

Summary of the 2018 Meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 9-18 July 2018

The 2018 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened from 9-18 July 2018, at UN Headquarters in New York. The meeting focused on the theme of “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” During the first week of the meeting, the Forum reviewed progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on resilient societies. Thematic reviews took place on:

- Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies – Building resilience;
- Advancing science, technology and innovation (STI) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Small island developing states (SIDS) perspective;
- Perspectives of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and middle-income countries (MICs);
- Implementing the SDGs: lessons from the regions; and
- Perspectives of society.

In addition, the following SDGs were reviewed in detail:

- SDG 6 (water and sanitation);
- SDG 7 (energy);
- SDG 11 (sustainable cities);
- SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production);
- SDG 15 (terrestrial ecosystems); and
- SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), which is reviewed annually.

The first week wrapped up with a session on “Leaving no one behind: Are we succeeding?” on Friday, 13 July.

The Ministerial Segment convened from 16-18 July, where 46 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

The Ministerial Segment also included:

- the UN Secretary-General’s report on the theme and thematic discussions of the 2018 ECOSOC session;
- an address by the President of the UN Environment Assembly;
- reports from regional forums;
- the report of the Committee for Development Policy; and
- statements from ministers and other high-level representatives of Member States.

The UN Secretary-General delivered a keynote speech before the closing session of the Forum on Wednesday, 18 July. A Ministerial Declaration was adopted on the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” during the closing session, after voting on three paragraphs relating to: means of implementation (MOI) and global

partnerships; peace and security; and gender equality. The Ministerial Declaration as whole was also put to a vote, following a request from the US. The Declaration was adopted by a vote of 164 in favor, 2 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

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). The HLPF 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 ECOSOC every year, and under the auspices of the UNGA every four years (the next session under UNGA will be in 2019), 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

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- 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” (2030 Agenda), 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.

HLPF 2014: 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.

HLPF 2015: 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.

HLPF 2016: 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 VNRs—22 countries shared their experiences with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This session was also the first where elements of the Ministerial Declaration were put to a vote due to a controversial paragraph relating to the Paris Agreement on climate change, which remained intact.

HLPF 2017: In-depth reviews of the SDGs were initiated in 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 for the Goals) was also reviewed and will be reviewed annually. The number of countries presenting VNRs nearly doubled to 43. 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.

HLPF 2018 Report

ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová opened HLPF 2018 on Monday, 9 July, and invited Member States to adopt the provisional agenda (E/HLPF/2018/1). In her opening remarks, Chatardová said the participation of over 80 ministers and vice ministers and 2500 non-state actors in the HLPF exemplifies the rallying power of the SDGs.

Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, presented the UN Secretary-General’s SDG progress report (E/2018/64). He highlighted the challenges of: climate change and conflict zones; inadequate social protection; the rise of hunger; gender inequality; pressures on land, forests, and livelihoods; an overall decrease in global official development assistance (ODA); and underfunding of data collection for SDGs in developing countries.

Keynote speaker Jeffrey Sachs, Columbia University, said greed and the vested interests of coal, oil, and gas companies are the biggest obstacle to the achievement of the SDGs. He called out the global food industry’s unsustainable supply chains and unhealthy products. Citing overlapping rankings at the top of sustainable development and happiness tables, he noted that sustainable development promotes well-being and happiness, while tax cuts for the rich undermine essential dimensions of the SDGs. He called on rich countries and individuals to address the US\$200 billion shortfall in funding required to achieve the SDGs, by: increasing ODA; using 1% of the wealth of the world’s 2208 billionaires; closing down off-shore tax havens; taxing the five big global technology monopoly companies; taxing financial transactions; a global carbon tax; and measures to tackle wholesale tax evasion.

Keynote speaker María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, outlined ways to make the 2030 Agenda more inclusive, including by increasing access to technology to ensure human rights and strengthen democracy.

Keynote speaker Alex Steffen, Worldchanging.com, described the essential tension to be addressed as that between sustainable and unsustainable economies, one that can be resolved by human innovation and the contribution of technology. He stressed the importance of speed in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Resilient Societies

This session on Monday, 9 July, organized in two sub-sections, was chaired by ECOSOC President Chatardová and moderated by Emily Pryor, Data2X.

Reviewing progress in achieving the SDGs: Opening this sub-session, Pryor highlighted the examples of Finland and Vietnam in collecting and using gender-disaggregated data.

Panelist Åsa Regnér, UN Women, noted that while girls attend school more than they did a decade ago, and more women participate in political settings, progress is slow with women being disproportionately affected by extreme poverty and the lack of access to safe, drinkable water.

Panelist Pádraig Dalton, Central Statistics Office of Ireland, highlighted: the need to ensure that the institutions that gather and compile SDG-related data are trusted by both citizens and policy-makers; and the importance of making data accessible and meaningful for policy-makers.

Panelist Grace Bediako, National Development Planning Commission, Ghana, said the SDGs are being implemented in Ghana through a decentralized planning system.

Lead discussant Sofia Monsalve Suárez, FIAN International, noted the lack of sufficient data to assess inequality, both within and between countries. She cautioned that the way “big data” is being compiled and used does not always respect human rights or serve the intention of the SDGs.

In the ensuing discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: proposals for more effective, coordinated, approaches to data collection, including: community-level data collection; methodologies to improve feedback and policy responses at the national level; better coordination of UN statistical systems; and focused disaggregated statistical attention on risk factors for the young and the needs of persons with disabilities. There were calls for special efforts to take on board the contributions and local knowledge of indigenous peoples.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3338e.html>

Better data for sustainable development: Panelist Zachary Chege, UN Statistical Commission, discussed a link between data gaps in measuring progress and poor development outcomes, and called for better donor coordination to address underfunding in areas of data gathering. He drew attention to plans to launch a framework for data related to the SDGs at the 2018 World Data Forum in Dubai.

Panelist Nancy Potok, US Chief Statistician, underlined the important curatorial role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in turning reliable data into insights.

Panelist Shaida Badiee, Open Data Watch, said there is a US\$280 million annual financing gap for data to track the SDGs and called for political support and domestic financing.

Lead discussant Leesha Delatie-Budair, Statistical Institute of Jamaica, underlined the need to mainstream SDGs in global, regional, and national statistical programmes. She called for improved technical capacity in NSOs, institutional capacity, public information, and consideration for indebted and vulnerable countries.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: a timeframe for the collection of data on Tier II and Tier III SDG indicators; a focus on the data requirements of those countries in the lower ranks of the SDG index; the use of data collected by civil society organizations (CSOs); enhanced cooperation on statistical capacity and sharing with vulnerable countries; and compliance with UN statistical criteria.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3338e.html>

Thematic Reviews

Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies:

Building resilience: This session, on Tuesday, 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Inga Rhonda King.

Moderator Emily Wilkinson, Overseas Development Institute, noted that disasters and crises often have their roots in economic models or urban development patterns.

Panelist Isabelle Durant, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), highlighted better infrastructure, debt forgiveness, and technology advances as paths to improve the resilience of vulnerable countries.

Panelist Dereje Wordofa, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), identified investments in educating the young, tackling gender-based violence, strengthening health systems, and understanding population data as building blocks for resilience.

Panelist Jeb Brugmann, 100 Resilient Cities, noted that long-term structural issues complicate Puerto Rico’s recovery efforts.

Panelist David Smith, University of the West Indies, underlined investments in human capital to address the climate-related challenges specific to SIDS.

Lead discussant Vuk Žugić, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, proposed looking at resilience through the lens of the 2030 Agenda’s “Five Ps”—people, prosperity, planet, peace, and partnerships.

Lead discussant Marikris de Guzman, Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Youth Network, shared insights from the 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), including the need to move past big infrastructure and technological solutions to focus on people-centered policies.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised the need for synergies between different levels of governance, including local governance and the UN, as well as with several provisions of the Paris Agreement. Panelists noted the role of debt suspension and of human rights in resilience building.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3339e.pdf>

Advancing science, technology and innovation for SDGs:

This session, on 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President King.

Toshiya Hoshino, Co-Chair of the STI Forum, reported on the third annual meeting of the Forum in June 2018, highlighting: engaging youth in sustainable consumption and production (SCP); the regulation of agriculture; and the critical role of roadmaps as tracking tools for governments.

STI Forum Co-Chair Juan Sandoval-Mendiolea noted that rapid technological change, of paramount importance for the SDGs, is now on the UNGA agenda. He called for more ethical considerations in the deployment of technologies.

Moderator Norma Munguía Aldaraca, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, called for efforts to address the inequalities brought about by rapid technological change, and invited the STI Forum to play a role in drafting public policy.

Panelist Endah Murniningtyas, Co-Chair of the group of scientists for the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), described four main STI issues to be explored in the 2019 GSDR: the role of STI in understanding the complexity of SDGs, interlinkages and trade-offs; the need to improve the link between science and policy; science’s contribution to SDG monitoring; and increasing the interdisciplinarity of science for sustainable development.

Panelist Nebojša Nakićenović, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), said three billion people have been left behind by the “fourth industrial revolution,” but STI policies could also make the transformation towards inclusive and equitable societies affordable and effective. He highlighted that STIs can have an important role in human capacity building, education, and SCP.

Panelist Carsten Fink, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), introduced the World Innovation Index, with 80 indicators that include the political environment, education, and infrastructure.

