

NGOCSD-NY General Membership Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 26th 2016, 1-3:30PM at the United Nations, 2nd Floor Church Center for the UN, 777 UN Plaza

Submitted by Jun Cao for Chris Dekki

1-3:30 PM Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced the 501c3 status that NGOCSD-NY recently received. The Co-chairs announced the co-hosted meeting at the Mission of Sri Lanka next month and 2 CSW side events co-sponsored with UN DPI. Co-chairs elucidated that this month's theme for our meeting is: Advocacy & Impact Investing: Bridging the Gaps for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Margo and Yvonne introduced a video message from **Dr. David Nabarro**, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Dr. Nabarro talked through a video message and began his statement by pointing out that 2015 is an extraordinary year for global cooperation. He elucidated in detail, the agreements reached in Sendai, New York, and Paris. He spoke of the implementation as the ultimate test of the agreements' success and as the only way to turn ambitions to action. He said that global partnership can best allocate the comparative strength, abilities, and resources of countries to achieve the best result. Government, NGOs, foundations, companies, and international organizations all need to play a part in this global partnership. Dr. Nabarro also denoted that economic growth and social progress are tied. The private sector can be a great source of enchanting resources, innovation incentives, and new thinking to organizations that driving social change. Impact investment is growing in popularity as it can create real value for both investors and for society. Impact investment generates measurable social and environmental impact alongside the financial returns. The 2030 SDGs provides a platform to align private action and public policies serves to fuel a future of opportunity and prosperity for every person in this planet. Co-benefits include better health, cleaner air, national security, and improved access to clean energy. Dr. Nabarro would like to contribute to activate the activists and to harness the positive power of enterprise for sustainable development, so as to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Dr. Caleb Otto**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Palau to the UN. Dr. Caleb Otto began his statement with an introduction of the Republic of Palau. He introduced Palau's location, history, land, population and business sector. He said that Palau has small population, land and business sector. But it has a large and vibrant civil society with more than 250 registered nonprofits and more than 1,000 community based organizations. Dr. Caleb Otto elucidated in detail, seven successful public-private community partnerships for implementing SDGs in Palau. 1) Public-Civil Society partnership represented the enabling role of the public sector. Individuals and business entities are able to receive tax rebates up to 10% total tax for their charitable donation. 2) Palau's Protected Area Network fund, also called PAN fund, is a unique public-community partnership and mechanism for funding sustainable development. PAN fund derived from exit fee assessed on visitors and is earmarked to use for environmental protection. 3) Strategic partnerships are built based on shared interests. Government bodies and organizations may have different purposes but they shared same interests in creating walkable environments. (i.e. Health NGOs and Ministry of Health) 4) Civil society and Palau Conservation Society's partnership are represented through philanthropy, grants and contracts, trust fund, responsible investing, and impact investing. 5) Ebiil society is a community based organization that advocates for conservation through offering management service, conservation education for youth, and other impact investment projects. 6) Community governance enabled some traditional institutions to have a role in law making process. Dr. Caleb Otto used *Council of Chiefs* and *Mechesil Belau* as examples. 7) Community mutual support derives from a traditional insurance scheme where families support families in need. Dr. Caleb Otto said further partnership development will focus on socially responsible investing, productive investment of pooled funds, and impact investing.

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Dr. Mamadou Tangara**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Gambia to the United Nations in New York. Dr. Mamadou Tangara began his statement with a brief introduction of Gambia. He took SDGs as a platform where governments and NGOs work closely with individuals to translate visions into actions. One challenge in the translation process is the ownership issue – if there were no ownership, there is no way to make projects sustainable. Dr. Mamadou Tangara mentioned that in order to make sure the impact investment is meaningful and sustainable, it's important to establish a legal framework to guarantee the payment, and to develop diversified income sources to make sure the significant drop in one source wouldn't affect others. Dr. Mamadou Tangara closed his statement by pointing out the importance of capacity building for nonprofit organizations and the importance of SDGs 2017 to all of us.

