2016 ECOSOC Partnership Forum

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for the 2030 Agenda
...From Commitment to Results

OPTIMISING IMPACT: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF MSPS FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

Proposals drawn from independent research paper on "Multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda: Improving accountability and transparency" by Dr. Marianne Beisheim and Dr. Nils Simon, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, (SWP):

Improving guidelines due diligence

- Take the Bali guiding principles and CSD11 decision as a starting point, build on them and reflect the principles of the 2030 Agenda, and decide in GA/ECOSOC on them and their implementation and discuss in the ECOSOC Partnership Forum;
- Have reporting rules reflect these principles and guidelines;
- Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community; and the UNHRC adopts Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and assess the results, possibly with the help of independent entities;
- Pool due diligence procedures to realize efficiency gains and to avoid conflicts of interest for UN agencies and programmes. The screening itself could be done either by an impartial UN entity or an external contractor;

Enhancing the alignment of MSPs with the 2030 Agenda

To avoid a silo approach, set up *inter-agency committees or task forces*, building on the positive experiences with the UNTT and TST. These would be responsible for follow-up reviewing the means of implementation, including MSPs. These entities could also support MSPs in working across sectors and in applying a nexus approach towards implementing the SDGs;

Better reporting mechanisms

- *Mandatory regular reporting of UN-led MSPs* to the Executive Board of the relevant UN agency, to ECOSOC, to HLPF, or to the General Assembly (depending on the kind of MSP);
- Uphold the practice of *voluntary self-reporting* for all MSPs registered in the Partnerships for SDGs online database on at least a biennial basis through the submission of short reports to the platform;
- Encourage the private sector to adapt theiir standards for sustainability reporting for use in reports produced in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The UN Global Compact

Key Ideas and Proposals from DESA Expert Group Meeting on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships held on 5-6 February 2016

- *A nexus approach should be promoted by the UN and applied by MSPs, reflecting the cross-sectorial nature of the 2030 Agenda.*
- *More focus is needed on MSPs at the country-level and MSPs in LDCs and other countries in special situation need to be encouraged.*
- *UNDESA could take the lead in mapping partnership initiatives, supported by the Global Compact. The online platform "Partnerships for SDGs" should be improved, including search functions and regular updates. There might however be an issue of capacity.*
- *The differentiation between different types of partnerships needs to be further defined and clarified as a first step. It must reflect that partnerships do not only include business, but all relevant stakeholders including philanthropy, NGOs and academia.*
- *The GA resolution on "Towards Global Partnerships" could broaden its focus beyond partnerships with the private sector to also include academia, NGOs, philanthropy and other stakeholders.*
- *More coordination across the UN system is necessary. A network of multi-stakeholder focal points could be established and could be involved in the preparation of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum.*
- *The UN system needs to ensure that principles and guidelines established are respected. There might be a role for the QCPR to set a minimum set of guidelines for the UN's engagement with partners at the national level.*
- *A coherent and strengthened due diligence procedure should be established. A first layer could be to centrally endorse throughout the system a set of overarching guidelines for partnerships, building on already existing guidelines and language from A/RES/70/224.*

could align its "Communication on Progress" reporting to the SDGs;

- Have UNDESA or an independent expert (panel) prepare a *synthesis report* or commission an *independent third-party evaluation* of all progress reports submitted by MSPs through the Partnerships for SDGs online platform;
- On this basis, the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could discuss lessons learned and evaluate the effectiveness of established guidelines and policy frameworks. A report on the results of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum could inform the HLPF reviews;

Improving learning and knowledge-sharing

- Learning and knowledge-sharing could be supported by setting up or using existing *(cross-) sectoral thematic platforms.* The UN should incentivize and support these existing MSPs in considering nexus linkages in their work and should also foster and support new cross-sector MSPs;

Improving the review of MSPs

- Discuss synthesis report or an independent evaluation of all reports by/on MSPs, especially all with UN involvement and with a focus on the annual ECOSOC/HLPF theme in the ECOSOC Partnership Forum. Also discuss review input from *inter-agency committees or task forces* on relevant MSPs in their area of work. Produce a summary report with recommendations;
- Discuss transnational and national MSPs that are relevant to the annual theme of the HLPF and draw on input from the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, including the specialized agencies;
- Make use of *independent* reviews of MSPs. The outcomes of participatory monitoring and accountability processes led by local civil society organizations (e.g., citizen reviews) could be taken into consideration;
- Based on all this, the *ministerial declaration* could request either the GA/ECOSOC and/or the secretariat to further develop and amend guidelines, criteria, and support for MSPs.
- *Mainstream* the issue of MSPs into other reviews like the *ECOSOC FfD Forum* which could review MSPs' contribution to financing. The *STI Forum* could review MSPs' contribution to science, technology, and innovation. The *Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review* (QCPR) could give guidance to the UN system on how to engage with MSPs at the national level, which could then be reviewed as part of the QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework. Independent bodies such as the *Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) could help with advice whether it comes to budgetary matters and the further development of the accountability system in the UN Secretariat. The JIU and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)* could help with independent evaluations.

It could specifically also make signing onto the Global Compact principles a requirement for business engagement with the UN. A second layer could complement these guidelines by sector specific guidelines endorsed by specialized agencies.

- *Intergovernmental fora can and should complement each other and apply a holistic approach, rather than creating parallel structures. There should be specific and complementing roles for the GA, ECOSOC and the HLPF as reflected by existing mandates. The various executive boards of funds and programmes could also play a role in providing guidance on MSPs involving the UN organizations over which they have oversight.*
- *Leading to the HLPF, a coherent process of review should be put in place, based on the suggestions for monitoring and review. ECOSOC should lead this process.*
- *A central reporting mechanism could be established, distinguishing between different types of partnership, with distinct requirements for UN-led partnerships. Reporting should be aligned with guidelines and principles. For mega partnerships, internal monitoring and review mechanisms could be complemented by independent reviews/audits. For partnerships registered on the "Partnerships for SDGs" platform, a lighter reporting process should be put in place, with the option to follow-up and review the listing, but this might require off-line resources.*
- *A role for independent or expert bodies should be considered in providing expertise and assistance to intergovernmental fora or the UN system in their monitoring and review of MSPs.*
- *Major groups and other stakeholders should have a role in promoting transparency and accountability.*
- *A proposal was made to showcase "Champion" partnerships at the ECOSOC Partnership Forum as positive examples for other MSPs. It was also felt that there is a need to establish "safe spaces" for sharing negative results and to promote learning from failure. The Partnership Forum could also be that space. It could also be a creative space to explore new ideas and trends in MSPs.*
- *The Global Compact's communication on progress reporting requirements could be further aligned with the SDGs and discussed at the Partnership Forum.*