Lead discussant Ernest Foli, Forestry Research Institute, Ghana, said an African regional multi-stakeholder workshop on the role of STI in implementing the SDGs in Africa highlighted that Africa’s transformation will come from within, and investments in infrastructure, education, and diversifying people’s skills need to be increased.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the imperative to use STI to reach and involve vulnerable groups; the launch of projects to leverage STI for international development and social inclusion; the need to address the privatization of knowledge and the socialization of costs; and the role of STI in enabling rural development.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3339e.pdf>

SIDS perspective: This session, on Wednesday, 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Marc Pecsteen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: investment frameworks for resilience; linkages between the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, and priorities for the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway, including funding; and participation of persons with disabilities and young people in designing disaster preparation and risk reduction strategies.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3340e.pdf>

Perspectives of LDCs, LLDCs and MICs: This session, on 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Pecsteen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: increased ODA and debt relief for LDCs, and a stand-alone session on LDCs during HLPF; adequate support for MICs' challenges in the UN system, including meetings on the progress of MICs towards achieving the SDGs at the HLPF; the importance of multi-stakeholder regional cooperation; support to increase the resilience of LLDCs; recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to land and resources; active engagement in the mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action in 2019; and the need for gender-sensitive budgeting.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3340e.pdf>

Implementing the SDGs: Lessons from the regions: This session, on Thursday, 12 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Jerry Matthews Matjila, and moderated by Alicia Bárcena, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the role of international and regional agreements in implementing the 2030 Agenda; the need for financial, technical, and human resources; action on single-use plastic; the need for assistance in localizing the 2030 Agenda; the role of regional commissions in harmonizing data collection and interpretation; and the importance of stakeholder participation in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Panelists further raised the need for: a bigger role for the

regional forums in feeding into the HLPF; and regional economic integration to achieve the SDGs.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3341e.html>

Perspectives of society: This session, on 12 July, was organized with Major Groups and other stakeholders. It was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Matjila.

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the need to take into account older persons in SDG implementation; multi-stakeholder participation in HLPF delegations; the importance of education for the transformation envisioned by the SDGs; the need to protect indigenous peoples’ rights to their lands, territories, and resources; enhancing awareness of the SDGs among CSOs; the need for capacity building for grassroots organizations to access funding and increase impact; and the need to strengthen synergies between the regional and global forums.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3341e.html>

Review of Implementation of the SDGs

SDG 6 (water and sanitation): This session, on 9 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Mahmadamin Mahmadaminov. It was moderated by Joakim Harlin, UN-Water.

Yongyi Min, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), highlighted conflict as a barrier to achieving SDG 6, explaining that 83% of people living in fragile states lack access to safe drinking water. She added that more than 2 billion people live in conditions of water stress, and this will be further intensified by climate change.

Stefan Uhlenbrook, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), warned that the world is not on track to achieve SDG 6, highlighting: increases in freshwater pollution; climate change impacts; links between conflict and water-use; and the need for efficiencies in energy and agriculture.

Keynote speaker Mina Guli, water advocate and “ultra runner,” emphasized that gender inequalities result from the lack of access to safe drinking water by increasing the time spent by women fetching water, reducing their time in education and income-generating activities.

Panelist Danilo Türk, Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and former President of Slovenia, lamented an absence of political leadership behind water cooperation, and welcomed UN Security Council interest in the links between water stress and peace.

Panelist Callist Tindimugaya, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda, called for enhanced transboundary collaboration and high-level political support for water management.

Panelist Claudia Sadoff, International Water Management Institute, appealed for more circular, sustainable thinking about water. She underlined the importance of governance, reform, and partnerships.

Panelist Lucía Ruíz, Vice Minister of Environment, Peru, highlighted the need for integrated water management, and the active participation of holders of indigenous knowledge.

Lead discussant Thomas Stratenwerth, Ministry of Environment, Germany, called for a formally mandated meeting to advise the UN system on SDG 6.

Lead discussant Neil Jeffery, Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor, outlined his company’s work in Africa and Asia on building institutional capacity.

Léo Heller, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, called for a further incorporation of human rights, including the affordability principle and the treatment of inequalities in disaggregated data.

Lead discussant Florencio Marerua, WaterAid, underscored the importance of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in preventing maternal and neonatal mortality.

Lead discussant Ney Maranhão, National Water Resources Agency, Brazil, described Brazil’s experience in building water tanks to provide fresh water during droughts.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: links between water stress and climate change, and drought and socio-economic changes; the role of good governance and water diplomacy; links between water stress and conflict and the need for water diplomacy; the impact of water privatization on equity and access; and the rights of smallholders and indigenous peoples. There were calls for an international conference on water management to discuss infrastructure and financing. The French Water Partnership and others proposed a more sustained consideration of SDG 6 across the HLPF process.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3338e.html>.

SDG 7 (energy): This session, on 10 July, was chaired by ECOSOC President Chatardová.

Heather Page, UN DESA, provided a statistical snapshot of progress on SDG 7, saying the number of people without electricity dipped below the “symbolic threshold” of 1 billion.

Moderator Adnan Amin, International Renewable Energy Agency, outlined positive developments in renewable energies since 2015, including that: China, India, and Saudi Arabia have committed to install hundreds of gigawatts of renewable energy; and declining costs favor the business case for renewables.

Panelist Siri Jirapongphan, Minister of Energy, Thailand, described policies that have enabled Thailand to ensure near universal access to energy.

Panelist Laurence Tubiana, European Climate Foundation, emphasized the centrality of clean transport and energy for industry.

Sheila Oparaocha, ENERGIA, called for gender action on energy policies, roles in utilities, investment and entrepreneurship, and capacity building. Ricardo Puliti, World Bank Group, highlighted the role of the private sector, policy, regulatory reform, and financial instruments to address private sector risk.

Lead discussant Hans Olav Ibrekk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, emphasized gender and equity considerations related to SDG 7, and proposed an intergovernmental oversight mechanism.

Lead discussant Cheng Mengrong, Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization, described China's global energy interconnection strategy to achieve efficiencies in energy transmission worldwide, linking clean energy bases to power loads.

Joan Carling, Tebtebba Foundation, called for new capacity in the private sector to address local needs and take into account the human rights of local communities.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the importance of carbon pricing and carbon taxes to reduce the carbon intensity of national economies; the need to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies; how the UN can contribute to catalyzing investments in renewables; the social dimension of universal energy access; and the need for integration, including through geo-spatial technologies.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3339e.pdf>

SDG 11 (sustainable cities): This session, on 11 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Pecsteen.

Benjamin Rae, UN DESA, highlighted an increase in numbers of slum dwellers and rising air pollution.

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, called for a human rights approach saying inadequate housing assaults human dignity.

Moderator Rohit Aggarwala, Columbia University, said SDG 11 demands new levels of multi-level coordination.

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

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

Panelist Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat, described urbanization as a transformative force.

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

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: breaking down the silos that weaken the implementation of the SDGs through an "urban vision"; the challenge of providing sustainable transport for all; mainstreaming safety as a key component of inclusive spatial planning; the challenge of hosting displaced populations in urban areas; youth distress and radicalization in disadvantaged areas; the difficulties in treating housing as a human right without adequate financing; implementing the 2016 New Urban Agenda; the potential for climate-friendly economic development in the shift from rural to urban economies; and the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships in municipal planning.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb3340e.pdf>

SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production): This session, on 12 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President King, and moderated by Elliott Harris, UN DESA.

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

Keynote speaker Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, said SDG 12 lies at the heart of the

2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement; called for sustainability to be a core fiduciary responsibility for business; and challenged the UN system to integrate SDG 12 across all its agencies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: SCP as key to decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation; SCP challenges linked to deregulation policies; the need for a shift from growth-focused economic models to circular economies; the role of sustainable food systems in the achievement of SDG 12; the need for transparency in the extractive sector; the necessity for sound chemicals management; respect for traditional knowledge on the sustainable management of ecosystems; enhancing consumer education; and enabling policy environments, paired with strong marketing signals from consumers, to spur businesses' transition to SCP.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3341e.html>

SDG 15 (terrestrial ecosystems): This session, on 13 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Matjila.

Heather Page, UN DESA, presented an overview of SDG 15, saying that while forest and biodiversity protection is on the rise, forests continue to shrink and there is an alarming decline in fauna.

Keynote speaker Simon Levin, Princeton University, sharing insights from the HLPF Expert Group Meeting on SDG 15, called for a better monitoring framework and more systemic thinking.

Moderator René Castro Salazar, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, said insufficient progress is being made on reducing GHGs and on biodiversity protection.

Panelist Anne Larigauderie, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, said the Aichi Biodiversity Targets would not be met by 2020, threatening SDG 15.

Panelist Cécile Bibiane Ndjebet, African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests, described efforts to include women, rural communities, and indigenous peoples in SDG 15 implementation, particularly in the area of deforestation.

Panelist Roy Brouwer, University of Waterloo, Canada, said payments for ecosystem services schemes need better targeting and enforcement.

Panelist Martha Rojas-Urrego, Ramsar Convention, called for the integration of wetlands and biodiversity in the implementation of the SDGs.

Lead discussant Gertrude Kabusimbi Kenyangi, Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment, Uganda, called for

VNRs to use the monitoring and evaluation practices as used in the human rights regime.

Lead discussant Jill Blockhus, The Nature Conservancy, described “sustainable land bonds” for climate change mitigation and rural development.

