



**UN Public Private Alliance for Rural Development**  
Summary of 18 June 2003 meeting at UNHQ

Mr. Sarbuland Khan (UN/DESA): Welcome. You have before you a short concept paper and an issues note on a proposed UN public-private alliance for rural development. This meeting will serve as a brainstorming session on the ideas in those documents. You represent a broad range of organizations. We especially welcome the participants from the business community and NGOs.

By incorporating a broad range of participants in this meeting, we gain valuable insight and ensure that the United Nations remains a relevant organization. The knowledge that you bring to the table helps to develop ideas and cooperation that can result in positive implementation on the ground. This is vital, for unless a transformation in rural areas is accomplished, we will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2000.

A free-flowing discussion today will help improve the ideas that we currently have, and guide our next steps in constructing the Alliance. Hopefully at the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in early July, the Council will approve a Ministerial Declaration, endorse such an Alliance to help all sectors come together to fight rural poverty.

Rotary International: We are very interested in this proposal, and will be represented in Geneva. Rotary is a grassroots organization, and its goals coincide with the MDGs. We understand the necessity of empowering rural people. We have representatives at the FAO in Rome. The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are our main partners in executing our major project, eliminating polio in the world. Rotary also provides such things as vitamin A supplements. These things must be done at the rural level. Urban poverty is completely different from rural poverty, and it must be addressed as a separate issue. The next president of Rotary is from Nigeria. He is the first African president the organization has ever had, and is very interested in rural development. We have been in consultation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the Business Council for the United Nations (BCUN). I do, however, have one personal concern. Every year the United Nations does something 'new' and has a particular theme. Do we forget about these themes as time goes on? We need to maintain continuous support for programmes that are developed and always keep these things in our minds.

Rotary Club of NY: We are following the example of the private sector. Land O' Lakes gave us an idea: how corporations can be farmer-friendly. As Rotarians of NY, we like to lead by examples of giving. We are in partnership with the WHO,

UNICEF and a number of other organizations. Private sector partnerships are very important in looking at productive infrastructure.

F.J. Elsner NA: What has been done in the past by the UN and other agencies? What other agencies are involved in rural development? Is there a centralized agency to promote rural employment and rural development?

Mr. Khan: Rural development is a very complex issue, and cannot be thoroughly discussed in the time we have today. There is no single, overall group to manage rural development. The ECOSOC High-Level discussions this year are on rural development, and involve many UN agencies and organizations from outside the United Nations. Numerous issues need to be addressed. The proposed Alliance can be of significant value in relation to the leveraging of UN and private sector interests for greater impact in reducing poverty in rural areas.

UN Global Compact: We need to work with all UN agencies and with the private sector. The Alliance concept and the idea of a forum can be helpful. One of the functions that such a forum could perform is to complement other bodies and encourage cooperation between them.

Rotary Member: The question of what is being done is a good one. My answer-- lots is being done, but with many gaps. This Alliance seems a good idea because it can use information technology and help coordinate other efforts. This is one of several movements towards public-private partnerships. All actors need to be involved, not just government. One thing is missing from this framework though-- if it is to succeed, it needs a public identity that will help businesses sell more of what they sell. For it to truly be effective, the Alliance must develop a grand image from which both companies and people can profit.

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO): FAO activities in rural areas are designed to help rural agriculture. It takes a comprehensive approach to all of the involved problems, including HIV/AIDS, water, women, etc. In a general sense, the FAO is doing a lot; information about these activities can be made available. One of the new programmes is an International Alliance against Hunger, which seeks to bring together a wide range of actors in the international community to achieve major international priorities.

(Mr. Khan left. Ambassador Andrianarivelo (Madagascar) chaired the remainder of the meeting.)

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC): The ICC would strongly support the type of activity described today. The Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development may be a response to ECOSOC's call for the development of partnerships. The concept is good, but it needs a lot of working out before we come up with any institutional structures.

Land O' Lakes: To provide a snapshot of Land O' Lakes—throughout our 80-year history, Land O' Lakes has been working with others towards common goals. Our original business strategy transformed the company from a small coalition of farmers into what it is today. We also established a non-profit division that can partner internationally, taking this concept of cooperation for mutual benefit and sharing it with emerging private industries throughout the world. In resolutions and policies, we have a corporate mandate to do what we can for people around the world. Our international division has an \$80 million portfolio and works in 30 countries, serving as a catalyst, motivator and supporter of those in rural areas. It is a heartfelt social response, but business-driven and market-sustainable, with quantifiable results in productivity and income.

UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP): We are involved in creating partnerships and support the principles of this Alliance. We would like to bring attention to the need for a baseline in whatever we do here. Good partnerships are based on specific plans of action and programmes. In order to be successful, we need to show results. Since this Alliance concept is important and comprehensive, which issues should we be involved in? We need to utilize the MDGs to decide. We should find numbers now and use them to gauge the success of our actions in the future. We should distribute a copy of the MDG goals, targets and indicators to all here today. (*Information in this regard can be found at <http://millenniumindicators.un.org>*)

World Monitors: We would like to find a point-person within the UN to discuss matters of rural development, as we have a lot of information that could be useful.

