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HLPF 2015 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 30 JUNE 2015

The 2015 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) continued on Tuesday, 30 June. A morning meeting addressed “Reinforcing Major Groups and other stakeholders’ participation.” In the morning and afternoon, moderated discussions took place on “Changing approaches to policy making: the role of the SDGs” and “Regional support to national action.”

“REINFORCING MAJOR GROUPS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS’ PARTICIPATION”

ECOSOC President Martin Sajdik, Austria, introduced the morning meeting, highlighting an unprecedented openness and opportunity for Major Groups and other stakeholders to engage.

Hanna Hansson, CIVICUS, presented the outcomes of the online survey on the HLPF and post-2015 development agenda governance, conducted jointly with the HLPF working group of Major Groups and other stakeholders, focusing on the function of the HLPF and how to shape an inclusive process. She said different degrees of knowledge on the HLPF was observed, ranging from good to no knowledge, which indicated the need for more information sharing, awareness raising and capacity building.

Hansson noted respondents to the survey highlighted priorities, including the need for: responsibility resting with member states; a global comparative index to highlight progress; support for citizen-led monitoring; participation of stakeholders in follow up and review; an active role for youth, including in the official review itself; and that the HLPF global review should clearly link with other UN processes.

Further, Hansson highlighted that the outcomes also underscore that Major Groups and other stakeholders should have access to information in a timely manner at all stages, all HLPF meetings should be open, and Major Groups and other stakeholders should have the right to make oral and written contributions.

In the ensuing discussion, representatives from Major Groups and other stakeholders further emphasized the issue of inclusion, including: mechanisms to ensure participation of all groups and constituencies; recognition of local and subnational authorities in governance; and respect of human rights and environmental justice.

On participation in the HLPF, delegates called for: participation that goes beyond “speaking slots” to involve agenda setting; co-management approaches; and funds to support participation.

On follow up and review, delegates stressed: transparent and robust mechanisms at all levels; accountability mechanisms and reviews of financial mechanisms; disaggregated data; citizen data; global and regional peer reviews; building on existing reviews; and free access to public data.

“CHANGING APPROACHES TO POLICY MAKING: THE ROLE OF THE SDGS”

Opening the session, ECOSOC Vice-President Vladimir Drobnyak, Croatia, highlighted the interdependencies between the SDGs, stating they require integrated approaches and policy coherence.

Moderator Debapriya Bhattacharya, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh, and Chair, Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals, noted the importance of linking action with broader development concerns, in addition to accounting for inter-linkages and multiple policy levels.

Karel van Oosterom, Permanent Representative to the UN, the Netherlands, for the Chairperson of the 66th session of the UNECE, underscored the important role of regional organizations in a multilayered approach. To strengthen regional effectiveness, he emphasized the importance of partnerships and inclusion of all relevant actors, highlighting the particular importance of youth.

Patrick Birungi, National Planning Authority, Uganda, noted the difficulties posed by trying to formulate implementation plans for the SDGs, while the discussions are ongoing. He also urged establishing mechanisms for implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Jaroslava Jermanova, First Vice-President, Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament, Czech Republic, underscored the need for different perspectives, stressing that women should be involved in these discussions. She also said that while resources are finite, a social consensus could still be built on the topic.

Pak Y.W. Junardy, President Commissioner, PT Rajawali Corporation, and President, Global Compact Network Indonesia, called for coordination at the ministerial, provincial and commission levels. He also underscored the key role companies and businesses can play in advancing sustainable development, stating that strong political will and guidance can assist this.

Galina Angarova, Tebtebba, Russia, on behalf of INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, said that it is “necessary to check ideas and aspirations against the realities on the ground.” She underscored the importance of traditional knowledge in all aspects of sustainable development.

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The ensuing discussion touched on points related to the SDGs, including the need for a conducive national-level legal architecture that fits the SDGs into national policy processes, and the use of SDGs to reinforce integrated planning through inclusive approaches and coherent policies.

On education, delegates called for recognizing the importance of accessible and quality education, and acknowledging the scientific community's importance in this field.

On translating vision to action, delegates variously called for: seeing the economy as a subset of the environment; drawing on multi-stakeholder, bottom-up approaches as a tool; discussing a roadmap to bring together growth, inclusion and sustainability; focusing on the embedded, integrated dimensions of sustainable development, rather than "silos"; and ensuring MOI.

Responding to participants, the panel members stressed: creating the right conditions for integration as opposed to more government investments; developing strong institutions and mechanisms; having a few, smart, multi-dimensional indicators that allow measuring various targets; and respecting national circumstances to achieve a balanced, consensual sustainable development agenda.

