

HLPF 2018 Highlights: Wednesday, 11 July 2018

HLPF 2018 continued on Wednesday at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, two thematic reviews based on the theme of transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies took place: perspectives of small island developing States (SIDS); and perspectives of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and middle-income countries (MICs).

In the afternoon, the review of SDG implementation continued, with a session on SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies – SIDS Perspectives

This session was chaired by Marc Pecsteen, ECOSOC Vice-President.

Moderator Elizabeth Thompson, Permanent Representative-designate of Barbados to the UN, highlighted the twin challenges of water and energy faced by SIDS.

Panelist Alexander Teabo, Minister for Environment, Lands, and Agriculture Development, Kiribati, said the size, remoteness, and vulnerability of SIDS create significant water stress.

Panelist Tessa Williams-Robertson, Caribbean Development Bank, identified political leadership, an investment-friendly environment, and the diversification of energy sources as essential elements for energy security in SIDS.

Panelist Adrianus Vlugman, Pan American Health Organization, commented on the nexus between energy and water, and the challenges of fragmented governance and short-term policies, while pointing to water recycling as a way forward.

Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, flagged insufficient progress on the 2014 SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

Lead discussant Rhonda Robinson, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, offered ideas for an enabling environment for effective water governance in SIDS, including support for the role of women, capacity-development, and knowledge sharing between SIDS.

Lead discussant Addys Claribel Then Marte, Alianza ONG, called for increased participation of citizens in energy issues in SIDS.

In the discussion, the EU offered enhanced support for investment frameworks for resilience. NORWAY described plans for a high-level panel on a sustainable ocean economy. Looking to the 2019 review of progress on the SAMOA Pathway, Trinidad and Tobago, for the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), described symbiotic links with the 2030 Agenda. The CSO PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS asked for more private sector accountability.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY called for their participation and leadership in designing disaster preparation and risk reduction strategies. SINGAPORE described approaches to address water stress. NGOs called for a new development paradigm respectful of

planetary boundaries. BELIZE called for support for the Caribbean's efforts to address climate change. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for a focus on young people most at risk. WOMEN said the climate change crisis and gender injustice are rooted in an economic model that engenders inequalities and violence. Maldives, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES, set out priorities for the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway, including funding.

In closing comments, Williams-Robertson described concessional resources to attract private investment in energy, and to address debt. Vlugman said we live in a "flush and forget" world.

Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies – Perspectives of LDCs, LLDCs, and MICs

This session was chaired by Marc Pecsteen, ECOSOC Vice-President.

Moderator Karin Fernando, Center for Poverty Analysis, Sri Lanka, highlighted the challenges of urbanization and its accompanying problems such as governance issues, pollution, inequality, and heightened vulnerability to disasters.

Panelist Kaba Urgessa, State Minister for Environmental Sustainability, Ethiopia, noted national efforts to: address the needs of a largely rural population; create jobs for 60% of the population that is under 25; implement a climate resilient green economy strategy through decentralized governance; and increase resilience to drought.

Panelist Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, UN High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, listed priorities to address higher poverty levels and vulnerability to climate change in LDCs and LLDCs, including: sustained economic growth; access to reliable and sustainable energy; cellular and broadband connectivity; technology and innovation; inclusion; access to finance; capacity building; and sustainable foreign direct investment.

Panelist Felipe Castro Pachón, National Planning Department, Colombia, highlighted challenges faced by MICs, including their diversity, density of population, and levels of inequality. He called for a focus on economic diversification; qualitative improvements to the economic apparatus; targeted international cooperation; and new and innovative sources of financing.

Panelist Maruxa Cardama, Cities Alliance, Belgium, called for an integrated and systemic approach to address urbanization, focused on governance, economy, citizenship, and the environment, with resilience as the interconnector.

Lead discussant Idriss Maïga Alzouma, African Disability Forum, noted that the majority of the world's one billion persons with disabilities live in LDCs, LLDCs, and MICs, and called for global partnerships to support them.

During the discussion, Bangladesh, for LDCs, called for increased official development assistance and debt relief for LDCs, and a standalone session on LDCs during HLPF. The PHILIPPINES called attention to preparedness for worst-case scenarios during the graduation of countries from different categories, to

enhance resilience to shocks. INDONESIA requested adequate support for MICs' challenges in the UN system. ASIA-PACIFIC CSOs underlined the importance of multi-stakeholder regional cooperation. QATAR underscored the need to protect ecosystems while building urban resilience. EL SALVADOR called for meetings on the progress of MICs towards achieving the SDGs at HLPF. NEPAL called for support to increase the resilience of LLDCs. NGOs said no one should be left behind during the graduation process for vulnerable countries. The EU emphasized insurance for catastrophes.

BELARUS called for enhanced support for MICs from the UN system. OMAN described programmes on rainwater harvesting developed to address water stress. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES called for recognition of their rights to land and resources. SIERRA LEONE emphasized challenges posed by changes in rainfall patterns when paired with lack of capacity of meteorological infrastructure. LIBERIA highlighted the importance of SDG 17 for LDCs. Paraguay, for LLDCs, called for countries to actively engage in the mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019. WOMEN stressed the importance of gender-sensitive budgeting.

