



**“Enhancing UN-Business Collaboration”  
Breakfast Meeting of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes  
Co-hosted by the UN Global Compact, UNDP and UNIDO**

**2007 United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit  
Geneva, Palais des Nations  
July 6, 2007 7:30 am - 9:00am**

**Meeting Report**

**1. Overview**

- Participants: Senior-level representatives from 25 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes including 6 UN Heads of their respective Organizations.
- Chair: Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP
- Facilitators: Martin Reeves (BCG), Adrian McKemey (BCG), Soren Petersen (Global Compact Office), Melissa Powell (Global Compact Office)
- Guiding Questions for the Discussion:
  - What are your **perceptions** of the 2007 UN Global Compact Leaders Summit as it relates to the current state of UN-business partnerships?
  - What are the major **challenges** your Organization and/or the UN System as a whole is confronting?
  - What **actions** are needed to address the key obstacles?
- Background document compiled in advance of the breakfast which summarizes the strategies, activities and commitments by 21 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes across the System regarding their collaboration with the private sector.

**2. Summary of Round-Table Discussions**

**A) Perceptions**

- Some participants felt that too often the UN is positioned as needing help from the ‘wonderful’ private sector while implicitly ‘white washing’ business.
- It was also posited that beyond Global Compact participating companies receiving recognition for engaging with the UN, the UN itself may also be gaining in terms of its own public perception by appearing more pragmatic and action-oriented.
- The group felt that presentations during the first day of the Summit tended to over-generalise the many dimensions of partnerships, noting that the mission and nature of each UN Agency, Fund and Programme’s activities with the private sector is highly varied, for instance:
  - Modalities vary from funding, to hybrid business models, to policy and norms-setting.



- Issues and opportunities vary greatly from global corporations to the less attended constituency of SMEs.
- Solutions are different from short term fixes to long term structural solutions
- There was broad-based acknowledgement of need for meaningful engagement by the UN with the private sector.

## **B) Challenges**

### **i) Strategy**

- The UN's potential 'value add' to the private sector is not clear. There is a need to create clarity on where UN and business aims coincide and where they diverge. The UN should more clearly articulate the unique competitive advantage and role of UN in relation to business
- There is a need to ensure that the value of the UN brand is preserved and enhanced through mechanisms for collaboration.
- The UN brand has not only positive connotations. Although the brand is one of credibility and global reach, many private sector representatives view the UN as overly bureaucratic. The value of the UN brand is very different across geographies.
- The UN should better recognise that a "partnership" should be viewed in a way where each partner gains from the collaboration (the UN should not be seen as the sole beneficiary).

### **ii) Transparency and Communication**

- The commonality and diversity of the UN system is not clearly articulated and therefore interfaces are not easily understood either by the private sector or within the UN. External actors do not understand how to engage with the UN due to a lack of clear concepts and communication..
- The UN needs to ensure that forums such as the Global Compact Leaders Summit are substantive to avoid unconditional and superficial evangelism around CSR and 'collaboration'.

### **iii) Management and Evaluation**

- The UN needs to create measurability and transparency around commitments and outcomes when it comes to partnerships with business. Metrics for partnership success do not exist. Although every UN agency's development activity now has a strong focus on outputs and outcomes, competition for resource mobilization is perceived to have obstructed a shared approach to quantifying the value extracted from partnerships.
- There is a need for greater organizational transparency and learning around what forms of UN-business collaborations exist, what works, what doesn't and why.



## **C) Actions/Next steps**

### **i) Strategy**

- A common strategic framework for engagement with private sector needs to be discussed at the highest levels within the UN and the outcomes of this meeting should be put forward to the CEB.
- Such a common strategic framework would include clearly specified aims of the Organization in the area of UN-business partnerships and how the Organization should adapt in order to develop more effective partnerships. The diversity and commonality of the UN could be captured in a simple framework segmenting strategic intent, value proposition and modalities of engagement with the private sector.
- Each UN Agency, Fund and Programme needs to take steps to develop their own strategic approach to collaboration with business. Only then will the UN system be in a position to develop a more coherent system-wide strategy.
- The UN needs to be more careful regarding the risks of partnerships. “The UN is selling its brand too cheaply”. There should be a check on corporate performance and the match as a partner. UN Guidelines (e.g., on logo use) need to be better implemented and observed.
- The UN’s Resident Coordinator System at the country level doesn’t involve the private sector which creates a notable gap given there is no real entry point for business at the country-level.

