

HLPF 2018 Highlights: Thursday, 12 July 2018

On Thursday morning, HLPF 2018 at UN Headquarters in New York conducted thematic reviews on: implementing the SDGs – lessons from the regions; and perspectives of society, a session organized with major groups and other stakeholders. In the afternoon, the review of SDG implementation continued, with a session on SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).

Implementing the SDGs: Lessons from the Regions

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Jerry Matthews Matijala, and moderated by Alicia Bárcena, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Panelist Vera Songwe, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), noted the return of economic growth in the Africa region alongside increasing inequality and absolute poverty; and described efforts to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Panelist Mohamed Ali Alhakim, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), underlined regional challenges, including: gender inequality; a youthful population in a region of slow economic growth; exposure to fluctuating oil prices; shrinking access to international finance; inequality; and coastal urbanization. He called for support from Member States in bringing peace to the region.

Panelist Olga Algayerova, UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), described economic inequalities; water scarcity; significant levels of youth unemployment; and worsening environmental trends in the region.

Panelist Kaveh Zahedi, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, said the region's best efforts to achieve the SDGs are falling short, with the exception of education, and highlighted: the deterioration of ocean health; high greenhouse gas emissions; and inequalities exacerbated by environmental degradation and disasters.

Bárcena presented the report for the ECLAC region, highlighting the importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda at a time of weakening multilateralism, emerging protectionism, fiscal consolidation, public mistrust in institutions, political fragmentation, rising inequalities, and a looming trade war.

Lead discussant Tatyana Valovaya, Eurasian Economic Commission, described the benefits of economic integration in facilitating SDG implementation.

Lead discussant Alma Sinumlag, Cordillera Women's Education and Action Research Center, highlighted structural barriers to achieving the 2030 Agenda, including: "greed-driven" multinational corporations; lack of prior informed consent; and "patriarchal, chauvinistic" governance.

In the discussion, BELARUS praised the regional forums on sustainable development as a unique opportunity for countries to create partnerships. BENIN, with IRAN, commended the

role of the regional commissions, saying they provide common implementation and monitoring frameworks and promote healthy competition between countries. STATE OF PALESTINE said Israeli occupation is the main obstacle for peace and security in the region. SWEDEN pointed to the importance of stakeholder participation in implementing the 2030 Agenda. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called on the regional commissions to play a larger role in monitoring, follow-up, and peer learning among countries. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS said the space for them to participate is shrinking and called for the International Labour Organization (ILO) to be engaged at the regional level.

Expressing support for the proposal for UN development system reform by the UN Secretary-General, MEXICO however opposed reducing the regional commissions to think tanks. TOGO welcomed the role of the regional commissions in capacity building. MOROCCO appreciated the role of ECA in promoting partnerships to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

GEORGIA highlighted the role of international and regional agreements, such as the ECE's Aarhus Convention, in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The EU expressed support for inclusive growth, trade, and regional integration. IRAQ requested ESCWA to assist with fighting terrorism. VIETNAM highlighted the need for financial, technical, and human resources. ISRAEL called on the State of Palestine to take responsibility instead of apportioning blame. SOUTH AFRICA supported the alignment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and a role for the ILO at the regional level, while agreeing that foreign occupation impedes sustainable development. UGANDA called for action on single-use plastic. LESOTHO called for assistance in localizing the 2030 Agenda. UN-HABITAT highlighted the role of regional commissions in harmonizing data collection and interpretation.

In conclusion, Zahedi welcomed a bigger role for the regional forums in feeding into the HLPF. Songwe supported regional economic integration to achieve the SDGs.

Perspectives of Society: Session Organized with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Matijala.

Moderator Luisa Emilia Reyes Zuñiga, HLPF Coordination Mechanism, said there were attempts to intimidate and harass stakeholders by certain Member States and called for a review of stakeholder engagement modalities during the upcoming HLPF review.

Panelist Haydée Rodríguez, Unión de Cooperativas de Mujeres Productoras Las Brumas, called for the engagement of women at the grassroots level to implement disaster risk reduction efforts and the 2030 Agenda.

Panelist Ruben Zondervan, Earth System Governance Project, elaborated on the role of the scientific community in providing evidence and data for sustainable development, including by exploring the role of SDGs as "aspirational goals" that can advance normative coherence and actor alignment.

Panelist Jolly Amaty, Major Group for Children and Youth, called for a global process through ECOSOC to take stock of public-private partnerships, while underlining that: there are fundamental planetary boundaries; no person is illegal; and technology is not neutral.

Lead discussant Vitalice Meja, Reality of Aid Network Africa, highlighted the importance of working with communities; making Member States' reporting on SDGs more accountable; and giving enough space to CSOs within countries.

Lead discussant Berry Vrbancic, Mayor of Kitchener, Canada, called the adoption of the 2030 Agenda at the local level of governance a "silent tsunami."

In the discussion, AGEING called for taking into account older persons in SDG implementation. NORWAY underscored the participation of multi-stakeholders in its HLPF delegation. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES said they are four times more likely to die in natural disasters. MEXICO said stakeholders have a permanent seat and vote in their parliament. EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA highlighted the importance of education for the transformation envisioned by the SDGs. The EU emphasized its commitment to create a strong enabling environment for stakeholders to hold states accountable. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES called for: protection of their rights to their lands, territories and resources; and for their full participation in SDG implementation.

