

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
22 January 2019

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships****Thirteenth session**

Geneva, 25-27 March 2019

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

Implementation of the Programme of Work:**Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships****Putting the Guiding Principles on People-first Public-Private Partnerships into practice****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The following document contains a number of suggested policy recommendations¹ aimed at governments to voluntarily follow if they are interested in implementing the ten Guiding Principles on People-first PPPs (contained in document ECE/CECI/2019/5), in response to paragraph 48 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.²

The Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships at its second session in November 2018 endorsed the document and requested the secretariat to submit it to the Committee for approval.

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¹ The UNECE PPP standards, guiding principles, best practices, declarations and recommendations are adopted by acclamation by the UNECE intergovernmental bodies – the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships – and do not impose any obligations on member States as their implementation is entirely voluntary.

² The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is available at:
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/frameworks/addisababaactionagenda>

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I. Introduction

1. It is not sufficient to identify the most urgent challenges (e.g. poor, non-inclusive infrastructure policies, inadequate PPP processes and procedures, inadequate consultation mechanisms etc.) and defining principles and guidance, but there is also a need to take steps to try and fix the problem, that is, put the principles into practice. The following is a list of recommendations to implement each of the principles that are available to governments that wish to make reforms. The list is not exhaustive and could complement ongoing policy initiatives at the national and regional levels in various jurisdictions.³

Principle 1 – Build into infrastructure strategies the People-first transformative agenda, making sure that peoples’ needs are listened to

2. People-first PPPs obviously start with the people, who should be able to protect their rights and interests. People should be better informed of their rights to access good services and consulted on whether they accept, reject or want to revise a PPP project. Governments should therefore develop new innovative ways of engaging with the people to make them participate in the decision-making process at all stages of the PPP delivery process.

Principle 2 – Deliver more, better, simpler People-first projects by joining up government and allowing cities and other local levels to develop projects themselves

A. Projects

3. The following actions could help mainstreaming People-first PPP projects:
- **10 flagship People-first projects** could be developed and implemented. These should have major transformational impacts at different levels and sizes. These projects should demonstrate how embracing innovation and new technologies can have major transformational impacts. The use of mobile phones, for example, increased radically access to services to vulnerable groups, especially women, which helped overcoming their social and geographical isolation and gave them self-development opportunities.
 - Governments, the private sector and civil society have already submitted **130 “People-first Projects” into the UNECE database**. These concrete case studies inform different stakeholders about the approach that can be replicated elsewhere while the data base itself gives recognition to those submitting projects. The People-first PPP case studies database needs to be expanded and upgraded with adequate resources.
 - There needs also to be a **new impact assessment methodology** that identifies and validates the indicators of People-first PPPs.
 - An **international prize/award for the best People-first PPP project** could be established to give publicity to the “People-first” approach and celebrate the accomplishments of the model towards social and environmental sustainability across different sectors: water and sanitation, transport, etc.

³ The Joint Multilateral Development Bank platform SOURCE for assistance to infrastructure project preparation is a generic software that could be leveraged to disseminate the present UNECE Principles and help governments to implement them on a day to day practical basis. <https://public.sif-source.org/>

B. Implement UNCTAD’s action package for a new generation of investment promotion and facilitation

4. UNCTAD’s action package for investment promotion and facilitation could be customized to the requirements of People-first PPPs by national authorities. Sustainable development projects (i.e. in infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.) usually require intensified efforts for investment promotion and facilitation. The most frequent constraint faced by potential investors in sustainable development projects is the lack of concrete proposals of sizeable, impactful, and bankable projects. PPP units could join efforts with promotion authorities in the marketing of a pipeline of projects with priority support at the highest political level.

Principle 3 – Increase officials’ skills in delivering People-first projects, particularly ensuring that governments know how to better empower women in projects as well as encouraging the private sector to contribute to the necessary transfer of skills.

5. Developing People-first PPPs will require more effective capacity building for governments – top to bottom - than has heretofore been available:

A. A UN International Centre of Excellence for People-first PPP capacity building

6. Since 2012, there has been a UNECE International Centre of Excellence on PPP capacity building approved by the UNECE intergovernmental structures. This body could be scaled up and become part of the UN as a whole. For this to happen, the UN regional commissions, UNCTAD, other UN bodies, as well as governments would need to play a stronger role as well as civil society, especially with regards to sharing tools and instruments. The Centre is supported by international specialist PPP centres covering different sectors and approved by their respective government. While these centres are welcome developments in capacity building and in collecting case studies and offering training to governments, these should become operational as soon as possible. Focus should be made on implementation, rather than just the creation of theoretical examples. Exclusivity should not be given to the sectoral centres. After all, no single centre realistically has the resources to cover the whole world. Rather centres can be set up in different regions of the world and cover the needs of both developed and developing countries in triangular forms of cooperation. An improved One UN approach could help develop the right governance so that PPPs fit for purpose and capacity is enabled across the globe.