Lead discussant Chiagozie Chima Udeh, Plant-for-the-Planet Foundation, linked biodiversity and forest loss to Boko Haram’s recruitment of young people in Nigeria.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the integration of biodiversity conservation into housing planning; biodiversity as a source of nature-based solutions to many global challenges, such as conflict prevention; women’s leadership in biodiversity conservation; mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors; ensuring the same commitment and ambition for biodiversity as for climate; stepping up efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; the need to combat land degradation; and the role of traditional communities in sustainable land management and use.

Panelists further raised the need for: localizing the 2030 Agenda and biodiversity conservation; joint monitoring of water and land management; ensuring rural and indigenous women are fully engaged in SDG 15 implementation; and multi-stakeholder involvement in safeguarding biodiversity, including the private sector.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3342e.html>

SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals): This session, on 13 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Mahmadaminov.

Yongyi Min, UN DESA, said net ODA in 2017 decreased by 0.6% from 2016 in real terms, and aid to LDCs stagnated in this period, growing just 1%.

Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the UN, called for better debt management monitoring by national and international actors, and for ODA providers to fulfil their commitments.

Moderator Gillian Tett, *Financial Times*, pointed to the challenges of harnessing finance and technology in a world “drowning in debt.”

Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, said economic globalization has suffered a setback with the rise of inward-looking and protectionist tendencies, and pointed to the transformative potential of technology, gender equality, and access to disaggregated data.

Panelist Robin Ogilvy, Special Representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to the UN, pointed to the importance of researching how digitalization is affecting policy choices.

Panelist Alfred Watkins, Global Solutions Summit, said proven cost-effective technological solutions to sustainable development exist, but technology deployment measures are missing.

Panelist Steven Waygood, Aviva, pointed to US\$300 trillion invested in capital markets that can be leveraged in support of the SDGs. He called on the UN and civil society to support the development of rules and standards to make capital markets more sustainable and transparent.

Lead discussant Kavaljit Singh, Madhyam, highlighted the challenge of implementing partnerships for the SDGs at a time of global economic fragmentation when poor countries could become collateral damage in a global trade war.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: the need for support for MICs; diversification of financing for development, including by leveraging private sector funds; the need for strong and innovative partnerships; the challenges posed by declining ODA; the need for ambitious UN reform; and the necessity for an open, rules-based trade system.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3342e.html>

Leaving No One Behind: Are We Succeeding?

This session, on 13 July, was chaired by ECOSOC President Chatardová.

Keynote speaker Andrew Gilmour, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the world is not on track with the 2030 Agenda as many people are pushed further behind by the forces of globalization, with risks and burdens borne by the poorest and marginalized.

Moderator Manish Bapna, World Resources Institute, underlined the imperative to address extreme poverty, recalling US President Abraham Lincoln’s belief that “if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.” He introduced the rapporteurs to review the thematic discussions of the first week.

Rapporteur Douglas Keh, UN Development Programme (UNDP), noted that some people are intentionally left behind and must be included as “agents of change.”

Rapporteur Riitta Oksanen, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, commenting on water, SCP, and life on land, noted: the need to understand who is being left behind; a balanced discussion on data that also focuses on supply and demand, and land rights.

Rapporteur Alicia Bárcena, ECLAC, commenting on energy, cities, and MOI, called for more attention to critical linkages across the SDGs. She noted the importance of land, water, and access to energy to address poverty and inequality, and wealth redistribution.

In the subsequent discussion, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Disabilities said accessibility to physical spaces for persons with disabilities is essential for the exercise of economic, social, and cultural rights. Chile noted the tension between the indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the need for governments to prioritize certain areas. Business and Industry called for a rules-based trading system and encouraged Member States to de-escalate the growing trade war. Belgium encouraged Member States to engage youth representatives as co-authors of the VNRs.

Lead discussant Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Committee on Development Policy (CDP), said only 14 VNRs presented detailed action plans to leave no one behind, and few addressed discriminations based on ethnic, religious, or racial grounds.

Lead discussant Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, outlined the vision of the Wales Future Generations Act, saying the true measure of the success of the 2030 Agenda will be whether it is able to meet the needs of future generations.

Lead discussant Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, underscored the need to obtain prior, free, and informed consent of indigenous peoples; and ensure they are included during data collection and disaggregation.

Lead discussant Sylvia Beales, Gray Panthers, noted that older people are facing multiple forms of exclusion and marginalization, and called for the recognition of their capacities and rights.

In the subsequent discussion, participants raised, *inter alia*: changing demographics and their impact on new technologies; the need to increase access to legal representation to ensure no one is left behind; the importance of education that puts justice and solidarity at its core; addressing gender-biased stereotypes; and ensuring disability-disaggregated data.

A more detailed summary of the discussion is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol33/enb3342e.html>

Closing the first week of the HLPF on 13 July, UN Under-Secretary-General Zhenmin encouraged all countries that have not done so to present their VNRs. Chatardová noted that the use of statistics is gaining ground, helping leave no one behind, and called for a greater share of ODA to be dedicated to statistics.

Ministerial Segment

Opening the joint ECOSOC and HLPF Ministerial Segment on Monday, 16 July, ECOSOC President Chatardová noted insufficient progress on the 2030 Agenda, and pointed to the importance of science, technology, research, engagement with the private sector, and policy coherence.

UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said there are causes for celebration but more causes for concern, citing worsening global inequalities and climate change impacts. He called for non-traditional sources of financing and more inclusive processes.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed said momentum is being lost in tackling areas such as undernourishment and urban poverty. She warned against an “SDG-light” approach, while underlining the need for increased coherence, transparency, and accountability as key elements for reform of the UN development system.

Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, encouraged countries to involve young people in the HLPF process, either as co-writers of VNRs or as youth delegates.

Keynote speaker Michelle Yeoh, UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, underlined the importance of more conscious consumer choices, for instance to reduce the “rampant overconsumption” in the fashion industry by being more “consciously-dressed citizens.” Later in the day, Yeoh introduced a video on the impacts of fashion on sustainability, Yeoh highlighted challenges such as microfibre contamination of oceans and dangerous and poor conditions for workers, and promoted the use of forest fibres and a predominant role for consumers in pushing for sustainability through better choices.

UN Secretary-General’s reports on the theme and thematic discussions of the 2018 ECOSOC: Elliott Harris, UN DESA, on behalf of UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Zhemín, presented a report of the UN Secretary-General on harnessing new technologies to achieve the SDGs (E/2018/66). Acknowledging concerns at the “dazzling” speed of technological progress, he highlighted drivers of risk and the need for local ownership, capacity building, policy integration, and inclusivity. Commenting on the *World Economic and Social Survey 2018* due in October, he said a better understanding of the UN’s role in shepherding technology to support sustainable development, and of the negative externalities of technologies, is needed. He called on governments to share knowledge and form alliances and partnerships.

Address by President of UNEA: On Monday afternoon, 16 July, Siim Kiisler, Minister of Environment, Estonia, and President of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), reported that pollution has affected almost every ecosystem and outlined recommendations on: increasing research and data collection; science-based decision making in the public and private sectors; investment in innovative solutions; sustainable lifestyles; fiscal measures to support environmental solutions; integrated policy and law; the need to bolster monitoring and accountability; sharing best practices in education; the promotion of North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation across the UN system; and the expansion of stakeholder partnerships.

Reporting on regional forums: This session, on Monday afternoon, 16 July, was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Matjila.

Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Public Health, Lebanon, presented messages from the 2018 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, highlighting: the role of VNRs in setting priorities; the role of non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, and parliaments; equity in the distribution of resources; digital infrastructure; and a gender-specific approach to the 2030 Agenda.

Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Cuba, presented messages from the 2018 Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, highlighting agreement to: embed SDGs in state policies to protect them from transitions in government; enhance South-South cooperation; and address poverty, external debt, and reliance on international cooperation.

Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environment and Agriculture, Georgia, presented messages from the 2018 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, including: regional cooperation to implement the 2030 Agenda; a focus on vulnerable populations; engagement at all levels of government, including local government, and of stakeholders; interlinkages between SDGs; and the positive impact of VNRs on policy development and review of progress. He highlighted gaps in statistical capacity.

Mame Thierno Dieng, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Senegal, highlighted key messages from the 2018 Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, including: harmony between the 2030 Agenda and the African Union’s Agenda 2063; improvements in access to water and electricity in the region; major initiatives such as the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel to combat desertification and climate change; and the need for integrated national frameworks.

Michael Gerber, Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development, Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, said the 2018 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development in Europe highlighted five priorities: practical peer learning; universality of SDGs; regional platforms to connect government and other stakeholders; SDG interlinkages; and transboundary dimensions of SDG progress, like cooperation on water management.

Introduction of Committee on Development Policy Report: During the presentation of the CDP report on Monday afternoon 16 July, José Antonio Ocampo, CDP Chair, highlighted LDC-related issues including: the CDP’s recommendations from the 2018 triennial review of the LDC category; the monitoring of the development progress of graduating and graduated countries; and the need for an incentives package of improved assistance for graduating LDCs.

Voluntary National Reviews

Forty-six countries presented their VNRs during the three days of the Ministerial Segment, in panels or as individual presentations.

Panel (Ecuador, Kiribati, Lithuania, Mali): Presenting the VNR for Ecuador, José Agustín Briones, National Secretary of Planning for Development, said the national development plan in his country is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and has resulted in a reduction of multi-dimensional poverty. He described Ecuador’s recognition of rights throughout the lifecycle of citizens.

