

HLPF 2019 Highlights: Wednesday, 10 July 2019

HLPF 2019 continued on Wednesday at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, a thematic review on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality included two sessions, on the perspectives of small island developing states (SIDS), and of least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). In the afternoon, a review of implementation and interrelations among Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

Thematic Review on Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality

Perspectives of SIDS: This session was chaired by Mona Juul, Vice-President, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and moderated by Emele Duituturaga, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the discussion, BELIZE, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS), noted the paucity of resources to break the poverty and inequality cycle in SIDS, due to the priority given towards climate adaptation and disaster recovery.

NORWAY emphasized the need to focus on SIDS in the climate-related high-level events in 2019, such as the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, US, and the Climate Conference in Santiago, Chile. TONGA expressed support for partnerships based on an integrated approach and called for improvements in the UN's monitoring system for SIDS, saying progress made in remote places is not reported. JAMAICA presented a national roadmap for SDG implementation with catalytic policies to accelerate SDG implementation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC emphasized the need to institute social protection for most vulnerable groups, including those working in the informal sector.

HAITI, for CARICOM, highlighted the challenges faced by SIDS, especially those related to climate change and the lack of finance for tackling inequality, biodiversity loss, and natural resource management. FIJI called for increasing the number and amount of

financial grants available for SIDS to address those challenges. The UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR LDCs, LLDCs AND SIDS called for support for capacity building to improve data collection and analysis systems in SIDS.

PALAU called for support from the UN system in localizing the SDGs in SIDS and for improving the communication and cooperation between regional organizations and SIDS. The BAHAMAS highlighted a national focus on addressing the lack of employment opportunities for young people through support for entrepreneurship. WOMEN called for identifying and monitoring regional and sub-regional challenges and supporting cross-border approaches to tackle them. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES suggested focusing official development assistance on promoting the integration of accessibility for persons with disabilities in the SDGs.

In concluding remarks, panelists highlighted: the need for good data to create effective policies for SIDS; addressing vulnerabilities in SIDS through a multidimensional rather than a “piecemeal” approach; the need for technology transfer from developed countries to SIDS to tackle their specific development, climate change, and environmental challenges; and the recent appointment by CARICOM of a Special Rapporteur on Disability.

Perspectives of LDCs and LLDCs: Vice-President Juul chaired the session. Moderator Hope Muli, Hivos, invited participants to examine challenges to inclusiveness and the changes needed in international rules and institutions to better support LDCs and LLDCs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the discussion, PARAGUAY for LLDCs linked achievement of the SDGs to the achievement of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) for LLDCs, and to increased

support for LLDCs. The EU highlighted the “Everything but Arms” initiative that provides LDCs duty- and quota-free access for almost all products, reporting EU imports worth EUR23.5 billion in 2016 from the beneficiary countries.

ETHIOPIA called for tangible progress in implementation of the VPOA, including technical assistance and capacity building for industrialization, diversification of products for export, strengthening of domestic resource mobilization, and curbing of illegal financial flows (IFFs). ZAMBIA highlighted challenges faced by LLDCs, including limited transport and energy infrastructure options due to remoteness from the sea.

TURKEY said it has exceeded its aid allocation to LDCs by providing USD350 million annually instead of the USD200 million promised during the Mid-Term Review Conference of the IPOA in 2015. NEPAL highlighted inequalities perpetuated by the caste system, which hampers SDG implementation. WOMEN stressed the need to stem IFFs that stunt development in LDCs. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES called for the integration of indigenous peoples in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs.

HAITI and NIGER called for increased support for LDCs and LLDCs to achieve the SDGs. MALI noted the need for increased cooperation between LLDCs and countries in transition to middle-income status. MOROCCO highlighted South-South and triangular cooperation in Africa to share best practice and expertise in trade, health, infrastructure, industry, energy, fishing, and agriculture.

The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES called for more support for disaster risk management, to enable states to return to the path of achieving the SDGs after natural disasters.