B. Smart spending on capacity building

7. Government donors have a tendency to provide funding for one-off projects which impact for the country development is limited. Instead, a smarter way would be to allocate resources to project-oriented capacity building so that the impact is greater, and the money better spent.

8. Capacity building should include technical support throughout the project life cycle. This means not only providing support for the enabling environment but also by creating projects that make an impact on the 2030 Agenda. Capacity building should deliver results for development. Therefore, capacity building should be orientated towards developing the right policies and strategies for People-first PPPs and developing a pipeline of projects that meet the People-first PPP outcomes. Digital tools are key to enhance this endeavour.

C. The private sector

9. The private sector could do more to help the capacity building effort. In the case of women's empowerment,⁴ for example, it should work with the public sector to ensure that output specifications of projects address the special challenges women face in their daily lives. It should also include more women in project teams as project officers/leaders and involve them at all stages of project design, delivery and financing. To this effect, private companies could adopt the UNECE four-point plan to empower women within and outside companies in PPP projects.⁵ Such work can be done with local and national women empowerment organizations working together to set international targets such as an action plan to receive endorsements from companies for such an empowerment scheme.

Principle 4 – Make more inclusive policy and legal frameworks that allow for active engagement of communities and focus as well on a zero-tolerance approach to corruption

A. Zero tolerance to corruption

10. Governments could endorse the UNECE Declaration⁶ to a Zero Tolerance approach to Corruption in People-first PPP Procurement standard,⁷ thereby committing to put the recommendations contained in the standard into legislation.

B. Improve legislation and citizens involvement in PPP decision taking

11. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) legislative Guide of 2003 is currently being updated and it is highly recommended that the People-first approach be integrated therein⁸. A model law for PPP/concessions is also needed incorporating specific elements dealing with People-first approaches.⁹ In this regard, governments need to establish the consultative machinery for the full involvement of stakeholders starting with involving their citizens in legislative changes. Citizens should play an active role throughout the full life cycle of projects, starting with the design, followed by the procurement and then the operational project phases.

⁴ All stakeholders - governments, civil society, academia, international organizations and private sector - should promote women's empowerment in their respective areas of work, not just the private sector.

⁵ The four-point plan developed by ECE includes the following actions: 1. Enhance the role of women inside companies undertaking PPPs and in the PPPs themselves; 2. Help women-led companies in the supply chain compete in tenders for projects; 3. Make a difference in the communities where they do business - help young women and train them to become the business leaders of the future; and 4. Help women deal with the special challenges they face in their daily lives in the design and operational stage of the delivery of projects.

⁶ The UNECE ZTC Declaration is contained in document ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2018/4.

⁷ The UNECE ZTC Standard is contained in document ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2017/4.

⁸ UNCITRAL 2003, https://www.uncitral.org/pdf/english/texts/procurem/pfip/model/03-90621_Ebook.pdf

⁹ The UNECE has been mandated by the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (see ECE/CECI/2018/2) to set up a project team to prepare a model law for PPP/concessions. This work is being carried out with the support of EBRD and in coordination with UNCITRAL.

C. Standardize through national and international standard making

12. Governments could work to standardise their various PPP processes, common contractual clauses, other provisions and internal procedures for preparing and approving PPP projects.

13. The UNECE International PPP standards have set a benchmark. This can be the foundation for the involvement of civil society and the other UN bodies in setting the roadmap for People-first PPPs involving at the same time the UNECE associated specialist PPP centres, especially the one on law, policy and institutions.

Principle 5 – Disclose more information¹⁰ about projects to society especially on the commitments made to various partners in the project

Develop international transparency and accountability guidelines

14. An immediate next step that could be initiated by the UNECE is the review of existing studies and guidelines regarding transparency and accountability.¹¹ In case of lacunas, UNECE might complete the existing works.

15. Guidance from existing initiatives on corporate reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals could be of help in such tasks. For instance, the Sustainable Stock Exchange initiative launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2009, a joint effort by UNCTAD, the UN Global Compact, the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Finance Initiative, calls on stock exchanges to become Partner Exchanges by committing voluntarily to advance sustainability in their market. UNCTAD has provided guidance to policymakers and stock exchanges in this effort and lessons learned could be applied for mainstreaming transparency and accountability in People-first PPPs.

Principle 6 - De-risk projects by providing more predictability in the enabling environment

16. Governments, the international community and the international finance institutions should work on several fronts to lower the high risks in middle and low-income countries where the institutions and the capacity to undertake PPPs is weak. Governments could:

(a) Provide guarantees to companies that there would be adequate compensation in case of changes in contracts for reason of general interest and support for PPPs throughout the course of their investments;

(b) Undertake national reforms to make their business conditions more attractive through sound macroeconomic policies, an improved enabling environment, among others that can “de-risk” the country;

(c) Introduce incentive mechanisms in the contractual frameworks (such as viability gap funding)¹² and beneficially use legal requirements under Corporate Social

¹⁰ Excluding proprietary information.

