

HLPF 2019 Highlights: Friday, 12 July 2019

As the first week of HLPF 2019 drew to a close, two sessions reviewed the implementation and interrelations among Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). A brief session in the morning also held a discussion on the 2019 report of the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum.

Review of Implementation and Interrelations Among SDGs

SDG 13 (climate action): This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Omar Hilale, who called for the creation of a “virtuous cycle” for climate action.

Keynote speaker Luis Alfonso de Alba, UN Secretary-General’s (UNSG’s) Special Envoy for the 2019 Climate Action Summit, said the Summit needs realistic plans, not speeches, that increase ambition and result in a 45% reduction of emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Moderator Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) asked panelists to focus on increasing ambition, synergistic implementation, concrete initiatives, and scaling up of actions.

Carolina Schmidt, Minister of Environment, Chile, and President-designate of the 25th Conference of Parties (COP 25) to the UNFCCC, identified seven priorities for COP 25: ambition in implementation; rules for carbon market mechanisms; climate finance; science for climate solutions; adaptation and loss and damage; forests and food security; and oceans and climate change. She said gender will be a crosscutting theme.

Leena Srivastava, Co-Chair, UNSG’s Science Advisory Group for the Climate Action Summit, said the rhetoric on interlinkages between the SDGs and climate action is not matched by action on the ground due to lack of quality data, analytical capability, and leadership empowered to take cross-sectoral decisions.

Panelist Javier Manzanares, Green Climate Fund (GCF), said the GCF has directed USD5.23 billion in climate finance to 99 developing countries for 110 adaptation and mitigation projects in the last four years, in addition to capacity building and readiness activities.

Lead discussant Mami Mizutori, UNSG Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), said 90% of the natural disasters over the past 30 years are related to climate change and extreme weather events, and failing to include climate change in DRR plans could negate DRR efforts.

In a discussion, JAMAICA called on international financial institutions to increase adaptation support. ISRAEL reported a reduction in the use of coal balanced by an increase in renewable

energy, and integration of climate change in national plans and policies. GERMANY announced the establishment of a “Climate Cabinet” to implement climate-related targets for 2030. CHINA expressed its commitment to address climate change, including through its Belt and Road Initiative.

The MARSHALL ISLANDS called for an integrated approach to climate change and sustainable development. SWEDEN underscored the need to increase climate finance flows and step up climate commitments. POLAND summarized successes from UNFCCC COP 24, which took place in Katowice in 2018. VIET NAM announced the creation of a National Committee on Climate Change. Noting that the population in least developed countries (LDCs) will double by 2050, MALAWI for LDCs called on the international community to increase support for adaptation and mitigation in LDCs. SWITZERLAND called on countries to review fossil fuel subsidies and adopt long-term emissions reduction strategies.

MEXICO described synergies and co-benefits in implementing SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement, including job creation in the energy sector. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION reported national preparations to ratify the Paris Agreement. INDONESIA reported on climate actions that have resulted in a 50% decrease in economic losses due to disasters.

Lead discussant Rola Dashti, UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, highlighted the work of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, and reported on climate action related to renewable energy, wastewater recycling, and climate smart agriculture.

Panelist Penny Abeywardena, New York City Mayor’s Office for International Affairs, described a Green New Deal launched in April 2019, focused on climate change, green jobs, accessibility to nature, clean air, water, and healthy food.

Lead discussant Zhao Dong, Xiamen Airlines, China, reported actions by the Airline to promote energy savings, emissions reductions, and decreased fuel consumption.

Lead discussant Dimakatso Sekhoto, World Farmers’ Organisation, described the CLIMAKERS Initiative, launched at COP 24 to help farmers deal with climate change by sharing best practices.

In a discussion, NEPAL described plans to transform 29% of its public transport fleet to electric. NORWAY reported a national emissions reductions target of 40% below 1990 levels, to be achieved through actions in the energy and transport sectors. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES cautioned that renewable, hydropower, and geothermal energy plants can have negative impacts on indigenous peoples, resulting in evictions from ancestral lands and disenfranchisement from natural resources. PORTUGAL highlighted

economic competitiveness and air pollution benefits as driving factors of the national energy policy. FRANCE described the High Council on Climate Change, created to advise on climate policy and hold government to account for the Paris Agreement pledges.

COTE D'IVOIRE highlighted the establishment of the National Commission for Climate Change, adoption of climate-related legislation, and updating of its nationally determined contribution. NIGER highlighted the link between climate change and security in countries in the Sahel region. The INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY said renewable energy and energy efficiency can deliver 90% of the emissions reductions in the energy sector, but rapid scaling-up is necessary. MOROCCO highlighted capacity building efforts nationally, and in Africa. FINLAND highlighted ambitious plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. SPAIN stressed the importance of making climate change a focus of foreign policy, including through technical cooperation.

