

ICLEI

CSD-16

Partnerships

Mr Chair

„Partnership“ has become a magic word around and after the 2002 Johannesburg Summit. “Partnership” has undoubtedly a positive connotation, and who would object against a proposal to “partner”?

However, the story of the so-called Implementation Partnerships staged at WSSD 2002 is sobering. A huge opportunity was forgone because the UN failed to establish official and binding guidelines and frameworks for the Implementation Partnerships, and thus most partnerships did not receive the funding expected. Only few such partnerships launched in Johannesburg have come to an implementation stage.

However, we have made another observation after WSSD. Agencies managed to secure extended mandates but found themselves lacking adequate resources to fulfil these. So they determined that they need partners who would bring resources and help getting the job done. This has led to numerous questionable relationships between actors from various sectors.

There is a frequently found misconception of partnerships. Organizations, especially funding agencies, often think that partnerships would per se reduce expenditure because overlapping and doubling work could be avoided. However, while this may in some cases be true, practice shows that partnerships lead to additional costs since they require considerable coordination efforts.

We categorize partnerships and have found that there are “fair and synergetic partnerships”, “false or pretended partnerships” and “exploitative partnerships”. True and fair partnerships require that the partners define common goals, mutual expectations, duties and contributions of each partner and agree on the resourcing of the activities at the outset through a formal agreement. Such partnerships are efficient and avoid exploitative effects.

Having this said, let me mention encouraging examples of true partnerships.

My organisation, ICLEI, a global association of local government for sustainability, and the world association of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) enjoy a partnership on joint activities, for example on Local Government involvement in the UN climate negotiation process.

We have entered into a partnership with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) on a global program called Local Action for Biodiversity.

UNEP and UN-HABITAT partner with us on specific projects under a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding.

The World Economic Forum partners with ICLEI on the SlimCity Initiative, which brings business leaders and municipal leaders together for dialogues on resource-efficient cities.

So there are positive examples, but clearly we have a long way to go in developing, nurturing and enabling effective partnerships to address the very real and urgent issues discussed here at CSD-16.

I thank you