HLPF 2017 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY 11 JULY 2017

The second day of the 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) started with a review of implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger). In the afternoon, a thematic review on “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world: Multi-stakeholder perspectives,” took place.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION: SDG 1
Frederick Musiwa Makumure Shava, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe and President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), chaired this session.

Highlighting findings from the 2017 Sustainable Development Goals Report, Stefan Schweinfest, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), said three quarters of a billion people still live in extreme poverty, despite progress, and social protection coverage varies worldwide and misses many vulnerable populations.

Moderator Carolina Sanchez-Paramo, World Bank Group, said those who remain poor are the hardest to reach, with many concentrated in areas that are fragile, in conflict, or have a high risk of natural disasters.

Panelist Martin Ravallion, Georgetown University, said while progress has been made in reducing absolute poverty, challenges remain in reducing relative poverty; and better anti-poverty policies are needed to complement economic growth.

Panelist Yang Zhi, Mayor of Jingzhou, China, highlighted China’s pledge to lift 70 million out of poverty by 2020, noting efforts to: mobilize all sectors of society towards this end; scale up infrastructure investments; strengthen social protection systems; and advance e-commerce networks in villages.

Highlighting that close to 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land is found in Africa, Panelist Yaw Ansu, African Center for Economic Transformation, emphasized the need to: improve access to land and tenure security; improve productivity on farms; and make agriculture profitable.

Panelist Janet Cornish, City University of New York, highlighted drivers of high poverty levels including market income inequality and meager state redistribution.

Lead discussant Deborah Greenfield, International Labour Organization, identified decent work and universal social protection as critical drivers of poverty and inequality reduction.

Lead discussant Wellington Chibebe, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), highlighted the importance of quality job creation, access to democratic decision-making, and comprehensive social protection systems.

During the discussion, INDONESIA identified areas for international cooperation, including, *inter alia*: improving data collection and analysis; addressing child poverty; and empowering local governments to plan and implement policies for poverty reduction. AZERBAIJAN said progress on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) is necessary to accelerate progress on SDG 1. MALDIVES, for small island developing States (SIDS), emphasized that SIDS are a special case because of their unique vulnerabilities, and their progress toward SDGs will require reversing environmental harm.

Noting that 80% of the poor live in rural areas, the FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO) underscored the importance of holistic approaches to poverty reduction. SWITZERLAND observed that one in eight people in his country are threatened by poverty and, with KENYA, stressed the importance of education as a catalyst to ending poverty. CHINA emphasized that more than 55 million people have been lifted out of poverty in rural China from 2013 to 2016. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for governments to: abandon austerity programmes; consider implementing universal basic income schemes; and impose caps on maximum incomes.

In closing, Ansu called for improved agricultural productivity in Africa, while addressing environmental preservation and SDG 8. Ravallion stressed the need for redistributive policies to reach the poorest, and markets that work for the poor. Yang highlighted the need to tailor solutions for poverty alleviation. Gorrick urged countries to connect their microdata to ensure its rich information can be harnessed.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION: SDG 2

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President Shava and moderated by Gerda Verburg, Scaling-Up Nutrition Movement.

Under this statistic, said to SDG 2, Min Yongyi, DESA, noted that while agriculture is an important means to poverty reduction, domestic and foreign investment in agriculture is declining.

Panelist Esther Penunia, Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development, emphasized: access rights to natural resources for the poor; market infrastructure and access; and addressing climate change.

Panelist Elizabeth Mpofu, La Via Campesina, stressed: education; better measures of human progress; and negative impacts of budget cuts on social goals.

Lead discussant Eugenio-Diaz-Bonilla, International Food Policy Research Institute, stressed that a universal poverty-based safety net would cost less than 0.1% of world GDP.

Lead discussant Meena Bilgi, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, urged identification of emergent challenges in rapid urbanization and in the increasing disconnect between food and nutrition.

Lead discussant Patrick Caron, Committee on World Food Security, called for: local innovation to improve natural resource management; development of institutional frameworks; and inclusive and cross-sectoral national policies to ensure the right to food. Understanding that the gains made against hunger are at risk, FAO, also on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, called for putting smallholder farmers at the center of food policy.

SOUTH AFRICA lamented that malnutrition in Africa depresses GDP by 11%, and highlighted his country’s integrated National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (2017-2022). ARGENTINA said...
achieving SDG 2 requires eliminating economic and commercial distortions, including fisheries subsidies. FINLAND said improving gender equality could allow women to increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and emphasized the importance of policy coherence.

BENIN identified land degradation as a key challenge and said countries with high consumption levels have a role to play in addressing this. The WORLD BANK GROUP highlighted the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, established by the Group of 20 to prevent crises, and emphasized the need for interventions to be recipient-led. INDONESIA highlighted challenges such as inequitable food distribution and called for multistakeholder collaboration to address food insecurity. NGOs said SDG 2 is a good driver for integration of other SDGs and called for a rights-based approach to addressing conflicts, natural disasters, and migration. FRANCE underlined the importance of addressing malnutrition.

CHINA emphasized the need for: agricultural modernization; reduction in trade barriers; and agricultural technology financing for developing countries. SUDAN called for: an increase in agricultural productivity; sustainable food systems; and natural resource management that involves women’s empowerment. The US urged bridging the gap between humanitarian and development action by taking preventative action. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES called for physically and financially accessible health and nutrition programmes by mainstreaming disability into food security programmes.

THEME: Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

This session was opened by Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President.

Luis Emilia Reyes Zuñiga, Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGos) HLPF Coordination Mechanism, highlighted the role of the Mechanism in ensuring rights of access to, and inclusive participation in, the HLPF are upheld and potentially expanded.

While noting that governments are primarily responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation, Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, called for the active engagement of all stakeholders to build ownership of the SDGs.

MGos: Challenges and pathways to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world: This part of the discussion was moderated by Maruza Cardama, Cities Alliance.

Chibebe, for Workers and Trade Unions, highlighted reporting on the SDGs by trade unions to complement Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and stressed the importance of SDGs 1, 3, (good health and well-being), and 5 (gender equality) for workers.

Sahmz Kiymaz, for Women, stressed empowering women and girls affected by conflict, and the need for dedicated funding on women-related issues.

As a Member States’ respondent, Kenya noted the importance of: international cooperation on trade that allows Africa to finance its needs; national good governance; and inclusion and participation. Noting that companies have already begun to integrate SDGs into sustainability efforts, Louise Kantrow, for Business and Industry, said the private sector is a driver of innovation and an actively engaged partner in knowledge sharing.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The first-ever review of specific SDGs at the HLPF on Tuesday resulted in pleas from the moderator for heartfelt dialogue, instead of reading of statements. They seemed to fall on deaf ears, however, as speakers from the floor rushed through prepared statements, many calling for paradigm and transformational shifts to meet the SDGs. A paradigm shift may well be in order in the nature of HLPF discussions, a delegate shrewdly noted in the corridors, to prevent the Forum from becoming another “talk across each other’s” shop. A focused and purposeful dialogue to identify barriers and find solutions is crucial, he said, for the HLPF to find its mojo.