

HLPF 2017 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY 17 JULY 2017

The opening session of the High-level Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Ministerial Segment of the 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) took place on Monday morning. Reporting by Ministerial Chairs on the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, and two sessions on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), followed.

In the afternoon, the UN Secretary-General's report on the theme of the ECOSOC 2017 session ("Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges"), and the report on the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) were presented, followed by a general debate. In parallel, an additional two sessions on VNRs took place. In total, 12 countries presented VNRs on Monday: Brazil, Luxembourg, Nepal, Monaco, Japan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Kenya, the Netherlands, Chile, and Malaysia.

OPENING OF HIGH LEVEL / MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the UN and ECOSOC President, opened the High-level Segment. He called for solidarity and cooperation to address key global challenges such as extreme poverty, inequality, conflicts and terrorism, and climate change.

Stressing the 2030 Agenda is "the pathway that will guide humankind to a sustainable way of life," Peter Thomson, President of the UN General Assembly, highlighted the importance of awareness-raising, and a focus on implementation on the ground.

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General (UNSG), noted a "paradox" in which challenges are increasingly global, but citizens are distrustful of globalization, given its mixed performance. He said the 2030 Agenda could make globalization fair, and outlined key proposals for reform of the UN development system, including: empowerment of resident coordinators; gender mainstreaming in 2030 Agenda implementation; and coherent and accountable funding.

Noting the presence of immense wealth but major inequality in the world, Jeffery Sachs, Director, The Earth Institute, identified obstacles to progress, including: vested interests, for instance of the oil, coal, and gas lobbies; belligerent leaders that perpetuate conflict; and an absence of "big, bold thinking." He proposed:

responsible investing; an "SDGs fund" for low-income countries; and compensation based on the polluter pays principle for climate-related loss and damage.

Shava, along with the ECOSOC Vice Presidents, presented main messages from the previous week. Shava highlighted: the increasing role of regional cooperation; improvements in intersectoral coordination and mainstreaming at the national level; and persistent inequality. He identified empowerment of women and youth, mobilization of domestic resources, foreign direct investment, official development assistance (ODA), and social protection as drivers of change.

Marie Chatardová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, highlighted the value of: multi-sectoral health interventions; legal provisions and institutional frameworks tied to human rights conventions for women's empowerment; and reflection of interlinkages in budget allocations. Cristián Barros Melet, Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, called for more systemic and systematic cooperation between governments and communities to overcome barriers to financing. Jürgen Schulz, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, encouraged governments to find ways to further incorporate other major stakeholders into the SDG process, including the private sector, farmers, women's groups, and youth. Nabeel Munir, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, urged acceleration of national efforts and strengthening of international cooperation to support policies and programmes for implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

REPORTING BY MINISTERIAL CHAIRS OF THE REGIONAL FORUMS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President Shava.

Lahcen Daoudi, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance, Morocco, highlighted poverty eradication, good governance, and equality as priorities for sustainability in the Western Asian region, and a renewed commitment to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Francisco Guzmán Ortiz, Office of the President, Mexico, highlighted the eradication of poverty as a key issue for the Latin American and Caribbean region, while stressing the importance of multilateralism and gender equality. He called on the UN to develop indicators for progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income.

Rosemarie Edillon, National Economic and Development Authority, the Philippines, noted two key outcomes adopted by the Asia-Pacific region: a regional roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda; and a document on the form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

Highlighting the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, Gervais Meatchi, National Planning Authority, Togo, highlighted the following issues for the African region: integrated approaches; harmonization with national plans; resilient infrastructure; and sustainable use of oceans.

Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, Ministry of Environment, Energy and the Sea, France, said the key issues for the UN Economic Commission for Europe countries include: adapting the SDGs to the national level; building statistical capacity; and high-level political engagement to integrate the SDGs into existing policies.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 1

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President Shava.

Presenting Luxembourg's VNR, Carole Dieschbourg, Minister of Environment, and Romain Schneider, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, said unprecedented demographic growth in the last decade has increased pressure on environmental resources. They outlined the following national priority areas: social inclusion; quality education; decoupling the economy from carbon emissions; improved land use planning; and more effective environmental protection.

Presenting Nepal's VNR, Min Bahadur Shrestha, National Planning Commission, highlighted: the enshrinement of all three dimensions of sustainable development in Nepal's 2015 Constitution; three high-level committees established to promote SDG implementation; progress in promoting gender equality, including in parliamentary representation; and challenges related to financing and provincial- and local-level implementation. He called for a strong international mechanism to oversee progress and follow-up of SDG implementation.

