

## HLPF 2022 Highlights: Thursday, 7 July 2022

On the third day of HLPF, participants discussed challenges that must be overcome in order to achieve gender equality (SDG 5), emphasized the need for the 2023 SDG Summit to be inclusive and disruptive, and considered how the outcomes from the UN Ocean Conference and the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference contributed to efforts to achieve SDG 14 (life below water).

### **SDG 5 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs - Gender Equality**

HRH Princess Dina Mired of Jordan said women are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and face increased levels of domestic violence. She stressed the importance of preventing non-communicable diseases, which negatively impact low- and middle-income countries, and emphasized the value of engaging local NGOs and adopting laws that regulate harmful products like tobacco, junk food, and sugary drinks.

Denis Mukwege, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Democratic Republic of the Congo, highlighted fragile progress towards gender equality and setbacks that women's rights faced recently. He called on governments to invest in policies and grassroots organizations and use the legislative toolbox from the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council report, which is based on four pillars: ending gender-based violence; education and health for all; promoting economic empowerment; and complete equality between men and women in public policy.

Paul Pacheco, UNDESA, presented highlights of the report of the UN Secretary-General on progress towards SDG 5, outlining, *inter alia*, that 641 million women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a known partner and women made up nearly 45% of global employment losses in 2020.

Peggy Clark, CEO and President, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), moderated the session. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, called for a change in social and cultural norms to allow women to work and combat gender-based violence globally.

Nadine Gasman, President of the National Women's Institute, Mexico, drew attention to the country's constitutional guarantees, which protect the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHRs) of women including access to abortion. Innocent Menyo, Co-Founder, Mobile Scan Solutions Uganda, highlighted his

organization's portable ultrasound technology to ensure safer child-bearing procedures.

Tofara Lindsay Chokera, Founder of Tofara Online, Zimbabwe, shared her work on building effective digital marketing platforms for women. Pille Tsopp-Pagan, Women's Support and Information Centre, Estonia, underlined the importance of: national-level gender budgeting; access to SRHRs; addressing the digital gender divide; and ensuring access to energy for women.

Highlighting that women's rights, including SRHRs, are being abolished in different parts of the world, Frida Ravn Rosling, Danish Youth Delegate to the UN on Democracy and Partnerships, called for strong legislation to promote women's rights, as well as protecting those working to secure them.

Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships, said the Spotlight Initiative, an EU-UN partnership, has provided over 1.6 million women and girls with access to services addressing gender-based violence, and, highlighting the importance of education to empower women and girls, said the EU will increase financing for education globally.

Stressing that "freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression," Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, South Africa, said the country has adopted a multi-sectoral and whole-of-society approach to respond to gender-based violence and femicide.

Delegates highlighted: the "exodus" of women from the workforce as a result of the pandemic; EU legislation that has brought more active involvement of fathers in parenting; a Central American regional coalition to tackle trafficking of people; and the need to ratify ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. The Holy See called on delegates to "cherish" women's role in the family and expressed regret at the "overemphasis" of sexual and reproductive health in the discourse on women's empowerment.

Delegates emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming, supporting LGBTIQ+ rights and preventing hate speech online and offline, gender-responsive budgeting and ensuring women's representation on all levels of governance. They also stressed the need to ensure reproductive rights, including access to contraception and abortion, highlighted an opportunity to tackle food insecurities through advancing equality for women farmers, and acknowledged threats to women's rights resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine.

Margaret Greene, Senior Fellow, Promundo, US, shared insights on the role and potential of men in achieving gender equality, citing the negative effect of gender imbalance on both genders and stressing the need to fully engage men in equal rights discourse.

Mukwege shared his experience in developing a holistic support system for victims of sexual violence that includes health, legal, and economic assistance. He urged governments to adopt this system of non-stigmatizing care.

Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Chair of the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, underlined the need to respect and uphold the legal frameworks enshrining SRHRs.

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, Director of the Agency for Gender Equality, Bosnia and Herzegovina, called for action on compensating unpaid care and domestic work to strengthen women's economic power. Vikrant Pandey, Founder and Managing Director, Fightback, Nepal, shared his organization's focus on training women in self-defense to address gender-based violence. Seiko Noda, Minister of State for Gender Equality, Japan, highlighted the country's actions to address the gender pay gap, gender-based violence, and men's engagement in community and family.

Many countries highlighted domestic initiatives to promote gender rights. Participants warned against weaponization of tradition, religion, and culture that undermines women's rights; and described the negative impacts of war and displacement on women and girls. They also: highlighted the need for disaggregated data and better data management; called for progress on SDG 5 to be considered at every HLPF Conference; noted the value of child care centers to enable women to participate in the workforce; and called for women's economic empowerment and universal basic education.

### ***Working Towards the 2023 SDG Summit***

Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, UNITAR, moderated the discussion on the 2023 SDG Summit and invited speakers to focus on three aspects: process, outcome, and dovetailing with other conferences.