Hahn Associates: In the past, I have worked for the FAO, IFAD and UNFIP. Rotary taking the lead here is an excellent start. With 1.2 million members, and \$500 million raised for their current campaigns, Rotary can be a very useful partner. The private sector can bring in a new era of development- this should incorporate the FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and promote cooperation. I have five principal recommendations:

- (1) Hold a discussion in Geneva to move the agenda ahead and bring in more participants;
- (2) Bring in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR);
- (3) Bring in the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a UNICEF programme funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which focuses on food fortification;
- (4) Make sure that efforts involve women farmers, especially in Africa; and
- (5) Involve the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations.

I appreciate all that has been done so far, and would urge UN/DESA to take this further.

Behbudi Foundation: We have formed an NGO to deliver millions of dollars of aid, including food, medical and school supplies, to needy people. We have built various alliances and hope to continue to do so in order to expand our activities. We hope to do more for the needy, and build bridges of understanding.

U.S. Sterilizer Corporation: Rotary was founded by successful businessmen who saw no conflict between making money and doing good. Rotary can bring a lot to this project. We support win-win situations. I am here both as a Rotarian and as an inventor. One problem in developing countries is healthcare. Most fatalities related to operations are a result of post-operative infections. I have developed a sterilizer that requires five percent of the energy of a normal sterilizer. It is ready to be distributed, and can be produced for about \$200 each.

UN Global Compact: The statements so far have two strands: one is philanthropy, and the second is strategic marketing, and is directly beneficial to corporations, using the forces of the market to benefit the rural poor. The group should determine which strand we will follow. I would suggest following the latter strand. The Global Compact-UNDP joint meeting last week focused on supply-chain management. Multi-stakeholder initiatives are trying to use the market to help people. How can we identify and incorporate these programmes? Company investment is also important. We went to CEO's with the list of least-developed countries, and asked for involvement to increase investment. Madagascar will be one of the pilot countries for this. Though this initiative will not be profitable right away, it should be in five years.

Water-life: Suggestion: there needs to be a business-case in this. The goal of my own programme is developing this business-case. We find that corporations all want the same thing. We should involve the Conference Board, Columbia University, etc. We would be more than happy to help in further developing this Alliance.

UN/DESA: This discussion is meant to be free-flowing, and is intended to develop the concept of the proposed Alliance. We need to think of the range of UN work, the dynamic of business and investment, and the role of the ECOSOC. The discussion aims toward making something practical, founded on sustainability, and linking with existing efforts.

Research Consortium on Africa: We would like to talk with private organizations interested in bringing damaged land back to a farmable level, and improving access to potable water.

World Monitors: We have heard discussions of information technology, and the need for profitability. Technology for farming is one of the most basic areas in which people should focus, because it can have such a substantial impact on the productivity of land.

Rotary: The initiative will be successful only through strong support by companies. Over the next weeks, we should find a dozen or so multinationals and others interested in working with this group. Maybe Land O' Lakes can help with this. We also need to put together a working group. Beginning this afternoon, we can initiate a small working group.

European Commission: I have two points. Firstly, I would encourage ECOSOC to stay away from too much structure at the beginning. I believe the formation of an informal Alliance is of significant importance. We don't want to develop complex rules or to bring in lawyers at this stage. My second point is that we should mainly involve business and professional persons in the Alliance.

UN/DESA: (Answering a question of the number of contacts made so far) The group today, about 45 people, is a good mix of representatives from companies, business associations, NGOs, UN entities and delegations who are all here by invitation. The full list of those contacted so far includes about 120 names from a broad range of organizations. They have all made expressions of initial interest, but many are far away from the New York area and so were unable to attend today's meeting.

ICC: We should avoid, in the early stages, anything rigid or institutional. We need to assume that those who have expressed interest are regarded as associated. No formal membership requirements should be developed. No contributions should be required. We in the ICC have some general questions about how the Alliance would work, who is eligible, what the emphasis will be, etc. That can be discussed later. NGO's have been invited to this meeting, but the proposal on the table mentions them very little. We need to ensure that NGO's are involved because of their significant expertise on the ground.

Ambassador Andrianarivelo: Thank you for coming. We invite those interested to stay for a smaller meeting upstairs in the Delegates' Lounge.

### **Agreements Reached**

*On the basis of discussions in the main meeting and the smaller meeting, the following points have been agreed:*

- 1 – A breakfast meeting will be organized at ECOSOC in Geneva, for discussions with additional interested parties on the morning of 3 July. The purpose would be to continue working on initial steps for the proposed Alliance, subsequent to adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. Further details will be made available.
- 2 – Ambassador Andrianarivelo (Madagascar) will serve as team leader for carrying forward the proposed Alliance. Ambassador Richardson (European Commission) has also expressed his support and willingness to become engaged in the effort.

- 3 – More contacts will be made on an informal basis during the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC in Geneva, sounding out businesses, NGOs and delegations to ensure viability of the idea and broad participation.
- 4 – In developing thoughts on the priorities for the Alliance, emphasis will be put on Madagascar and the business-related aspects of rural development that are especially relevant in that country. This should help in sharpening the focus of attention, and in striving for a definite practical impact.
- 5 – In further exploring the idea of the Alliance, constant attention would be given to the role of ECOSOC for encouragement of stakeholder dialogue, for policy formulation, for coordination, and for stimulation of international cooperation.

DS 20 June 03

### **Attendance at 18 June 2003 Alliance Meeting**

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| Land O' Lakes, Inc.   | Kristin Penn          | Krpenn@landolakes.com              |
| Metlife; and Rotaract of UN                                 | Shiv Trivedi          | strivedi@metlife.com               |
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