Responding, Urgessa emphasized the need for a focus on land restoration. Pachón called for sharing of best practices among MICs. 'Utoikamanu invited support to build the capacity of vulnerable countries to access financing. Cardama highlighted the importance of urban-rural linkages.

Review of SDG Implementation

This session, chaired by Marc Pecsteen, ECOSOC Vice-President, reviewed progress on SDG 11.

Benjamin Rae, UN DESA, highlighted an increase in numbers of slum dwellers and rising air pollution. Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, called for a human rights approach saying inadequate housing assaults human dignity.

Moderator Rohit Aggarwala, Columbia University, said SDG 11 demands new levels of multilevel coordination.

Panelist Penny Abeywardena, New York City's Commissioner for International Affairs, said New York's Mayor Bill de Blasio had announced the world's first annual city-based HLPF Voluntary Local Review, and declared 11 July "Global Goals Day."

Panelist Jean Todt, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, underscored the importance of sustainable transport and urban planning.

Panelist Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), described urbanization as a transformative force.

Panelist Meera Al Shaikh, Smart Dubai, UAE, described steps to make Dubai the "happiest city on Earth," drawing on the fourth industrial revolution.

During the discussion, MEXICO suggested an "urban vision" helps break down silos that weaken the implementation of the SDGs. INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION underlined its role in extending basic services to everyone living in cities. THAILAND described slum upgrading programmes that harness, among others, flexible finance schemes.

AUSTRIA mentioned Europe-wide cooperation on urban issues as well as efforts to mitigate natural risks in cities. BRAZIL outlined efforts to make its housing programme, which seeks to make up for a deficit of 6.2 million housing units, inclusive for women, persons with disabilities, and traditional communities. TURKEY pointed to providing sustainable transport for all as an ongoing challenge. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY said navigating the complex links between SDGs requires evidence.

KENYA said housing is a constitutional right and described national plans towards realizing it. ISRAEL said 93% of its population lives in cities. SOUTH AFRICA pointed to mainstreaming safety as a key component of inclusive spatial planning. LEBANON described challenges, including that it hosts 1.5 million displaced Syrians in urban areas. The NETHERLANDS spoke of youth distress and radicalization in disadvantaged areas,

saying it is essential to make cities work for the younger generation. SIERRA LEONE argued that it is difficult for LDCs to treat housing as a human right without ways to finance housing.

SWEDEN said implementing the 2016 New Urban Agenda is crucial in their strategy for livable cities. SWITZERLAND noted that the shift from rural to urban economies offers the potential for climate-friendly economic development.

ROMANIA highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships in municipal planning. INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE called for integration of nature in regional and urban planning. RUSSIA presented environmental approaches to urban planning. BAHRAIN presented a partnership with UN-Habitat to assist the government with public-private partnerships for addressing urban management issues. UN World Food Programme, for ROME-BASED AGENCIES, called for urban planning to integrate rural-urban linkages. NORWAY said urban infrastructure should promote walking, cycling, or public transport. ESTONIA highlighted nature-based solutions to sustainable urbanization. UNEP called for designing resource-efficient cities. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for renewed public housing financing models to provide affordable housing. ALGERIA said Algiers has become the first capital in Africa without slums.

INDONESIA announced national development plans to reduce urban waste by 18%. VOLUNTEER GROUPS ALLIANCE highlighted the role of volunteers in SDG implementation. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES called for urban planning to be localized, involving indigenous people. The EU highlighted the importance of integrated urban planning. MOROCCO presented a national strategy on human development supporting the fragile populations, including those living in slums. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES called for improving access to built environment, communication, and information. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS called for policies that protect public spaces and commons from privatization and gentrification. INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY emphasized the potential contribution of nuclear energy to waste management and reducing air pollution.

FINLAND called for women's participation in urban planning. UN EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION said cities should raise awareness of cultural diversity, and safeguard indigenous cultures and practices. JAMAICA underscored the centrality of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving SDG 11. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO mentioned financial obstacles in bridging the gap between housing demand and supply. PALESTINE said urban destruction by Israel has led to massive human displacement. MAURITANIA underscored the need to consider SDG 11 together with SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) in implementation.

Abeywardena expressed openness to collaboration between cities on data. Sharif reiterated UN-Habitat's commitment to SDG 11 implementation. Al Shaikh underscored STI as an enabler for sustainable urbanization.

In the Corridors

Meanwhile, elsewhere at UN Headquarters, negotiations continued on the Ministerial Declaration that will be the final outcome of the HLPF 2018 ministerial segment next week. A final draft was released on Wednesday and is now under silence procedure. Last year, several delegates registered disappointment that elements of the Declaration had to be put to vote. It remains to be seen if consensus will be possible this time. The auguries do not look good, with disagreements reported on similar issues as previously, including means of implementation, occupied territories, and gender. Differences on a Declaration now run much deeper, however: a recent process to review reforms to ECOSOC considered whether a Declaration should continue to be the outcome of HLPF ministerial segment. Not everyone appears to be convinced of its value. For now, it was agreed that the Declaration will remain. As one delegate put it, "there is no revolution, only evolution when it comes to the UN."