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Kenya to the UN
4	UN system	Mr. Mathieu Verougstraete	Financing for Sustainable Development Office (FSDO)
5	Global initiative for SDG 6	Mr. Fany Wedahuditama	Regional Coordinator, Global Water Partnership Southeast Asia, Jakarta, Indonesia
6	National NGO for SDG 6	Mr. Samuel Malinga	Managing Director, Sanitation Africa, Uganda
7	Environmental Consulting / Think Tank	Mr. Harris Gleckman	Center for Governance and Sustainability, UMass-Boston and Director, Benchmark Environmental Consulting
8	Private sector (interlinked Mols of technology + data) for SDG 7	Mr. Jeff Giery	Chief Growth Officer, Impact PPA
9	UN system focal point for SDG 11, 12	Mr. Juan Rengifo	Intergovernmental Affairs, UNEP
10	Multi-lateral development cooperation org	Mr. Ernesto Soria Morales Senior Policy Analyst	Senior Policy Analyst, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, Office of the Secretary-General, OECD
11	International org on SDG 15	Mr. David O'Connor	Permanent Observer of IUCN to the United Nations International Union for Conservation of Nature
12	Multi-lateral Development Bank: all SDGs	Mr. Nicholas Bian	World Bank Group Office in New York
13	UN system	Ms. Amber Barth	Senior Programme Analyst of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for the UN (New York)
14	Youth representative	Mr. Marwan Bishtawi	Associate Coordinator of the International Movement of Catholic Students - Pax Romana's UN Advocacy Team in New York