

Governments, businesses 'walk the talk' for investment in sustainable development: UN forum

Business and government leaders from around the world have gathered at a major United Nations conference in Geneva, in search of innovative and strategic solutions to complex investment and development challenges.

The [2018 World Investment Forum](#), organized by [UNCTAD](#), the primary UN agency on trade and development, comes against the backdrop of declining investment flows around the world and concern over how that is affecting sustainable development, according to the agency.

It is now time “to walk the talk” and scale up private investments in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) said UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi, welcoming over 6,000 [participants](#) from more than 160 countries, to the Forum.

“The remarkable turnout at this year’s Forum bears witness to the critical need for this global platform to tackle investment in sustainable development.”

In his remarks, Mr. Kituyi also underscored that continued engagement between governments is vital for refining international economic policies, especially when the support for multilateralism “is not always evident.”

Mutual solutions to shared problems, must “supersede” narrow interests, he stressed, calling on governments, the private sector, and all other stakeholders, to help ensure that good ideas and policies can be turned into action on the ground.

Our purpose is shared, we are working to build a sustainable inclusive future – this means, our efforts must be mutual – *UNCTAD chief Mukhisa Kituyi*

“Our purpose is shared, we are working to build a sustainable inclusive future – this means, our efforts must be mutual,” said the head of UNCTAD.

Also speaking at the opening of the Forum, María Fernanda Espinosa, the President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly underscored the importance of partnership with the private sector, urging them to make “responsible investments” that respect human rights, environmental regulations and fiscal regulations.

“By fulfilling its moral and legal imperative, the sector can have a positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of a country; boost employment,

productive investments, and knowledge and technology transfer,” she said.

Held from 22-26 October, at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, the 2018 edition of the biennial World Investment Forum features [several high-profile events](#), including an investment summit, a global “sustainable stock exchanges” dialogue, a conference on investment agreements, thematic discussions, and other side events.

The opening day of the Forum also saw agencies from Bahrain, India, Lesotho and South Africa win top laurels at the UN Investment Promotion Awards for excellence in advancing investments in critical socio-economic sectors.

According to an UNCTAD [news release](#), the Bahrain Economic Development Board, Invest India, Lesotho National Development Corporation, and InvestSA from South Africa won awards for boosting technology education, promoting renewable energy, employment, and waste-to-nutrient recycling, respectively.

[Ebola in DR Congo: UN chief ‘outraged’ by recent killings of civilians and health workers](#)

The United Nations [Secretary-General, António Guterres](#) said on Monday he is “outraged by the continued killing and abduction of civilians by armed groups” near Beni, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)’s North Kivu region, which has been grappling with an [Ebola](#) outbreak since August.

Mr. Guterres [condemned](#) Saturday’s attack in the town of Mayongose on the outskirts of Beni, in which at least 11 civilians were killed, and several more were injured and abducted. He said he is also “deeply troubled” by reports that on Friday, two Congolese health workers helping to combat the Ebola outbreak, were killed in Butembo by armed militia.

Such attacks continue to hamper humanitarian access in the conflict-torn region and prevent health workers from tackling the outbreak.

This outbreak, the tenth to hit the DRC in 40 years, was declared in North Kivu Province on 1 August this year and, given the worsening security situation in and around the city of Beni, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) elevated its risk level from “high” to “very high” on 28 September. So far, more than 250 Ebola cases have been reported, causing over 140 deaths.

WHO suspended all of its activities for a period of two days after attacks in late September in and around Beni, which left more than 20 dead.

The Secretary-General called “on all armed groups to immediately cease attacks against civilians and ensure humanitarian access to populations in need”.

[Many deaths can be avoided with better data: UN deputy chief](#)

“While it is clear that the data revolution is having an enormous impact, it has not benefited everyone equally,” [said](#) Ms. Mohammed, adding that, to achieve the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), better and bigger data is needed: “With accurate, representative, inclusive and disaggregated data, we can understand the challenges we face, and identify the most appropriate solutions for sustainable development.

The UN deputy chief outlined other ways that data can improve lives: “It means students can find out about job opportunities and women can learn about laws protecting them from discrimination. It means citizens can monitor how their governments are performing and hold decision-makers to account. It can strengthen trust in public institutions and unveil new opportunities.”

The United Nations, [said](#) Ms. Mohammed, is leading global efforts to integrate data and information systems. One example is the [Open Data Hub for the Sustainable Development Goals](#), a tool which provides decision makers with accurate data for informed policy and advocacy.

Another is the global [SDG indicator website](#) – which gives users access to all available global information and enables them to see interactive stories about progress on implementing the 2030 Agenda – and [UN Global Pulse](#), which partners with UN experts, governments, academia and the private sector to harness big data for development and humanitarian action worldwide.

Ms. Mohammed also mentioned the work of the [United Nations Centre for Humanitarian Data](#), based in The Hague, which is increasing the impact and use of data throughout the humanitarian sector, ensuring that aid workers around the world can access information they need to make fast, life-saving, informed decisions.