Margo and Yvonne introduced **Ms. Minh-Thu Pham**, Executive Director for Policy at the United Nations Foundation. Ms. Minh-Thu Pham introduced the UN Foundation briefly at the beginning of her statement. UN Foundation started in late 1990s by Ted Turner, a successful entrepreneur who wanted to donate million dollars to UN. One important objective of UN Foundation is to make sure that U.S. stays being a constructive member of United Nations, and help UN to work better from a special perspective. The UN Foundation aimed at connecting UN to people, resources, and ideas and has been actively involved in bringing people together to generate a comprehensive and meaningful SDGs agenda. UN Foundation served as a resource, a conveyor, and an empower role in the SDGs process. As a resource, UN Foundation explained what's happening in the process of creating the goals and implementing the goals. As a conveyor, UN Foundation hosts meetings to get member states together and enable them to get to a better place in terms of reaching consensus and creating breakthroughs in difficult negotiations. Lastly, UN Foundation also empower member states by making sure that they have access to the best ideas, the best evidences, the best analysis, and the best expertise. Ms. Minh-Thu Pham spoke of SDGs 17' framework as the most broadly owned public agenda that sets up a normative framework (setting standards for things we all strive for), a planning framework (customize and implement), and an evaluative framework (result-oriented framework). Ms. Minh-Thu Pham pointed out that economic growth is a major factor in achieving SDG goals, but not sufficient. Three big things we learned from last year are: 1) We cannot separate development and climate; 2) No one should be left behind 3) Everyone has to be involved. Several things we should consider for SDGs: 1) Political will and advocacy: How to translate negotiated goals into action? How to create a platform to involve everyone? 2) Funding: How much does it cost us to achieve the goals? How large the potential funding gap is? 3) Policies and choices: Where do we decide to put the money? How to make sure that our money is in the right place?

Margo and Yvonne introduced, **Ms. Alexandra Akira**, the Philanthropist, Humanitarian, Environmentalist and Social Justice Entrepreneur. Ms. Alexandra Akira started her career in art, music, and entertainment industry and was an Executive in Charge of Development and Production for Viacom Entertainment. Then Ms. Alexandra Akira turned to work for globally recognized corporate commercial real estate companies and became an extremely successful real estate developer. In addition to that, Ms. Alexandra Akira and her family devoted to philanthropy and nonprofit world. She was affiliated with Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and has worked with city, state, and federal government agencies in creating economic development strategies and initiatives. Ms. Alexandra Akira initiated the New Yorkers Against Fracking to prevent oil companies from fracking people's farms and lands in the state of New York. The organization grew from 6 people to over 100,000 members across the states. Ms. Alexandra Akira also introduced several future projects/initiatives she is working on and said she is looking forward to making contributions to sustainable development with UN and NGOs in policy making and implementation process.

Ms. Akira took over as Moderator and introduced **Ms. Robyn Polansky**, the Vice President and Private Client Associate with U.S. Trust in New York. Ms. Robyn Polansky thanked the NGOCS D for the opportunity to talk to the NGO community. She started her career in Wall Street as a research analyst and portfolio manager. After realizing that she wanted to align personal values with the work she was doing, Ms. Robyn Polansky found the impact investment industry and would like to find a way to put impact investment, social entrepreneurship, SRI, ESG, and so on together. As a trained economist, Ms. Robyn Polansky found the invisible heart theory and believed the invisible heart market will guide the invisible hand to improve lives for those otherwise will be left behind. Joining the U.S. Trust and standing in a traditional world, Ms. Robyn Polansky is looking for a way to drive traditional capital to social change. She will continue to push traditional world, working with her clients and peers on Wall Street, driving capital towards the mission of social change through many different ways. She closed her speech by quoting Dr. Narobi – Private sector can be a force for change.

