

First High-Level Meeting

Opening Remarks

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Your Excellency, President Peña Nieto,
Secretary-General Ban,
Minister Meade,
Distinguished Co-Chairs,
UNDP Administrator Helen Clark,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by acknowledging the role of President Peña Nieto and his government in hosting this meeting, as well as the efforts of our three Co-Chairs – Armida Alisjahbana, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and Justine Greening – who have helped bring the Partnership to life in its first two years of existence.

It is fitting that this meeting is being held in Mexico, which has undertaken the most impressive package of reforms, showing that nations do best when they lead by example; when they get their act together politically; when they aim for ambitious policies which reflect best practices.

As 2015 approaches, the global economy is at a crossroads

Important advances have been made in human development: more than half a billion people have risen out of poverty in the last 20 years. But we need to re-double our efforts, especially given our commitments next year: to agree a post-2015 framework; to address climate change; and to tackle gender equality.

We need to do much, much more.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Busan, we changed gears: broadening a discussion that was previously focused on “aid”, to one that places effective aid within a broader package of policies, and that focuses on partnerships that matter for development effectiveness.

Existing commitments on aid and development matter

But, beware! We must not use this broader agenda as an excuse to back away from prior commitments on aid. For some people, aid can make the difference between life and death. At the time of the Busan High Level Forum, aid volumes from members of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee had hit a record high, only to fall again in the two years that followed. I am therefore particularly pleased that figures released by the OECD only last week showed that official development assistance rose again by 6.1% in 2013, reaching 135 billion US Dollars – a record

high. I am not sure whether there is a correlation here, but I cannot help but wonder whether the imminence of another high level meeting had anything to do with this strong effort!

In Busan, many of you volunteered to participate in a global monitoring exercise, which the OECD and UNDP are proud to have supported. The final report – released two weeks ago – shows that the pace of change has been far too slow, particularly when it comes to some of the aid-focused commitments made by donors in Paris, Accra and Busan.

More and better co-operation to strengthen institutions and raise domestic revenue

This brings me to my next point: we should use development co-operation in ways that help countries strengthen their own institutions and capacities, including the capacity to raise revenues.

For example, with a clear vision and well-targeted support from its international partners, Rwanda built its revenue authority almost from scratch, increasing domestic revenue from 9% of GDP in 1998 to over 15% of GDP last year. , - We have similar examples of the high returns to investment in tax from OECD projects on transfer pricing in countries such as Colombia and Kenya, for example.

We still invest less than 0.1% of all aid in efforts to improve tax policy and administration. Why is this? What would it take to agree to double – or even triple – the amounts donor countries invest to help developing countries raise their own revenues? Isn't this something we could all agree to do here, right now, in Mexico City?

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OECD is accelerating and deepening its efforts to make the international tax system fairer; to help tackle tax evasion; and to curb illicit financial flows. For example, at the invitation of the G20 Finance Ministers, we have developed an action plan to address tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS). Earlier this year, we presented a new single standard for the automatic exchange of information for tax purposes – an important step forward in the fight against tax evasion. And we are scaling up an initiative called Tax Inspectors Without Borders, which will see tax experts being deployed to support the work of tax authorities in developing countries.

We need to forge a new multilateralism for development

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to design a new multilateralism for development, built on the spirit of solidarity enshrined in the Millennium Declaration. It needs to break down bureaucratic barriers. It needs to be truly multi-stakeholder. It needs to encourage leaders to come to the table in a “race to the top” for development.

The initiative taken by private foundations to develop Guidelines for Effective Philanthropic Engagement is one encouraging development. It shows how the Global Partnership continues to grow.

The OECD is working hand-in-hand with UNDP and with the United Nations family to support the Global Partnership. We are responding to a call from 161 countries and 56 organisations to make sure the MDGs and their successors are implemented, and that poverty becomes a scourge of the past. I am encouraged, Secretary-General Ban, by your strong personal commitment to this Partnership. Count on us!

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I encourage you to use the next two days to show how all of this can be done in practice; to turn commitments into action; and above all, to come closer to ending poverty, to reducing inequality in all its forms, and to addressing environmental sustainability. In short: Better Policies for Better Lives.

Thank you.