Presenting the VNR for Kiribati, Teuea Toatu, Minister for Finance and Economic Development, and Martin Tofinga, Representative of Non-State Actors in Kiribati, highlighted:

alignment of the national development plan with the 2030 Agenda; achievements in education and literacy; high levels of child mortality; the negative impacts of climate change; and challenges around institutional capacity, including lack of finance for data processing.

Presenting the VNR for Lithuania, Kęstutis Navickas, Minister for Environment, highlighted: support for education; re-organization of the residential care system; a low carbon and circular economy; and renewable energy. He committed to increasing the country's contribution to ODA.

Presenting the VNR for Mali, Mahamane Maiga, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Drissa Doumbia, Head of Department at the Agency for the Environment and Sustainable Development, and Modibo Traore, Director of Multilateral Cooperation, highlighted: appreciation of societal transformation and resilience in the wake of the Algiers Process on peace and reconciliation following the worst crisis the country has known; concerns about land degradation; and increased dependency on ODA.

Lead discussant, Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister for Environment, Energy and Housing, and Vice-Chair of the National Sustainable Development Commission, Finland, highlighted: coordination of 2030 Agenda implementation by the Prime Minister's office; localization of the 2030 Agenda; and the role of national parliaments.

In response to questions from NGOs and Burkina Faso, Briones noted the engagement of the president of the National Assembly of Ecuador in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and his government's commitment to rural areas and the involvement of young people. Toatu and Tofinga said the VNR process is part of the mid-term review of Kiribati's national plan and emphasized the engagement of non-state actors in its preparation. Navickas noted an ambitious national goal to fully integrate the SDGs into policies. Traore confirmed links between migration and land degradation in the region, and the engagement of the Mali National Assembly and local authorities in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Morocco asked how stakeholder engagement can be institutionalized. Briones responded that a clear link between participation, planning, and budgeting is essential. Traore said Mali has a gender-balanced committee to involve stakeholders.

Guinea: Kanny Diallo, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, highlighted: successes in increasing resilience to economic, social, environmental, and health shocks, including the eradication of the Ebola outbreak; the need to increase statistical capacity for SDG monitoring; and the encouraging results obtained on all six SDGs under review through the promotion of good governance and the inclusive development of human capital.

In response to a question from France Volontaires, Diallo pointed to the cost-effective role of volunteers in data collection and generating new ideas.

Greece: Socrates Famellos, Alternate Minister of Environment and Energy, George Vernicos, President, Economic and Social Council of Greece, and Aikaterini Igglesi, Member of Parliament and President of the Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection, highlighted: the endorsement of a national plan for a circular economy; new legal frameworks connecting biodiversity with all relevant sectors; and plans to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix to 50% by 2030.

Responding to questions from Saint Vincent and Grenadines and the European Disability Forum, Famellos noted that the national plan on a circular economy is part of Greece's economic growth strategy; and the government is trying to make political participation as inclusive as possible.

Mexico: Francisco Guzmán Ortiz, Head of the Office of the President, said: 31 of Mexico's 32 states have established follow-up and review mechanisms for the SDGs; 12 states have development plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda; and plans are underway for universal water, drainage, and sanitation coverage by 2030, and to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix to 30% by 2030, and 50% by 2050.

Responding to questions from Canada and Egypt, Ortiz said special economic zones help promote economic inclusivity; and noted the need to address technology through public policy.

United Arab Emirates: Abdulla Lootah, Vice-Chair of the National Committee on the SDGs and Director General of the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, highlighted: the use of data and policies informed by evidence in SDG implementation; UAE's hosting of the World Data Forum in 2018; the appointment of a Minister of Youth Affairs to increase social inclusion; and the reorientation of UAE's foreign aid programmes to align them with the SDGs.

Responding to questions from Slovakia, Bahrain, and Egypt, Lootah noted plans to: make renewable energy the backbone of the economy; reach zero food waste by 2030; and introduce a law to address the gender pay gap.

Panel (Benin, Cabo Verde): Presenting the VNR for Benin, Abdoulaye Bio Tchane, Minister of Planning and Development, highlighted efforts to provide access to safe drinking water to all by 2021, and develop public policies to address the SDGs, including through social safety nets for vulnerable populations and persons with disabilities.

Presenting the VNR for Cabo Verde, José da Silva Gonçalves, Minister of Tourism, Transport and Maritime Economy, highlighted: efforts to integrate the SDGs in national planning, with 74% of the national strategic indicators directly related to the SDGs; extensive involvement of local administrations; and financing challenges unique to SIDS.

Lead discussant Jiko Luveni, Speaker of the Parliament, Fiji, said financing for development remains the greatest challenge in development, especially for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

In response to questions from the CSOs for Financing for Development Group, Tchane pointed to efforts to include civil society in SDG implementation, particularly in improving access to water; and said costing SDGs and innovative financial instruments can help finance implementation.

Gonçalves described the importance of finance to SIDS, given their vulnerability to natural catastrophes that can result in debt; and said that while graduating from an LDC to a MIC is a financial burden, the goal of development is "to improve and get better." In response to a question from Norway, he elaborated on how national policies can support the SDGs.

Slovakia: Richard Raši, Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Information, highlighted national priorities, including to: anchor the SDGs in all public policies; build ownership by all stakeholders; engage in partnerships at all levels, from the regional to the municipal; align budgets with 2030 Agenda priorities; and encourage voluntary actions. Daniel Bunda, student from Slovakia, highlighted low levels of income inequality; pressure on Roma populations because of their socio-economic background; long-term unemployment; and the need for inclusion of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Ivana Maleš, Institute for Circular Economy, called for: a transition to a knowledge-based and green economy; reduction of GHGs and implementation of adaptation measures; and improving access to affordable and clean energy for the private sector and households. Vladimír Krčmery, St. Elizabeth University of Health Care and Social Work, highlighted health disparities based on gender and

socio-economic background; and good governance, democracy, and peace.

Responding to questions from Greece, Kenya, Indonesia, Singapore, and NGOs, Raši said the national priorities he described had been developed through local, national, and regional consultations; and priorities were being translated to the local level, in addition to aligning budgets and developing a national investment plan.

Bahrain: Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al Mutawa, Minister of Cabinet and Head of the National Information Committee, highlighted: a people-centered approach to development; the establishment of a national information committee that will help institutionalize the SDGs; an online monitoring system for monitoring the implementation of the national development plan, which integrated 87% of the SDG targets; and a social protection system that covers 80% of families.

Colombia: Luis Fernando Mejía Alzate, Minister of National Planning, highlighted: a multi-stakeholder platform for SDG implementation; plans to achieve universal access to drinking water; and the introduction of a carbon tax. He said 20% of the companies in Colombia are reducing their water consumption; 21% are recycling the materials they use; and that there is a 30% reduction in the use of plastic bags.

Responding to questions from Denmark and Indigenous Peoples, Mejía Alzate introduced an online platform that allows multi-stakeholder participation, and tax exemptions for remote rural areas to integrate them into the economy.

Viet Nam: Nguyen The Phuong, Vice-Minister of Planning and Investment, highlighted that: 99% of households have access to energy, yet Viet Nam is lagging behind with regards to renewables; rural infrastructure has been expanded to cover 99% of the country; efforts are made to integrate people with disabilities in society and economy; and a national database of genetic resources and traditional knowledge has been developed.

Responding to questions from Lao PDR, Singapore, Australia, and NGOs, Phuong described efforts to leverage public finance to catalyze private investment and create multi-stakeholder forums for SDG implementation.

Panel (Albania, Latvia, Niger, Sudan): Presenting the VNR for Albania, Senida Mesi, Deputy Prime Minister, described efforts to: reform public administration and justice systems, with accession to the European Union (EU) as a key driver; protect human and property rights; encourage economic growth and investment, particularly in resilient infrastructure; and improve water and land management. She highlighted two national success stories: an urban renaissance programme; and a justice reform programme.

Presenting the VNR for Latvia, Arvils Ašeradens, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economics, highlighted: a stable and growing economy; increasing employment; progress in meeting climate change targets; and technological solutions to address linguistic barriers. Among challenges, he emphasized inequalities with a territorial dimension, requiring out-of-the-box solutions. Inese Vaivare, Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation, noted efforts to improve human security, social capital, and citizen-generated data and monitoring.

Presenting the VNR for Niger, Aïchatou Boulama Kané, Minister of Planning, underlined national challenges, including: large areas of desert; a young population, with 25% below 25; security threats from surrounding countries; and falling commodity prices, including oil. She reported progress on SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 17 (partnerships); medium progress on SDG 15 (life on land); and low progress on SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), a key priority for the country.

Presenting the VNR for Sudan, Gamal Mahmoud Alrayah, Minister of Urban Planning, highlighted three “SDG accelerators:” strengthening justice and good governance; agricultural transformation; and social transformation. Nasreldin Ibrahim Shulgami, a civil society representative, said NGOs in the country are engaged in implementation, awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy, and data collection for the SDGs. Limyaa Abdulgaffar Khalfallah, Secretary-General, National Population Council, highlighted domestic resource mobilization efforts and a commitment to reduce poverty by 8% annually. Ahmed Magzoub Ahmed Ali, National Assembly, highlighted the commitment of Parliament to implement the SDGs through a framework of legislation and forward-looking strategies.

