

Second Committee of the 58th Session of the UN General Assembly
PANEL DISCUSSION ON PARTNERSHIPS
27 October 2003

The panel acknowledged the vital importance of partnerships in the increasingly interconnected world. Partnerships, in contrast to single agencies, are able to address issues that require a depth and breadth of knowledge and a quantity of resources. Based on experiences shared by panel participants, essential components of successful partnerships are shared vision, open communication, and complimentary competencies.

Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh is the Chairman and Founder of Talal Abu- Ghzaleh Organization, the Vice-Chair of the UN Information and Communication Technology Task Force, Chair of the Commission on E-Business, Information Technologies and Telecoms at the International Chamber of Commerce, and holds positions on numerous other boards including King Hussein's Cancer Foundation.

Mr. Abu-Ghazaleh underlined the importance of partnerships in our technologically advanced world. In this regard, he shared his own observations, through his involvement with the ICT Task Force. In particular he affirmed the need to recognize that different stakeholders have different competencies and to work together for a common interest and shared vision. As such, the ICT Task Force identified that its guiding framework would be the Millenium Development Goals. In order to work most effectively, the ICT Task Force designed a two-track approach using Regional Nodes and Working Groups. The regional nodes ensure a customised approach to the Task Force's developmental work. The Working Groups devise guideposts for issues such as policy, human resources, and governance.

Additionally, he stated the importance of all stakeholders to enter the partnerships with an open mind and a willingness to be flexible since the purpose of partnerships is to learn and benefit from each other. Governments and NGOs can benefit from the efficiencies associated with business processes just as businesses and governments can benefit from the reach and community credibility associated with NGOs. The ICT Task Force has been able to marshal some of these factors and has found great success promoting partnerships such as the "Global e-school Community Initiative," which addresses the MDG goal of education. He concluded by stating that ICT technology should be used in the UN System as it helps avoid unnecessary complication and duplication while promoting efficiency, transparency, and synergy.

Mr. Robert Coultas is the Representative to the United Nations of Rotary International, and from 1996-1998 he served as the Rotary International Director as well as numerous other positions within Rotary and was past chairman of the Board of Directors of the Madison, NJ YMCA.

Mr. Coultas illuminated the potential role of NGOs in the domain of partnerships by sharing the best practice examples based on experiences of Rotary. One noteworthy example is the PolioPlus program. The program is a collaborative effort of Rotary

volunteers, WHO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and has effectively immunized over 2 billion children in 122 countries. Rotary's new projects are tackling the AIDS crisis in Southern Africa, providing fresh water to rural areas, and promoting literacy- all of which involve local-level partnerships. He reiterated that the mission of supporting peace and development cannot be accomplished by one organization, but instead requires collaboration and cooperation. Regarding the UN's new initiative, the "UN Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development," he declared Rotary's interest in engaging its worldwide network, and his own involvement in making connections between Rotary Clubs in the focus country of Madagascar and the Alliance.

Mr. Georg Kell is the Executive Head the Global Compact Office and prior to that worked as head of the New York office of UNCTAD.

Mr. Kell noted that the UN has encouraged increased participation from NGOs and the private sector in order to achieve the MDGs. That trend recognizes the influential role business especially as a result of market liberalization and privatisation. Simultaneously, businesses have been asked to develop practices that represent corporate social responsibility.

He stressed that constructing viable partnerships is an art and that not all partnerships can follow the same model. However there are some notable characteristics of successful partnerships including complementary competencies, shared vision, open communication, power sharing, and reporting mechanisms. He added that the best indication of a successful partnership is one that is mutually beneficial for all involved parties. In this respect, the UN should implement a more coherent and systematic approach to supporting partnerships including incentives and ensuring accountability.

Mr. Amir Dossal is the Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and oversees the partnerships between the UN system and the UN Foundation, which is financed by the \$1 billion contribution from Ted Turner.

Although Mr. Dossal declared partnerships could not be a panacea, he recognized their usefulness in addressing many of the UN's goals. Mr. Turner's \$1 billion pledge has made it possible for the UN to create an interface to address these goals, one of which is support to LDCs. He noted that this action prompted the Gates, McArthur, and Rockefeller foundations to make substantial contributions. Specifically, of the \$530 million already being put to good use in the fund, \$168 million comes from donors other than Turner. With regard to developing successful partnerships, he emphasized that in partnerships the aim is to benefit from each other's comparative advantage. Additionally, he said the international community should remain cognizant that not all partnerships will work and therefore should strive to be open-minded and creative.

Anne Kerr is Chief, Programme Coordination, Major Groups and Partnerships in the Division for Sustainable Development of UN/DESA. She participated as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development Secretariat in the preparatory meetings and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Ms. Kerr shared information regarding the UN's current system of tracking and supporting partnership initiatives. She stressed that while the Johannesburg Plan of 2002 was not intended to replace Agenda 21 of the 1992 Rio Conference, it contributed to the current climate that now embraces partnerships. Governments openly agree that partnerships are useful tools to facilitate sustainable development, and should be implemented when possible. Due to increased cooperation, she cited a recent influx of activity including 230 partnerships posted on the CSD website and an additional 235 other initiatives. Primarily, the initiatives have been launched by UN or other Inter-governmental Organizations - less than 25% were suggested by NGOs. However, she encouraged increased participation. Her office plans to cooperate with the government of Italy on 6 March 2004 to hold an action-oriented conference on Partnerships for Sustainable Development at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy.

Questions were solicited from the floor, and country representatives, NGOs, and persons from within the UN system took the opportunity to speak. **The Humpty Dumpty Foundation** asked if UNFIP has a program for land mine clearance. **The World Federation of United Nations Associations** asked about the relevance of partnerships within the MDG framework. **The Chairman** wanted to know if the work of the UN Foundation would be markedly affected by the culture of the private sector. **South Africa** expressed concern that partnerships should ensure equal resource distribution. **Ambassador Andrianarivelo of Madagascar** shared information regarding his country's participation in the recently developed initiative, the Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development. **Ms. Yvette Stevens (The Office of the Special Advisor on Africa)** highlighted the work of NEPAD and inquired about the panel's input on implementing its objectives. **Ms. Ruben** wondered whether a partnership between NGOs and financial institutions could be forged through the use of microcredit.
