

Summary of the 2019 Meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 9-19 July 2019

The global response to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has not been ambitious enough, and a renewed commitment and accelerated action is needed to deliver the SDGs in time. This was the key message from the 2019 High-level Political Forum (HLPF), which completed the first four-year cycle of its mandate to review the 17 SDGs and assess progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).

“We are not yet on track and must step it up,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres unequivocally in his opening addresses to the HLPF Ministerial Segment. Four years after the 2030 Agenda was adopted, he said the picture is unsettling, with poverty rates not falling fast enough to meet the 2030 “no poverty” goal, and fair and efficient justice systems are beyond the reach of some 5 billion people. He invited governments to “kickstart a decade of delivery and action.”

The Forum also identified new threats to SDG implementation in line with its mandate to identify emerging issues, such as climate change, a reduced pace of economic growth, the threat of a further decline in the economy, and the “double-edged” sword of new technologies. “Our collective ambition for realizing the 2030 Agenda hinges on how we manage the evolving risks and challenges, and whether we seize the social, economic, and environmental opportunities before us,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, on the first day of the Forum. “Otherwise, we will not be able to fulfill our duty to deliver on the SDGs in time.”

The review of six SDGs during the Forum brought further sobering news: SDG 4 (quality education) is battling a “global learning crisis”; progress on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) is “slow and uneven”; income inequality (SDG 10, reduced inequalities) is on the rise; climate change (SDG 13, climate action) is disrupting national economies and affecting lives; and no substantial progress has been made on the SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) targets. On SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), official development assistance (ODA) is down by 2.7% in 2018 compared to 2017, humanitarian aid fell by 8% in the same period, and aid to the least developed countries and African countries, who need it most, is falling.

VNRs were presented by 47 countries during the Ministerial Segment, with seven countries presenting for the second time. This was seen by many as a commitment to both the SDGs and multilateralism, at a time when it is under increasing threat.

In advance of the upcoming review by the UN General Assembly, while many believe the HLPF has fulfilled its functions, there were also many useful suggestions for improvement, including making better use of regional institutions and fora; focusing on interlinkages between goals; and ministerial declarations that capture the discussions of the annual Forum and identify follow-up action.

The HLPF, which took place from 9-18 July at UN Headquarters in New York, was followed by a day of discussion at the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 19 July, on visions and projections for the future of the SDGs and long-term scenarios.

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Over 2000 participants took part in the 2019 HLPF (down from 2458 in 2017, and 2200 in 2018). These included three current or previous Heads of State or Government; seven Deputy or Vice Heads of State or Government; and 90 ministers, 12 vice-ministers, and over 30 other ministerial-level officials. Among these, 27% were from ministries of economy and planning; 22% were from foreign affairs; 13% were from development; 12% from social sectors; 9% from environment; 7% each from finance and education; and 2% from justice. In the general debate during the HLPF Ministerial Segment and the ECOSOC High-level Segment, 241 statements were delivered by the high-level representatives.

A Brief History of the HLPF

The HLPF was established in July 2013 by UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 67/290 as the main forum for sustainable development issues within the UN. The HLPF is one of the main outcomes of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which was established at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit). The UNGA resolution calls on the HLPF to meet under the auspices of the ECOSOC every year, and under the auspices of the UNGA every four years, to:

- provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development;
- follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;
- enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; and
- have a focused, dynamic, and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

In September 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Summit adopted “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” a package that includes the 17 SDGs, 169 targets, and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. The 2030 Agenda calls on the HLPF to take on a central role in the follow-up and review process at the global level, and to carry out voluntary, state-led national reviews to provide a platform for partnerships.

Key Turning Points

First Session of the HLPF: The one-day inaugural session of the HLPF, on 24 September 2013, was held under the auspices of the UNGA, and followed the closing session of the CSD. Heads of State and Government articulated a number of concrete proposals on the role of the HLPF, which should include stakeholders, emphasize accountability, review the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of the SDGs, and examine issues from scientific and local perspectives. There was general agreement on the need for a genuine balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, and for the HLPF to seek to integrate these dimensions throughout the UN system.

2014 HLPF Session: The second HLPF session (30 June - 9 July 2014) featured numerous dialogues around the key theme of “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda including the SDGs.” As participants awaited the adoption of the post-2015 agenda, the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the Forum focused on overcoming gaps identified in the implementation of the MDGs; and on reaffirming commitment

to a strong, ambitious, inclusive, and people-centered post-2015 agenda.

2015 HLPF Session: The third session of the HLPF (26 June - 8 July 2015) was once again described as a “placeholder” meeting awaiting the adoption of the post-2015 agenda. It focused on “Strengthening integration, implementation and review—the HLPF after 2015.” In addition to discussions on issues such as the future of the HLPF, supporting national action through HLPF outcomes, and keeping science involved in SDG implementation, the Ministerial Declaration called on the ECOSOC President to issue summaries of the discussions held during the Forum as a contribution to the upcoming Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda.

2016 HLPF Session: The fourth session of the HLPF (11-20 July 2016) was the first to take place after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. It was also the first session that included voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and 22 countries shared their experiences with the 2030 Agenda. This session was also the first where elements of the Ministerial Declaration were put to a vote. A controversial paragraph relating to the Paris Agreement on climate change remained intact following the vote.

2017 HLPF Session: In-depth reviews of the SDGs were initiated at this session (10-19 July 2017), focusing on six goals: SDG 1 (no poverty); SDG 2 (zero hunger); SDG 3 (good health and well-being); SDG 5 (gender equality); SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure); and SDG 14 (life below water). SDG 17 (partnerships) was also reviewed and will be reviewed annually. Forty-three countries presented VNRs. Once again, two elements of the Ministerial Declaration—relating to occupied territories and the multilateral trade system—were put to a vote. While the Declaration was adopted with both paragraphs receiving overwhelming support, a number of countries abstained from voting, protesting that the voting process itself diluted a strong political signal from the HLPF.

2018 HLPF Session: This session (9-18 July 2018) focused on the theme of “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” Five goals were reviewed in addition to SDG 17: SDG 6 (water and sanitation); SDG 7 (energy); SDG 11 (sustainable cities); SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production); and SDG 15 (terrestrial ecosystems). Forty-six countries presented VNRs. A Ministerial Declaration was adopted, following voting on the text as a whole, and specifically on means of implementation and global partnerships, peace and security, and gender equality.

HLPF 2019 Report

ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King opened HLPF 2019 on Tuesday, 9 July, and invited Member States to adopt the provisional agenda (E/HLPF/2019/1). In her opening remarks, King said the 2019 HLPF session has special importance because:

- it is the last meeting in the HLPF’s first cycle, marking the conclusion of the first review of all 17 SDGs, discussion on four themes, and presentation of 142 VNRs;
- it will send messages to the HLPF under the auspices of UNGA (SDG Summit) in September 2019;
- it will initiate discussions on the performance of the HLPF in the past four years, and changes needed; and
- it will reflect on collective progress in SDG implementation globally, regionally, nationally, and locally.

Valentin Rybakov, ECOSOC Vice-President, presented key messages from the ECOSOC Integration Segment held on 8 July,

noting that the VNR process was useful for engaging stakeholders and spurring SDG integration in national development plans.

Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said the HLPF has supported the 2030 Agenda by facilitating countries in accelerating and tracking implementation; and announced an online registry on the SDG Summit website for recording new SDG accelerated actions that are announced by Member States in September.

Najat Maalla M'jid, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence against Children, highlighted: SDG target 16.2 on eliminating violence against children, urging for stronger legal frameworks and data to provide children the best start in life.

Chris Skinner, author and commentator, said financial technology is changing delivery of financial services, including in reaching people excluded from banking and financial services.

Yolanda Joab Mori, One Young World Ambassador, stressed the need to close the disconnect between governments and the grassroots to translate the 2030 Agenda to action on the ground, and presented key messages from the ECOSOC Youth Forum.

Progress, Gaps, and Obstacles: Are we on track for leaving no one behind?

This session, on Tuesday, 9 July, included two parts: where do we stand; and who is at risk of being left behind.

Where do we stand? Moderator Minh-Thu Pham, UN Foundation, invited a focus on financing when addressing gaps in SDG implementation. Liu Zhenmin presented the UN Secretary-General's Progress Report on the SDGs, noting that the world was not yet on a trajectory to achieve the SDGs by 2030. He noted areas where progress needs to be accelerated, including: leaving no one behind; mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing; strengthening effective and inclusive institutions; and investing in data. He welcomed the mainstreaming of SDGs into planning; actors beyond governments embracing the 2030 agenda; and the re-positioning of the UN system to support SDG implementation.

Panelist Julio Santaella, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico, noted that existing gaps in collecting data on SDG indicators are related to the technical capacity of countries, the technical complexity of indicators, and lack of granularity to ensure no one is left behind. He said a global assessment of the SDG indicators will take place in 2020.

Panelist Marta Acosta, Auditor General, Costa Rica, presented the findings of Supreme Audit Institutions on SDG achievements and challenges, saying some governments have made important headway in identifying national performance indicators, while others have not yet started the process.

Panelist Robin Ogilvy, Special Representative and Permanent Observer of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to the UN, highlighted persistent gender income gaps, stark economic inequality, and obesity, which affects more than 30% of the population in OECD countries.

Panelist Thomas Brooks, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said the dangerous ecosystem deterioration highlighted by the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) impacts most vulnerable populations and those left behind, as their livelihoods depend on nature. He stressed the importance of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework to support SDG implementation.

In the discussion that followed, participants highlighted the importance of:

- multi-dimensional measures of poverty to reduce inequality;
- volunteer-led mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of those furthest from government services;
- refraining from taking unilateral economic measures;
- addressing barriers to inclusion;
- increasing engagement of non-governmental organizations; and
- investing in tax collection capacity.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3347e.html>

Who is at risk of being left behind? Moderator Nikhil Seth, UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), highlighted the lack of progress made on reducing inequality between countries.

Keynote speaker Lucas Chancel, World Inequality Lab, said ending extreme inequality directly shapes the ability to end extreme poverty. He identified taxation as a major challenge in reducing inequality, and worried that low corporate taxes were being balanced by taxing consumption of the middle class.

Presenting key messages from the regional forums on sustainable development, panelist Alicia Bárcena, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), said regions such as the Asia-Pacific and Africa are not on track to achieve the SDGs. She identified high unemployment and high wealth inequality as challenges for Latin America; and urged addressing the needs of refugees and migrants in the Arab world.

Panelist Jarkko Turunen, International Monetary Fund (IMF), said many countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are expected to reach the SDG target on eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.

Panelist Stephen Chacha, Tanzania Data Lab, noted that 21 African countries have achieved medium to high levels of human development, but "huge" data gaps exist in areas such as environment, public statistics, and disaggregated data on marginalized populations.

Panelist Sarah Charles, International Rescue Committee, said fragile states are off-track when it comes to achieving the SDGs. She regretted that only 15 VNRs have mentioned migrants or refugees.

Lead discussant George Khoury, National Association for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon, said people with disabilities have not been adequately included in SDG implementation.

In the discussion that followed, participants highlighted the need to:

- support marginalized populations impacted by climate change;
- assist developing countries in curbing illicit financial flows (IFFs); and
- align business models with the SDGs.

Others also raised concerns about exclusion of indigenous peoples in resource management, while calling for national mechanisms for data collection and an ambitious HLPF review process. In concluding remarks, panelists emphasized the need for: a commitment to include refugees and displaced persons in national plans; making improvements in public spending and fiscal policies; a multilateral pact to reduce tax evasion; and needs assessments to fill data gaps.

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Thematic Reviews on Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality

Perspectives of small island developing states (SIDS): This session, on Wednesday, 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Mona Juul, and moderated by Emele Duituturaga, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations.

In her keynote address on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment, Samoa, highlighted key messages from the mid-term review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. She emphasized: Pacific innovations, including a regional peer review of Vanuatu's VNR and joint reporting on the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway; challenges such as inequitable growth and high vulnerability; and the need for strengthened capacity for implementation.