Converging around the ultimate goal of creating change, further discussions covered three overarching themes: conceptual frameworks; modalities of implementation; and assessment. Specific points raised were, *inter alia*: drawing on local context; evaluating all three sustainable development pillars; strengthening the mandate by establishing a bureau or secretariat to move the agenda forward; assessing integration; developing effective governance and implementing bodies at local and national levels; fostering integration and inclusion within Major Groups' and other stakeholders' processes; and acknowledging the challenge of achieving both awareness and mindset change.

"REGIONAL SUPPORT TO NATIONAL ACTION"

ECOSOC Vice-President María Emma Mejía Vélez, Colombia, introduced the panel, emphasizing the importance of regional inputs for strong national responses. She urged taking into account existing reviews, stressing the roles of civil society, academia, and the private sector in these reviews.

Moderator Ximena Ponce, Member of Parliament, Ecuador, reflected on the roles of the regions and how to set out, through policy, new definitions and structures to tackle the SDGs at the local and regional levels. She stressed the need for balance and flows between levels, and mutual support between regions to achieve the SDGs at all levels.

Vajira Narampanawa, Secretary, State Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, and Vice-Chair, Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, reported the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development held in Bangkok in May 2015. He noted these included the need for focusing on a more inclusive growth path, holistic approaches and balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development. Narampanawa said they also called for political commitment to achieve the sustainable development agenda, involvement of all stakeholders in planning and review processes, and respect of planetary boundaries.

Mohamed Ashraf Rashed, Member, African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons, said that the potential of the African Peer Review Mechanism for SDGs is as a regional follow up and review mechanism. He said key principles guiding the review process are inclusiveness and participation of all stakeholders to create a sense of ownership and commitment to the implementation of recommendations.

Christian Brodhag, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), outlined the process of peer review used by OIF, saying that it goes through three phases: organization and implementation; "context report" preparation; and hosting

a review workshop. He noted the advantages of this system are, *inter alia*, external perspectives can be sought and capacity is built. He underscored that the peer review process is not an evaluation or a sanction.

Discussants Paul Ladd, UNDP, and Roula Majdalani, UN-ESCWA, both highlighted the importance of regional processes and organizations to link the local to the global. Majdalani called for capacity building at this level and drawing on multi-stakeholder platforms and south-south cooperation. Ladd further stressed the importance of national-level monitoring and review processes and drawing on other stakeholders' energy and contributions to implement a common agenda.

Responding to participant interventions, Narampanawa highlighted the importance of regional dialogue and experience sharing. Rashed said stakeholders and civil society, not only government, are being taken into account in self-assessment national reports, which monitor and evaluate progress and provide accountability for policy makers and citizens. Brodhag highlighted the need for continued peer review processes and engagement with civil society and the scientific community.

Participants highlighted the importance of partnerships for regional level reviews, saying that those outside of the region could participate as observers. They also noted the critical role regional level mechanisms can play in national actions for transitioning from MDGs to SDGs.

Delegates then discussed: SCP; innovative financing mechanisms for regional and national processes; political will and commitment to progress; transparent dialogues and spaces to share knowledge and practices; regional instruments as leaders of regional processes in the context of HLPF annual reviews; subsidiarity and complementarity at all levels; challenges related to data collection and analysis; national reporting and reviews to inform regional reviews; the role of the RECs; a specific HLPF session for regional reviews; creating linkages between statistical agencies and planning ministries; including participation of Major Groups and other stakeholders at both national and regional levels; regional platforms to facilitate peer exchange and regional agreements; approaches focused on results; and the effective use of statistics and indicators.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The morning session of the HLPF set the tone for the day, discussing the importance of inclusion and integration of Major Groups and other stakeholders in the HLPF processes. While the need for multi-stakeholder participation was echoed throughout the day, feelings were mixed across representatives of Major Groups and other stakeholders.

Some stated that participation in the HLPF process represented a large step forward, while others suggested that there was under-representation, with meaningful participation lacking. One Major Group participant said that regardless of this, there remains a large gap around the framework and modalities for inclusion and integration.

And while Major Groups and other stakeholders expressed their desire to be participants and not simply observers or beneficiaries, one panelist reminded that all stakeholders will need to play their part in facilitating integration, allowing for flexibility within their own specific agendas.

Some suggested that to move towards a truly inclusive and integrated process, the advice quoted by one moderator might be a first crucial step: "progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change themselves cannot change anything."