

Concept Note

on the Creation of an International Association of PPP Units

For purposes of this concept note, PPP Units are defined as public or mixed public-private entities involved on the public sector side, be that national or regional, in a decision-making or advisory role regarding the design, tendering or awarding of PPP projects.

A. THE CHALLENGE

PPP has existed in one form or another for centuries. It is only lately however, as the need for systematic and professional administration of PPP procurement and management in a complex and fast globalizing world, that it has become recognized as a separate field of research, study and practice. In recognition of that, we have seen a mushrooming of academic papers, how-to books, guidelines, international conferences and even World Bank and other certifications come about.

Unlike other fields, however, there is still no international body in existence, which is entrusted with and recognized as the setter of standards – professional, sectorial, ethical, or otherwise – for the field of PPP.

International private sector companies, multilateral organizations, PPP units and PPP practitioners alike might all benefit from the development of an international framework of rules, standards, best practices and other recommendations in this regard. This could be becoming the more urgent because many of the players mentioned above are becoming more and more international in scope; and because the need by governments to make progress on the Sustainable Development Goals they have set themselves is becoming more acute. SDG No. 17, which calls for partnerships at all levels, is the key to unlocking many, if not most, of the solutions to the other SDGs – and chief among its tools is PPP, especially as regards socially-focused “People-First PPPs”.

B. IS THERE A NEED FOR “ONE VOICE” REPRESENTING THE PPP UNITS IN SUPPORT OF PPP BEST PRACTICES AND THE UN SDGs?

This concept note asks two sets of questions:

1. *Would it be useful to develop a common platform for PPP units to promote the PPP agenda as stated in the UN SDGs?*
 - a. PPP is becoming more used internationally. But there exists no ‘champion’ especially within the public sector to represent the public interest. UNECE and other bodies will produce best practices, standards and guidelines, especially on people first; can the PPP units work together as validators of these outputs?
 - b. Are our bodies suitably homogeneous to be able to speak as one?

- c. Is there a role for such a body to help other PPP units to meet the standards of PPP Units located in developed countries?
2. *Might the creation of an international association of PPP units around the world be a useful initiative? Specifically:*
 - a. If there can be hotel associations and port associations and associations for most every profession, should there not be an association of PPP units? Should there not be an association that brings together a global network of public sector PPP unit officials who work together to improve the skills and standards of this “new” profession, embracing important development objectives?
 - b. Should such an association be formed in partnership with UNECE and their multilateral organizations that have been playing crucial roles in developing the field of PPP and its tools?
 - c. What should be the nature of such an organization? What should its structure look like? What should be its conditions of membership? How would it be funded – through membership fees?
 - d. What should its objectives be? Training? Standards? Visit exchanges? A unified project database that can be accessed by private companies?
 - e. Should a committee be formed to follow up on the matters above?

C. FURTHER DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITY

All representatives of PPP Unit and national infrastructure agencies participating in the upcoming First Session of UNECE Working Party on Public Private-Partnerships (PPP) at United Nations, Geneva, 21-22 November 2017, are invited to a meeting to discuss this concept note and the accompanying declaration.

This informal meeting will take place from 13:30 to 14:45 on 21 November 2017 in conference room (salle) XII (same salle as the Working Party session). A sandwich lunch will be provided to participants.