Noting the untapped potential for mutual support and dialogue with SIDS, Panelist Pat Breen, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market, and Data Protection, Ireland, noted the need for: simplifying and rationalizing international financial instruments; deepened partnerships with the diaspora; and quality policy advice.

Panelist Yvonne Hyde, Ministry of Economic Development and Petroleum, Belize, highlighted their Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy aimed at guiding development policies, and education sector reforms to increase student engagement.

Panelist Rakesh Bhuckory, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade, Mauritius, reported on: the Marshall Plan Against Poverty aimed at eradicating poverty and exclusion; reform of the education system to make it more inclusive; and the introduction of a minimum wage.

Panelist Douglas Slater, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, reported on an aquaculture parametric insurance scheme with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism against the impacts of climate change on fisheries, and urged strengthening financing for SIDS to achieve sustainable development.

Lead discussant Stacy Richards-Kennedy, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, reported that his university has partnered with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Caribbean Development Bank to increase university enrollment, innovation, and job creation in the region.

Lead discussant Willy Missack, Pacific Climate Change Collaboration, Influencing and Learning, Vanuatu, emphasized that local ownership and commitment are key to translating the promises of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway into reality.

In the discussion that followed, participants highlighted the paucity of resources to break the poverty and inequality cycle in SIDS. They mentioned the need for: partnerships based on an integrated approach; improvements in the UN's monitoring system for SIDS to reflect progress made in remote places; and localization of the SDGs in the SIDS. In concluding remarks, panelists highlighted: the need for good data to create effective policies for SIDS; addressing vulnerabilities in SIDS through a multi-dimensional rather than a "piecemeal" approach; and the recent appointment by CARICOM of a Special Rapporteur on Disability.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3348e.html>

Perspectives of least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs): This session, on Wednesday, 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President

Juul. Moderator Hope Muli, Hivos, invited participants to examine challenges to inclusiveness and the changes needed in international rules and institutions to better support LDCs and LLDCs.

Panelist Jerry Tardieu, Congressman, Haiti, stressed the importance of: building resilience at the institutional level; engaging parliaments in sustainable development; and access to credit.

Panelist Saad Alfarargi, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development, called for placing human beings at the center of development, through an inclusive and comprehensive approach.

Panelist Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, UN High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS said most LDCs and LLDCs are unlikely to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, and identified high inequality and natural disasters as challenges.

Panelist Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva, Oxfam Mexico, urged a focus on the quality of social expenditure in health and education to improve inclusivity.

Lead discussant Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the UN, identified areas where international institutions can better support LDCs, including: provision of resources; diversification of exports; and science, technology, and innovation (STI) to drive structural transformation.

Lead discussant Richard Ssewakiryanga, Co-Chair, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, said people, not metrics, should determine graduation out of LDC status, and called for a reflection on how young people can better participate in development.

In the discussion that followed, participants emphasized:

- the link between the achievement of the SDGs and the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs;
- the "Everything but Arms" initiative that provides LDCs with duty and quota-free access; and
- challenges faced by LLDCs, including limited transport and energy infrastructure options due to remoteness from the sea.

Others stressed the importance of: South-South and triangular cooperation to share best practices and expertise; and support for disaster risk reduction (DRR) to enable states to continue on their paths to achieving the SDGs.

In concluding remarks, panelists highlighted the need to: ensure the right to development; fulfill the commitments of the international community to LDCs; and identify and provide dedicated support to countries graduating from LDC status.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3348e.html>

Perspectives of society: This session, on Thursday, 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Kira Christianne Danganan Azucena, and was moderated by Paola Simonetti, Major Groups and other Stakeholders, and Katarina Popovic, Education and Academia Stakeholder Group.

Addressing guiding principles for strengthening the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda, including HLPF reform, Panelist José Viera, World Blind Union, highlighted the need for inclusivity, a focus on results-based actions, and space for civil society involvement.

Addressing integration with other crosscutting and thematic processes such as Financing for Development (FfD), STI Forum, Committee on World Food Security, and Sendai Framework for DRR; and how to strengthen the interplay between global and regional processes, Panelist Pooja Rangaprasad, Civil Society FfD Group, urged an honest assessment of how global processes can address systemic risks and called for greater coherence at the

global level to support national efforts such as domestic resource mobilization.

Warda Rina, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Engagement Mechanism, highlighted the need to address inequality of wealth, power, and access to resources, and called for better linkages between regional forums and the HLPF.

Addressing how to ensure vibrant participation and effective dialogue in the VNR process at the national and global levels, Panelist Donovan Guttieres, Major Group for Children and Youth, observed that good examples of CSO participation in the VNR process are more the exception than the rule, while calling for redesigning spaces for collaboration between civil society and governments.

In the discussion that followed, participants highlighted the need for:

- citizen-generated data to complement state-generated data in follow-up and review;
- enabling environments, freedom of speech, outreach for the indigenous peoples furthest left behind, and access to justice; and
- well-organized participatory processes to ensure civil society involvement that enable ownership of SDG implementation.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3349e.html>

Science-policy interface: This session, on Thursday, 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Azucena, and moderated by Romain Murenzi, World Academy of Sciences.

Panelist Peter Messerli, Co-Chair of the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), said the 2019 GSDR, which will be launched at the SDG Summit in September, sounds alarm bells, indicating uneven progress in the achievement of the SDGs and highlighting the need to scale-up and accelerate implementation. He noted that 67 scientific assessments and UN flagship reports have confirmed the inter-related nature of SDGs and called for integrated implementation approaches. Listing six entry points for transformation identified in the GSDR (human wellbeing and capabilities; sustainable economies; energy decarbonization and access; food systems and nutrition; urban and peri-urban development; and global commons), he said strong institutions could serve as levers of change for these transformations.

Panelist Endah Murniningtyas, GSDR Co-Chair, said the 2019 GSDR demonstrates that science can identify emerging issues beyond the goals, and that scientific institutions should be engaged in resource planning.

Panelist Heide Hackmann, International Science Council, called for: effective integration between natural, social, and technical sciences; and effective science-policy coordination in response to the transformative imperative of the 2030 Agenda.

Emphasizing the role of data analytics in policy formulation, Panelist Meera Joshi, outgoing Commissioner, New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, urged empowering local governments with the information, tools, and resources necessary to obtain meaningful results.

Lead discussant Virginia Murray, Public Health England, called for the standardization of hazard definitions, enhanced data sharing to support reporting, and making science usable for all stakeholders.

Lead discussant Stephan Contius, Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany, said the GSDR provides an important argument for more ambitious and integrated policies in areas where progress is lacking.

- In the discussion that followed, participants noted the need for:
- a focus on building scientific infrastructure as a complement to focusing on science in primary and secondary education;
 - efforts to bring the SDGs “into lecture halls”;
 - including a reference to the GSDR in the political declaration of the SDG Summit, to enable its use as a resource by policy makers; and
 - the importance of arts along with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

They also highlighted the need to: secure access to data and knowledge especially in low-income countries; use big data to facilitate interdisciplinarity in SDG implementation; and create partnerships between local governments and the private sector to use big data to improve people’s lives.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3349e.html>

Report of the STI Forum: This session, on Friday, 12 July, 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 the 2019 Forum, including the need to strengthen capacity and policies for development of STI roadmaps, and tackle the fragmented nature of ODA 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 Group to support the STI Forum, emphasized the role of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), the Science and Technology Major Group, and the digital platforms.

Panelist Paulo Gadelha, 10-Member Group to support the STI Forum, recommended that the UNGA be requested to report on progress of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM); and that states include STI in their 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 that followed, participants called for, *inter alia*:

- investing in STI, women in science, and innovation for faster, better, and cheaper technologies;
- fostering innovation in small- and medium-sized enterprises; and
- international cooperation in the areas of digital, cyber, and artificial intelligence technologies.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3350e.html>

Review of SDG Implementation and Interrelations among Goals

SDG 4 (quality education): This session, on Tuesday 9 July, was moderated by Henrietta Fore, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), who called for more equitable and efficient investments in education.

Presenting on the progress made, Shashwat Sapkota, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), described a “global learning crisis,” with a low proficiency rate among school children in reading and mathematics despite increased enrollment rates, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Panelist John McLaughlin, Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development, Canada, identified gender as a central focus for education, and highlighted Canada’s approach to target gender issues through aid.

Panelist Stefania Giannini, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), said achieving SDG 4 is no longer just about education reform, but about transforming the mindset with which we currently approach learning and teaching to make educational systems inclusive and integrate the vision of SDGs, including global citizenship and sustainability, in curricula.

Lead discussant Susan Hopgood, Education International, said SDG 4 cannot be achieved unless governments “dramatically improve” working conditions for teachers.

In an ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the importance of:

- SDG 4 to achieving SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 3 (good health and well-being);
- aid effectiveness principles in advancing progress on SDG 4; and
- system changes, such as universal design approaches, that facilitate access to education to persons with disabilities.

Panelist Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, underscored the importance of a personalized approach to education.

Panelist Kazuhiro Yoshida, Co-Chair, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, called for a system of support for teachers to create an enabling environment for learning.

Lead discussant Maria José Monge, Fundación Monge, highlighted crosscutting structural barriers in education in Costa Rica such as concentration of resources in urban areas, lack of continuous learning and teaching methods, and unequal quality of teacher training.

Lead discussant Madeleine Zúñiga, Global Campaign for Education, stressed the importance of addressing diversity to increase the quality of education and cautioned that private education may further exacerbate inequality.

In the subsequent discussion, participants stressed: the importance of education to advance gender equality and reduce gender violence; the need to ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups in the educational system; and the role of education for global citizenship. Delegates also emphasized the need for:

- investments in scientific and technological education;
- support for developing countries to build school facilities;
- reducing inequalities within the education system;
- increasing funding for the sector; and
- improvement of conditions for teachers.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3347e.html>

SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth): This session, on Wednesday, 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Rybakov. Moderator Moussa Oumarou, International Labour Organization (ILO), said progress on SDG 8 has not been encouraging when the 12 interlinked targets are examined.

Faryal Ahmed, UN DESA, presented a statistical snapshot of SDG 8, highlighting: an increase in economic growth globally, with LDCs falling short of their 7% target; 22% of the world’s

youth are not in education, employment, or training; and an increase in labor productivity with high variation across regions.

Providing policy recommendations focused on increasing digital skills, Panelist Fu Xiaolan, Oxford University, described new technologies as a “double-edged sword” that empower people, but also have disruptive implications for the future of the labor market. She called for reform of educational curricula to ensure that skills match future needs.

Panelist Mamadou Diallo, International Trade Union Confederation, highlighted the importance of inclusive growth based on collective bargaining, and urged prioritizing social dialogue to address issues such as climate change, technological change, and refugees.

Panelist Peter Robinson, US Council for International Business, highlighted the need for good governance and rule of law in creating enabling environments for business, explaining that trying to make business shoulder responsibilities that governments should bear would constitute a disincentive to investment.

Panelist Darja Isaksson, Vinnova, called for increasing women’s participation in the digital economy, and life-long learning to ensure an agile and easily adaptable workforce for a dynamic labor market.

Lead discussant Olga Algayerova, UN Economic Commission for Europe, underscored the need for regional integration and inter-regional cooperation to spur economic growth.

Lead discussant Matthias Thorns, International Organization of Employers, said a recent report by the UN Joint Inspection Unit shows that many UN agencies are not agile and entrepreneurial enough to be able to work with the private sector.

In the ensuing discussion, participants described:

- social protection promoted by the ILO through the Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work;
- efforts to include previously under-represented groups into labor markets;
- a green bond programme, which aims to promote financial sector innovation; and
- the role of innovative financing mechanisms in improving the quality of education and strengthening human capital.

Participants also noted the need to:

- narrow the wage gap between women and men;
- protect the freedom of movement of migrants;
- policy coherence between the SDGs and decent work for all; and
- introduce interventions for the “ultra-poor” to enable people to transition from safety nets to economic activities.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3348e.html>

SDG 10 (reduced inequalities): This session, on Thursday, 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Rybakov, and moderated by Sarah Cliffe, New York University.