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

Review of Implementation and Interrelations Among SDGs

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

Faryal Ahmed, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, presented a statistical snapshot of SDG 8, highlighting: an increase in economic growth globally, with LDCs falling short of their 7% target; 22% of the world’s youth are not in education, employment, or training; and an increase in labor productivity with high variation across regions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the discussion, the EU lauded the ILO for promoting social protection through the Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. COSTA RICA highlighted economic growth supported by a decarbonization plan. SWITZERLAND reiterated support for the Better Work Programme, a partnership with ILO and the International Finance Cooperation, to improve working conditions and increase competitiveness of the textile industry. ISRAEL highlighted efforts to include previously under-represented groups into labor markets. KENYA reported on the Green Bond Programme, which aims to promote financial sector innovation through a domestic green bond market.

THAILAND highlighted a focus on innovative technology-based manufacturing, and education sector reforms to ensure the right skills are available. CIVIL SOCIETY FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT GROUP cautioned against privatization of economic policies and corporate capture of development, which undermine the rights of vulnerable groups. MEXICO highlighted efforts to promote participation of young people in labor markets and ensure increased formal employment.

SWEDEN emphasized the need to narrow the wage gap between women and men. FRANCE highlighted its national labor market reform which aims at establishing a new skills economy. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION underlined the importance of innovative financing mechanisms in improving the quality of education and strengthening human capital.

INDONESIA noted challenges, including: stagnation of women's participation in the labor market; reliance on low value-added sectors; and low access to banking. BANGLADESH stressed the importance of freedom of movement of migrants and called for international support for repatriation of refugees.

FINLAND stressed the need for policy coherence between the SDGs and decent work for all. SPAIN highlighted its national plan for a circular economy. The CZECH REPUBLIC

highlighted a national employment strategy that responds to the changing labor market, and the skills required. WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL called for interventions for the "ultra-poor" such as graduation programmes to transition people from safety nets to economic activities. GUATEMALA noted significant progress made nationally in supporting medium, small, and micro-scale enterprises. BELIZE, for AOSIS, highlighted vulnerability to external crises such as the global financial crisis and natural disasters, and identified persistent challenges such as high youth unemployment.

NIGER called for development efforts to be focused on rural areas and women's empowerment. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO emphasized the need to include vulnerable groups in national plans for SDG 8 implementation. FARMERS called for tax and investment regimes that take into account farmers' needs. ALGERIA announced the adoption of a new economic growth model by 2025 focused on preserving the social base of the economy. SOUTH AFRICA said achieving full and decent employment needs not only policy design but also policy enforcement.

POLAND announced a national strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities into the economy. CHILDREN AND YOUTH highlighted the need to connect communities to create a circular economy. ZIMBABWE emphasized the need for social dialogue to ensure inclusive and sustained economic growth. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for addressing barriers to the enrollment of girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. AZERBAIJAN underscored the need to support micro-enterprises in poor and marginalized communities, saying they can serve as effective engines for poverty reduction and economic growth. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES called for equality, sustainability, inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability to be core principles of full and decent employment.

In concluding remarks, panelists emphasized the need for: re-skilling and re-training; social dialogue frameworks; and a focus on including youth in the digital revolution.

In the Corridors

"The road is shorter when we travel together." This observation by an Irish delegate was especially appreciated by several delegates from SIDS, LDCs, and LLDCs, who emphasized that for them, international cooperation is a prerequisite to achieve the SDGs. Speakers pointed out that the SIDS are on track to achieving only a few SDG targets, while the LDCs are growing at 4.8%, below their target level of 7%. Natural disasters, on the rise due to climate change, continuously threaten to push these countries further off track.

At the same time, however, speakers pointed to the crisis in multilateralism – as one delegate put it, "multilateralism is on fire". Squaring this circle is one of the bigger challenges that the HLPF and the broader international community face. Perhaps answers on how the needs of the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS can be met will be forthcoming during the discussion on SDG 17, on global partnerships and financing, scheduled for Monday, 15 July.

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