



2012 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION COORDINATION SEGMENT

Panel I

“Mobilizing partnerships for development, including in the field of education”

10 July 2012 – New York, UN Headquarters

Opening statements

Launching the discussion, **Council Vice-President, H.E. Ambassador Mootaz Khalil**, noted that partnerships had become increasingly integral to the work of the United Nations. He emphasized the growing need for collaboration amid increasingly complex and interdependent challenges and growing reach of non-state actors. He reinforced the need to maximize the potential of such partnerships for advancing the development agenda and encouraged creating a better understanding of how successful partnerships are conceived and how they function.

The Moderator, **Mr. John Hendra, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)** reiterated that partnerships had increased in importance, becoming a top-priority of the Secretary-General. He focused on lessons learned, noting that early agreements among partners as well as up front articulated desired goals and responsibilities for each partner was key to success. At the same time, he warned that partnerships should not become a substitute for government efforts. New norms and innovative partnerships should be found to maximize synergies and ensure that the Council can effectively contribute to strengthening partnerships.

Discussion

A number of themes and recommendations emerged from the presentations and discussions:

Developing an enabling environment for partnership activity

Several panelists underscored the need and urgency for multi-stakeholder partnerships for tackling today’s complex challenges. **Mr. Robert Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the UN**, stressed that the financial crisis had reduced available resources of the UN, creating a greater need for establishing partnerships. Furthermore, the critical importance of partnerships has been recognized in several outcome documents adopted at major conferences on development, including Rio+20. As a consequence, an enabling environment

for partnership activity needed to be developed in different ways, including by improving accountability, lowering transaction costs and ensuring a more systematized approach. In this regard, the Secretary-General's Five Year Action Agenda called for a new partnership capacity to harness the growing power of business, finance, philanthropy, as well as civil society and academic and research institutions, to meet global needs. **Mr. Orr** noted that the proposed "partnership mechanism" would build capacity for partnerships among agencies, strengthen local networks and provide the backbone for accountability platforms. **Mr. Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO**, and **Mr. Martin Mogwanja, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF**, both stressed multi-stakeholder partnerships as pivotal for the success of their respective programmes for achieving Education for All, adding that the private sector and civil society organizations were both valuable sources for finance and innovative thinking.

The private sector as a key partner

The role played by the private sector in partnerships for education was noted as particularly relevant and diverse. **Mr. Tang** highlighted its function as service provider, funder, innovator, policy advisor and advocate. While UNESCO has worked with several large companies, especially in the area of funding of ICT for educational purposes, Mr. Tang stressed that the private sector should not only be perceived as a source of finance but also as a source for providing business advice and expertise, and should be treated as a partner and client. To that end, adopting a more systematic and innovative approach for private partnerships would be desirable. He furthermore commented that Education for All could only be achieved through a broad societal movement, nourished by viable government-civil society partnerships. **Mr. Mogwanja** reiterated the need for private sector engagement in the education sector, especially in the area of vocational training. Respondent **Ms. Rebecca Winthrop, Director of the Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution**, agreed that engagement with the private sector was a new area for education actors. She underlined the importance of being action-oriented with the private sector, moving engagement out of corporate social responsibility areas and into profit-making, which has already proved to mobilize private-sector resources in the health sector.

Partnerships as complementary to government efforts

Although the private sector was considered to be a crucial partner, panelists also emphasized the need for solid government engagement and regulation in the area of education. While corporations sought quick returns, long term investments in education and regulations were needed. **Mr. Mogwanja** warned that public-private partnerships risk facing an equity dilemma by creating low-fee schools, excluding poorer children from quality education. Education for the ultra-poor must be safeguarded to ensure a human rights-based approach to education. **Mr. Orr** likewise cautioned against "over-privatizing" partnerships for education and encouraged focusing on the reach of education. Some delegates noted that perennial bottlenecks occurred in public-private partnerships for education, commenting that academia was often biased against private-sector participation, due in part to the long-term commitment required. They further noted that companies often preferred investing in higher education where fees generally are higher.

Improving the quality of partnerships

Several panelists underlined the need for increasing the quality of partnerships, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. **Mr. Mogwanja** noted that collaboration should be based on results, building on comparative advantages and deliver greater value for money. Flexibility should be key, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches. **Mr. Tang** added the need to continuously tackle the issue of measuring learning outcomes and including education for peace, tolerance and human rights in curricula. Potential benefits and goals should be identified up front and performance monitored. Clear partner exit strategies should also be created to avoid inefficiencies and duplications. **Mr. Orr** stressed transparency and accountability were essential in unleashing the potential of transformational change through partnerships.

Building on the United Nations strengths

While discussing lessons learned, participants agreed that it was important to build on the UN strengths, first and foremost, its universal membership. **Mr. Orr** noted that coherence challenges were faced both on the ground and globally. Aspirations to transformational change require engagement at the political level. He stressed the need for building capacity which could serve the entire UN system, noting that smaller agencies, funds and departments could benefit disproportionately. The UN system also needed to become more “user-friendly” for external partners. Agencies could benefit from having common services to identify common partners. Through the ECOSOC, **Mr. Tang** hoped the scope of the education discussion could be enlarged to achieve consensus. The Secretary-General’s prioritization of education in his five-year action agenda and his Global Initiative on Education, which would be launched during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, were welcomed by participants.

Concluding remarks

Ambassador Khalil reemphasized that education was still a valid and pertinent goal both pre- and post-2015. A shared vision for pursuing education after the deadline must be developed, addressing new aspects such as the inclusion of education for peace, tolerance and human rights. He reiterated that partnerships were an important complementary tool to government efforts in achieving development goals. Closing the meeting, Ambassador Khalil called for more and better partnerships, citing accountability, impact, effectiveness and sustainability as important components.