Presenting a global statistical snapshot of SDG 10, Benjamin Rae, UN DESA, said income inequality is on the rise, with the bottom 40% receiving less than 25% of overall income, and an increasing share of income going to the top 1% in many countries. He said 39% of women lack decision-making power at work and home; only 20% hold managerial positions; and 50% of those affected by extreme poverty are children below 14 years of age.

Panelist Edwin Cameron, Constitutional Court of South Africa, said SDG 10 requires the elimination of discriminative laws and policies that criminalize marginalized groups such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community

and persons living with HIV, while noting that stigmatization and social exclusion impact the security, health, livelihoods, and wellbeing of these groups.

Panelist Martha Chen, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing Network, called for policies and laws that embrace, rather than stigmatize and criminalize, the poor in the informal economy who are denied social services, housing, secure work places, and business licenses. She highlighted the principles of “leaving no one behind” and “nothing for us, without us” as essential for achieving SDG 10.

Panelist Máximo Torero Cullen, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), called for improving access to markets and diversification of income sources for the poorest to tackle income inequality.

Panelist Eun Mee Kim, Ewha Womans University, Republic of Korea, said inequalities in education undermine poverty alleviation efforts, and called for the elimination of systemic and institutional barriers in the education sector.

Lead discussant Jane Barratt, International Federation on Ageing, stressed the need for all age groups to be actively involved in SDG implementation, and called for addressing the stereotypes that marginalize ageing people.

Lead discussant Nalini Singh, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, underscored the need to eliminate systemic discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, and disability through measures that address income discrimination.

Matthew Martin, Development Finance International, presented an analysis showing that the majority of countries “vastly ignore” SDG 10 in their national development plans, and called on the UN to appoint an SDG 10 focal point.

In the subsequent discussion, participants noted the need for:

- progressive fiscal policies, coupled with social protection and partnerships with the private sector, to promote social inclusion;
- moving beyond a monetary notion of poverty, to a multi-dimensional poverty index;
- centralized wage bargaining, to ensure even income distribution; and
- policies and disaggregated data to reduce inequality.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3349e.html>

SDG 13 (climate action): This session, on Friday, 12 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Hilale, who called for the creation of a “virtuous cycle” for climate action.

Keynote speaker Luis Alfonso de Alba, the UN Secretary-General’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, UN Secretary-General’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 USD 5.23 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, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for 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.

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 the discussion that followed, participants called for:

- an integrated approach to climate change and sustainable development;
- increasing climate finance flows and stepping up climate commitments;
- reviewing fossil fuel subsidies and adopting long-term emissions reduction strategies; and
- scaling up renewable energy to deliver on emissions reductions in the energy sector.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3350e.html>

SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions): This session, on Friday, 12 July, chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Hilale, was moderated by Irene Khan, International Development Law Organization.

Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, UN DESA, said no substantial progress has been made on the SDG 16 targets in recent years; women comprise 70% of the victims of violence; nine human-rights defenders were killed weekly in 2018 compared to seven in 2017; and only 40% of children under the age of five 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 rights 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.

In the discussion that followed, participants called for:

- integrated and people-centered approaches;
- capacity building for implementation;
- transparent public financial management, including good governance assessments;
- strong political will and constitutional guarantees for integrating marginalized communities into society and the economy; and
- collaboration between states, private agencies, and Interpol to deal with transnational cyber-crime.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3350e.html>

Financing the SDGs: Moving from Words to Action

This session, on Monday, 15 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Rybakov, and moderated by Courtenay Rattray, Co-Facilitator, 2018 Outcome Document on FfD.

Min Yongyi, UN DESA, said ODA totaled USD 149 billion in 2018, down by 2.7% in real terms from 2017; and humanitarian aid fell by 8%. She noted a reduction in aid to LDCs and African countries who need it most, saying donor countries are not living up to the pledge to scale up ODA.

Keynote speaker Homi Kharas, Brookings Institution, noted that while more than USD 20 trillion has been spent on the SDGs so far, this investment has taken place mainly in high- and middle-income economies. He presented research showing that while minimum spending of around USD 340 per capita annually is needed in the various sectors to implement the SDGs in low-income economies, there is a cumulative gap between this figure and current spending of at least USD 840 billion per year. He also cautioned against overtaxing the poor to implement the SDGs through domestic resource mobilization.

Panelist Dag-Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, Norway, highlighted Norway's focus on helping countries with domestic resource mobilization and said no single methodology will provide a silver bullet to enhance taxation capacities, and trial and error and knowledge exchange is necessary.

Panelist Vera Songwe, UN Economic Commission for Africa, noted: the reliance on domestic resource mobilization in developing countries to implement the SDGs; the need to close the gap between required spending and ODA; and the need to address IFFs.

Panelist Thomas Gass, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, called on developed countries to remember the shared vision of the 2030 Agenda and fulfill their ODA commitments; and for the 2030 Agenda to become a social contract between governments and the people.

Panelist Belgacem Ayed, Ministry of Development, Investment, and International Cooperation, Tunisia, announced that Tunisia has: instituted a governance framework for public-private partnerships; reduced its rates for corporate tax and imports; created a tax to support small- and medium-sized enterprises; and broadened the base for its value-added tax.

Panelist Mahmoud Mohieldin, World Bank Group, urged: tackling lost revenue due to "revenue shifting" by companies; reducing the cost of remittances; leveraging the private sector; a focus on fragile and post-conflict states; and mobilization of women entrepreneurs.

Lead discussant Iñigo Urkullu Renteria, President, Basque Government, Spain, said 10% of the budget of the Basque government is spent on the SDGs, especially on health, housing, and social protection.

Lead discussant Wang Lubin, ICBC Standard Bank, highlighted efforts on inclusive financing for infrastructure projects, fostering SMEs in Africa, and innovative financing instruments.

In the discussion that followed, participants noted, *inter alia*:

- the role of taxation, ODA, and the private sector in financing SDG implementation;
- innovative financing mechanisms;
- the need for an intergovernmental body on global norms for taxation, including for multinational corporations;
- the impact of trade tensions in jeopardizing financing for SDGs;
- fossil fuel subsidies; and
- effective resource utilization.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3351e.html>

Four Years of VNRs: What have we learned on implementing the SDGs?

This session on Monday, 15 July, was chaired by ECOSOC President King, and moderated by Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP.

Luis Gerardo González Morales, UN DESA, presented online SDG progress and VNR visualization platforms developed by UNDP and UN DESA that enable comparison of VNR reports.

Panelist Seán Canney, Minister of State, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Ireland, reported that the VNR process helped his country assess progress made on education (SDG 4), health (SDG 3), economic growth (SDG 8), and peaceful and safe society (SDG 16). He said it also helped to identify priority areas requiring attention, including homelessness.

Panelist Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany, discussed the establishment of a Climate Cabinet to address challenges in shifting to a low carbon circular economy, and to help the country reach its European Union climate targets for 2030. She highlighted the drafting of a climate protection law, which will be tabled this year.

Panelist Abel Hibert, Office of the President for Analysis and Innovation, Mexico, highlighted the need for legal changes to create state institutions to implement the Goals in an integrated manner.

Panelist Sugath Yalegama, Sustainable Development Council, Sri Lanka, noted challenges related to institutional fragmentation and described the Sustainable Development Act, which aims to promote coherence.

Panelist Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted: VNR-related challenges in data availability, reliability, and disaggregation; and the high reporting burden for most members of the region, which she said could be made lighter through simplified and unified reporting platforms.

Panelist Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, The New School, said the Committee for Development Policy found that SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) was the least mentioned in the VNRs presented so far; and “leaving no one behind” has become more rhetoric than reality, as it lacks concrete measures and strategies.

Panelist Shannon Kindornay, Canadian Council for International Co-operation, highlighted: the inability of some governments to realize a “whole of society” approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda; lack of institutionalized mechanisms for stakeholder engagement; and the lack of civic space, particularly in the face of recent crackdowns on human rights and environment defenders.

Panelist Chris Derksen-Hiebert, World Vision, noted that civil society participation is insufficient in the VNRs.

Panelist Judy Njino, UN Global Compact Africa Region Network Council, worried that the private sector is not sufficiently engaged, and called for moving from awareness creation to action, and from action to impact.

In the subsequent discussion, participants noted, *inter alia*:

- improving country ownership of VNRs, including through stakeholder engagement;
- follow-up actions after VNR presentations;
- experience-sharing workshops on effective VNRs;
- making the second round of VNRs more substantive and supported by statistical data;
- the dual role of civil society in facilitating SDG implementation and holding governments accountable;
- minimizing parallel reporting, while encouraging shadow reports by CSOs;
- the role of parliamentarians in SDG implementation and accountability; and
- the role of the VNRs in integrating the 2030 Agenda into national legislation, identifying interlinkages between SDGs, and providing governments with a mechanism to work with the private sector, local authorities, and civil society.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3351e.html>

Wrap-up Session of the First Five Days

In this session, on Monday, 15 July, Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, UN DESA, summarized messages from the first five days, saying that while governments are on the right track, the level of ambition is not enough to achieve the SDGs by 2030. She noted that the meeting has reiterated important principles of the 2030 Agenda including: the integrated nature of the SDGs; the importance of not leaving anyone behind; the need for multiple actors for implementation; and the transformative nature of science and technology.

In her closing statement, ECOSOC President King highlighted: the importance of investing in data capacity; partnerships to facilitate peer learning; the interlinkages between decent work, economic growth and other goals; the role of science in shaping

policies; and resource mobilization at the regional level. She urged governments to speed up implementation and kickstart transformative action.

Ministerial Segment

Inga Rhonda King, ECOSOC President, opened the annual Ministerial Segment on Tuesday, 16 July, which started with a dance performance based on the HLPF 2019 theme.

Statements from five representatives of Children and Youth followed, calling for: support for access to education; employment opportunities; platforms for youth to discuss exploitation and violence; opportunities to follow their dreams and passions; environmental protection; tolerance; and peaceful and just institutions.

In her opening statement, ECOSOC President King said the HLPF has kept the international community focused on the 2030 Agenda, and the Group of Friends of VNRs will carry the Forum’s message to the SDG Summit in September.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said four years after the 2030 Agenda was adopted, the picture is discouraging: a handful of men own as much as half of humanity; 30% of young women and 13% of young men are not in school or employment; and no country is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. He called for: “dramatically scaling up” private and public investments in SDGs, including reversing the trend of declining ODA; shifting to a green economy and increasing climate finance; implementing the Global Compact on Migration; and strengthening the global commitment to end conflict. He invited governments to “kickstart a decade of delivery and action.”

UNGA President María Fernanda Espinosa said the international community has only 11 years to avoid devastating climate change, but climate action presents a USD 26 trillion growth opportunity up to 2030. Noting that empowering women and girls is the closest we have to “a magical formula” for sustainable development, she said the five Summit-level meetings at UN Headquarters in September 2019 will be a key opportunity to show that multilateralism works.

Mary Robinson, Chair, The Elders, described the 2030 Agenda as one of the most important diplomatic achievements of this century. Citing the alarming findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and IPBES, she said the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda can no longer be considered voluntary. Describing climate change as “grotesquely unfair, with the poorest who have contributed the least paying the highest price, she urged industrialized countries to show more ambition.

Richard Curtis, screenwriter, producer, and film director, said achieving the SDGs requires: partnerships that leverage a variety of skills; urgency, keeping in mind the “simultaneity of human suffering”; and seizing the “unique opportunity” presented by the SDGs before the window of opportunity begins to close, and an acceptance of failure sets in. He called on the UNGA to commit to hosting an annual meeting on the SDGs to drive progress.

IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee said achieving the SDGs will be made more challenging by the impacts of global warming, but the impacts will be considerably less if global average temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C, instead of 2°C. He called for: high material and energy efficiency; low greenhouse gas-intensive food consumption; equity and effectiveness; and international cooperation to address climate change, while creating new opportunities for the economy, society, and the environment.

