

Speech by Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
General Discussion on Partnerships
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Your Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to participate in this general discussion on partnerships. Increased networking has lent significance to this topic. Actually, with one stroke on the computer keyboard, we can affect the lives of many globally through the exchange of expertise, education, offering healthcare and information and conducting financial transactions. **Our actions are no longer confined or isolated within demographic or geographic boundaries.**

In our quest and common effort towards fulfilling and enhancing our development goals –the Millennium Development Goals- we find technological devices at our service that help in this effort **by supplying us with the means to reach the farthest points and the highest levels of efficiency and creativity.**

I can say that the twin goals of the march towards development are the (enhancing of) the community and the economy, which are naturally interrelated. Also, the different elements in the developmental environment are tied together with a cause-and-effect relationship. Every element plays a role in every action and consequent reaction in this environment. Technological advancement in different areas has increased our role and the effect we have in this environment. We all have an interest, and we only have this one environment so we must preserve it. This is why we are here. So how can we fulfill our role in a more efficient fashion? How do we use the tools of the 21st century to fulfill these developmental goals more effectively?

Therefore, I'd like to limit my discussion on partnerships within the context of the UN ICT Task Force (i.e. UN Information & Technology Task Force), and through the expertise of this team, of which I'm proud to be vice-chair. From our experiences on the task force, we praise the recommendations prepared by the Global Compact office, and I specifically would like to mention the following recommendations:

-Recognizing that those with different interests have different types of authority or resources or both that they can bring to the table – I would rather use the term “skills”.

We should enter these partnerships with a clear understanding of what we can offer, what our core skills are, and suggest that contributions take place with each person employing his/her skill sets.

For the purpose of fulfilling goals in one of the development areas, there is a need for team spirit. Building a community isn't that difficult, but communities must have

something in common as far as culture and mutual trust that evolves over time. Effective partnerships start with a certain degree of trust.

The task force I'm a part of has been working closely together since 2001. I can confidently say that during the past couple of years, we've reached a good level of understanding one another and the developmental goals each of us desires. We have evolved a keen sense of teamwork and mutual trust. Lately through this group, a partnership was formed between the governments of Ireland and Sweden to launch and develop the Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (**GeSCI**). This initiative is an educational program that aims to combine the efforts of ministries of education, local officials, domestic NGOs and local businesses to design household educational solutions, to ensure that communities get the education and ICT skills needed to compete in the global economy and society.

Another one of the Global Compact Office's recommendations is:
Having a common vision and a clear commitment to the partnership objectives and enough common interest to fulfill these goals.

Our team, the ICT Task Force, realized –since its launch- that the framework which defines its actions is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals represented our “North Star” if you will, that directed our actions. The following became our common vision: How can we utilize technology to serve the MDGs?

We designed a curriculum with two tracks: **regional networks and working groups**. The job of the local networks is facilitating the means for our work and ensuring there is a domestic curriculum with an overall regional feel for our evolutionary assignment. We have five regional networks; in Africa, the Arab world, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe. In the Arab region network for example, a working group was formed that comprised of numerous parties that had an interest at stake, with the objective of coordinating, helping and facilitating the role of ICT in regional evolution and defending this role. This group organized national consultative meetings in the region, the most recent of which was on June 14, 2003 in Lebanon. There, a large number of national and international delegations from both the public and private sectors and civil society, in addition to academic sectors worked together to help Lebanon in its march towards the electronic world.

Working groups provide guidance that is dependent on the issues of interest related to our actions in different areas. This guidance is to address: ICT policies and the systems that regulate it, national and regional electronic policies, developing human resources and capacity-building, inexpensive communication, business projects and investment partnerships.

Each of these groups has its own community and partnerships that allow us to focus on our work.

In addition to the suggestions of the Global Compact, I advise that those with particular interests enter into these partnerships with an open, creative and flexible agenda, so that we can learn and benefit from each other. For example, governments and NGOs can benefit from the level of potency tied into business transactions, and governments and businesses can benefit from the access to and credibility of NGOs. Businesses and NGOs

can benefit from the expansion of government's capabilities and the infrastructure and the nationalistic political curriculum of governments.

The formation of partnerships can provide unified capabilities of considerable effect towards fulfilling continuous evolution. The ICT Task Force benefits from the UN infrastructure, reliability and ability to access different entities. Accordingly the task force increased the margins of creativity and the variety of expertise among different sectors.

While the composition of the task force is fixed at the current time, those with an interest can contribute in its work the working groups and regional networks whose membership is flexible and depends primarily on the expected contribution to its action plan.

There is much that needs to be learned about the strength and effect of partnerships among those involved. While each relationship is unique, how do partners act to ensure efficiency and the achievement of desired goal? I suggest that the time is right to experiment and be creative.

I welcome you ideas, and ask you to think about the methods that the ICT Task Force can work with you to fulfill our expectations within the MDGs.

Our experience over the past 2 years shows that there are 3 major factors for the success of any partnership:

- 1- The necessity for clarity and focus on the desired objectives.
- 2- A complete and permanent commitment on behalf of all partners towards the objectives.
- 3- A desire to work together and committing to provide both financial and human resources to achieve the goal of the partnership.

The ICT Task Force was able to mobilize these factors in some major ICT areas for development, which led to tangible results. Yet there is much to be done in other areas, especially in relation to having ICT reach a global audience at an affordable price, realizing capacity building and enhancing local content. We are working diligently in moving the partnership towards these goals, and the best example of this is the Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (**GeSCI**), which was mentioned earlier. This program aims to improve the educational system in developing countries following a well-structured curriculum and connecting all schools to ICT, enforcing training programs for teachers, and developing local content in schools such that ICT is utilized in the service of society. It is expected that the initiative will be launched at the World Summit on Information Society, and is expected to be a qualitative contributing factor in fulfilling MDGs in the field of education.

Thank you.