Lead discussant László Borbély, Head of the Department for Sustainable Development, Secretariat General of the Government, Romania, highlighted the importance of parliamentary engagement in SDG implementation.

Responding to questions from Norway, Sweden, Jamaica, Estonia, Mali, Serbia, Women, and NGOs, Mesi said the inter-ministerial national committee for SDG implementation includes civil society and other stakeholders. Ašeradens noted plans to address the negative impacts of recent tax reforms on the income of CSOs. Kané emphasized that 16 of the 17 SDGs relate directly to Niger’s national development plan. Alrayah noted that vulnerable populations are integrated in the national development plan, and local governments are actively engaged in SDG implementation.

Armenia: Ararat Mirzoyan, First Deputy Prime Minister, described “revolution” as an SDG accelerator that has removed the single largest barrier in the country—the lack of political will. He highlighted safe drinking water, health, clean energy, DRR, equal rights for women, income inequalities, and regional partnerships as key priorities.

Responding to questions from Greece, Lebanon, Women, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, Mirzoyan and his delegation highlighted: plans to increase women’s representation in Parliament to 30%; a commitment to address energy, corruption, and environmental issues; youth participation in the governance of the country; the role of the international community in overcoming problems faced by LLDCs; and the Armenian National SDG Innovation Laboratory, which aims to identify innovative approaches for targeted solutions.

Ireland: Denis Naughten, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Lauren Flanagan, youth delegate, and Paul Dockery, youth delegate, highlighted: the establishment of a national stakeholder engagement forum; a “whole of government” approach to SDG implementation; plans to increase the housing stock by 50,000 homes by 2021; a €22 billion climate-focused investment plan; and a new international development policy that will prioritize “leaving no one behind,” focused on women and girls.

Responding to questions from the UK, Lithuania, and Children and Youth, Flanagan mentioned a report on SDG implementation prepared through extensive consultations with youth. Naughten noted emissions reductions and improved health as the benefits of reducing fossil fuel subsidies.

Namibia: Obeth Kandjoze, Minister of Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Planning Commission, highlighted: decreasing inequality; a policy for gender equality in the public sector; increased investment in rural infrastructure; stabilization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; increased life expectancy from 58 to 65 years; access to electricity for 54% of households; and a high potential for renewable energy that needs to be harnessed.

Responding to questions from Lesotho and Persons with Disabilities, Kandjoze described the integration of SDGs in the national development plan and social grants for persons with disabilities.

Jamaica: Parnell Charles Jr., Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, said the national development plan “Vision 2030 Jamaica,” adopted in 2009, is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda. He noted progress on over 60% of the development indicators from a 2007 baseline, while highlighting the challenges of accessing aid and concessional finance as an upper middle-income country, and strengthening data collection and disaggregation.

Responding to questions from Italy, Greece, Norway, Liberia, Women, Singapore, Denmark, Austria, and Sendai Stakeholders, the delegation from Jamaica described efforts to: improve data systems; mobilize resources; address hazard risk reduction and resilience; promote local community development plans; and empower, educate, and engage stakeholders.

State of Palestine: Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the UN, said six members of the Office of the Prime Minister due to present the VNR were absent because their visas were denied by the US. He highlighted: the creation of a national working group on the SDGs; progress in areas such as education and health; and the impacts of Israeli occupation on efforts to tackle unemployment, provide water and electricity to all, and protect the environment.

In answer to questions and comments from Israel, South Africa, the US, Education and Academia, and Egypt, Mansour pointed to: reports by the Bretton Woods Institutions suggesting that the country would be a MIC if it was independent; efforts to keep the VNR factual and not political; and the inclusion of civil society in political processes, including national dialogues on the rights of women. He thanked the international community for nominating the State of Palestine to lead the G-77/China group in 2019.

Panel (Bhutan, Togo): Presenting the third VNR for Togo, Komi Sélom Klassou, Prime Minister, highlighted: a paradigm shift in the country’s national development plan, designed to make the country a regional logistics and business hub; engaging women, youth, and small farmers; enhanced land tenure laws; and plans to complete electrification by 2030, using a public-private partnership to provide clean and affordable energy.

Presenting the VNR for Bhutan, Lyonpo Namgay Dorji, Minister of Finance, and Thinley Namgyel, Secretary, Gross National Happiness Commission, discussed the integration of SDGs into a transitional development plan as the country graduates from LDC status in 2023. They highlighted: regional disparities in levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment; reliance on hydropower and vulnerability to climate change; the country’s commitment to retaining 60% forest cover; and its status as a carbon-negative country.

Lead discussant Miguel Ángel Moir Sandoval, Secretary of Planning and Programming for the Presidency, Guatemala, inquired about Togo’s long-term plans for renewable energy, and Bhutan’s climate change resiliency. Responding to these and other questions from Youth Volunteers for the Environment, India, Singapore, Thailand, and Nepal, Klassou described Togo’s support for risk-sharing among farmers facing climate change impacts and measures to engage the diaspora in development. Namgyel described the central commitment to environmental conservation in the Gross National Happiness approach, and challenges in producing disaggregated data.

Uruguay: Álvaro García Rodríguez, Director of the Office of Planning and Budgeting, highlighted: the importance of a human rights approach, pointing to the right to housing; being inclusive

of the business sector perspective; and their commitment to localizing the SDGs.

In answer to questions from Brazil, the International Trade Union Confederation, Argentina, and Germany, respectively, Rodríguez said regional cooperation provides an excellent opportunity for progress; spoke of efforts to institutionalize the participation of civil society; and elaborated on how a national environment plan will be interlinked with other policies.

Sri Lanka: Sandith Samarasinghe, Minister Delegate of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development, spoke of the significant progress the country has made since the end of its civil war, which left public infrastructure, such as roads, in dilapidated conditions. He highlighted: the strengthening of democratic institutions; the reconstruction of public infrastructure; and progress in the areas of education and health, including confirmation of the country’s malaria-free status by the World Health Organization in 2016.

Responding to questions from Australia and Nepal, members of the delegation elaborated on Sri Lanka’s “Vision 2025” policy, which is aligned with the SDGs; and said progress is being made in collecting and disaggregating data, notably through the establishment of digital platforms.

Switzerland: Doris Leuthard, Minister of the Environment, Transport, Energy, and Communications, highlighted: the commissioning of an SDG-related baseline assessment; the inclusion of SDGs in existing statistical indicators; a commitment to circular and green economies; and progress needed in areas such as sustainable consumption. Sophie Neuhaus, National Youth Council, referring to a shadow report by civil society, asked that the next VNR focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, and on the impact of Switzerland abroad.

Responding to Germany, Center for Economic and Social Rights, and European Disability Forum, Leuthard underlined Switzerland’s willingness to collaborate with neighboring countries to promote sustainable consumption, and agreed that more efforts should be made in the area of inclusivity of persons with disabilities.

Australia: Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN, Duane Fraser, Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, and Darrell Wade, Co-Founder, Intrepid Travel Group, noted: the significance of the SDGs for indigenous communities and Torres Strait Islanders, and their contribution in areas such as conservation; and the contribution of SDGs in generating shared value in the private sector.

Responding to questions from Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, Switzerland, and Non-Violence International, Australia highlighted its commitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development (AAAA), gender responsive data, and a regional focus.

Andorra: Maria Ubach Font, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Silvia Calvo Armengol, Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, and Jaume Esteve, President of the Andorran Mountaineering Federation, reported that: the SDGs are now the basis of executive and ODA decision-making; citizen ownership of Agenda 2030 is encouraged; and the Font Blanca ski race is promoted as an international event dedicated to fighting climate change.

Responding to the Stakeholder Group on Ageing and Rwanda, the presenters affirmed a focus on an inclusive education system, and on reducing the use of plastics.

Canada: Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and Celina Caesar-Chavannes, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, highlighted the compatibility of the SDGs to end poverty and to ensure a sustainable future; the imminent unveiling

of the first ever national poverty reduction strategy in Canada; the centrality of SDG 5 (gender equality) to Canada's national and international policies; and a commitment to develop a rights framework for and with indigenous peoples, and address social exclusion of other groups such as the LGBTQ+ community.

Responding to questions from Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, France, Children and Youth, Fiji, and NGOs, Duclos emphasized the importance of: partnerships; ensuring a role for cities and municipalities in tackling climate change; and making diversity a source of strength and pride.

Dominican Republic: Isidoro Santana, Minister of Economy, Planning and Development, pointed to challenges, including: limited funding, due in part to difficulties in collecting taxes; mass movement of people from rural to urban areas; insufficient statistical capacities; and vulnerability to weather risks. He described the creation of a commission and a national strategy for sustainable development.

Responding to questions from Guatemala, Panama, the EU, NGOs, and Act Alliance, Santana elaborated on implementation strategies in the areas of: water and sanitation; SCP; inclusion of vulnerable groups; and gender issues.

Egypt: Hala El Said, Minister for Planning, Monitoring, and Administrative Reform, highlighted: a participatory approach to "Egypt 2030," the national development plan; focus on youth empowerment and human capacity development; major investments in infrastructure, especially road networks and electricity; and the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies by 2020.

Responding to questions from Singapore, Mexico, Jamaica, and Children and Youth, El Said noted that women make up 38% of the cabinet and emphasized the importance of private sector involvement in SDG implementation. A member of the delegation highlighted the hosting of the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity as an opportunity to discuss mainstreaming biodiversity in the energy sector.

