

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Statement**

**by**

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**at**

**UNECE International PPP Forum**

**“How do we make People-first PPPs fit for purpose for the SDGs?”**

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**09:30 to 09:45, Salle XVIII**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to bid you a cordial welcome to the Fourth International PPP forum “*The Last Mile: Promoting People-first PPPs for the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”. A big thank you especially to those who have come long distances to be here.

Three years ago, UNECE started a journey to make Public-Private Partnerships for infrastructure more compliant with the SDGs - ‘fit for purpose’. SDG 17 has expressly identified PPP as a preferred tool for the 2030 Agenda. But PPPs have not always been up to the development challenge.

Accordingly, the UNECE decided to revise the PPP model. We’re changing it to ‘value for people’; not just ‘value for money’. We have made good progress. We have concluded important standards, such as the one on a Zero Tolerance Approach to Corruption in PPP Procurement, as well as standards on PPPs in Road, Rail and Renewable Energy. We also have the Guiding Principles on People-first PPPs, which set down the institutional requirements for such projects. However, we still have the **last mile to reach**.

We have, ladies and gentlemen, identified three milestones for this Forum, to achieve this last mile.

The first milestone is **making the People-first model more operational**.

I can report that several countries are now doing precisely this, and are putting People-first outcomes in their infrastructure plans and legislation. But the number of such countries is still limited. We still need to do more for wider dissemination of the People-first PPP approach.

We will create a project impact assessment tool which can distinguish which are PPPs for high-quality, People-first infrastructure projects. These projects must fulfil several criteria. They must:

- improve access to critical services for the unserved and achieve greater social equality;
- be economically effective;
- be environmentally sustainable and enhance climate resilience;

- be replicable;
- have a training component so that skills can be transferred and lead to further projects; and
- engage with all stakeholders.

Also, we should consider whether these criteria are of equal weight or whether some are more important? For example, are projects which are economically effective worthier than those which engage with stakeholders? Economists might say yes. But the SDGs require a new mentality and a new means of delivering projects– not ‘top down’ but involving end users. So stakeholder engagement, arguably, deserves at least equal weight.

Projects also need to be recognised as contributing to the SDGs. They should carry a ‘statement of intent’ mentioning this at the origin. But how and who should do this? Often, companies announce that their projects are contributing to sustainable development. But with the passing of time, this commitment is often forgotten. How can we avoid this? Should the project’s statement of intent come from the CEO and the very top of the company?

Moving on, in order to make the People first model more operational, we are also launching a project facilitation hub.

Policy guidance is not enough for delivering impact and real projects on the ground. There is still a big funding gap for the kinds of projects we need. Therefore, we propose a Project Facilitation Hub to help governments bridge this gap.

The Hub would invite Governments to submit project ideas and help make these ideas bankable. What kind of projects? For example:

- Projects that provide clean and safe drinking water: This is one of the great challenges of the 2030 Agenda.
- Projects that can meet acute needs: People-first PPPs can, for example, turn waste and debris from refugee camps and into energy to power the camps.
- Infrastructure projects that integrate wellbeing and health. We are told we need more exercise, but our streets are jammed with cars. Air pollution

kills millions. We need to organise our cities with People-first projects, for effective and healthy mobility such as with bikes or metro rail.

Operationalizing the People-first PPP model also requires working with new partners. I am delighted to announce the readiness of our colleagues from the Economic Commission for Africa to host the next PPP Forum. We look forward to holding future fora in partnership with the other Regional Commissions as well.

Regional initiatives such as the Belt & Road also have a role to play. To our delight, at the recent Belt and Road Forum, President Xi mentioned the importance of ‘People-first’ PPP for infrastructure in his speech. Indeed, at the same Forum, Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General declared that only fifty percent of the SDG’s will be achieved according to current estimates; and called on the Belt and Road initiative to breathe new life into the 2030 Agenda for the future of our planet.

I mentioned three milestones for this Forum, with the first being further operationalization of the People-first PPP model. **The second milestone is increasing the collaboration between the public and private sectors.**

I am pleased that we have a special session devoted to mobilising the banks behind the People-first PPP concept. Banks are critically important in doing the due diligence for projects. With proper due diligence, projects are much less likely to fail. So let us ask banks to help.

We also urge companies working with us join the UN Global Compact. This is an important body that is critical for the success of the SDGs.

We need pilots or champions to illustrate our work – there is an ongoing programme to achieve 500 People-first projects. We encourage governments, the private sector and civil society to submit further projects. As we increase the number of projects in our database, this can become an indicator for the extent to which SDG 17 and PPPs are being respected by governments. Pilot projects moreover can show that People-first PPPs are genuinely more than just words. They can feed back into better guidance and better capacity building.

And now we come to our third and final milestone for this Forum: **Identifying ways to increase stakeholder engagement in People-first PPPs.**

We need meaningful and sustained consultation, and participation by end users and local stakeholders in decision making. This must be a deliberative process, from design to implementation and evaluation. ‘People-first’ should result in improved outcomes for end users and citizens, through improved service, quality, accessibility and affordability.

This, then, is our journey for the next three days. It is an important journey for the success of the SDGs. Let us redouble our efforts. Let us work together to achieve the last mile.

Thank you.