### **ii) Transparency and Communication**

- Efforts should be made to help business better understand the goals and objectives of the UN and the UN should make additional efforts to highlight the business case for companies to engage with the Organization.
- The Global Compact should play a greater “broker” role to help link companies with parts of the UN system that may be able to engage with them in partnership. GC should also play a greater role within the UN system, convene such meetings of UN staff working in this area, networking, GC should strengthen its networks with all UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes over and above those which are “core agencies”.

### **iii) Management and Evaluation**

- The UN needs to further facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned across the UN System with a view to enhancing collaboration across UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes. Currently there is very little information-sharing system wide.
- The UN should further explore partnership selection criteria system-wide. Additional efforts are needed to revise the UN-business guidelines.
- The UN could begin the process of measuring partnership value and relevance by establishing intent to rank partners based on the performance of specific projects.



- The UN could take a number of additional steps to improve its partnering capacity including: increased staff training (in many cases UN staff don't have the skill set to interact with the private sector) and secondments with the private sector. There is still a lot of work to be done in order to change the mindset of many UN staff to see the potential of UN-business partnerships and to build the capacity to scale-up successful initiatives.

### **3. Chairman's Summary**

- The UN has great value as a platform to convene and guide business actions that can contribute to the goals of the UN.
  - The UN is grossly underselling its brand within the existing partnerships and in its communication toward the private sector.
  - There is no clarity of purpose and no systemic approach to business partnerships across the UN System.
  - There needs to be a much more focussed discussion on the role of partnerships, the policies within and across agencies and the strategy for private sector engagement at the CEB level. The outcomes of this meeting should be put forward to the CEB for further discussion and action.
  - Each UN Agency, Fund and Programme should continue to advance its own strategy and processes of private sector engagement while at the same time sharing experiences and lessons learned across the System.
- \* Also note the plenary speech made by Achim Steiner on the topic of UN-business partnerships during the Global Compact Leaders Summit. The speech can be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/webcast/globalcompact/archive.asp?go=070706>



## BACKGROUND

### Role of the UN Global Compact Office

The Global Compact Office (GCO) plays an important role in strengthening UN-business collaboration across the Organization in three key areas. First, the GCO contributes to the development of the UN's policies and practices in the area of partnerships with the private sector. Second, the GCO supports UN entities in their efforts to engage business by facilitating learning and capacity-building among UN staff working with the private sector. Finally, the GCO acts as a catalyst for the promotion of responsible corporate citizenship within the Organization and provides support to the UN in its efforts to internalize the GC principles into its own operations.

Increasingly the UN System is using the Global Compact as the values-based platform for engagement with the private sector. Its light governance structure, combined with operational flexibility and the focus on pragmatic solution-finding has helped the Compact to become the largest worldwide initiative of its kind. Its universal values are firmly embedded in the Organization's mission and objectives, providing both a strong moral compass and a practical framework for action.

#### A) Policy Development

##### **- Development of the “Guidelines for cooperation between the United Nations and the business community”**

The Global Compact played a critical role in the initiation and development of the “Guidelines for cooperation between the United Nations and the business community” which were issued by the Secretary-General in July 2000. The Guidelines, which have now been widely adopted by the UN system, recognize that the Global Compact provides an overall value framework for co-operation with the business community and that the principles of the Compact should be used by UN organizations as a point of reference when choosing a business partner. The Global Compact Office has recently launched an effort to collaborate with entities from across the System to revise the UN-business guidelines. A number of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes have also developed supplementary guidelines.

##### **- Secretary-General Reports to the General Assembly “Towards Global Partnerships”**

Since 2000, the GCO has been the functional entity within the UN Secretariat charged with preparing the Secretary-General's report under the item “Towards Global Partnerships”, focused on ways of enhancing cooperation between the UN and all relevant partners, in particular, the private sector. Three such reports have been prepared and presented to date:

- “Cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector” (A/56/323)



- “Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector” (A/58/227)

- “Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector” (A/60/214)

Each has entailed in-depth consultations and a comprehensive stock-taking exercise of experiences in the area of partnerships across the UN system. Two of these reports were also issued by the UN Department of Public Information as UN sales publications: “Building Partnerships: Cooperation between the United Nations system and the private sector” (2000) and “Business Unusual: Facilitating United Nations Reform through Partnerships” (2005).