Presenting Brazil's VNR, José Antônio Marcondes de Carvalho, Ministry of Environment, Energy, Science and Technology, described the establishment of a 16-member National Commission for the SDGs, with eight members from government and eight from civil society. He welcomed efforts by Brazilian civil society to disseminate and localize the SDGs, and stressed the importance of SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals).

Lead discussant Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, Minister for Environment and Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany, inquired about: multi-stakeholder engagement; how conflicts between different government departments are addressed in SDG implementation; and integration of SDGs into the national budget.

Lead discussant Adil Najam, Boston University, called for bridging the differences in the way donor and developing countries approach SDG 17 in their VNRs, and noted that the HLPF and UN have a key role in ensuring that crosscutting lessons are drawn from the VNRs of different countries.

Responding to the question on resolving conflict between departments, Dieschbourg noted the use of regular reporting from, and discussions within, inter-ministerial groups.

On a question from BANGLADESH on resources for implementation and by Schwarzelühr-Sutter on budgeting, Shrestha said ministries have been asked to propose projects related to SDGs for funding from the national budget, and budget codes are being used to track expenditure.

In response to COLOMBIA's question on local ownership, de Carvalho said states and municipalities have been approached to internalize the SDGs. On a question raised by WOMEN and NGOs, he said civil society is engaged in the SDGs process. From the floor, questions were also raised on: data disaggregation; actions taken to curb illicit financial flows; and the need to avoid tokenism in civil society engagement.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 2

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice President Munir.

Serge Telle, Minister of State, Monaco, presented his country's VNR, describing: the allocation of 1.1% of revenue to ODA, focused on least developed countries (LDCs); a focus on healthcare and education as part of his country's global efforts; over-achievement on Kyoto Protocol mitigation targets and a national goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050; and national priority areas related to SDG 14 (life below water).

In response to a query from the SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY, Telle stressed his government's commitment to address the needs of marginalized communities.

Presenting his country's VNR, Fumio Kishida, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan, highlighted: the establishment of the SDGs Promotion Headquarters; examples of "Public-Private Action for Partnership" projects; and efforts to promote international cooperation based on the notion of human security. He announced US\$1 billion in ODA by 2018, focused on education, health, disaster risk reduction, and gender equality.

In response to questions from THAILAND, CANADA, and CHILDREN AND YOUTH, Kishida responded that his country is: finding ways to reduce inequality; promoting the participation of women in leadership positions; and engaging younger generations in addressing challenges such as poverty among children.

Bambang Brodjonegoro, Minister of National Development Planning, Indonesia, highlighted the adoption of a presidential decree on SDG implementation and the establishment of a National Coordination Team on the SDGs. He said Indonesia's next medium-term development plan will incorporate all SDG targets.

Responding to questions from the PHILIPPINES, AUSTRALIA, and PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, Brodjonegoro outlined support measures to local fisheries and said marginalized groups can voice their concerns during Indonesia's development of SDG action plans.

INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT ON THE OVERALL THEME OF THE COUNCIL'S 2017 SESSION

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice President Chatardová.

Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted findings from two reports of the UNSG: "Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges" (E/2017/64), which describes systemic challenges and key policy actions for eradicating poverty; and "Beyond gross domestic product: multi-dimensional poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals" (E/2017/69), which provides an overview of national approaches to addressing multi-dimensional poverty. He also highlighted the 2017 World Economic and Social Survey, underscoring that the global economic situation remains a challenge for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

José Antonio Ocampo, CDP Chair, discussing findings from the 2017 Report of the CDP (E/2017/33), said the Committee is approaching poverty reduction from the angle of building productive capacities in countries that have graduated, or are graduating, from LDC status.

Group and national statements by 25 heads of state, ministers, and other representatives of Member States followed.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 3

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice President Melet.

Noting that VNRs are an opportunity for transparency in action, Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo, Minister of Planning, Costa Rica, highlighted a national pact on the SDGs that brings together all three branches of government as well as civil society. She highlighted specific actions taken on zero hunger, health, infrastructure, and marine life.

Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Netherlands, said her country scores high on welfare, trust in institutions, education, and health but must address greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, and the gender pay gap. Martijn Visser, Youth Representative for Sustainable Development, called on his country to prioritize education, climate action, and equality. Eugene Rhuggenaath, Prime Minister of Curaçao, highlighted challenges of small island developing States and the importance of SDG 17.

