

## **HLPF 2017 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY 14 JULY 2017**

On Friday morning, the 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) started with a session on leveraging interlinkages for effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the afternoon, a session on science-policy interface and emerging issues was followed by a wrap-up of the week's events by the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Under-Secretary-General (USG) of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

### **LEVERAGING INTERLINKAGES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDGS**

This session included two panels, on interlinkages and on data and statistics, chaired by Marie Chatardová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the UN, and ECOSOC Vice President.

**Interlinkages:** Minh-Thu Pham, UN Foundation, moderated this panel.

Panelist Debapriya Bhattacharya, Centre for Policy Dialogue, urged: exploring intralinkages between targets before considering interlinkages across Goals; consideration of interlinkages in budgetary allocations; and addressing the international systemic dimensions of interlinkages.

Describing the importance of addressing interlinkages in efforts to tackle HIV/AIDS, panelist Michel Sidibé, Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), called for political leadership, and clarity on how the HLPF can facilitate a move away from state-centric approaches to genuine multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Panelist Charles Arden-Clarke, UN Environment, identified the need to promote policy coherence through interministerial coordination, and make use of integrated funding to achieve intersecting targets for sustainable consumption and production.

Discussant Michael Gerber, Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development, Switzerland, stressed the integrated nature of the SDGs as an opportunity for policy coherence at all governance levels.

Discussant Irene Khan, International Development Law Organization, underscored the importance of transparent, rule-based processes and mechanisms that ensure appropriate, inclusive, and equitable arrangements for SDG implementation.

In the discussion, SRI LANKA emphasized the need to incorporate non-quantitative indicators. BELARUS stressed political leadership, stakeholder participation, assistance from UN agencies, and access to disaggregated data as key in stabilizing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in her country. The ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT highlighted its Policy

Coherence for Development framework, developed to enable self-assessments by governments. The EU described the emphasis on interlinkages in the new European Consensus on Development. UN ENVIRONMENT identified opportunities that arise from interlinked approaches, such as the economic and social benefits of investing in a green economy.

ROMANIA, FINLAND, CHILE, KENYA, SUDAN, NIGERIA, MALAYSIA, GHANA, THAILAND, and the PHILIPPINES described national systems to promote an interlinked approach for implementation of the SDGs.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) underscored that investments in nature-based solutions can catalyze achievement of many of the Goals and targets. NGOs called for empowering women and girls for 2030 Agenda implementation. A youth delegate, for BELGIUM, said young people are key to leveraging linkages, as they are experienced in considering problems and solutions in a multi-disciplinary way.

Bhattacharya stressed the need to avoid confusion between processes and outcomes; said SDG implementation should not be held hostage to the concept of indivisibility; and asked how accountability on interlinkages will be ensured at the global level. Sidibé highlighted the importance of addressing stigma, exclusion, and prejudice, and of qualitative data. Arden-Clarke noted the need for high-level coordination of sustainable development efforts at the national level.

The NETHERLANDS said a "mutual gains approach" could help to bring together multiple interests and move beyond trade-offs. WOMEN said interlinkages and policy coherence should be guided by elimination of systematic and structural barriers.

TOGETHER 2030, for other stakeholders, with CHILDREN AND YOUTH, called for reframing the discussion to consider interlinkages between policy frameworks. PARTNERS IN POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT supported practitioner-oriented networks and learning platforms between countries.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES urged integration of human rights in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES highlighted the importance of broadening and extending participation mechanisms. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY advocated: a controlled end to fossil fuel subsidies; a carbon price; and taxing water beyond use to fulfill minimum human rights.

Arden-Clarke called for a dedicated space for considering interlinkages at the HLPF, and said guidelines for Voluntary National Reviews should also require consideration of interlinkages. Simon Bland, UNAIDS, highlighted the importance of including non-state actors in SDG coordination. Bhattacharya noted persisting confusion on whether interlinkages should be merely aspirational or also measurable, and on whether they are a management goal or an implementation issue with real potential to add value.

**Data and statistics:** Debapriya Bhattacharya moderated this panel.

Roberto Olinto, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, said data disaggregation is necessary to find the “no one” in the goal of “leaving no one behind.” Judith Randel, Development Initiatives, said disaggregated data sheds light on the different aspects of people’s identities and what holds them back. Anil Arora, Statistics Canada, said national statistics offices bring the statistical rigor that is necessary to generate useful information and called for greater statistical literacy.

In the discussion, BELARUS urged international organizations to share best practices on use of disaggregated data. CHILE and IRAN highlighted challenges of interministerial coordination and data collection. GHANA and SWITZERLAND described challenges in data collection. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for the establishment of detailed methodological standards that can be harmonized across countries. MADAGASCAR highlighted national surveys to evaluate implementation of the SDGs. The stakeholder group on AGEING urged delegates to ensure data is fully disaggregated by age, disability, and gender. SENEGAL identified resource mobilization as a major constraint.