## **B) Facilitating learning and capacity-building across the UN System**

The GCO also facilitates information-sharing and capacity-building across the UN System in order to support UN staff to more effectively engage in partnerships with the private sector. New forms of engagement with businesses also advance UN reform by providing the Organization with exposure to improved management practices - thus becoming a powerful catalyst for continued institutional innovation across the System.

### **- Guidance and referrals to UN colleagues in the context of their work with business**

On an ongoing basis, the GCO offers advice, guidance and referrals to UN colleagues in the context of their work with business. On several occasions, UN Divisions/Offices and Programmes have sought advice, recommendations and expertise from the GCO in this area. For example, the GCO has provided speakers to represent the private sector at a variety of UN high level events and conferences.

### **- UN System Private Sector Focal Points Meetings**

The Global Compact has played an integral role in convening and facilitating UN System Private Sector Focal Points meetings since the inaugural event in 1998 in Turin, co-hosted by the UN System Staff College. These meetings are designed to offer UN staff working with business an opportunity to share recent experiences, identify and analyze innovative approaches, and assess core competencies and learning needs in order to facilitate partnership capacity-building and mainstreaming within the UN system.

### **- New UN-business website platform**

In response to the growing consensus across the UN System that greater efforts should be made by the UN to showcase potential engagement opportunities to non-state actors, especially the private sector, the UN Global Compact Office, OCHA and UNFIP have been collaborating with a group of 10 United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes and the international NGO Global Hand to develop a new UN-Business website platform stemming from the UN’s homepage. The new design and software will provide user-friendly language and logic as well as an interactive platform through which the United Nations can more proactively engage with business actors. This soon-to-be launched website will showcase the UN’s diversity, while at the same time, highlighting its unity and responsiveness by directing users to the information they seek from one central platform.



**- Building the foundation for “smart selectivity” of partnerships with the greatest potential though systematic impact assessment**

The Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT) was developed jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP), the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Global Compact, with the support of the Boston Consulting Group, to assess the sustainability and impact of UN-Business partnerships. The tool, designed for both UN and corporate partners, enables project managers assess a project’s development prospects ex-ante, and will enhance understanding of the expected performance of partnerships.

**- Quarterly electronic newsletter “The UN-business Focal Point”**

In April 2006, the GCO launched a UN system-wide electronic newsletter, "The UN-Business Focal Point", which is published on a quarterly basis. This newsletter, which includes contributions from UN staff working with business from across the Organization, provides UN private sector focal points with the latest news, tools, resources and upcoming events concerning the UN System's engagement with the private sector. By enhancing communication, strengthening education and improving collaboration across the UN, this project is making a significant contribution to enhancing the UN's ability to work in partnership with business.

**- Dissemination of good practice through the new publication "Joining Forces for Change: Demonstrating Innovation and Impact through UN-Business Partnerships"**

This publication profiles a broad spectrum of partnerships by 20 companies with 17 different United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes, which are helping to address significant global challenges. The guide is designed to inspire others to recognise the win-win potential of partnerships and the value of collaboration with the United Nations.

**- The "Business Guide to Partnering with NGOs and the UN"**

This Guide will systematically identify the leading non-profit social actors from around the world that have demonstrated skill and excellence in partnering with companies, and in so doing, will seek to assist in the selection and formation of future partnerships among companies, NGOs and the UN.

**C) Supporting the UN in its efforts to Internalize the Global Compact principles**

In order to preserve the UN’s credibility as the architect of the GC initiative, and in response to challenges by leaders from civil society and the private sector, the Secretary-General requested that a review be carried out to explore the extent to which the Organization could embrace the Global Compact’s principles. Following a review process, “The Right Road” Report was issued in February 2004 and at the Global Compact Leaders Summit in June 2004, Ms. Bertini (USG for Management) announced that there was much scope for the UN to explicitly embrace the principles. An Advisory Group and four specialized Working Groups were subsequently established in the areas of Investment Management; Facilities Management; Procurement; and Human Resources. The Global Compact has been supporting such efforts.