What are regions telling us about implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs? This session, on Tuesday, 16 July, focused on messages from the regional forums on sustainable

development, and was chaired by ECOSOC President King. Moderator Alicia Bárcena, UN ECLAC, pointed out that all five UN Regional Economic Commissions are currently led by women.

Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, Cuba, presented key messages from the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, saying 144 priority indicators have been identified for the region, and equality remains a key challenge.

Fidelis Magalhães, Minister of Legal Reforms and Parliamentary Affairs, Timor-Leste, said the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development highlighted: the need for accountability for achieving the SDGs; the key role of technology, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and data in advancing sustainable development; and the need for stronger regional cooperation.

Nezha El Ouafi, Secretary of State to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Sustainable Development, said the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development highlighted that: two-thirds of the African countries have not yet reached the goal of universal education; 48 African countries have ratified the Paris Agreement and adopted ambitious measures; and regional trade agreements in Africa enhance regional integration and spur economic growth.

Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Health and Social Protection, Albania, presented outcomes of the UN Economic Commission for Europe Regional Forum, including: the need to improve the disaggregation of data; rising levels of inequality and youth unemployment in the region; diverse needs of learners at all stages of life; and opportunities for leveraging new technologies to achieve SDG 13 (climate action).

Nouri Al-Dulaimi, Minister of Planning, Iraq, said the Arab Forum of Sustainable Development acknowledged the slow pace of SDG implementation in the region, and sought inventive solutions, particularly related to priority areas such as inequalities, increasing poverty levels, weak economic growth, high unemployment rates, climate change, wars, conflicts, occupation, and displacement.

Respondent Sarah Zaman, Women's Action Forum, called for a change in the nature of discussions in the HLPF, saying systemic issues raised at the regional level are not currently reflected. She highlighted the important role of regional bodies in addressing issues such as IFFs, tax avoidance, and trade, while proposing that interim VNRs are presented at the regional level before they are presented at the HLPF.

In the discussions that followed, delegates underscored the need for a statistical fund to support the alignment of data with legislation in Africa, and for support for economic diversification in Central Africa. In response, panelists stressed the need for: support from international institutions for SDG implementation; mobilizing youth; preserving multilateralism; and improving data collection and disaggregation.

Messages to the HLPF: This session, on Tuesday, 16 July, focused on messages from other intergovernmental bodies, and was chaired by ECOSOC President King. Ola Elvestuen, President, Fourth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 4) and Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, presented messages from UNEA 4, including: ensuring the health of the planet by tackling biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution; UNEA and HLPF must provide political guidance and inspire ambition for sustainable consumption and production; and rule of law governing the environment is key to promoting equity and inclusiveness.

Michelle Bachelet Jeria, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, reported on the Human Rights Council's Intersessional Meeting for Dialogue and Cooperation on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She said Member States, UN representatives, national human rights institutions, civil society, businesses, and academics emphasized that implementing the SDGs requires a human rights-based approach locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

Boris Greguška, Chair, UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), presented key messages from UNFF 14, including: forests have a key role in combating climate change; many of the world's poorest people depend on forests, and securing forest tenure is a prerequisite for reducing poverty and inequality; and the HLPF needs to promote the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.

Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, reported on the 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum, noting that 90% of the world's youth live in developing countries and face enormous challenges, but are not actively engaged in decision-making. She said the Forum emphasized the need, among other things, to involve youth in national and sub-national planning and budgetary processes, provide access to education, training, and capacity building, and address discrimination and xenophobia.

Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO, presented the outcome of the ILO Centenary International Labour Conference, which adopted an ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, and a Convention and accompanying Recommendation to Combat Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. He highlighted areas addressed in the Declaration, including challenges such as climate change and the need for new skills, while calling on Member States to ratify the Convention.

General Debate: The opening of the General Debate, on Tuesday, 16 July, was chaired by ECOSOC President King.

Introduction of UN Secretary-General's reports on the 2019 ECOSOC theme and Long term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs: Elliott Harris, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, presented key messages from the UN Secretary-General's reports, saying:

- inequality is multi-dimensional and increasing;
- countries need to build strong and inclusive institutions and effective mechanisms for stakeholder participation in SDG implementation; and
- the international community needs to capitalize on the potential of frontier technologies to accelerate SDG implementation, including by protecting biodiversity hotspots, while mitigating risks to the labor market and widening inequality.

Introduction of Committee on Development Policy Report: José Antonio Ocampo, Chair, UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), presented the highlights of the CDP report, including:

- current levels of inequalities within and between countries are unsustainable, with many not just being left behind, but being pushed behind;
- climate change and environmental degradation are the gravest risks the world is facing;
- reaching the SDGs necessitates the implementation of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; and
- many LDCs are at high risk of being left behind.

The general debate continued in parallel until 19 July, and statements were made by 241 high-level representatives.

Lessons Learned from the First Cycle of the HLPF and Messages for the 2019 SDG Summit: This session, on Thursday, 18 July, was chaired by ECOSOC President King. It started with an “intergenerational dialogue” between David Donoghue, Co-Facilitator of the intergovernmental negotiations on the 2030 Agenda, and Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. Wickramanayake called for the empowerment of youth and fulfillment of the SDGs to ensure young people, constituting half the world’s population, have security, jobs, and opportunities to fulfill their potential. Donoghue said the intention to put “the infinite capacity of young people for activism” at the heart of the 2030 Agenda had not yet been realized, and worried that young people feel “betrayed” by their political institutions. Wickramanayake responded that while young people are not waiting for leaders to act, political polarization is eroding the space available to them for expression.

Lessons learned from the first cycle of HLPF: This session was moderated by Helen Mountford, World Resources Institute. UN Under-Secretary-General Liu said the achievements of the HLPF so far include presentation of 142 VNRs; review of all of the SDGs; organization of regional fora; and stakeholder contributions. He listed areas for improvement:

- high-level political guidance for accelerated action;
- the need for systematic reporting on all SDGs;
- evidence-based analysis in VNRs;
- better identification of areas where assistance is required in VNRs; and
- better exchange of experiences.

Presenting the preliminary and partial results of a survey conducted to inform the upcoming HLPF review process, Liu said respondents believed the HLPF has fulfilled its functions and the VNRs are useful to share lessons and challenges, advance implementation, and mobilize partners.

Muhammad Abdul Mannan, Minister of Planning, Bangladesh, highlighted the role of the VNR process in triggering the review of institutional coordination for SDG implementation.

Oumar Bassirou Diop, Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Cooperation, Senegal, said the VNR process helped engage different sectors and constituencies in SDG implementation.

Jan Vapaavuori, Mayor of Helsinki, Finland, said cities bring “undeniable” value to SDG implementation. Marianne Beisheim, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, said the HLPF process is a success in terms of attendance and attention, but called for more political guidance in the ministerial declaration to ensure follow-up and action-based outcomes.

Saumya Aggarwal, Youth for Peace International, called for changes to: the economic growth model that poses serious threats to the climate and the environment; the weak linkages between regional and global fora; and the general and thematically siloed discussions at the HLPF.

In the discussion that followed, speakers appreciated the in-depth reviews of the SDGs, but called for:

- a strengthened focus on interlinkages;
- strengthening the role of regional fora, while giving voice to national and local fora in the HLPF process; and
- making the process more accessible for people with disabilities.

NGOs referred to the HLPF as the “crown jewel of the UN’s development pillar,” but said it needs to be remodeled to include more voices, more space for interaction, a stronger secretariat, and better use of regional institutions.

In response, Mannan and Diop supported strengthening regional UN institutions and fora. Vapaavuori said Helsinki was

the second city after New York to prepare a “voluntary local review” and proposed better integration of cities in the second cycle of the HLPF. Beisheim suggested improving the workflow to enable more action-oriented outcomes. Aggarwal called for the HLPF to provide meaningful spaces for accountability and civil society participation, and regional and inter-regional exchanges.

In concluding remarks, Donoghue proposed improvements in addressing: crosscutting issues; SDG interlinkages; regional implementation; and engagement with civil society and youth. Wickramanayake called for ensuring a feedback loop after HLPF sessions that involves civil society; and solutions to transnational and global issues such as migration.

Messages to the SDG Summit: Summarizing key messages for the SDG Summit, Rapporteur Gloria Amparo Alonso Másmela, Minister of National Planning, Colombia, said the strong country ownership of SDGs was evidenced by the 142 VNRs presented, with 15 countries presenting twice; the national actions on the SDGs; local-level reflection; and budgetary allocations for the SDGs. She listed challenges, difficulties in long-term planning, awareness building, and resource mobilization. On ways to accelerate actions, she emphasized education, reducing inequalities, providing decent work, scaling up climate action, and ensuring peaceful and just societies.

Rapporteur Christian Wenaweser, Liechtenstein, noted that few countries have concrete plans for financing SDGs and emphasized the need to mobilize domestic resources, including creating enabling environments for investments. To accelerate progress, he proposed:

- understanding interlinkages, synergies, and tradeoffs;
- the role of STI in enabling co-benefits;
- governance, for integration and coordination;
- accurate and timely data for informed decision-making;
- gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;
- partnerships, including international cooperation; and
- regional forums that enable a space for peer learning and showcasing practical solutions.

Voluntary National Reviews

VNRs were presented by 47 countries during the Ministerial Segment from 16-18 July.

Azerbaijan: Ali Ahmadov, Deputy Prime Minister, said the World Economic Forum ranked Azerbaijan third among developing countries in a classification on inclusive economic development; and the World Bank ranked the country among the top ten reformers for ease of doing business in Europe and Central Asia in 2018. He mentioned a 2017 national survey showing that 29% of the SDG targets have been adapted to the national level.

Responding to questions, Ahmadov noted that 10% of the country’s population consists of internally displaced persons, and efforts to resolve conflicts and address the needs of the affected are underway. He also reported on a national agency to scale up public-private partnerships for SMEs.

Philippines: Ernesto Pernia, National Economic and Development Authority, noted a 94% enrollment rate for primary education in 2017; a 6.2% growth in GDP in 2018; faster income growth among the poor; a reduction in casualties due to natural disasters; and a reduction in bribery.

Responding to questions, Pernia reported that the annual socio-economic report helps monitor SDG implementation; and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the National Anti-Poverty Commission are addressing issues of marginalization, including the welfare of indigenous communities.

Sierra Leone: Francis Kai-Kai, Minister, Planning and Economic Development, identified education and peace as progress accelerators; highlighted a focus on education in the national medium-term plan (2019-2023); and identified gender-related achievements, including gender parity in primary schools, near gender parity in secondary schools, and an increase in the rate of female youth literacy.

Responding to questions, Kai-Kai reported that free primary and secondary education, and reproductive health awareness programmes are aimed at keeping girls in school. He also noted the active participation of civil society organizations in the VNR process, including in the official HLPF delegation.

Chile: Alejandra Candia, Vice-Minister, Social Development, highlighted a national-level consensus building exercise on issues such as comprehensive development, public security, and human rights to achieve inclusive growth; a “public-private alliance” to develop solutions; and South-South cooperation for technical assistance and capacity building.

Responding to questions, Candia cited multi-dimensional gender parity indicators developed with stakeholders to show progress in providing access to decent work; and reiterated a commitment to address gender disparities in private and public sectors, including violence against women.

Guatemala: Miguel Ángel Moir, Office of the President, said Guatemala has incorporated 99 of the 169 SDG targets in its National Development Plan. He announced “comprehensive” tax reform aimed at mobilizing financial resources for SDGs; a national strategy on the role of stakeholders in SDG implementation; and efforts to reduce corruption.

Responding to a question, Moir highlighted: institutional arrangements for SDG implementation in the executive branch, including restructuring of the cabinet; problems posed by tax evasion; and the need for economic reform.

Indonesia: Bambang Brodjonegoro, Minister, National Development Planning, described a national 2030 roadmap for SDG implementation, focused on SDG interlinkages and projections for their achievement; the creation of nine SDG centers in Indonesian universities; and the involvement of stakeholders in SDG implementation, including a public consultation on best practices.