Presenting Bangladesh's VNR, Abul Kalam Azad, Principal SDG Coordinator, noted efforts to mainstream the SDGs by establishing an office to oversee the exercise. Noting coherence between national policies and the SDGs, he said 14 out of the 17 SDGs are thematically aligned and three are partially aligned with his country's 7th Five-Year Plan. He identified nutrition and infrastructure as areas in need of further attention.

Irungu Nyakera, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Kenya, highlighted the establishment of an interagency technical committee that works with civil society organizations and private sector, and an SDGs Liaison Office working with sub-national governments. He identified a lack of disaggregated data and inadequate funding as challenges.

Michele Brooks, Purposeful Journey Consulting Group, moderated the question and answer session.

Responding to a question from COLOMBIA on multi-dimensional poverty, Oviedo said consideration of access to health care, adequate housing, and social protection are vital in addition to measuring income. Ploumen highlighted national efforts to ensure children fulfill their potential in terms of education. Azad stressed substantial increases in GDP, exports, and remittance flows over the past decade. Nyakera noted social protection initiatives to empower vulnerable groups.

Responding to AUSTRALIA on how development planning mechanisms are contributing to SDG implementation and accountability, Azad emphasized the importance of private sector and NGO engagement.

On questions posed by IRAN, BELGIUM, and NGOs, Ploumen noted: the possibility of increased ODA if the economic situation improves; her country's offer to developing countries to re-negotiate tax treaties that are being misused by corporations; and coherence instilled by reporting processes to Parliament.

Nyakera noted his government's priority to provide health insurance, particularly to the vulnerable segments of the society. Azad called for more concrete action to safeguard the planet and, in response to a question on health delivery from NEPAL, he stressed the importance of community clinics and the private sector.

Oviedo identified two challenges to meeting the SDGs: achieving political consensus among actors, and recognizing the interests and demands of all sections of society.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 4

This session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice President Melet.

Presenting Chile's VNR, Marcos Barraza, Minister of Social Development, said that while only 11.7% of his country's population are poor in terms of income, 29% of people are in multi-dimensional poverty. He described four priorities in his country's efforts to achieve the SDGs: sustainable and inclusive economic development; reducing inequality; addressing climate change and environmental protection; and bolstering institutions and democracy.

In response to questions from COSTA RICA and CHILDREN AND YOUTH, Barraza highlighted: labor and health reforms; and a comprehensive protection system that tackles social vulnerabilities.

Abdul Rahman Dahlan, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia, highlighted: the adoption of a multi-stakeholder participatory governance structure; the organization of a national SDG symposium; studies on data readiness and gaps; development planning mapping exercises involving NGOs and the private sector; and the formulation of a national SDG roadmap.

On a question from THAILAND on complex interlinkages among SDGs, Dahlan said his government has carried out a detailed mapping by clustering SDGs and formulated a roadmap. He further highlighted the National Blue Ocean Strategy that aims to break down silos to deliver outcomes across ministries. Responding to a question from INDIGENOUS PEOPLES on disaggregated data and Bumiputera peoples living under poverty, Dahlan noted ongoing efforts to coordinate data collection. On a question from CHILDREN AND YOUTH on behalf of Malaysian civil society organizations, Dahlan underscored institutionalized processes for stakeholder consultation. On a question from NGOs on how the multi-dimensional nature of poverty is being addressed, Dahlan further outlined initiatives to increase income, reduce vulnerability, and supply housing.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Addressing an overflowing room on Monday morning during the opening of the High-level Segment, UNSG Guterres and keynote speaker Sachs told it like it is. Guterres highlighted the importance of overcoming mistrust in multilateralism and globalization at a time when both are increasingly important, and yet under threat. Sachs spoke directly of the vested interests that are "killing" the planet, calling out the oil, coal, and gas lobbies in particular. He said the lack of sufficient funding to implement the 2030 Agenda is "palpable" – and suggested specific measures to address it: an "SDG fund" for the most vulnerable; compensation, not aid, to address loss and damage due to climate change; and diversion of funding from armaments, which are all about "destruction, destruction, destruction." Both emphasized the importance of the Paris Agreement, with Sachs calling for "big, bold thinking."

Big, bold thinking appeared in short supply, however, as there were further indications of difficulties on the draft ministerial declaration on "same old" issues. During the general debate, the G-77/China said that although the draft falls below their expectations, the Group has shown flexibility to go along with it as it currently stands. He encouraged other Member States to do the same, warning that reopening it will result in revisiting of other issues, making it impossible to achieve consensus. Rumor had it, meanwhile, that the 2017 Forum is headed towards a vote on at least four issues that currently remain unresolved: climate, gender, trade, and peoples and countries under foreign occupation.

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