**How public private partnerships can help us reach the 17 sustainable development goals for the world**

**In April 2018, I had the honour to be a member in a panel discussion at the World Association for Sustainable Development in the Palais de National, the UN centre in Geneva. The topic was Partnership for innovation and they called it ”a crazy mixed meeting”. This crazy mix included different UN organisations, non-profit organisations like WHO and representatives from the private sector, and the focus of the meeting was how to enhance the Public Private Partnership (PPP) within different fields.**

You´ve probably heard of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a UN Summit. Over the next fifteen years, with these new goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Everyone agrees that change must happen quicker than today and in order to achieve this, the UN must get support from private companies, as well as citizens and non-profit organisations.

In the panel about PPP activities to support innovation, I participated representing Ideon Science Park and Sweden. The moderator was Jonas Svensson, the UNOPS global director of Innovations, and the panel also included representatives from the Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship, USA, Zound Industries, Sweden, the private investor Atomica, UK, Humanitarian Innovations at Innovation Norway and the non-profit organisation Ocean Generation. In this group we all agreed that there is a need to define exactly what we mean with the term innovation. But I leave that for now.

**No profit – no tax. No tax – no science. No science – no innovations. No innovations – no economic growth**

From the reactions of the audience, I learned that private companies are not always let into the inner circle – they are perceived by many as dangerous, greedy and should be treated with suspicion. Especially wanting to generate a profit was something of a warning sign. This pushed my buttons, as I know that by striving to create a profit, companies can grow and create more jobs and become a growth engine in a region. My answer to one man, admitting he actually saw profit as something evil, was:

”Then I have a message from Sweden and the Scandinavian countries. No profit – no tax. No tax – no science. No science – no innovations. No innovations – no economic growth.” OK, I might have made it look all streamlined and easy, but I still mean it. Of course, Sweden is lucky to have many successful founder families that donated large amounts of money into science research, but this money came from some kind of profit. Another example is Ingvar Kamprad and IKEA, who were important donors in creating Ideon Science Park 35 years ago.

In fact, there was an interesting analysis made by Andrew Brown, Quid Europe, that the most driving sector towards all the 17 SDGs was actually the private sector, not the public. Today, many large and medium sized companies, as well as startups, have made it their core business to save the world in some way, which is truly fantastic. Doing good, while doing business.

**We are all in this together**

Creating a healthy and productive Public Private Partnership (PPPs) is not easy, we all have different perspectives and incentives. But PPPs have in fact been a success factor in the growth of Ideon Science Park over the years, supporting the development of almost 1 000 new companies, and a long range of deep tech innovations. So here are my recommendations for a better PPP:

1.      Make sure that you put together a diverse mix of competences, gender, age and nationalities when you gather a team or meeting members for input on how to develop your organisation. The different perspectives alone will be a starting point for creating understanding, respect and trust and could grow into partnerships over time.

2.      Acknowledge that we are all in the same boat (world) together, so we might as well put an effort in to paddling in the same direction. Find you role and the role of your organisation in this one team.

3.      Connect to national and international initiatives to make the most of the partnerships and contribute to the SDGs and the world.

4.      Be proud. Tell the success stories to inspire others to pitch in and make a difference.

And remember, we are all in this together. No one can save the world alone.

//Mia Rolf, CEO of Ideon Science Park

**Want to know more?**

Here are some links to learn more and connect with the UN:

**Apply with your World changing idea/innovation in the current Challenge from UNOPS**: <https://www.unops.org/>

Find out more about the conference, Public private partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: <http://www.wasd.org.uk/geneva2018/>

Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System: <https://www.unjiu.org/>

Sustainable development goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>