Other projects and initiatives include the [ID4D](#) partnership with the World Bank, which aims to help countries realise the transformational potential of responsible digital identification systems, and the [High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation](#), launched by the UN Secretary-General in July 2018 to strengthen inter-governmental cooperation in the digital space.

There is an urgent need for data and statistical systems funding, [said](#) Ms. Mohammed, which currently remains limited, and for political, technical and advocacy support in all areas.

Data literacy must be developed, she added, as well as “innovative tools and data visualization platforms, which allow users to understand data intuitively and interact seamlessly with data in real time.”

“UN country teams of the future,” she said, “must be fully equipped with the right skills and capacities to harness the opportunities offered by all types of data and innovation, including emerging technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics and drones.”

Ms. Mohammed concluded by inviting all data innovators to work with the UN and help absolutely no one is left behind. To find out more about how digital technology is being to tackle some of the world’s biggest problems, listen to this recent episode of our flagship podcast [The Lid Is On](#).

[Data experts gather to find solutions to world’s biggest challenges at UN Forum](#)

International data sectors from national statistical offices, the private sector, NGOs, academia and international and regional organizations are gathering in Dubai from Monday to Wednesday, in a bid to accelerate progress on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)

The experts will launch innovative solutions to improve data on migration, health, gender and many other key areas of sustainable development at the second annual Forum, which takes place at the Madinat Jumeirah Convention Center.

The 3-day conference is packed with over 80 sessions and parallel events, and is seen as a crucial opportunity for major producers and users of data and statistics to find ways to deliver better data for policy makers and citizens in all areas of sustainable development.

Speaking ahead of the opening session, Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, underlined the critical importance of good data in order to achieve the SDGs: “It is essential to have accurate, reliable, timely and disaggregated data, tracking the unprecedented range of economic, social and environmental goals in the 2030 Agenda. At the UN World Data Forum, I expect new partnerships to be forged, commitments announced, and support boosted.”

The conference takes place two months before the expected adoption by Member States of the [Global Compact for Migration](#), the first-ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration, and one of the

high-level sessions will be on improving migration data to help set new strategies for how to better track the more than 258 million migrants around the world, including through real-time data sources such as call records: this will serve as a contribution to the December conference.

Financing for data and statistics, and ways to fill the funding deficit and data gaps that exists in many countries will be a focus topic of this year's Forum, at a time when developing countries face a gap of \$200 million per year and over 100 countries do not have comprehensive birth and death registration data: a lack of funding and capacity are serious constraints for many countries.

Other issues to be examined at the Forum include the need for open data and how to facilitate data sharing and integration of new data sources into official statistics.

The Forum will launch or advance a number of practical solutions, including for the use of non-traditional data sources such as mobile phone and bank records, social media, earth observations and geospatial data.

Projects to be showcased include the use of high-resolution satellite images to map poverty, measure soil fertility and improve agricultural productivity.

Some sessions will look at the benefits and risks of using new data sources for the public good, including issues of data privacy and governance.

Several initiatives are focusing on how to better count minorities and vulnerable groups and to improve gender data, to ensure that no-one is left behind, and ensure the protection of human rights; and how data journalists can work with national statistical offices to better inform the public.

[Amidst deadly violence, UN calls on Afghan authorities to ensure voters can cast ballot](#)

Against a backdrop of violence and technical malfunctions, the UN Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) has released a [statement](#) calling on the country's electoral authorities to re-double their efforts to make sure all eligible voters are given a reasonable opportunity to cast their ballot.

Afghanistan's parliamentary elections took place on Saturday amid reports of explosions targeting polling stations across the country, including the capital Kabul, killing or injuring dozens of people,

The violence, along with technical electoral management issues, has led to delays, and many people were forced to wait long hours to cast their vote: a number of stations are reported to have extended their opening hours, with some remaining open for voting on Sunday.

In Kandahar, citizens will have to wait until next Saturday to vote, following the killing of senior Afghan government officials in the province on Thursday.

UNAMA praised the voters who decided to brave the violence and carry out their civic duty in the first elections completely run by Afghan authorities since 2001, described by the Mission as “an important milestone in Afghanistan’s transition to self-reliance.”

The Mission put the onus on all Afghan authorities with a role in the electoral process to demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding and completing the elections, and to protecting the integrity of the process, especially with regard to tabulating and announcing the results.

The UN has taken note of the anti-fraud measures put in place by the authorities, and the presence of up to 400,000 observers and candidates’ agents, as well as political party monitors, to ensure the transparency of the elections: the Organization is encouraging them, and the voters themselves, to play an active, informed and constructive role in the days ahead.

In its statement, UNAMA reminded Afghan citizens who witness fraud of their civic obligation to file a complaint with the relevant Afghan authorities, and that Afghan law enforcement agencies should investigate swiftly and, where appropriate, detain and prosecute those responsible for fraud, where credible allegations are made.