THAILAND called for a stronger political signal on means of implementation. SOUTH AFRICA asked how the GCF will address unfulfilled pledges and losses due to foreign exchange volatility. The EU stressed the importance of making financial flows consistent with low carbon pathways. LOCAL AUTHORITIES emphasized the role of decentralized governance in supporting policy coherence. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY highlighted the incorporation of sustainable development in the model code of practice of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO). MALDIVES stressed the importance of simplifying access to climate finance. BELIZE, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES, underlined adaptation to climate change as a global responsibility. GHANA urged scaling up investments on the ground.

The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO underscored the need to step up efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The NETHERLANDS said supporting adaptation efforts is as important as implementing mitigation measures. TANZANIA announced the adoption of a climate-resilient development plan. ETHIOPIA announced plans to implement sustainable urbanization, build resilient infrastructure, and work towards a green energy transition.

ZIMBAWBE welcomed a USD1 million contribution from the Russian Federation for climate change. NEW ZEALAND described plans for a “just transition” to a low emissions economy, designed in consultation with local communities. GHANA called on the GCF to move from readiness funding to funding adaptation measures. UAE called for a focus on eliminating pollution.

CANADA highlighted gender as a key focus of its USD2.5 billion climate finance commitment. The INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY described how its evaluations support countries in designing, implementing, and evaluating national climate strategies. NGOs highlighted the need to focus on the most vulnerable and ensure no one is left behind.

In concluding remarks, panelists said the “fourth industrial revolution” should focus on accelerating action on climate change and the SDGs; and highlighted the need to increase the grant element of climate finance.

SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions): This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Hilale and moderated by Irene Khan, International Development Law Organization.

Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said no substantial progress has been made on the SDG 16 targets in recent years; women comprise 70% of the victims of violence; 9 human-right defenders were killed weekly in 2018 compared to 7 in 2017; and only 40% of children under the age of 5 have birth certificates in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keynote speaker Laura Chinchilla, former President, Costa Rica, called for: involving women, youth, and children in policy-making related to SDG 16; promoting non-discriminatory policies; instituting and enacting policies to protect human right defenders; and putting technology at the center of enhancing institutional capacity.

Delivering a message from Children and Youth, Ahona Paul, Cambodia, and Charles Young, Jamaica, said violence against children impacts national welfare and economic growth, and called for children to be empowered to serve as agents of change.

Panelist Emanuela del Re, Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy, said access to justice, effective rule of law, transparent and effective institutions, and fundamental respect for human rights are prerequisites for peaceful and prosperous societies. She noted the need to break the cycle between insecurity, injustice, and inequality.

Panelist Maria Fernanda Rodriguez, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, Argentina, described legal and social services provided in her country through online platforms and mobile justice clinics.

Panelist Abdoulie Janneh, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, presented the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, which provides an annual assessment of the quality of governance in African countries based on: safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development. He reported progress but noted shrinking space for civil society expression.

Panelist Gabriela Cuevas Barron, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), said citizens should be included in parliamentary processes such as translating commitments to law and budgeting for implementation. She highlighted IPU's efforts to provide SDG-related tools for parliaments.

FRANCE described capacity building support to address institutional fragility, and support for states to deliver basic services and justice reform. Noting mediation and conflict prevention as priorities, FINLAND highlighted the role of women and youth in peace processes. The EU highlighted its integrated approach to addressing conflict and crisis. BANGLADESH urged a focus on income disparities. REPUBLIC OF KOREA said sustainable development cannot be achieved without justice.

ISRAEL highlighted a pilot programme on community courts for criminal proceedings. SWITZERLAND said localizing SDG 16 is a priority and called for support for local communities.

QATAR stressed the importance of justice, reconciliation, and good governance for lasting peace.

Noting that progress on SDG 16 was “off-track and backsliding,” NGOs called on governments to: pursue integrated approaches; adopt a people-centered approach; utilize data; and build capacity for implementation. The NETHERLANDS urged consideration of how partnerships can support SDG 16. SWEDEN highlighted the need to ensure equal rights for all and promote and sustain peace. CANADA supported the conclusions of Justice for All, a report by multistakeholders.

Lead discussant Harib Al Amimi, State Audit Institution of the UAE, emphasized the importance of public financial management, including good governance assessments, as an opportunity for supreme audit institutions to contribute to the SDGs.

Lead discussant Vuk Žugić, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, highlighted conflict prevention and peace building; good governance and corruption prevention; environment-related security challenges; and inclusiveness and addressing inequalities.

In a discussion, NEPAL said strong political will and constitutional guarantees are instrumental in integrating marginalized communities into society and the economy. MALI highlighted international partnerships for enhancing national institutional capacity. The CZECH REPUBLIC noted its participation in the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies initiative. THAILAND announced the development of a national programme for youth aimed at promoting rule of law and combating discrimination. MOROCCO announced the adoption of a National Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights, aimed at strengthening participatory democracy. Explaining that it spends 70% of its public expenditure and 30% of its tax expenditure on security, NIGER called on the international community to recognize security as a global public good. IRAQ described efforts to restore affected areas, recover stolen assets, and adopt re-stabilization programmes in liberated areas following victory against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2017.