Laos PDR: Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs, said: SDG focal points have been appointed in relevant ministries; more than 60% of the national social and economic development indicators are based on the SDG indicators; poverty rates are declining; sustainable urban transportation projects are part of a green-growth strategy; and efforts are underway to disaggregate data.

Senegal: Mame Thierno Dieng, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, highlighted: integration of environment and sustainable development in school curricula; a 47% poverty rate; efforts to ensure that the benefits of development are shared equitably between urban and rural areas; continued efforts to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality despite the high cost of health services; 43.9% health coverage in 2017, with plans to reach 53% by 2021; 99% access to drinking water in rural areas; and 68% and 40% access to electricity in urban and rural areas, respectively.

Responding to questions from Guinea and Workers and Trade Unions, Dieng said the VNRs are an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other countries.

The Bahamas: Prime Minister Hubert Alexander Minnis noted the vulnerability of The Bahamas given its location in a volatile hurricane zone, and outlined challenges, including in sectors related to poverty, youth unemployment, education, health, energy efficiency, and coastal resilience. He outlined SDG-related plans to promote land reform, empowerment, and backyard farming.

Responding to questions from Jamaica, Singapore, and NGOs, Matthew Aubry, Organization for Responsible Governance, and Nicola Virgill-Rolle, Economic Development and Planning Unit, Office of the Prime Minister, noted that The Bahamas does not

have a strong culture of engagement with civic organizations and the role of international lenders in tackling coastal resilience.

Romania: Grațiela-Leocadia Gavrilescu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, described work across national and local governments to advance the SDGs, and highlighted: breaking down silos to address a complex agenda; the need for stability to support human rights; and the importance of SDG implementation, commencing with individual lifestyles.

Responding to questions from Spain, Greece, and Children and Youth, Gavrilescu acknowledged: complex threats to its biodiversity and the importance of involving universities in the VNRs.

Lebanon: Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, highlighted that: Lebanon's economic and political stability is central to stabilize a volatile region; the country bears the weight of hosting more than 1.5 million displaced Syrians; it adopted a bottom-up and "whole of government" approach to SDG implementation; good progress was reached in the areas of education, health, women, poverty reduction, and development of small and medium enterprises; and more work is needed in areas like improving statistical capabilities.

In answer to questions from Hungary, Armenia, Norway, and NGOs, Hasbani and his delegation, which included a CSO representative, elaborated on: private sector involvement in the 2030 Agenda, which took place primarily through the UN Global Compact network for Lebanon; the country's focus on jumpstarting growth and creating jobs for youth; the role of education in transitioning from humanitarian solutions to long-term development strategies; and the inclusion of CSOs in the VNR drafting process.

Hungary: László Palkovics, Minister for Innovation and Technology, focused on: water management, including Hungary's leading role in international water diplomacy and plans to host the 2019 Budapest Water Summit; a sustainable energy strategy, which includes a programme to promote the use of electric cars; a focus on sustainable cities, which includes housing, climate change, and air quality-related components; and a national strategy on SCP.

In answer to questions from Lebanon, Singapore, Poland, Malta, Children and Youth, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone, Palkovics underlined: their assistance to other countries in the area of water management; policies aimed at tackling demographic problems, including a low fertility rate; youth participation in the SDGs; and efforts to promote inclusivity of disadvantaged people, such as Roma communities.

Malta: Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion, highlighted: a national law mandating mainstreaming of sustainable development in all policies; a high and steady economic growth rate; investments in education, skills development, and health; a high employment rate; and efforts to ensure gender equality and social inclusion, including of persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

In response to questions from Liberia and NGOs, Abela highlighted an emphasis on life-long opportunities for education and training, and free childcare services to boost employment; and a "can-do" attitude to address issues such as bureaucracy and energy tariffs to encourage investments.

Poland: Jadwiga Emilewicz, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology, highlighted the alignment between the 2030 Agenda and the Strategy for Responsible Development adopted by Poland in 2016. She described social, economic, and environmental initiatives, including "Family 500 Plus" to help families with children through cash transfers; "75 Plus," for the elderly; the "Polish Investment Zone" to promote innovation, research, and

development through tax relief; “Starting Poland,” to help start-ups; and “Stop Smog” to deal with air pollution. Members of her delegation emphasized the commitment of the private sector to the 2030 Agenda and to the UN Global Compact.

In response to questions from Malta, Hungary, Ethiopia, Belarus, Women, and Children and Youth, Emilewicz noted measures to implement a circular economy; address water management; and tackle air pollution as part of efforts to implement the Paris Agreement.

Singapore: Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, highlighted: the implementation of integrated closed-loop systems for recycling water and waste materials; Singapore is one of the first Asian nations to implement a national carbon tax; integrated long-term planning for sustainable cities, including an emphasis on urban greenery; and a Climate Action Package, which aims to develop climate resilience capacity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region.

Responding to questions from Bhutan, Egypt, Colombia, Thailand, Slovakia, Viet Nam, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and Ageing, Zulkifli elaborated on: multi-stakeholder approaches to SDG implementation; a long-lasting commitment to combine environmentalism and development, particularly in the area of water management; and willingness to increase knowledge-sharing and South-South cooperation.

Spain: Teresa Ribera, Minister for the Ecological Transition, Josep Borrell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation, and Cristina Gallach, High-Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, highlighted: high levels of inequality and youth unemployment; high levels of gender violence; large pay gaps between men and women; high levels of women’s participation in politics (11 out of the 16 ministers are women); high vulnerability to climate change; a multi-level, multi-stakeholder structure; a national committee for SDG national implementation; and a research and development strategy for the SDGs.

Responding to questions from Romania, Mexico, NGOs, and Women, members of the delegation noted the creation of more than 50 organizing platforms for civil society participation and decentralization in SDG implementation.

Saudi Arabia: Faisal Alibrahim, Vice-Minister for Economy and Planning, Abdallah Yahya Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the UN, Yousef Abdullah Al-Benyani, Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, SABIC, and HRH Princess Banderi Al Saud, highlighted: the alignment between Saudi Arabia’s “Vision 2030” and the SDGs; coordinated support of the private sector and civil society; a national water strategy to achieve universal clean water access; the involvement of women and youth in urban planning; and local partnerships for SDG implementation.

Responding to questions from the UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, and Malaysia, Alibrahim noted close collaboration between ministers and Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund plans to increase investments in renewables.

Paraguay: Vice President Alicia Beatriz Pucheta de Correa highlighted: the 2030 national development plan, which includes policies aimed at strengthening municipal capital and protecting vulnerable populations; institutional processes such as the establishment of audits and indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs; programmes fighting violence against children and adolescents; and greater statistical capacities as one of the challenges ahead.

In response to questions from Uruguay and Indigenous Peoples, Pucheta and her delegation pointed to MERCOSUR as a good platform for SDG collaboration between neighboring countries, and to ongoing efforts to improve the well-being and living standards of indigenous peoples and rural communities.

Qatar: Saleh bin Mohammed Al Nabit, Minister of Development Planning and Statistics, highlighted: plans to increase economic growth from 1.7% in 2017, to 2.2% in 2018; improvements in the literacy rate, from 97% in 2015 to 98% in 2017; and reduced youth unemployment, from 1.7% in 2015 to 0.8% in 2017. He said Qatar leads the Middle East and North Africa peace index, and has universal access to clean drinking water, while outlining plans to promote SCP through green buildings.

Responding to questions from Guinea and Children and Youth, Al Nabit emphasized a focus on quality education, and contributions of civil society to SDG implementation and the drafting of the VNR.

Keynote Speech by the UN Secretary-General

UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted achievements towards the 2030 Agenda, including improvements in reducing maternal and child mortality, and access to electricity. He said, however, that, at the same time, there are areas where countries are lagging or backtracking in areas fundamental to the shared pledge to leave nobody behind. He highlighted runaway climate change, conflict, inequality, persistent pockets of poverty and hunger, and the need to address gaps opening up during an extraordinary expansion of the economy. He announced the launch of a UN strategy to support and engage young people in September 2018, a climate summit to galvanize ambition in September 2019, and a high-level meeting on financing the 2030 Agenda in September 2018.

Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration and the HLPF Draft Report

On Wednesday afternoon, 18 July, ECOSOC President Chatardová invited the HLPF to consider the adoption of the draft Ministerial Declaration (E/HLPF/2018/L.2), while thanking the co-facilitators of the drafting process, Gillian Bird (Australia) and Masud Bin Momen (Bangladesh).

She invited delegates to consider two amendments (E/HLPF/2018/L.3) to paragraph 28, proposed by the US. In the first amendment (on MOI and a global partnership), the US reiterated its objection to a reference to “mutually beneficial cooperation.” She said the terms “win-win cooperation” and “mutually beneficial cooperation” had been promoted interchangeably by a single Member State to insert its domestic policy agenda in the UN context; and that these terms have come to be synonymous with a model of development that is dangerous to the future of the SDGs. She called for a recorded vote. The original text of the draft was retained after 50 Member States voted in favor of the amendment, 107 against, and three abstained.

Chatardová then invited participants to consider the second amendment proposed by the US to paragraph 28, proposing deletion of a reference to align the Ministerial Declaration with the AAAA, and deleting references to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The US stated her objection to the trade language in the paragraph, stating that her country does not view the UN as the appropriate body to opine on the WTO and does not support references to WTO issues in UN documents. She introduced an amendment, reaffirming that trade can contribute to the promotion of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty, as recognized in the 2030 Agenda. The original text was retained following a vote, where two Member States voted in favor of the amendment, 155 against, and three abstained.

