

**22<sup>nd</sup> Informal Working Breakfast on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**  
*“Partnerships for Post-2015: At the intersection of risk and reward”*

Hosted by the Bahá'í International Community and the International Movement ATD Fourth World  
17 December 2014

A diverse group of stakeholders<sup>1</sup> held a working breakfast to discuss key issues related to partnerships and the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The following are highlights of the discussion:

- The term “partnerships” has no clear definition and is used to describe a wide variety of relationships. Partnerships, broadly, are becoming increasingly important as means of implementation of the SDGs.
- A recent General Assembly resolution—“Toward global partnerships”—for the first time in its title and content referred to a “principle-based” approach to partnerships. How do we nurture such relationships? The answer must be found in the context of the UN charter and global agreements. Many current partnerships are not framed by UN norms and standards; they are not part of reporting mechanisms to the UN.
- At present, we are measuring impact not according to these standards (e.g. human rights) but rather according to resources committed. Small contributions *can* have very big impact. This is important.
- It must be remembered that resources committed in these partnerships are voluntary and extra-budgetary. E.g. The Gates Foundation is the largest voluntary funder to WHO. How does this impact what WHO is doing? The volume of voluntary resources far exceeds ODA flows.
- A lot of emphasis is being put on partnerships with the private sector. This often diverts resources from the public purse.
- In 2014, Samoa hosted the global conference on SIDS; this year 2014 Samoa will graduate out of category of Least Developed Countries. Samoa proposed that it be the host of the 2014 SIDS conference so that the international community could appreciate first-hand the realities of life in that country. The conference organizers substituted “roundtables” with “partnership dialogues.”
- The outcome document of the conference was the “SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) Pathway.” The document addresses among other things: climate change, economic growth, oceans and seas, non-communicable diseases, IT and communications. SIDS have a diverse array of needs and priorities which cannot be met without help from other countries.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships take a lot of work on the ground and could not happen without civil society.
- There is an assumption of equivalence among stakeholders which is often not true. Who has the power? Who is determining the partnership agenda?
- Partnerships cannot be pro-cyclical – they should not encourage relationships of dependence.
- Partnerships need to be transparent and coherent; they cannot be accountable only to selected members of the partnership in a way that excludes member states.
- There seems to be a ‘fixation’ on partnerships, with little clarity as to definition or without eligibility criteria. CESR has proposed ex-ante criteria for eligibility based on human right standards.
- Have to be coherent when looking at business partnerships. E.g.: We can’t laud companies for supporting SDGs if these same companies are not paying their taxes. Billions of dollars of revenue are lost to developing countries because of corporate tax evasion.

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<sup>1</sup> Permanent Missions: Belgium, France, International Organization of la Francophonie, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Samoa, Singapore. Representatives from UN: UN Conference on Trade and Development, UN Development Programme, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund, UN Volunteers. Non-governmental organizations: Bahá'í International Community, Center for Economic and Social Rights, Global Action to Prevent War, International Committee for October 17, International Forum for Volunteering in Development, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Presentation Association, Loretto Community, Mercy International Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, OMI/VIVAT International, Plan International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, SOS Children’s Villages International, Stakeholder Forum, Women’s Environment and Development Organization.

- PPPs (public private partnerships) often end up being more resource-intensive than the same initiative funded publicly. Studies from OECD, the EU and the World Bank show that PPPs are more expensive than publicly funded initiatives, and even those which are only privately funded.
- UNFPA puts partnerships at the core of its activity. The P2015 agenda will only be transformative through the presence of partnerships that are effective, time-bound and engage a variety of actors. We need to reduce the fragmentation of the UN system to build more partnerships. Agenda must be universal. The issue of innovation is very important.
- Partnerships need to engage civil society at the national level first.
- “A vision without implementation is hallucination.”
- The SDGs are a Member State driven agenda, but the delivery mechanisms rest with the public.
- Partnerships cannot be about substituting the government’s responsibility for delivery. Partnerships are to be complementary. Country ownership is essential.
- Partnerships are not only about resource mobilization but also about capacity.
- UN should be operating on a 'do no harm' principle with respect to partnerships, especially concerning climate change.
- Do women's organizations have to be involved in every partnership in order for them to be accountable to women's lives?
- Member States have a duty in terms of oversight of corporate funding. If a corporation is not paying its taxes, the State is also complicit. “It takes two to tango.” Where does the ultimate responsibility lie? With the Member State? The private funders? Both?