

2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum
“Partnerships Driving Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs”

11 April 2019, UNHQ, New York

Concept Note

Background:

The scope and complexity of the transformations required for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are unprecedented. In order to achieve the Agenda’s universal and ambitious goal of “leaving no one behind”, it is necessary to harness the tremendous potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships across and in all countries – both developed and developing ones.

The last decade has seen partnerships¹ in the field of sustainable development burgeoning and diversifying at an accelerated rate.² Sustainable Development Goal 17 – *“strengthen the means of implementation (Mols) and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”* – recognizes the critical importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the achievement of the SDGs in all countries.

The 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will focus on reviewing the following SDGs (in addition to SDG 17) with the theme of *“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”*.

- **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **Goal 10:** Reduce income inequality within and among countries.
- **Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.
- **Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

¹ The biennial GA resolution on “Towards global partnerships” 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” (A/RES/70/224, paragraph 2).

² Wade Hoxtell, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), 2016

The 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, co-organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP) and the United Nations Global Compact, aims to review multi-stakeholder partnerships around these five SDGs and showcase good practices and lessons learned on the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in driving inclusion and impacts.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General has recently initiated an ambitious reform to reposition the United Nations Development System (UNDS)³ with the aim of re-aligning its leadership, capacities and accountability mechanisms including in the area of partnerships to meet the demands in delivering on the 2030 Agenda. As per the two Reports of the Secretary-General in June 2017⁴ and December 2017⁵ on the UNDS reform, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) is currently leading a system-wide effort on this regard. In his December 2017 report, the Secretary-General further committed to six partnership related work streams:

- i. UNSDG to agree on a system-wide approach to partnership
- ii. Strengthen system-wide integrity, due diligence and risk management, including the 10 Global Compact principles on for private sector engagement
- iii. Improved global level governance from the Global Compact
- iv. Reinvigoration of UNOP as the global gateway for partnership
- v. A system-wide compact with IFIs
- vi. Efforts to invigorate UN support for South-South cooperation

In line with the Secretary-General's June 2017 report, which notes *"...as partnerships increasingly claim space in planning processes from global to country levels, the UN development system must be ready to support national demands for inclusive alliances...that take account of the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded"*, the 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will also be an opportunity to discuss ways to enhance the effectiveness of UN-associated partnerships in the context of ongoing UNDS reform, and to explore ways to support the Member States in fostering more inclusive and results-based country level partnership platforms.

Objectives for 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum:

Under the overall theme of *"Partnerships Driving Inclusive Implementation of the SDGs"*, the objectives of the 2019 ECOSOC Partnership Forum are as following:

- (i) To showcase innovative **multi-stakeholder partnerships and partnership platforms led by national governments** to draw concrete recommendations on ways to address existing gaps in SDG implementation, and to catalyse value-additions and accountability for different stakeholders. The role of the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and UN

³ This was in response to the mandates of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

⁴ [Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All \(A/72/124–E/2018/3\)](#)

⁵ [Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet \(A/72/684\)](#)

local networks including Global Compact Local Networks will be also discussed. The focus will be given to partnership efforts supporting the SDGs that will be reviewed at the 2019 July session of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) – education (SDG 4); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); climate action (SDG 13); and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).

- (ii) To discuss ways to enhance the **effectiveness of UN-associated partnerships** in the context of ongoing UNDS reform; and
- (iii) To update on the work of the **UNSDG Strategic Results Group on Partnerships**.

Format

The Forum will be opened by an informal **High-level Conversation** among 2-3 prominent thought leaders, setting a broad stage for the discussion of the day. It will be immediately followed by **three substantive dialogues in Davos style**: including one in the morning (session I) and two in the afternoon (session II and III).

Participants

Participants will include the representatives of the Member States, regional / inter-governmental organizations, multi-lateral development banks, NGOs, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, local governments, parliaments, academia, UN entities and other stakeholders.

Impacts

An analytical summary will be prepared capturing the key policy messages of the Forum, which will serve as a direct input to High-level Political Forum(HLPF).

Background documents

- 2019 Annual Partnerships Report (forthcoming).
- The Report of the Secretary-General on *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet* (A/72/684–E/2018/7) (<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/node/3553102>)
- [Resolution 72/279](#) on Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Possible Focus Questions:

Session I: “What It Takes to Build Effective Country-level Partnership Platforms?”

The session will present the innovative examples of country-level multi-stakeholder partnership platforms and will aim to answer the below questions:

- What constitutes effective multi-stakeholder partnership platform at country level? How can such platforms **facilitate and harness the value-addition** of different stakeholders to enhance mutual accountability and synergy?
- How can such country-level partnership platforms effectively promote **results-based reporting** by different stakeholders and **inclusive, regular joint review** of progress in support of the SDGs? What are some innovative ways to **institutionalize learning mechanism** (e.g. monitoring and review) within partnerships and national policy framework at large?
- What are the **strategic roles of UNCTs and UN local networks (e.g. Global Compact Local Networks)** in fostering more inclusive and results-based country-level SDGs governance structures?
- What are some ways to **meaningfully link the learning mechanisms of partnerships at country, regional, inter-regional and global levels** to facilitate more coherent knowledge-sharing and management?

Session II: “Multi-stakeholder Partnership as a Lever to Drive Inclusion and Impact”

- The session will review the examples of innovative and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the **SDGs in focus at the 2019 July session of the HLPF** -- education (SDG 4); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); climate action (SDG 13); and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16) – and discuss the concrete role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in driving inclusion and impacts in the implementation of the SDGs.

Session III: “Raising Ambition for UN-associated Partnerships”

After taking stock of findings from (i) an envisaged 2018 Partnerships Report and providing (ii) update on the work of the UNSDG Strategic Partnerships Results Group, the meeting will aim to answer the below questions:

- One of the recommendations of recent Expert Group Meeting on multi-stakeholder partnerships was to establish more **coherent review mechanism**, distinguishing different types of partnerships, with distinct requirements for UN-led partnerships. Are we ready for this endeavour? What would be the first concrete step forward?
- What are the **implications of UNDS reform on the possible system-wide review of effectiveness of partnerships**? What would be the **role of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum and the Member States** moving forward?
- How can we effectively **promote coherence** between the UNSDG-led inter-agency process on creating a system-wide approach to partnerships at operational level, and the system-wide governance processes at inter-governmental level? What would be the **role of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum**?