FRANCE underscored the need to enhance awareness of the SDGs among civil society organizations. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS called for the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process to be more transparent and inclusive. NGOs underlined the need for capacity building of grassroots organizations to access funding and increase impact. WOMEN highlighted their role in monitoring and accountability. ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CSO ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM called for strengthening synergies between the HLPF regional and global forums. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY acknowledged that "SDGs washing" was taking place in different parts of the world, but also noted genuine efforts to implement the SDGs.

Review of SDG Implementation

This session, chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Inga Rhonda King, reviewed SDG 12. It was moderated by Elliot Harris, UN DESA.

Shashwat Sapkota, UN DESA, said the extraction of raw materials in developing countries is supporting unsustainable levels of per capita consumption and production in the developed world.

Keynote speaker Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, said SDG 12 lies at the heart of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement; called for sustainability to be a core fiduciary responsibility for business; and challenged the UN system to imbue SDG 12 across all its agencies.

Panelist Nur H. Rahayu, Ministry of National Development Planning, Indonesia, outlined national initiatives on eco-labelling and clean production.

Panelist Petra Bayr, Parliamentary Sustainable Development Committee, Austria, called for: consumer tools to hold private and public sectors to account; a shift beyond neoliberal capitalism in favor of planetary boundaries; and international laws to hold the private sector accountable for human rights.

Panelist Jane Nyakang'o, African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production, described efforts to align SDG 12 with Africa 2063 and the green economy.

Panelist Ulf Jaeckel, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Germany, said that while a global framework on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) exists, the transition to SCP is a "huge wheel that turns very slowly."

Lead discussant Amy Luers, Future Earth, highlighted two major challenges to SCP: it is a multi-sectoral issue requiring systemic thinking; and we have not identified the limits for our current economic system.

Lead discussant Julius H. Cainglet, Federation of Free Workers, said people's issues and participation should be central to crafting solutions to SCP.

In the discussion, the EU said SCP is the key to decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. FINLAND said linear material flows must become circular. ISRAEL spoke of its efforts to harness technology to address SCP. TURKEY mentioned efforts to promote public awareness, including through eco-labeling. EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA said education is essential to achieve SCP. FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDER GROUP linked SCP challenges to deregulation policies. KENYA outlined national policies in relation to SCP, including a green economy strategy. ROMANIA described national frameworks anchored in sustainable business practices and consumer behavior.

NORWAY called for the involvement of young people. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for a shift from growth-focused economic models to circular economies. UN-HABITAT said SCP is a central component of the 2016 New Urban Agenda. ROME-BASED AGENCIES said sustainable food systems will play a critical role in the achievement of SDG 12. FRANCE supported a transition towards a circular economy. ITALY introduced a report on environmentally harmful subsidies. SWITZERLAND highlighted food waste and marine plastic pollution, calling for transparency of the extractive sector.

SWEDEN highlighted the need for sound chemicals management. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES called for respect for their traditional knowledge on the sustainable management of ecosystems. ILO said inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth can spur job creation. DENMARK presented a national strategy to reduce plastic waste. ESTONIA presented a digital roadmap for a circular economy. NGOs called for "demystifying" SCP. UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME invited implementation of existing SCP policies. IRELAND said 50% of its public procurement is required to respect green criteria. MALI called for a focus on production, not only consumption.

SOUTH AFRICA called for consumer education. WOMEN called for eliminating subsidies for monocultures. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION highlighted its contributions to SCP. BELGIUM described implementation of the Brussels Circular Economy Plan. MALAYSIA announced a 20% target to green public procurement by 2020. POLAND said the transition to a circular economy includes new business models, a "bio-economy," and sustainable consumption. UGANDA brought attention to electronic waste. THAILAND highlighted knowledge exchange between local and national levels of governments on waste management. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY said businesses need enabling policy environments and strong marketing signals from consumers to transition to SCP. ESCWA called for the adaptation of innovative technologies to the local context and behavioral change for SCP.

Jaeckel invited everyone to become part of the One Planet Network. Nyakang'o said the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on SCP should serve to bring stakeholders together. Bayr called for making a sustainable lifestyle "easy and sexy."

In the Corridors

Thursday was a day for breaking silence at HLPF. Behind closed doors, a Member State broke the silence procedure on the Ministerial Declaration, on language related to trade and foreign occupation. In the HLPF open forum, meanwhile, civil society laid bare their concerns about their freedom to engage honestly with Member States. While the pressure on Member States to present a positive image in a global forum may restrict candor, civil society also points to larger structural issues that create certain inhibitions. They are keen to address these issues in the context of the 2019 HLPF review, through modalities to both protect the standing and freedom of civil society and ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and rigor of the 2030 Agenda. As one NGO representative observed: "We are placing a lot of weight on a process that is too fragile." Several participants felt that the regional fora may provide a "safer space" for a more rigorous peer-to-peer conversation, and that is the level at which the detailed VNR deliberations should take place.