Ms. Akira introduced **Ms. Beth DeBeer**, the Impact Consultant and Founder of iImpact Consulting Network. She elucidated impact investing as an investment approach seeking financial returns in addition to positive social impact that can be measured. More awareness among organizations regarding the way they can invest in impact investment organizations. She took impact investment as a lens, a way to see opportunities and to make decisions. It provides a way to see how the decision we make today can impact future benefit. The second piece is a strategy. Impact investment is an investment arm to guide decision making. Lastly, impact investment is a field where there is a moving activity between people and ideas. Ms. DeBeer explained the way that impact investing relates to sustainability and advocacy. Sustainability involves environmental energy factors, social issues, governance concerns, social capital and shareholder activism. In the end, Ms. DeBeer showed the applications of impact investing in gender equality and stressed the importance of metrics and measurements to sustainable development.

Ms. Akira introduced **Mr. Avi Deutsch**, Co-Founder and CEO, LAVAN. Mr. Avi Deutsch elucidated why and how should we engage Millennials in SDGs conversation. The reason that we should care Millennials is that they are the largest generation in the workforce and they stand to inherit 59 trillion dollars. Good news is that Millennials are exposed and committed to social change. **Mr. Deutsch** pointed out the problem is that we don't know how to engage them into the conversation. Mr. Deutsch said that Millennials are looking for experiences not financial products. Three big things to engage Millennials and to create meaningful experiences for them are communities, active involvement, and transparency and accountability. More individuals are able to engage into private impact investment market due to the improved technology. He also summarized four typical features that made angel impact investing fascinating. Firstly, angel impact investing often done in a community environment. Secondly, each member must be actively involved. Thirdly, angel impact investing has high level of transparency. Lastly, funds impact entrepreneurs. Mr. Deutsch concluded that Millennials can increase by a tenfold the capital for sectors like education, healthcare, financial access, energy, waste management, and people with disabilities. Many Millennials are involved, interested, and actively pursuing to make the 2030 SDGs agenda reality.

Ms. Akira introduced **Ms. Rosa G. Lizarde**, via Skype. Ms. Lizarde is the Global Director of the Feminist Task Force. She talked to members through live stream video chat and she thanked the NGOCS D for the opportunity to be involved as a part of this event. She frames her presentation around the investment in gender equality and women empowerment, particularly speaking of women's economic empowerment. She elucidated the high level panel on women's economic empowerment launched by the general secretary in January. And she also mentioned the UN's Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She recognized that we have various forms of mandate coming from UN in improving gender equality and women empowerment. The Feminist Task Force, co-operated with the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, works very hard to develop a high-level financing strategy to achieve SDGs. Based on Gates Foundation's research, the impact investment has the potential to be a trillion-dollar market by the year 2020. She further discussed the funding landscape for women's organizations on the basis of Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID) investigation. Ms. Lizarde identified three major trends and elucidated the private sector's role in development financing and philanthropy. It's noteworthy that the median income of women's organizations was 20,000 dollars and the overall income of women's organizations was 106 million dollars. She mentioned three biggest challenges for women advocate organizations, that are 1) find alternative forms of financing other than traditional funding sources, 2) overcome the misconception of business financing, 3) networking and penetrating all forms of funding markets. She further discussed the benefits and emphasized the importance of accountability and transparency in the process.

Ms. Akira introduced **Mr. Juan Elias Chebly**, the Lead Adviser to the UN Environment Programmes' Secretariat of Governing Bodies. Mr. Chebly is also the founder and CEO of voipebox.com. He framed his presentation around the implementing agenda 2030. His background in business helped him become an economist specialized in finance. He started his career in St. John's Student Managed Investment Fund, and then became a finance professor at St. John's. After realizing the shortcoming of finance world, he decided to pursue further education in sustainable development. He recognized the importance of collaboration among different sectors in achieving SDG goals. Mr. Chebly took agenda 2030 as a necessary framework to make sure that our next generation is able to enjoy the same privilege that we had. He spoke of the UN's environmental program and its relevance to today's topic. Mr. Chebly also elucidated his research paper – *The present value of future generations: prioritizing public sector spending for sustainable development*. There are plenty of resources to finance SDGs as long as we knew how to allocate them in the right place. He concluded that SDGs won't be achieved by themselves, but it can be achieved with people, resources, and political wills, which we already had.

There were brief reflections from a number of NGOs followed by a lively Q&A session.
The Co-Chairs adjourned the meeting at 3:35 PM