¹¹ Various studies and guidelines can be found on the “PPP Knowledge Lab” website: pppknowledgelab.org.

¹² Viability gap funding was introduced by the Government of India to use funds appropriated from the national budget to provide upfront capital subsidies for PPP projects. Source: <https://pppknowledgelab.org/guide/sections/19-the-role-of-public-finance-in-ppps>

Responsibility, where applicable, as means to route the investments and structure projects; and

(d) Use PPP solutions that are based on local practices and competences, where applicable, rather than seeking high end technology driven solutions from developed countries. Local solutions will be much cheaper, support local manufacturers, provide local employment, and have lower maintenance costs.

17. The international finance institutions could offer more effective international risk mitigation instruments (e.g. financial guarantees and insurance) as the private sector is often confused about these instruments and how to apply them;

18. In this transition period, governments could work with other partners in innovative PPP arrangements such as public-NGO partnerships to help meet demands for essential services and to provide experiential local PPP capability and capacity development.

19. For larger and landmark programmes, governments could consider using PPP models such as the Inverted Bid Model¹³ to attract finance and to reduce risk.

Principle 7 – Set out clearly the projects’ selection criteria to promote “Value for People” so that the best People-first projects can be selected

20. Governments need to translate the People-first outcomes into tenders for projects. People-first PPP projects require higher level key performance indicators. Governments used to allow tenders to be won on price and have begun to accept other criteria for selecting such as the “most economically advantageous tender”, which includes other characteristics besides price.¹⁴ The indicators of People-first PPP criteria will vary according to the sector in which the tender is launched and should support the goals of value for people. Guidelines are needed for governments utilising the People-first approach for the selection of tenders and for the output specifications as set down in the People-first contracts.

Principle 8 – Make environmental sustainability a key component of evaluating, awarding and implementing People-first PPP projects

21. Governments could develop a strategy for finding partnerships that can mitigate the risks and adapt their infrastructure to climate change. This should include the metrics associated with the impacts needed to increase resilience (e.g. for buildings, construction etc.) and/or to survive extreme weather events (e.g. flooding, earthquakes).

22. UNCTAD’s action package for the reorientation of investment incentives could be implemented when relevant to People-first PPP projects. Accordingly, investment incentive schemes implicit in contracts could be restructured specifically to facilitate sustainable development projects as part of risk-sharing solutions. The general goal should remain to move incentives from purely “location-based” (i.e. leveraging the competitiveness of a

¹³ The Inverted Bid Model consists of an unsolicited market-led proposal where governments encourage significant private sector innovation and investment. This model might not be advisable for countries with very little or no PPP experience.

¹⁴ The Most Economically Advantageous Tender model has been implemented by the EU. This model does not only disclose the evaluation methodology but also the scoring matrix. The weighting criteria are not only based on costs, but also on quality outcomes. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance_public_proc_en.pdf

location) towards “Sustainable Development Goals-based”, (i.e. leveraging sustainability traits).¹⁵

23. The Impact Assessment Methodology for People-first PPPs being elaborated by UNECE would make a contribution to identifying those projects that are environmentally sustainable.

Principle 9 – Ensure that blended financing catalyses private partners to invest in People-first projects

24. Impact Investing is growing in importance and is critical for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. Further steps are however needed to increase its impact, and that includes the development of metrics to guide the impact investing industry. Such metrics can allow financial advisories and the lenders of People-first projects to assess the impact and encourage them to implement People-first PPP projects. But the banks and other financial institutions’ buy-in is very important. The following could be done:

- Develop an impact assessment methodology for People-first PPP; and
- Hold high level consultations with financial institutions on the appropriateness of the People-first indicators and the likelihood of them using these in their lending strategies.

25. These tools should take account of the Equator Principles adopted by financial institutions.¹⁶

Principle 10 – Avoid debt traps by ensuring the fiscal sustainability of People-first projects and the transparency of fiscal policies

26. Sustainable funding is the life blood of every PPP project and programme. After all, PPPs invite private sector participation in the delivery of public services, but the government is ultimately responsible for the delivery (and payment) for those services, either directly through availability type structures or indirectly through user pay structures where the government may appear to have less risk but ultimately is responsible if the funding or performance fails. Thus, funding sustainability is critical to long term viability of projects.

27. The following could be done by governments:

- Early assessment of budgetary and fiscal impacts of People-first PPP projects throughout the whole life-cycle;
- Transparency in funding options, risks, short and long-term guarantees and obligations, and contingent liabilities for People-first PPP projects; promotion of “on-balance” treatment in order to prevent hidden public debt; and
- Ensure long-term fiscal sustainability in all People-first PPP projects and programmes.

¹⁵ UNCTAD (2015), Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development, p. 149

¹⁶ See: <http://equator-principles.com/>