Responding to questions, Brodjonegoro highlighted: a legal basis for multi-stakeholder engagement, including partnership guidelines; blended finance as a top priority for the mobilization of resources; a commitment to reforestation and the logging moratorium, and a 20% renewable energy target by 2024; and a focus on agriculture and social activities for South-South cooperation.

Turkey: Naci Ağbal, Chief of Strategy and Budget of the Presidency, announced progress in SDG implementation, including: a net schooling rate of 83.6% for secondary education; 98% health coverage; a 32.5% share of renewable energy in electricity generation; and 1.1% of GDP provision for ODA.

Responding to questions, Ağbal noted multi-stakeholder engagement through an umbrella organization and substantial progress in women’s empowerment.

Iceland: Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir said 65 priority targets provide guidance for an inter-ministerial working group in implementing the SDGs. She highlighted gender-related efforts to eradicate violence, improve representation of women in labor markets, and legislate equal pay. Representatives of the Icelandic Youth Council called for role models to inspire and spark progress in achieving the SDGs. A representative of Iceland’s

Climate Council highlighted the Climate Action Plan launched in September 2018, which aims to make Iceland carbon neutral before 2040.

Responding to questions, Jakobsdóttir highlighted: the equal pay standard, shared parental leave, and universal childcare to provide gender equality in the labor market; a youth forum to enable inclusion of youth diversity; and a policy to manage health impacts of alcohol consumption.

Burkina Faso: Lassane Kabore, Minister of Economy, Finance, and Development, reported an income inequality rate of 35.5% and a 40.1% poverty rate, jeopardizing social cohesion and exacerbating conflict. He highlighted progress on gender parity in education, which is currently 1:1 (men to women) for primary education; 1:1.12 for secondary education; and 1:0.75 for tertiary education.

Responding to questions, Kabore explained that the peace and security challenges posed by terrorism result in decreased social spending, but the government focuses on investments in education and supporting entrepreneurs as key measures for achieving the SDGs.

Lesotho: Tlohelang Aumane, Minister of Development Planning, highlighted progress on poverty eradication and chronic and acute malnutrition, while pointing to widespread micronutrient deficiency and child growth stunting as persistent problems. Among challenges, he highlighted: a high drop-out rate in secondary school; a low economic growth rate; and the impact of climate shocks. A youth representative from Lesotho urged: enacting legislation to ensure that children are protected from violence; increasing the minimum age for marriage to 18; empowering women and girls to become agents of change; and the development of effective and strong institutions.

In response to questions, Aumane noted: the enactment of laws to protect the rights of young people; the need for disaggregated data; performance-based finance programmes to reduce school drop-out rates; and collaboration with the private sector to increase investment in job creation.

Palau: Sinton Soalablai, Minister of Education, reported on universal access to quality health care; achievement of 98% school attendance; reduction in poverty and malnutrition; reduced gender, ethnic, and rural-urban inequalities; and increased regional and global partnerships. A CSO representative said her inclusion into the VNR delegation is evidence of Palau’s commitment to the inclusion of CSOs in SDG implementation.

Responding to questions, Soalablai said his country is diversifying the economy to build climate resilience; the Responsible Tourism Policy Framework promotes high value tourism; and support is provided for pelagic artisanal fishing and climate-resilient agriculture and aquaculture.

Kazakhstan: Zhaslan Madiyev, Vice-Minister, National Economy, said: 80% of the SDG targets are integrated in government plans and strategies; human capital is a priority, with 99.8% of citizens over 15 years of age having received education, and 54.3% holding higher education degrees; plans are underway to increase the income of 40% of the poorest by 2025; and Kazakhstan has become a nuclear-free state.

Responding to questions, he noted plans and projects to transform Kazakhstan’s economy into a low-carbon economy, institute the polluter pays principle, conduct environmental impact assessments, and integrate people with disabilities into society and the economy.

Algeria: Rachid Bladehane, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted: the alignment of the SDGs with national plans; a reduction of extreme poverty; elimination of hunger and child

marriage; Algeria's contribution to re-structuring the debt of LDCs; and challenges such as urban environmental impacts.

Responding to questions, Bladehane emphasized: the engagement of civil society in VNR preparation; the opportunity to examine the social objectives of policies as a part of the VNR process; and the need for a framework to follow up and monitor all indicators.

Pakistan: Kanwal Shauzab, Parliamentary Secretary, highlighted: the SDG Unit for implementing the Goals; the National SDGs Framework with guidance on implementation; medium-term development targets to achieve zero hunger; a new Ministry of Poverty Alleviation, with a budget of USD 190 billion; and scholarships for girls, in addition to financial and digital services for 6 million women.

Responding to questions, Shauzab and other members of the VNR team described: national youth programmes; laws to provide justice for women and protect them against harassment; and efforts to promote climate smart agriculture.

UK: Rory Stewart, Secretary of State for International Development, noted the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income for ODA, and to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. He said the VNR process facilitated learning, and identified challenges in the UK related to housing, access to food banks, and child poverty. Representatives of the private sector, youth, and civil society on the VNR delegation highlighted the need for greening investments, enhancing data capacity, and expediting climate action.

Responding to questions, Stewart described a new focus on poor and marginalized communities.

Côte d'Ivoire: Joseph Seka Seka, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, said 83% of the SDGs have been integrated into national policies, and reported: expansion of universal health coverage; compulsory schooling for 6-16 year olds, leading to increased primary school completion from 63.9% in 2014 to 80.5% in 2018; implementation of a national strategy on reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+) to combat climate change; and successful measures to recover from a political crisis after the forceful removal of former President Laurent Gbagbo.

Responding to questions, Seka described a multi-stakeholder committee composed of state and non-state actors to ensure inclusiveness in the VNR process; and actions to include persons with disabilities by providing universal health coverage and special needs schools.

Fiji: Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister of Economy, highlighted: a near 100% literacy rate and free primary and secondary schools; leadership to combat climate change; building of infrastructure networks to expand the reach of development; fostering of upward mobility through grants for entrepreneurs; and sustained economic growth over the last 10 years. A civil society representative on the delegation identified free education, legal literacy and advocacy, and microfinance as examples of initiatives that have helped foster SDG implementation.

Responding to questions, Sayed-Khaiyum stressed: a commitment to greater grassroots participation; the importance of concessional finance; and the need for structural reforms that support SDG implementation.

Mongolia: Khurelbaatar Chimed, Ministry of Finance, said although Mongolia has the Sustainable Development Vision 2030, the government has not identified priority targets. He highlighted institutional arrangements to ensure "whole of government" and

"whole of society" approaches, including: a multi-stakeholder working group to identify national SDG targets and indicators; the National Council for Sustainable Development; the National Development Agency, which provides technical support for policy integration; and the National Statistical Office, which strengthens the evidence base.

Responding to questions, Chimed highlighted: legislation requiring public consultation; construction of over 200 schools to achieve SDG 4; and awareness-building on the SDGs through newspapers, television, and social media.

Cambodia: Yanara Chhieng, Minister Attached to the Prime Minister, and Thavrak Tuon, Secretary of State, Ministry of Planning, highlighted substantial reduction in the incidence of poverty, and the localization of the SDGs through the formulation of Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDG), which include an additional goal on clearing landmines. Tuon described CSDG targets, including on performance-based budgeting, public service provision, and monitoring. He highlighted challenges, including: the need for bold and fundamental reforms; the need for new sources of finance, such as blended finance; data gaps; and the availability of technologies.

Responding to questions, members of Cambodia's VNR team noted: an expectation to attain middle-income status by 2030; a consultative mechanism for inclusive participation of all development actors; and a focus on issues to sustain growth, such as human resources, the private sector, inclusive development, and diversification of the economy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Josip Brkić, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, described efforts to re-establish post-conflict peace after the conflict that ended almost 25 years ago; and ambitions for EU accession. He described a national SDG framework to inform planning processes, and the "Imagine2030" initiative, a blueprint for meaningful dialogue and stakeholder engagement.

Responding to questions, he noted: multi-stakeholder workshops; development of indicators; and a plan to enable resilience against floods.

Croatia: Zdravka Bušić, State Secretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, reported that: all citizens are guaranteed the right to healthcare; children up to the age of 18 spend around 13.5 years in school, with a drop-out rate of 3%; the average salary of women is 12.5% lower than that of men, the ratio of women in parliament is 21%, and the women's ratio in the judiciary is 71%; more than 90% of the population has access to safe drinking water; and the share of renewables in the energy mix is 20%.

Responding to questions, members of the Croatian delegation presented policies aimed at enhancing regional integration and protection of its forests, which cover 47.7% of its territory.

Central African Republic: Félix Moloua, Minister of Economy, Planning, and Cooperation, reported that after the re-establishment of constitutional order in 2016, following decades of recurring conflicts, his country developed a Plan of Recovery and Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic. He reported increased school enrollment of children below the age of 5 from 60.7% in 2015 to 62% in 2018; and measures to protect children and women against violence.

Responding to questions, Moloua: urged for support to ensure peace agreements are respected to uphold rule of law and to create enabling environments for investments; said his government is working towards ensuring broad stakeholder engagement; and noted that data is outdated due to the long period of conflict.

eSwatini: Tambo Gina, Minister for Economic Planning and Development, highlighted: 20% of the population still living in extreme poverty despite progress in efforts to address it; efforts to tackle high youth unemployment rates, including providing funds for micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprises; and high government expenditure to tackle the impact of an El Niño-induced food crisis.

Responding to questions, Gina noted: appreciation for the work of the UN in his country; engagement of CSOs in the identification of policy priorities, with plans to engage them “more rigorously”; the need to focus on human capital; and the necessity of sound macroeconomic management.

Iraq: Nouri Al-Dulaimi, Minister of Planning, announced success in SDG localization, and efforts to create an enabling environment for SDG implementation despite the humanitarian and economic crises created by war. He said Iraq faces a multitude of challenges, including: high population growth, particularly among youth; fluctuation in oil prices, putting a strain on the economy; under-performance of public institutions; impacts of climate change; a wide gender gap; the need for urgent post-conflict reconstruction, reliance on public resources; and the lack of data for monitoring the SDGs. Noting that only 63% of the population benefits from health coverage, he highlighted universal health coverage and social services for the poor as priority areas.

Responding to questions, Al-Dulaimi noted efforts to address corruption and diversify the national economy, including through supporting innovation and industrialization.

Saint Lucia: Gale Rigobert, Minister of Education, Gender Relations, Innovation, and Sustainable Development, reported on the establishment of the National Coordination Mechanism for the 2030 Agenda to provide guidance on implementation and ensure an inclusive process. While reporting progress in health, education, citizen security, agriculture, infrastructure, and tourism, she highlighted, *inter alia*: over 95% of children in the three-five age group attend preschool, and education is compulsory beginning at five years; social support for women; local disaster committees; and a solar farm that will generate seven million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.

Responding to questions, Rigobert highlighted: resource mobilization through the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and CARICOM; and efforts to ensure stakeholder participation in the VNR process.

Serbia: Slavica Đukić Dejanović, Minister without Portfolio in charge of Demography and Population Policy, and the VNR delegation highlighted: the central focus on children and youth; the role played by the Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities on needs assessments; and the importance of having clearly identified funds allocated for SDG implementation in the budget.

Responding to questions, Dejanović noted: the role of the VNR process in the launch of a countrywide call for cooperation with CSOs; the role of local communities in translating the SDGs into national priorities; and the need to include all stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation.

Tonga: Semisi Lafu Kioa Sika, Deputy Prime Minister, said: the SDGs are mainstreamed in policies at all levels; the Ministry of Internal Affairs is working on a cash-transfer scheme for those living in extreme poverty (3.1% of the population); the National Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality Strategy has been adopted; and the share of renewables in Tonga’s energy mix is 10%, with plans to reach 50% by 2030. He further noted efforts to support entrepreneurship, improve accountability and governance,

enhance national monitoring and evaluation systems, improve access to justice, and set up partnerships for climate change adaptation.