Lead discussant Edward Thomas Porokwa, Pastoralists Indigenous NGO's Forum, said a one-size-fits-all strategy for SDG 16 implementation is guaranteed to leave indigenous peoples behind.

In a discussion, BELGIUM said there is no peace without development and no development without peace. GUATEMALA highlighted efforts to create transparency in public budgets, to achieve zero tolerance for corruption by 2022. NORWAY urged collaboration between states, private agencies, and Interpol to deal with transnational cyber-crime. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO reported efforts to curb corruption and create democratic space, including a code of conduct for civil servants.

KENYA called for the international community to create systems for forecasting conflict before it erupts. UAE and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for innovation in approaching SDG 16 implementation. SIERRA LEONE invited focus on the needs of fragile and conflict-affected states. NIGERIA called for inequality, corruption, illegal financial flows, and illicit arms flows to be addressed. INTERPOL said it supports SDG 16 by promoting border integrity, curbing illegal markets, and combating organized crime. LOCAL AUTHORITIES highlighted their role in peace and justice. The CSO FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT GROUP called for an international tax body under the UN.

In concluding remarks, panelists identified working with local parliaments and improving data collection as key interventions for implementing SDG 16.

Report of the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

The session, on Friday morning, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Omar Hilale and moderated by Marie Chatardová, Co-Chair of the STI Forum.

Elizabeth Thompson, STI Forum Co-Chair, reported on the recommendations of 2019 Forum, including the need to strengthen capacity and policies for development of STI roadmaps, and tackle the fragmented nature of official development assistance for STI. She said keeping women in unpaid work and out of STI perpetuates dangerous social and economic inequalities, while noting that the enabling role of mobile technology for financial transactions is not adequately widespread.

Panelist Vaughan Turekian, Co-Chair, 10-Member Advisory Group to the STI Forum, emphasized the role of the WFEO and the Science and Technology Major Group, and the importance of digital platforms.

Panelist Paulo Gadelha, 10-Member Advisory Group to the STI Forum, recommended that the UN General Assembly be requested to report on progress of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM); and that states include STI in their voluntary national reviews (VNRs). He called for consideration of indigenous knowledge and citizen science.

Panelist Kazuhiko Takeuchi, Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES), highlighted the SDG Interlinkages Analysis and Visualization Tool developed by IGES to identify synergies and trade-offs among SDG targets.

Lead discussant Marlene Kanga, WFEO, said many VNRs do not mention STI and even fewer acknowledge engineering, which is core to providing innovative solutions to achieve the SDGs. She emphasized the need to build capacity on understanding the links between science and policy.

In the discussion, the EU stressed the importance of investing in STI, women in science, and innovation for faster, better, and cheaper technologies. MEXICO highlighted the risk of new technologies increasing inequalities. ISRAEL stressed the importance of considering gender in STI. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC highlighted the importance of exploring how innovation can be fostered in small and medium-sized enterprises. BELGIUM recommended mandating the TFM to report to the HLPF, and providing guidance to member states on including innovative solutions in the VNRs.

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION noted the many facets of the digital divide, such as differences in coverage, speed, affordability, location, and gender. The UN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION highlighted messages from the 2019 Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit. SOUTH AFRICA called for greater clarity on how regional forums are included in the STI Forum. FRANCE highlighted the importance of working with stakeholders in the education sector.

CHINA supported the need for international cooperation in the areas of digital, cyber, and artificial intelligence technologies, and described the role played by the Digital Silk Road in this regard. WOMEN stressed the need to support digital literacy and end sexual violence in the work place. ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK described its digital hub platform "Engage", and a transformer fund for start-ups. UAE noted the alignment of its Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy with the SDGs.

In the Corridors

When the UNFCCC's 2018 Talanoa Dialogue did not immediately deliver the urgent spike in ambition that science indicates is so critical, all eyes turned to the UNSG's 2019 Climate Action Summit. In previous months, expectations have been rising that the September Summit will be the moment for countries to announce more ambitious action, enough to keep global temperature rise within 1.5°C. The "action, not speeches" instruction from the UNSG has now been often repeated. Could it be, mused one HLPF delegate, that the political epicentre for climate change is shifting to UN Headquarters?

The SDG 13 discussion was useful to calibrate expectations for the Summit. But while "virtuous cycles" and progressive coalitions were mentioned, a sceptical delegate wondered if they will suffice to unlock ambition. The recently concluded Abu Dhabi Climate Meeting, in preparation for the September Summit, left some delegates more confused than confident. Meanwhile, public pressure continues to grow. The protestors who gathered outside the UN during the SDG 13 discussions at HLPF, as part of the global Friday for Future movement, held up their message loud and clear: "We need you to wake up, we need you to rise up".

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Edited by

Jennifer Allan, Rishikesh Ram
Bhandary, Alice Bisiaux,
Pamela Chasek, Natalie Jones,
Mari Luomi, Anna Schulz,
Cleo Verkuijl and Bryndis Woods