Arora stressed the need to ensure that “no national statistics office is left behind.” Randel said investment in data is as important as investment in infrastructure. Olinto underscored the importance of data comparability.

In closing, Bhattacharya highlighted the importance of: data capacity, literacy, and investments; data disaggregation; and complementing big data with “soft” measures such as privacy regulations.

### **SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE AND EMERGING ISSUES**

The session was chaired by Cristián Barros Melet, Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN. William Colglazier, American Academy for the Advancement of Science, moderated.

Panelist Endah Murniningtyas, National Development Planning Agency, Indonesia, underscored that the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) aims to provide an evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in poverty eradication.

Panelist Peter Messerli, University of Bern, recommended: better use of available knowledge; mobilization and innovation of science; and institutionalization of science-policy interfaces at the international level.

Panelist Wang Ruijun, UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development, underscored the need to identify science, technology and innovation capacity gaps for SDGs, especially in developing countries.

Discussant Tolu Oni, University of Cape Town, called for innovation in education related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and urged close interaction between academia and policymakers to bridge competing interests and incentives.

Discussant Stuart Taberner, Research Councils UK, recommended mobilizing national research systems to steer science towards generating impact, and towards promoting new skill sets to engage with societal changes.

In the discussion, ROMANIA called for evidence-based education policies. JAPAN urged linking domestic science and innovation policies with the SDGs. FINLAND called for greater engagement in, and transparency from, the GSDR process. UGANDA described the challenges of funding research that will deliver outputs only after national development planning cycles end. WOMEN called for people-centered, gender-responsive, evidence-based public policy. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY called for an inclusive definition of science, with “practice” being an important element of the science-policy interface. UN ENVIRONMENT shared recommendations from its first Science-Policy Forum, held in conjunction with the UN Environment Assembly in 2016.

Murniningtyas emphasized the interface between traditional and modern knowledge, and science. Messerli said applied research could simultaneously be basic and impactful. Wang said the gap between developed and developing countries is widening with new and emerging technologies.

UN University proposed a call for scientists to voluntarily contribute to the 2019 GSDR, and learning from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s approach. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES underscored the importance of inclusivity in disaster risk reduction. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES highlighted community-based monitoring and information services as complementary sources of data. NGOs said the UN should address emerging issues, such as animal welfare.

Messerli acknowledged the importance of “different voices, different knowledge” but said the generalization and aggregation of knowledge will be necessary for implementation of the SDGs. CHILDREN AND YOUTH recommended institutionalized spaces for stakeholder engagement in the GSDR, and greater transparency in data collection to minimize bias. IUCN highlighted four key dimensions to the science-policy interface: timeliness, relevance, communicability, and legitimacy.

In closing, panelists stressed the GSDR process should engage with all UN agencies.

### **WRAP-UP SESSION**

During this session, ECOSOC President Frederick Musiwa Makamure Shava and USG Wu Hongbo provided an overview of the first week of HLPF 2017.

Shava noted that while the week had focused on a limited number of Goals, the indivisible, integrated, and interlinked nature of the SDGs highlighted the need for collaborative implementation. He noted signs of progress, including: national efforts to improve coordination and coherence; South-South cooperation; learning and sharing of experiences; and increasing recognition of the regional dimension of 2030 Agenda implementation.

Shava noted that all sections of society, including adolescents, indigenous peoples, older people, people in conflict and post-conflict situations, migrants, rural workers, and persons with disabilities are at risk of being left behind. Noting strong engagement of stakeholders at the session, he emphasized the need to address the impacts of climate change, and the importance of capacity building for data management.

Calling the HLPF “the right platform on the right track” for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, Wu said the Forum was able to analyze gaps, go beyond sectoral boundaries, and encourage transformative actions. He stressed that growth alone cannot address poverty reduction, and called for targeted actions aimed at the multiple dimensions of poverty.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Do “interlinkages” by any other name smell as sweet? Are they necessary at every level? Should they be sought before all else, and at any cost?

With a relatively leisurely three hours on the subject, participants explored its many diverse dimensions, carefully weighing “coordination” alongside “coherence” and “interconnection” against “interlinkage.” It emerged that not everyone in the room, however, was always talking about the same thing. For instance, as one panelist remarked, “coordination” is not synonymous with “interlinkage.” The former is mainly about management, while the latter has transformational potential. And while the quest for interlinkages should not hold the SDG process hostage, he said, it should be more than merely aspirational – it should be measurable.

What about interlinkages at the global level? Without them, said the panelist, the discussion on national-level interlinkages is like “a sandwich with bread on only one side.” But with no champion to answer for global-level interlinkages in the room, the discussion appeared to end one slice short of a sandwich.