Responding to questions, members of the Tongan delegation said: a legal aid programme is funded through blended finance from the government and donors; Tonga has free compulsory primary education and universal health coverage; and the government is collaborating with CSOs on SDG 3 (good health).

South Africa: Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, Minister of Tourism, described the role of the National Development Plan in addressing the legacy of apartheid, reporting: free education for children from poor households; increased representation of women in parliament (from 25% in 1994 to 41% in 2016) and in the judiciary (35% of the judges are women); the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment programme, aimed at increasing employment for marginalized groups; and legislation and policies, including a carbon tax, to address climate change.

Responding to questions, the South African delegation described: the development of a medium-term strategic framework, with indicators that will enable reporting and monitoring; a joint reporting framework for the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement; a programme of action to address gender-based violence; and judicial action to address IFFs and corruption.

Rwanda: Claudine Uwera, Minister of State of Finance and Economic Planning, Rwanda, highlighted: 5% growth rate in the agriculture sector, with further efforts to intensify crop farming to support food security; a shift towards integrated and anticipatory disaster risk management; efforts to tackle high rates of stunted growth; a decline in inequality; and a commitment to improve the quality of education.

Responding to questions, Uwera noted: investment in human capacity and technology to support data collection ability; the need for further investment to increase the scope of monitoring beyond 60% of the SDG indicators; noticeable socio-economic gains through increasing the involvement of women in society; and the engagement of citizens in planning to increase ownership.

Kuwait: Khaled Mahdi, Secretary-General, Supreme Council for Planning and Development, described: the transition of the government from an operating to a regulating role, to support private sector driven development; the Kuwait Sustainable Development Award created in 2013 to incentivize a sustainable development focus in national development plans; and a national strategy aimed at ending corruption. Other members of the Kuwaiti delegation from government, civil society, and the private sector announced a national goal to reach 15% of renewables in Kuwait’s energy mix by 2030, and an increase in the share of non-oil exports from Kuwait to 60%.

Responding to questions, Mahdi mentioned collaboration with academia for evidence-based policy-making.

New Zealand: Craig Hawke, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the UN, said: the well-being approach of the VNR is encapsulated in the Māori proverb “He waka eke noa” — we are all in this together; key focus areas include reducing child poverty, and work with international partners, including a 30% increase in ODA in 2018; and the Living Standards Framework that provides a guide for policies, along with a set of indicators to monitor progress, supported by a “well-being budget.” A private sector representative reported on the Climate Leaders Coalition, a voluntary action by businesses to reduce emissions.

Responding to questions, the delegation described the indicator framework to monitor the well-being approach; and emphasized a commitment to overcoming challenges such as low SDG visibility, inequalities, and domestic violence.

Chad: Issa Doubragne, Minister of Economy and Development Planning, highlighted: progress on developing a legal framework for SDG implementation and engagement of stakeholders; the need to improve sanitation and address environmental issues; training programmes for parliamentarians to foster coherence between the 2030 Agenda and national plans; and improvements in access to water.

Responding to questions, Doubragne noted: 30% of the government budget is allocated to security challenges, resulting in resource constraints for implementing the SDGs; the need for investments in human resources; efforts to increase the representation of women in parliament; and the need for support from international partners.

Ghana: George Gyan-Baffour, Minister for Planning, reported: the integration of SDGs in national budgets; a reduction in poverty from 24.2% in 2013 to 23.4% in 2017; economic growth, making Ghana the fastest growing economy in the world, with a positive trade balance for the first time in 2019; policies to remove cost barriers to education; and a civil society platform for dialogue on the SDGs. A representative of civil society reported progress in the collaboration between the government and CSOs.

Responding to questions, Gyan-Baffour noted efforts to increase data capacity for SDG implementation and to integrate data from other sources such as civil society and academia; and gender parity at the pre- and primary school levels, with secondary schools approaching parity.

Israel: Zeev Elkin, Minister of Environmental Protection, and Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage, reported the use of innovation to tackle sustainable development challenges, including desalination of sea water, to provide over 70% of the nation's water, and wastewater recycling for agriculture. He described free dental services for children and youth; innovations involving artificial intelligence to document medical information; and Operation Good Neighbor, a social programme to support neighboring devastated communities.

Responding to questions, the Israeli delegation noted that civil society was actively involved in the VNR process; and a decision has been taken to align government strategies with the SDGs.

Timor-Leste: Fidelis Magalhães, Minister of Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs, highlighted: a sequential approach to SDG implementation, with an initial focus on nine goals that are aligned with the national development plan; achievements, such as a significant reduction in poverty, gender parity in schools, doubling of electricity access, and a petroleum fund for oil revenue; and challenges, including data collection, mobilization of domestic revenue, the need to diversify the oil-based economy, and absorptive capacity.

Responding to questions, Magalhães emphasized the interlinkages between public administration, the judicial system, and the private sector.

Tanzania: Philip Mpango, Minister of Finance and Planning, described: a focus on industrialization, inclusive economic growth, human development, and public-private partnerships; 90% enrollment in education, and public investments in free primary schooling; access to mobile financial services for 78% of the adult population; and challenges related to deforestation, with over 60% of the population reliant on firewood for cooking.

Responding to questions, Mpango noted plans to use citizen-generated data, support from international financial institutions to strengthen the National Statistical Office, and the need for support from the international community to tackle IFFs.

Vanuatu: Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and External Trade, reported on: The People's Plan, a national initiative to implement the 2030 Agenda; a free education policy for ages one to six; and the National Policy on Climate Change and DRR. He noted that his country was the first to have its VNR peer reviewed.

Responding to questions, the VNR delegation said: the peer review process provided a means for external examination of their actions; and the Second Home plan enables vulnerable persons at risk of evacuation due to climate-related crises to find a temporary home.

Cameroon: Alamine Ousmane Mey, Minister of the Economy, Planning, and Regional Development, highlighted: 4% average economic growth rate, with efforts to reach the 7% needed to achieve the SDGs; efforts to reduce the cost of education and improve its quality; and the need to identify new sources of government revenue. Among challenges, he listed mobilization of stakeholders and finance, and implementing a social safety net. Identifying next steps, he listed: intensification of national ownership of the SDGs; strengthening the statistical system; and establishing a multi-stakeholder monitoring body to review progress.

Responding to questions, Mey highlighted: the importance of supporting access to education; partnerships supported by the UN reform process, reflecting the principles of ownership and alignment with national policies; and the need to transfer competencies and resources to local authorities for SDG implementation.

Tunisia: Belgacem Ayed, Ministry of Development, Investment, and International Cooperation, highlighted: alignment of 58% of SDG indicators with national plans; growing representation of women in public office; and efforts to protect minority rights through legislation. Among challenges, he listed: a lower than expected economic growth rate; high rate of youth unemployment, at 29%; and the ongoing need to support migrants.

Responding to questions, Ayed noted: the introduction of economic and structural reforms; compulsory education, with the proportion of female students at 60%; and efforts to diversify the economy to expand growth in non-tourism sectors.

Congo: Ingrid Olga Ghislaine Ebouka-Babackas, Minister of Planning, Statistics, and Regional Integration, reported on: structural reforms to increase the country's resilience to fluctuating oil prices through strengthened governance, building human capital, and economic diversification; 90% integration of the SDGs in the national development plan, with implementation focused on 14 SDGs and 134 targets; 80% integration of children with disabilities in the schooling system in 2017; and policies addressing the needs of indigenous peoples.

Responding to questions, Ebouka-Babackas said the Congo has agreements with the International Monetary Fund for attracting private investment, and with the World Bank, for statistical capacity building.

Nauru: David Adeang, Minister for Finance and Sustainable Development, reported on: a focus on building resilience against climate change impacts, particularly in the fisheries sector; establishment of the National Planning and Development Committee; alignment of reporting for the VNR and the SAMOA Pathway, to avoid duplication; establishment of banking and financial services; and improved enrollment in schools.

Responding to questions, Adeang said sea level rise is a threat to Nauru's development, and the current priority is moving coastal communities to higher ground.

Oman: Ali Masoud Ali Al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry, highlighted integration of the SDGs into the Ninth Five-Year Plan and Vision 2040, a development plan to shape policies. He described strategies for SDG implementation, including: fostering human empowerment; building a knowledge-based and competitive economy; achieving peace; ensuring environmental sustainability; generating finance, including through integration in the national budget; localization, with the engagement of governorates; and monitoring through quality data.

A youth delegate from Oman highlighted the National Youth Programme for Skills Development, and the engagement of youth in the development of Vision 2040.

Responding to questions, Al Sunaidy and the delegation noted: efforts to provide education to persons with disabilities, including health and social services; programmes and plans to combat non-communicable diseases; Oman's withdrawal of its reservations on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and data dashboards for improved data accessibility.

Mauritius: Nandcoomar Bodha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade, and Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, said the Mauritius Vision 2030 document incorporates the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and SAMOA Pathway. He described measures to reduce poverty and inequality that have contributed to reducing the Gini coefficient from 0.414 in 2012 to 0.4 in 2017, including negative income tax, minimum wages, social housing schemes, free tertiary education, and participation of women in public service. He noted that 2.15% of GDP is invested in adaptation and mitigation to climate change.

Responding to questions, he said the lack of a military allows public spending to be focused on social welfare and described efforts to promote sustainable development through environmental impact assessments and public awareness campaigns in schools.

Guyana: Dawn Hastings-Williams, Minister of State, said the national sustainable development agenda is anchored in the Green State Development Strategy. Her delegation highlighted an emphasis on: expanding access to health facilities to hinterlands; environmental education; resilient agriculture; reforms in the education sector; and promotion of community participation.

Responding to questions, the delegation said 17% of the government's budget is directed to education, and national commissions address the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.

Liechtenstein: Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the UN, noted: progress on all the SDGs, except SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 15 (life on land), where he said his country faces major challenges. As success stories, he highlighted that 40% of agriculture is organic, and the photovoltaic power generated per capita is the highest in the world. A civil society representative on the delegation proposed the establishment of a national sustainability strategy and institutional structures for SDG implementation. A youth delegate proposed the inclusion of youth as volunteers to support aid programmes around the world.

Responding to questions, Wenaweser and his delegation highlighted: rule of law as an overarching priority; the role of the International Criminal Court in strengthening national judiciaries; and education as a pre-condition for gender equality, decent jobs, and employment.

Mauritania: El Moctar Djay, Minister of Economy and Finance, said the National Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity 2016-2030 is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and focused on economic diversification, inclusivity, and eliminating inequality, including through cash transfers for the poorest. He said 42% of the energy mix is from clean sources, investments in the social sectors are being doubled, and a health insurance scheme for vulnerable groups is being instituted. A member of the Mauritanian delegation reported achievement of gender parity in schools.

Responding to questions, Djay highlighted the need for institutional coordination for SDG planning and monitoring.

Turkmenistan: Batyr Bazarov, Minister of Finance and Economy, reported: 84% of SDG targets are reflected in national policies; access to affordable, high-quality medical services; enlisting of 17 youth ambassadors for SDGs; free primary and middle schools; reduction of rural and urban inequalities; afforestation programmes to combat climate change; and action plans to combat human trafficking and corruption.

Responding to questions, Bazarov noted the establishment of a working group to coordinate SDG implementation, and plans to raise USD 3 million by 2025 for implementation.

Closing of the HLPF

The HLPF closing session took place late Thursday afternoon, 18 July. ECOSOC President King introduced the draft procedural report (E/HLPF/2019/L.1), which was adopted.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed highlighted three main areas: "the inclusion imperative," noting that those who have been left behind are still behind; democratic and effective institutions, which form the bedrock of SDG implementation; and political commitment. She said national ownership of the 2030 Agenda at a time when multilateralism is being threatened indicates political commitment, while identifying three areas for improvement: data analysis; meaningful engagement of civil society; and solution-oriented VNRs that capture interconnections.

In her closing statement, ECOSOC President King noted the need to move out of our comfort zones and advance with a swifter pace of implementation. She called for further mainstreaming the SDGs into planning, integrating the SDGs into budgets, and bringing multiple actors together for implementation. She invited everyone to commit to taking transformative action as the decade of action on SDG achievement is launched.

She gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:04 pm.

ECOSOC High-level Segment

The ECOSOC High-level Segment and the HLPF Ministerial Segment were held jointly Tuesday through Thursday, 16-18 July. On Friday, 19 July, the ECOSOC High-level Segment concluded its work by reviewing the implementation of the SDGs and the work of the HLPF.

Where are We Heading? Visions and Projections for the Future of the SDGs

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President King. In a keynote address, Under-Secretary-General Liu presented megatrends from the summary of the UN DESA Sustainable Development Outlook 2019, which will be launched in September 2019, highlighting:

- implementation of the SDGs is made more challenging by lower GDP growth, 1% below the growth rate during the

period of the MDGs (2000-2015), and the looming risk of sudden deterioration of financial conditions;

- the global population is projected to reach 8.5 billion in 2030, and while this can present a demographic dividend for developing countries with a young workforce, nearly 1.8 billion are projected to face chronic unemployment risk and remain outside the workforce;
- more than two million people are experiencing high water stress due to climate change; and
- international migration, which will continue to shape population dynamics, is a win-win for origin and destination states.

Cristián Samper, Wildlife Conservation Society, said intact ecosystems are critical to support life, but only 23% of terrestrial ecosystems on the planet are intact, while 77% are fundamentally transformed. Calling for 30% of ecosystems be set aside by 2030 and for the restoration of degraded areas, Samper said 30% of the solutions for climate change are nature-based but are overlooked in most nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

A panel discussion followed, moderated by Gerda Verburg, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling-Up Nutrition Movement.

Li Andersson, Minister of Education, Finland, highlighted the role of education and continuous learning in achieving the 2030 Agenda, with opportunities for the young and for adults to upskill and reskill; and Finland's ambition to transform into a sustainable and carbon neutral society by 2030.

Describing SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) as a crosscutting goal, Ohood bint Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Happiness and Well-being, United Arab Emirates, said readiness for the future involves: agility, through balancing long-term planning with speed; using data for service delivery; and using the government as a platform to bring together NGOs and the private sector.

Highlighting increasing carbon emissions and rising inequality as “counter-transformations,” Nebojša Nakićenović, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), listed six focus areas as pathways to transformational change: education and health; consumption and production; deep decarbonization; biosphere and land-use; smart cities; and digital revolution. He called for a shift from incremental to transformational change; identification of synergies using sustainable development pathways; formulation of sustainable development roadmaps; and a focus on inter-relationships to uncover multiple benefits and synergies.

Masamichi Kono, OECD, urged focus on: national strategies that integrate sustainable development; policies that are consistent with tackling climate change; and innovation and skills to use digital technologies to enhance connectivity.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme, said solutions already exist to tackle pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change, and urged building on the successes achieved through multilateralism for enhanced action.

Mahmoud Mohieldin, World Bank Group, stressed: guidance for policymakers on using indicators to track progress; domestic resource mobilization, given declining foreign direct investment; healthy competition between countries to accelerate implementation; and the need for the 2019 September Summits to “speak to one another.”

In the discussion that followed, speakers discussed:

- data-driven research to identify opportunities for economic growth;

- formal civil society and volunteer engagement;
- support for private sector in developing countries to leverage international funds;
- links between climate and security;
- investments to transform food systems and accelerate SDG implementation; and
- maintaining a balance between ecological sustainability and economic growth.

Participants also raised:

- options for reparative justice to address inequities;
- advancing education in the face of resource constraints;
- the tension between a global political system in flux and the collective approach that underpins the 2030 Agenda;
- concerns about the impacts of decoupling the economy from environmental impacts such as carbon emissions;
- the role of the private sector in fragile countries; and
- implementation in the context of data unavailability.

Responding to participants, Andersson appreciated the training and support teachers receive in the Finnish education system.

Andersen highlighted the “lock-ins” that perpetuate the current system and, with Mohieldin, stressed the importance of taxing negative outcomes like pollution.

Mohieldin said reparative justice needs political solutions, while calling for a focus on SMEs in developing countries when discussing the role of the private sector. Kono said the SDGs allow for a shift in focus from economic growth to well-being and pointed to the role of sound corporate governance in advancing sustainability. Samper highlighted the “triple challenge” of protecting biodiversity, promoting human well-being, and addressing climate change.

Long Term Trends and Scenarios

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President King. Moderator Claire Melamed, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, drew attention to the challenges of decision-making and SDG implementation in the face of uncertainty regarding solutions—for instance, of the transformational benefits or potential dangers of new technologies.

Panelist Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Committee of Experts on Public Administration, emphasized the role of effective governments and public institutions as enablers of SDG implementation, calling for acceleration and agility of government-led actions to empower citizens and ensure equality.

Panelist Isabelle Durant, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), called for fair trade that benefits the entire supply chain, noting that while the volume of global trade has multiplied by five times in 30 years, the benefits are distributed unevenly.

Panelist Isabelle Pypaert-Perrin, International Movement ATD Fourth World, said dialogue on inequalities must involve marginalized communities, so they can contribute to solutions for inclusive and sustainable societies.

Panelist Charles Kenny, Center for Global Development, said the use of technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence can enable increasing production and generate wealth required to achieve the SDGs; and fair taxation regimes can ensure equal distribution of benefits.

Panelist Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner, Wales, UK, noted the inability of governments to think beyond electoral and budgetary cycles, listing areas where future impacts are clear but are still not being addressed, such as ageing, climate change, and urbanization. She called on governments to address inequalities not only on the basis of where people are born but

also on when they are born, saying Wales is the only government in the world with a Future Generations Commissioner to hold government to account for the impact of current decisions on future generations.

Lead discussant Doreen Bogdan Martin, International Telecommunication Union, said half the world's population is not connected to the internet, and growth rates are slowing at the bottom of the pyramid where connectivity is most needed for inclusion and equality. Highlighting that many lack the reading, numeracy, and technical skills needed to benefit from the internet, she said it will not be possible to achieve the SDGs without connecting the world's population.

Lead discussant Paulette Metang, Association Camerounaise pour la Prise en charge des Personnes Agées, said anticipating the rise in population of those aged 60 and over, from 962 million in 2017 to 1.4 billion by 2030, is important to "leave no one behind." She called attention to human rights violations and age prejudice, while proposing a global convention to protect the rights of the elderly.

In the subsequent discussion, participants highlighted: partnerships with local players; transparency and feedback loops between national, regional, and local governments and institutions; and transparency in budgeting.

In response, Durant underscored the need to support the LDCs. Howe highlighted the importance of independent accountability mechanisms, education, and social protection for all. Kenny called for transforming the current demographic crisis into an opportunity, taking into account the youth bulge in Africa and the ageing population in Europe. Pypaert-Perrin said the lack of access can become an opportunity for innovation, giving the example of women who invented organic agriculture because they lacked access to pesticides.

In response to a question from the moderator on why we fail to act collectively and individually on climate change despite knowledge of its impacts, Durant said transformative actions are not possible when governments focus on electoral cycles and noted the need to embrace multilateralism over protectionism. Pypaert-Perrin said vulnerable communities should not be driven to further poverty by climate change. Kenny urged citizens to continue making governments more accountable.

On actions by the private sector, a participant called for more investments in ecologically-sound agriculture. Kenny and Durant urged for more women in senior leadership positions, and income parity. Howe called for improvements in procurement procedures and investments in clean technologies. Pypaert-Perrin proposed investments in education and social protection. Martin supported the idea of providing mobile phone access as a primary step towards digital integration.

Participants called for: "moving with, not for" people and contextualizing solutions by taking cultural diversity and languages into account; promoting synergies between global agreements like the Sendai Framework on DRR, Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda; and promoting "voluntary local reviews."

Martin described a new project with UNICEF called "GAVI for Gigabites," to digitally connect schools around the world. Howe said fines can enhance compliance and accountability. Kenny called for wasting less talent in the future, by speeding up the process of ensuring that people are not denied education and opportunities, Pypaert-Perrin and Durant warned against SDG fatigue, and ensuring that policies succeed in recognizing interlinkages. Fraser-Moleketi said the difficulties lie not with technological solutions, but with policy objectives.

Summing up, Elliott Harris, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, reiterated:

- the key role of equality in unlocking the potential of the other goals;
- the multi-dimensional nature of inequality;
- the role of demographic trends in driving inequalities;
- the vicious cycle created by long-entrenched inequalities and denial of human rights;
- the importance of transparency, predictability, and accountability, especially in national budgets;
- access to technology and capacity to all countries and all citizens;
- the potential of climate change to exacerbate inequalities, and the need for "just transitions;" and
- the need for all voices to be heard while drafting policies.

Conclusion of the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC: The Way Forward

On Friday afternoon in closing remarks, Under-Secretary-General Liu said progress towards the SDGs is slow; the lack of data hinders progress in reaching those furthest behind; and stakeholder participation is essential. He noted that the high-level Summits in September 2019 will be an opportunity to share these messages.

King said the efforts invested in the HLPF's first cycle should yield lessons to help efforts for SDG implementation going forward, and an integrated approach that includes people in decision-making is key to ensure that no one is left behind. She summarized several emerging mega-trends discussed at the ECOSOC High-level Segment, including the debt crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. She said the international community is still uncertain about how to achieve the transformational change to address these crises, and ECOSOC and HLPF are providing a platform to nurture that discussion.

She gavelled the meeting to a close at 5:35 pm.

A Brief Analysis of the 2019 HLPF

"In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there 'is' such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action." — Martin Luther King Jr.

Time, or the lack of it, was of essence at the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). "The clock is ticking," warned Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, at the start of the meeting. Four years after the world agreed to an ambitious set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), progress was found lagging.

Richard Curtis, famous for his mastery of language, found that even the word "urgent" was lacking in flavor and power to reflect the exigency of the moment. "When you hear that word 'urgent,' I beg everyone here, in this room—never to lose their sense of the simple, intimate, daily urgency in the lives of those we serve. Never forget what is happening to millions as we sit here today—never forget the simultaneity of human suffering," he told delegates at the opening of the HLPF Ministerial Segment.

HLPF 2019 was different. While previous meetings fell into a regular pattern of reviewing a theme as a set number of SDGs in addition to reviewing voluntary national reviews (VNRs), this year's Forum had an additional task of gearing up for a set of reviews: not only of overall progress on the 2030 Agenda during

its first four-year cycle at the SDG Summit in September, but also of the HLPF itself, during the upcoming 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

This brief analysis considers HLPF 2019 as an opportunity for reflection—a chance to take stock of progress on the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, and how the HLPF has fulfilled its mandate to review progress, provide leadership, and recommendations, and identify new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

“This World Today”

The overall message at the conclusion of HLPF’s first review cycle of review was clear: we are not on track to achieve most of the SDGs by 2030. As delegates noted, while progress has been made in reducing poverty, too many people still live in extreme poverty; inequality is high and rising; women and children still remain marginalized; and existential threats like climate change and biodiversity loss threaten to undermine all progress.

An assessment of this year’s theme, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality,” also came up short, with most UN Regional Economic Commissions reporting inequality of wealth, power, and access to resources between and within countries. Current levels of inequalities are unsustainable, said José Antonio Ocampo, UN Committee for Development Policy Chair, with many not just left behind, but pushed further back. Even within richer countries, stark economic inequality and persistent gender pay gaps are cause for concern. Several speakers also raised alarm about lack of progress towards empowerment and inclusivity. The “with us, not for us” principle was evoked by many in the context of inclusion of youth, women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and other often marginalized sectors of society.

The review of six SDGs during the Forum brought further sobering news: SDG 4 (quality education) is battling a “global learning crisis”; progress on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) is “slow and uneven”; income inequality (SDG 10, reduced inequalities) is on the rise; climate change (SDG 13) is disrupting national economies and affecting lives; and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) is “off track and backsliding.” The inter-connectedness of each of these goals with the other SDGs was highlighted: without quality education, it will be impossible to unlock sustained and inclusive economic growth. Without climate action, the entire 2030 Agenda is at risk.