Chatardová then invited participants to consider paragraph 12, on peace and security, noting an objection by a Member State. Israel stated that the paragraph contained politicized language on

foreign occupation that does not belong in ECOSOC and HLPF discussions. The original text was retained following a vote, where 109 Member States voted in favor of its retention, five against, and 46 abstained.

Chatardová invited participants to consider an amendment to paragraph 16, on gender equality. The Russian Federation stated a preference for a reference to “unequal power relations” over the reference to “unequal gender roles” as reflected in women’s disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. Canada, on behalf of 66 Member States, said the inclusion of a stand-alone paragraph on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Declaration is in full alignment with the 2030 Agenda. The original text was retained, following a vote of 134 Member States in favor, 11 against, and 10 abstentions.

Turkey dissociated from a sentence noting that “creating multi-stakeholder partnerships, ensuring quality public participation and integrated water resources management at all levels are key to effectively tackling water-related issues.”

The US requested a recorded vote on the entire Ministerial Declaration. Following the vote, the Declaration was adopted with 164 Member States in favor, two against and no abstentions.

Egypt, for the Group of 77 and China, highlighted the need to end hunger and address food insecurity; and stressed the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respect for the territorial integrity of states. With Venezuela, he called on states to refrain from promulgating unilateral economic measures.

Austria, for the EU, expressed “deep regret” that the Ministerial Declaration was subjected to a vote, especially on paragraphs related to human rights, rule of law, and justice at all levels. He called for negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration to begin earlier than they did this year; regretted that the declaration lacks adequate references to environmental challenges, but includes a reference to an “outdated” vision of economic growth and industrialization; and noted that references to renewable energy are weak, while there is no call to reform fossil fuel subsidies.

Israel requested the Secretariat to record its dissociation from paragraph 12.

The US regretted references to foreign occupation and trade, and language on mutually beneficial paradigm of development.

China emphasized the need for a mutually beneficial development cooperation.

Russia expressed objections to the participation of children and youth in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, before they legally become adults. He said the growing number of disagreements this year and the fact that the entire Declaration was subjected to a vote reflects the HLPF’s ineffectiveness.

Venezuela regretted the lack of references to the sovereign management of natural resources and to the right of every state to elect its leaders without international interference. Morocco regretted the lack of references to territorial integrity. The Holy See said it does not recognize gender as being culturally constructed, but biologically fixed.

Chatardová then called for the adoption of the draft report of the meeting (E/HLPF/2018/L.1). Following its adoption, she highlighted key events of HLPF 2018 in her closing statement, including: the presentation of 46 VNRs, with civil society participation; the VNR Labs, where countries discussed how to utilize VNRs; institutional progress engendered by VNR preparations; and the lengthy preparatory process that preceded the HLPF.

She gaveled the meeting to a close at 6:42 pm.

Final Outcome: The Ministerial Declaration welcomes the preparatory work undertaken by ECOSOC under the theme “Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies” and, *inter alia*:

- reaffirms commitment to the 2030 Agenda, and ensuring no one is left behind, and that it is “people-centered, universal and transformative”;
- emphasizes that eradicating poverty, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development;
- recognizes that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, which will be at risk without sustainable development;
- recognizes that vulnerable countries, particularly African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, deserve special attention, while noting the challenges of many MICs;
- calls for further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation;
- emphasizes the importance of engaging and supporting the meaningful participation of children, adolescents, and young people in the implementation, follow-up, and review of the 2030 Agenda; and
- reaffirms commitment to gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and the full realization of the human rights of all women and girls.

Having reviewed SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17 this year, Member States acknowledge the need to leverage synergies and minimize trade-offs, and stress:

- the need for political leadership to achieve universal and sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation;
- the importance of accelerating the pace of transition towards renewable energy, especially in end-use sectors such as transport, buildings, and agriculture;
- that cities can act as agents of positive change, catalysts for inclusion, and “powerhouses” of equitable and sustainable economic growth;
- that the persistent challenges of decoupling economic growth from resource use is concerning, and that a sustainable food systems approach and sustainable lifestyles should be adopted; and
- the importance of stepping up efforts on all fronts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought, biodiversity loss and water scarcity.

The Ministerial Declaration also recognizes the need to strengthen MOI and a revitalized global partnership; and commits to promoting a multilateral trading system under the WTO and collectively pursuing global sustainable development and mutually-beneficial cooperation.

The Ministerial Declaration further commends the 46 countries that presented VNRs, and stresses:

- the importance of sharing best practices and making assistance available for building national capacities for follow-up and review;
- that the pace of progress toward all targets should be accelerated, in particular those with a timeframe of 2020;
- the critical role of STI in achieving the SDGs; and
- the need to take continuous, concrete, and immediate steps to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.

A Brief Analysis of the 2018 HLPF

...whatever nice words were spoken during these last several decades at international conferences or in the halls of the United Nations, the previous structures of privilege and power and injustice and exploitation never completely went away. They were never fully dislodged. – Former US President Barack Obama, in a speech marking Mandela Day, 18 July 2018

British parliamentarian Caroline Lucas once observed that we risk becoming the first species to monitor our demise in exquisite detail, supported by a bank of data, goals, indicators, and targets. “Why are we the species monitoring our own extinction rather than doing something about it?” she asked.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are an attempt to bring both parts of Lucas’ question together: to rally the international community behind 17 carefully crafted “Global Goals,” supported by a bank of data; and to orchestrate a root-and-branch re-design of institutions and institutionalized behaviors.

However, at HLPF 2018 a number of speakers warned that the world is not on track to fulfil the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, and in particular to “leave no one behind.” Global fragmentation, not collaboration, is the order of the day, as Andrew Gilmour, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and a number of others noted, while pointing to strains in the multilateral system and looming trade wars. They quoted data that indicates entrenched inequality, increases in the numbers suffering from hunger, and stagnant ODA. Global wealth remains concentrated in the hands of just 1% of the global population, and historical challenges have been joined by new and emerging threats. “Big data” and the mixed blessing of new technology, threatening jobs but still holding potential to address many of the world’s challenges, were mentioned several times during the meeting.

While many of these challenges will have to be dealt with at multiple levels and scales, from the global, to the regional to the local, this analysis examines the role that the HLPF can play in “orchestrating” the different levels, particularly in the context of the opportunities for institutional reform. As the panel discussions and VNRs took place in the UN conference rooms, the opportunities for fine-tuning the HLPF and making it fit for purpose that the upcoming review process presents was a key topic of discussion in the corridors and at some of the many side events that permeated UN Headquarters.

No Passion in Playing Small

There is no passion to be found in playing small. – Nelson Mandela

“The ambition expressed in the Goals and targets is overwhelming,” Ruben Zondervan, Earth System Governance Project, told the HLPF. It still remains to be seen if a governance-through-Goals approach will be effective in resolving today’s pressing challenges. The pressing question at this meeting, however, was what role the HLPF can play in steering towards the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

The HLPF was established before the 2030 Agenda was adopted. It was not, therefore, purpose-built for its follow-up and review. The September 2019 session of the HLPF, under the auspices of UN General Assembly, will look retrospectively and prospectively at the totality of the agenda for the ensuing four-year cycle, informed by the Global Sustainable Development Report. Heads of State and Government will consider obstacles, possibly make recommendations on resource issues, and produce a political declaration. Some view this as a precious opportunity

to make the HLPF a better fit for the task of follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. “Everyone is waiting for 2019,” one NGO leader remarked.

In addition, UNGA is expected to take up discussion of the HLPF at its 74th session, beginning in September 2019 (as per UN General Assembly Resolution 70/299), to review its format and organizational aspects. This will revisit the original HLPF mandate in UNGA Resolution 67/290 and consider what has worked, and what has not. It could also serve as an opportunity to better align ECOSOC and the HLPF.

Finally, the UN development system has been undergoing a major review and has been considering a series of measures that will allow it to better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF under the auspices of UNGA in 2019 will also have the opportunity to inform the guidance that UNGA will give to the UN system through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of UN system operational activities for development.

Vision with Action

Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely day dreaming, but vision with action can change the world. – Nelson Mandela

While the UN system can provide the vision implicit in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, its role can be over-stated if there is insufficient attention to enabling and empowering regional, national, and local governments and other stakeholders, who shared in the co-authorship of this vision.

The 46 VNRs presented during the 2018 session provided a good snapshot of action on the ground, but also of the numerous challenges faced by national and local actors. It was clear that some countries have gone to considerable lengths to align their national plans with the 2030 Agenda. However, capacity and financial resources, notably in a number of developing countries, was a recurring issue. The level of participation of non-state actors in the preparation of the VNRs varied among countries in scale and depth. During the VNR presentations, some of the most challenging questions on the limits of the focus of the VNRs, and on omissions, were in fact raised by civil society organizations.

Some actors expressed frustration at the lack of follow-up to and feedback on the VNRs. “Perhaps we have to move beyond the VNRs—as currently organized—to a more forceful approach. Is it time to bring in national auditing bodies, using clear and consistent reporting methodologies along with a more formal role for civil society experts?” one participant asked.

Even as governments described challenges with their attempts to integrate the SDGs across sectors and implement a “whole-of-government” approach, they were critical of the “fragmented” approach of the HLPF, which focuses on a subset of SDGs at each session, rather than on the linkages among them. The Latin American and Caribbean region and some civil society organizations have led calls for a more holistic approach to the SDGs based on their interlinkages. “The individual treatment of SDGs and in clusters is missing out on the structural analysis and interlinkages, such as education and work,” one veteran from the region explained. Participants also felt that some thematic review panels were structured in ways that defied a rigorous appreciation of the underlying causes, focusing instead on general trends.

Finally, questions were posed about the level of candor that can be expected from presenters of VNRs during the HLPF. During the session on perspectives from civil society, participants raised concerns about whether it would be possible to create “safe spaces” for rigorous, autonomous, and engaged civil society interventions. In her presentation, Luisa Emilia Reyes Zuñiga,

HLPF Coordination Mechanism, reported that civil society actors had been intimidated and harassed in the corridors.

She and others felt that models from the UN's Human Rights system could offer possible approaches to the protections being sought by NGOs, such as the adoption of a formal system of "shadow reporting"—a proposal that was rejected by Member States in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda was negotiated. They are hoping, however, to persuade Member States, in the context of the upcoming review process, that a more formal process is required.

Some of these challenges relate to the HLPF's status as a "platform" for discussion, which implies certain constraints—around resourcing, power of mandate, and capacity. Participants noted that the HLPF can be more effective in harnessing and keeping pace with the wealth of knowledge and activity currently being generated by the SDGs if it is given a clear and sufficient mandate, and adequate resources.

Impossible until Done

It always seems impossible until it's done. – Nelson Mandela

The challenge for the 2019 HLPF review will be to align all of these opportunities and make them coherent. Some hope that the HLPF can emerge as a platform with considerable convening power at the heart of a global network of networks—drawing on the compelling authority and legitimacy of the SDGs. This could allow, they argue, for not only UN bodies, including ECOSOC and the HLPF, to play a central role, but could give greater space to networks of non-governmental stakeholders including NGOs, civil society, the business community, academia, and intergovernmental organizations, among others.

Caroline Lucas' question is the meta-question that hovers over the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda is nothing less than sublime: it is the bearer of humanity's most intimate and public aspirations, not only for survival but to flourish in a world where reciprocity and rights beat at the heart of social and ecological relationships. But can an unprecedented experiment in Goal-driven and data-based global governance, led by the HLPF, deliver more than a monitoring of our own extinction?

Upcoming Meetings

ECOSOC Organizational Session for 2018-2019: The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold its organizational session regarding the programme of work of the Council from July 2018 to July 2019. **date:** 26 July 2018 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** ECOSOC Secretariat **email:** ecosocinfo@un.org **www:** <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2018-9>

World Water Week 2018: The 28th World Water Week, organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and partners, will focus on the theme "Water, Ecosystems and Human Development." **dates:** 26-31 August 2018 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **contact:** SIWI Secretariat **phone:** +46-8-121-360-00 **fax:** +46-8-121-360-01 **email:** siwi@siwi.org **www:** <http://www.siw.org/>

Eleventh Meeting of the OEWG of the Basel Convention: The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) is expected to discuss, *inter alia*: the Convention's strategic framework, technical guidelines, the review of annexes, the Basel Convention Partnership Programme, and new agenda items on marine plastic litter and micro-plastics and waste containing nanomaterials. **dates:** 3-6 September 2018 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** BRS Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8271 **fax:** +4-22-917-8098 **email:** brs@brsmeas.org **www:** <http://www.basel.int>

First Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on BBNJ: The first session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) follows an organizational session (held in April 2018) and will begin work based on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine BBNJ under UNCLOS, which was developed by the preparatory committee. **dates:** 4-17 September 2018 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) **phone:** +1-212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <https://www.un.org/bbnj/>

Bangkok Climate Change Conference: This conference will resume the work of the issues related to the Paris Agreement Work Programme. **dates:** 4-9 September 2018 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **contact:** UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://unfccc.int/>

Fourteenth Meeting of the Rotterdam Convention Chemical Review Committee: The Chemical Review Committee (CRC13) will review chemicals and pesticide formulations for possible listing under Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention. **dates:** 11-14 September 2018 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** BRS Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8218 **fax:** +41-22-917-8098 **email:** brs@brsmeas.org **www:** <http://www.pic.int>

67th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC 67): IWC 67 will convene in Brazil to discuss aboriginal subsistence whaling, cetacean status and health, unintended anthropogenic impacts, scientific permits, conservation management plans, whale watching, and other whale conservation and management issues. **dates:** 10-14 September 2018 **location:** Florianopolis, Brazil **contact:** IWC Secretariat **phone:** +44-1223-233-971 **fax:** +44-1223-232-876 **www:** <https://iwc.int/iwc67>

Fourteenth Meeting of the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee: The Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC-14) will review the possible listing of hazardous chemicals under the various annexes of the Stockholm Convention. **dates:** 17-21 September 2018 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** BRS Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8729 **fax:** +41-22-917-8098 **email:** brs@brsmeas.org **www:** <http://www.pops.int>

73rd Session of the UN General Assembly: The 73rd session of the UN General Assembly will include: a high-level general debate; a high-level plenary meeting on global peace; a high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis; and a one-day comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. The plenary will adopt a political declaration negotiated by Member States. A number of events will take place in parallel to the opening of the 73rd session of the UNGA under the banners of Global Goals Week 2018 and Climate Week NYC 2018. **dates:** 18 September - 5 October 2018 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Office of UNGA President **www:** <http://www.un.org/en/ga/73/meetings/>

World Habitat Day 2018: World Habitat Day is celebrated annually on the first Monday of October. The event focuses on the state of human settlements and people's right to sufficient shelter. It also aims to remind people that they are responsible for the habitat of future next generations. **date:** 1 October 2018 **location:** worldwide **contact:** UN Habitat **email:** unhabitat-whd@un.org **www:** <https://unhabitat.org/world-habitat-day/>

2018 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group: The 2018 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group 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:** 8-14 October 2018 **location:** Bali, Indonesia **contact:** World Bank/IMF Secretariats **email:** <http://meetings.imf.org/en/2018/Annual/Contact> **www:** <http://meetings.imf.org/en/2018/Annual>

Katowice Climate Change Conference: The Katowice Climate Change Conference will include the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 24) to the UNFCCC, along with meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. **dates:** 3-14 December 2018 **location:** Katowice, Poland **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://unfccc.int/> and <http://cop24.katowice.eu/>

Second UN World Data Forum: The UN World Data Forum 2018 will be hosted by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, UAE, with support from the Statistics Division of UN DESA, under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **dates:** 22-24 October 2018 **location:** Dubai, UAE **contact:** UN Statistics Division **phone:** +1-212-963-9851 **email:** dataforum@un.org **www:** <http://undataforum.org>

2018 UN Biodiversity Conference: The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 9th Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 3rd Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (CBD COP 14, Cartagena Protocol COP/MOP 9, and Nagoya Protocol COP/MOP 3) are expected to address a series of issues related to implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. A High Level Segment will be held from 14-15 November. **dates:** 17-29 November 2018 **location:** Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018>

G-STIC 2018: The Global Sustainable Technology & Innovation Conference aims to facilitate the world-wide implementation of the SDGs. The G-STIC Conference series will be hosted jointly by VITO (research and technology organization on cleantech and sustainable development in Belgium) and its international partners: the African Center for Technology Studies (ACTS), the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), the Indian Institute of Technology (IITD), and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). **dates:** 28-30 November 2018 **location:** Brussels, Belgium **contact:** G-STIC **email:** <https://forms.gstic.org/contact-us/> **www:** <https://2018.gstic.org/>

2018 G20 Leaders' Summit: The 2018 meeting of the G20 Leaders' Summit will focus on the theme "Building consensus for fair and sustainable development." Meetings will take place throughout 2018 to prepare for the Leaders' Summit. **dates:** 30 November - 1 December 2018 **location:** Buenos Aires, Argentina **www:** <https://g20.argentina.gob.ar/en>

50th Session of UN Statistical Commission: The UN Statistical Commission will hold its 50th session from 5-8 March

2019. **dates:** 5-8 March 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Statistics Division **email:** statistics@un.org **www:** <https://unstats.un.org/home/>

Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA): The theme of the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly is "Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production." It will be preceded by a meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) from 4-8 March 2019. **dates:** 11-15 March 2019 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** UNEP **email:** beatpollution@unenvironment.org **www:** <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

Basel Convention COP14, Rotterdam Convention COP9 and Stockholm Convention COP9: The 14th meeting of the COP to the Basel Convention, the ninth meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention, and the ninth meeting of the COP to the Stockholm Convention will convene back-to-back in 2019. **dates:** 29 April - 10 May 2019 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** BRS Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8729 **fax:** +41-22-917-8098 **email:** brs@unep.org **www:** <http://synergies.pops.int>

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2019: HLPF 2019 will address the theme, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality." It will conduct an in-depth review of SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), in addition to SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals), which is reviewed each year. Among other things, HLPF 2019 will consider the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), which is issued every four years. **dates:** 8-19 July 2019 (tentative) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development Goals **email:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/contact/> **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

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

Glossary

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
CDP	Committee on Development Policy
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
GSDR	Global Sustainable Development Report
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Landlocked developing countries
MICs	Middle-income countries
MOI	Means of implementation
ODA	Official development assistance
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
STI	Science, technology and innovation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNGA	UN General Assembly
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WTO	World Trade Organization