A few issues that have been brought up in previous HLPF sessions appeared to have “come of age” this year, perhaps driven by social movements such as the “#MeToo” movement and the “Greta Thunberg effect.” Gender equality, for instance, was no longer as abstract as it had been in the past. Throughout the discussions on the theme, and of individual SDGs, participants raised specific issues like the gender pay gap and gender-related violence and harassment. The role of youth was no longer sidelined. Young people were at the heart of the proceedings, even speaking first at the opening of the Ministerial Segment. They were also represented in several VNR delegations. An “intergenerational dialogue” between the UN Secretary-General’s Youth Envoy and David Donoghue, one of the key architects of the 2030 Agenda, featured reflection on whether the intention to put “the infinite capacity of young people for activism” at the heart of the 2030 Agenda had been realized. Consideration of intergenerational impacts was front and center in the discussion on long-term trends—the world’s only Future Generations Commissioner, from Wales in the UK, called on all countries to appoint people who can hold governments to account for the impact of current decisions on future generations.

That countries face resource constraints was one of the topline messages emerging from the Secretary-General’s SDG progress report. In addition to the declining levels of official development assistance (ODA), economic growth is uneven, and the trade order is under severe stress. Indeed, many countries noted that the required level of finance was simply not materializing. In the face of these realities, while participants discussed the important role of ODA, domestic resource mobilization was also a key consideration. Countries debated other potential sources of finance and effective use of existing sources for SDG implementation, including by curbing corruption and illicit financial flows, and improving national and global taxation, including by ensuring that multinational corporations pay their fair share of taxes. In the context of the latter, the calls for a global tax body under the UN were reiterated. The limits of reliance on domestic resources, was, however, also recognized. Homi Kharas, a keynote speaker from the Brookings Institution, cautioned that a heavy reliance on taxes by low-income countries may mean that the poorest get squeezed even harder.

There was also evidence of countries allocating funds from their national budgets for SDG implementation, and aligning development spending with the SDGs. Ghana’s Minister for Planning, George Gyan-Baffour, reported the integration of SDGs in national budgets, as did the Minister of Commerce and Industry of Oman, Ali Masoud Ali Al Sunaidy. For further alignment with budgets, and for enhancing accountability, many highlighted the necessity of engaging parliamentarians, who can influence budget allocations and ensure oversight of resource use.

The other long-standing discussion, of moving civil society engagement beyond “tokenism and tick-boxing” inched forward and was perhaps more prominent and mature, with participants calling for the creation of transformative spaces for civil society interaction, and welcoming citizen-generated data and shadow reporting.

New and emerging risks were also discussed, such as emerging technologies, including the digital revolution, robotics, and artificial intelligence; and demographics. These can either enormously advance or drastically threaten the 2030 Agenda, as they have the potential to drive economic growth, but also to exacerbate inequalities and exclusion. For instance, changing demographics can bring new opportunities in the form of a “youth bulge” to drive economic growth; or create challenges to equality and inclusion, if the projections of 1.8 billion facing a chronic risk of unemployment in 2030 are realized.

“That’s the Way of the World”

The enthusiasm that Member States have shown for presenting VNRs was viewed as a sign of their commitment to multilateralism, at a time when it seems to be receding. The content of the VNRs also showed maturity: while in previous years, the focus of many VNRs was on the creation of institutions and processes, this year’s presentations focused on implementation challenges, and included information on progress on specific SDGs. There was also more evidence of integration and alignment with national development plans and policies. Congo reported 90% integration of the SDGs in the national development plan, with implementation focused on 14 SDGs and 134 targets.

Cambodia took ownership further by formulating a set of 18 “Cambodia SDGs” (with an extra goal on clearing landmines). New Zealand reported alignment with the Living Standards Framework to guide national policies. Countries also mentioned

alignment with budgets. Vanuatu even report being the first country to have its VNR “peer reviewed” by a team of senior Pacific officials.

A further encouraging sign of ownership is the development of “voluntary local reviews” by two cities—New York and Helsinki. The Mayor of Helsinki called for this trend to be encouraged in the future signaling the start of the deeper ownership of VNRs, beyond national governments, across stakeholders, and down to the local level.

A key problem, however, continued to be the lack of data and baselines for monitoring and reporting. Some flagged this as an area for improvement, calling for the next round of VNRs to be more substantive and supported by data. A related concern is whether countries should report on select indicators in their VNRs, or if reporting should be more comprehensive. The former risks the creation of silos, while the latter is a challenge for countries with limited data collection and analysis capability.

In the final analysis, both in a poll conducted by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and from the views expressed by participants, the VNRs appear to have had several benefits at the national level, in tracking progress, identifying priority areas, enhancing institutional capacity for implementation, forging partnerships, and also, arguably, enhancing multi-stakeholder participation. There were calls, however, for better use of regional fora and institutions to maximize benefits of the VNRs—for instance, South-South learning and cooperation. Better follow-up action in country, after the VNRs have been presented at HLPF, was also proposed, such as strengthening policies and processes to address the gaps and challenges identified in the VNR. For instance, following the presentation of its VNR in 2016, Germany decided to revise its National Sustainable Development Strategy, including by conducting consultations and a peer review process.

“Moment of Truth”

In preparation for its upcoming review by the UN General Assembly, the HLPF itself came under scrutiny, notably through a survey circulated among participants during the two weeks of the Forum. While preliminary and partial results indicated that respondents believe the HLPF has fulfilled its mandate, there were many suggestions for improvement, including better use of regional institutions and fora; focusing on interlinkages among the goals; and ministerial declarations that actually capture the discussions of the annual Forum, rather than generic declarations negotiated before the Forum even convenes. Many felt that these ministerial declarations could provide more precise political guidance to accelerate implementation. Finally, as one participant noted, what happens after each HLPF session is critical so encouraging specific follow-up action is essential.

There was also recognition of the HLPF’s limitations. The annual agenda is already overburdened and at times resembles speed dating rather than meaningful dialogues. Some noted that being more selective about what can or should be discussed at the global level, and what can be dealt with at the regional level, could be one way of lightening this burden and improving the conversation.

“September”

The attention now turns to the SDG Summit in September. This will mark the year before a decade is left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and there is a clear expectation that the Summit must mark the start of a “decade of action.” Perhaps the review of

progress at the 2019 HLPF will provide the jolt that is needed to kickstart this action during the SDG Summit.

“Next year it’ll be 2020, a third of the way to 2030,” Richard Curtis, screenwriter, appealed to the opening of the Ministerial Segment. “If we wait, the window of opportunity will begin to fade. An acceptance will creep into people’s minds that we’re not going to make it. That it was a nice opportunity we missed. That we settled for bronze when we could have won gold.”

Upcoming Meetings

IPCC-50: The 50th session of the IPCC is expected to approve the Summary for Policy Makers of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land. **dates:** 2-6 August 2019 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** <http://www.ipcc.ch/calendar>

Latin America and Caribbean Climate Week 2019: The Latin America and Caribbean Climate Week (LACCW) 2019 is designed to advance regional climate action. It aims to support implementation of LAC countries’ nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and action to deliver on the SDGs. The event is envisioned as a stepping stone to the UN 2019 Climate Summit. LACCW is part of Regional Climate Weeks that are held annually in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific. Regional Climate Weeks are organized by the Nairobi Framework Partnership, which supports developing countries in preparing and implementing their NDCs. **dates:** 19-23 August 2019 **location:** Salvador, Brazil **www:** <https://www.regionalclimateweeks.org/>

Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2019: Asia-Pacific Climate Week (APCW) 2019 is designed to advance regional climate action. It aims to support implementation of Asia-Pacific countries’ NDCs and action to deliver on the SDGs. APCW is envisioned as a stepping stone to the UN 2019 Climate Summit. Regional Climate Weeks are organized by the Nairobi Framework Partnership (NFP), which supports developing countries in preparing and implementing their NDCs. **dates:** 2-6 September 2019 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **www:** <https://www.regionalclimateweeks.org/>

74th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA): UNGA 74 will open on 17 September, and the first day of the high-level General Debate will be Tuesday, 24 September 2019. UNGA 74 will include: a climate summit; a high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage; an HLPF meeting (SDG Summit); a high-level dialogue on financing for development; and a high-level meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing states. **dates:** 17 September - 30 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>

IPCC-51: The 51st session of the IPCC is expected to approve the Summary for Policy Makers of the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. **dates:** 20-23 September 2019 **location:** Monaco **www:** <http://www.ipcc.ch/calendar>

Youth Climate Summit: Young leaders from around the world are convening in advance of the UN Climate Summit to showcase climate solutions and engage with global leaders on climate change. **date:** 21 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/youth-summit.shtml>

UN 2019 Climate Summit: UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene the UN Climate Summit under the theme “A Race We Can Win. A Race We Must Win,” to mobilize political and economic energy at the highest levels to advance climate action that will enable implementation of many of the

SDGs. Its aim is to challenge states, regions, cities, companies, investors, and citizens to step up action in nine areas: mitigation; social and political drivers; youth and public mobilization; energy transition; climate finance and carbon pricing; industry transition; nature-based solutions; infrastructure, cities, and local action; and resilience and adaptation. **date:** 23 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <http://www.un.org/climatechange/>

SDG Summit: The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, will assess progress achieved so far since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 and provide leadership and guidance on the way forward that would help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. **dates:** 24-25 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsummit>

High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development: UNGA will hold a high-level dialogue on financing for development (FfD), the day after the SDG Summit. The FfD meeting is mandated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which calls for a high-level dialogue back-to-back with the HLPF's UNGA-level meeting every four years. The Dialogue will issue a call for collective action to accelerate progress on the implementation of the AAAA and provide opportunities to announce and launch new major initiatives, as well as engage with stakeholders. **date:** 26 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdialogue/>

High-level Review of Progress on SAMOA Pathway: UNGA will convene a one-day high-level meeting to review progress made on the SAMOA Pathway (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action). **date:** 27 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/samoareview>

34th Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board: The Adaptation Fund (AF), established under the Kyoto Protocol, finances projects and programmes that help vulnerable communities in developing countries adapt to climate change. The Fund is supervised and managed by the Adaptation Fund Board, which is composed of 16 members and 16 alternates and convenes meetings throughout the year. The World Bank serves as AF trustee on an interim basis. **dates:** 7-11 October 2019 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** <https://www.adaptation-fund.org>

2019 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group: The 2019 Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group and related events will bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, civil society, media, and academics to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, global financial stability, poverty eradication, jobs and growth, economic development, aid effectiveness, and climate change. **dates:** 14-20 October 2019 **location:** Washington, D.C. **www:** <https://www.worldbank.org/en/meetings/splash>

31st Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol (MOP31): MOP31 will consider issues, including hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) management, implementation, and other ozone-related matters. **dates:** 4-8 November 2019 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** <http://conf.montrealprotocol.org>

Santiago Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 25): The Santiago Climate Change Conference, which will feature the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the UNFCCC, the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP

15), and the 2nd session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 2), will convene along with meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies. The pre-session period will be from 26 November - 1 December 2019. **dates:** 2-13 December 2019 **location:** Santiago, Chile **www:** <https://unfccc.int/santiago>

2020 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up: The FfD Forum was called for as part of the outcome from the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3), which concluded with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). **dates:** 20-23 April 2020 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdforum/>

STI Forum 2020: The Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs will hold its fifth annual meeting. The STI Forum is a part of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism mandated by the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. **dates:** 12-13 May 2020 (to be confirmed) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/TFM#forum>

HLPF 2020: As of 21 February 2019, fifteen countries had already signed up to present Voluntary National Reviews at the 2020 session. **dates:** 7-17 July 2020 (to be confirmed) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

For additional upcoming events, see <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

Glossary

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDP	UN Committee for Development Policy
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FfD	Financing for development
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IFFs	Illicit financial flows
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Landlocked developing countries
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAMOA	SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
STI	Science, technology and innovation
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UN ECLAC	UN Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNGA	UN General Assembly
VNR	Voluntary National Review