Macharia Kamau, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya, suggested keeping the 2023 Summit easy-to-understand and highlighted climate change and peace and security as overarching issues that create the enabling environment to achieve all of the SDGs. Noting that multiple summits are taking place in 2023, he suggested focusing on how summits can ensure implementation, warning that lack of action leads to credibility loss.

David Donoghue, Distinguished Fellow, ODI, echoed the need to recover spirit of 2015 and said the HLPF 2022 ministerial declaration should: have a sharp focus on leaving no one behind; make the SDGs a top priority of political leadership; strengthen the role of civil society; promote regional cooperation; and acknowledge the role of cities.

Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships, announced that the EU would present a comprehensive voluntary review at the 2023 HLPF, and called

for states at the Summit to renew global political commitment to the SDGs. Mami Mizutori, Head, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), called for linking the Summit to the midterm review of the Sendai Framework and underlined the need for risk-informed decision making.

Emphasizing the need for a disruptive summit, Paula Caballero, The Nature Conservancy, recalled that the SDGs brought two streams of negotiations together and challenged delegates to do the same by calling for a single, compelling, and inclusive summit in 2023. She suggested that it should identify a single, succinct suite of actions for all stakeholders to implement, and proposed engaging with the Global Stocktake process underway under the Paris Agreement.

Åsa Persson, Member, Independent Group of Scientists, 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, underscored the importance of a formal recommitment by states to the SDGs, with a concrete acceleration action plan, and a renewed science-policy pact to accelerate the SDGs.

Daisy Ndikuno Owomugasho, The Hunger Project in East Africa, called for regional meetings to understand the priorities on the ground and for inclusive participation and funding for grassroots implementation.

Margaret Olabisi Mekwuye, Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development, Nigeria, called for the SDG Summit to be a "commitment summit" that brings in financial support from donors and private sector and stressed the importance of consultations with civil society ahead of the Summit.

In their responses, delegates highlighted that the Summit should: address carbon inequality; prioritize systemic change to improve the lives of the poorest and most marginalized; involve Indigenous Peoples; and demonstrate international solidarity to promote peace and security.

They also emphasized: addressing climate change and other challenges facing small island developing states (SIDS); investing in young people to build peace at the local level; and the value of sustainable forest laws and practices for achieving multiple SDGs. Several delegates noted that the lack of progress on SDGs could not be entirely ascribed to the pandemic and called for stronger action on climate change and means of implementation.

In closing, panelists recommended that the Summit: generate a concise action plan and "simple, scalable, and do-able" solutions; build up resilience, so the next crisis does not undercut 2030 Agenda achievement; include all stakeholders; focus on risks of inaction; take an integrated approach towards the SDGs and ensure cross-learning; generate a roadmap of where we are and where we need to be; and ensure strong and integrated data. Panelists also said the Summit of the Future, which will take place at the same time as the SDG Summit, should complement, rather than compete with, the SDG Summit.

### ***SDG 14 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Life Below Water***

ECOSOC President Kelapile opened this session. In her keynote address, Sylvia Earle, Marine Biologist and Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society, emphasized that we must work to build back and maintain the ocean's biogeochemical balance, underscoring that the ocean sustains all life on Earth.

Angela Paolini Ellard, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO), noted that the negotiations recently concluded on a global legally binding agreement to curb fisheries subsidies addressed illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overfishing and high seas fishing. She called on all 164 WTO Member States to deposit their instruments of acceptance in order for the agreement to come into force.

Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, presented the outcomes from the UN Ocean Conference.

Heather Page, UN Statistics Division, presented highlights from the UN Secretary-General's report on progress towards Goal 14, stressing that the main sources of marine pollution are land-based and outlining the link between acidification and growing inability of the ocean to mitigate climate change. Angus Friday, Blue Economy Director, Waitt Institute, noted there has been a change in narrative and growing awareness and financing for the ocean.

Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, welcomed the coherent work of all agencies, and stressed the interlinkages among the SDGs and the importance of engaging youth in decision-making for the ocean.

Charles Fox, Executive Director, Oceans 5, noted the growing role of private philanthropy and stressed the need for greater financing for the ocean and climate issues, including for support of small-scale fisheries and curbing fishmeal operations to achieve social and economic equality.

Valerie Hickey, Global Director of Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy, World Bank Group, emphasized the need for: integrated planning; restoring fish stocks; building sustainable enterprises and sharing benefits with Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and using funding strategically while streamlining and simplifying funding processes.

Participants highlighted: Norway's commitments to sustainable management of oceans by 2025; the importance of enhanced cooperation at all levels; investments in innovative technologies such as plant-based fish; FAO's Blue Transformation programme; the efforts of the High Ambition Coalition towards a treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ); over 400 commitments made at the Our Ocean Conference; and that USD 1 invested in the ocean can generate USD 5 in social, health, environmental benefits.

Delegates also discussed the importance of: ocean science, research, innovation and literacy; new, ambitious global agreements on BBNJ and plastic pollution; small-scale fishers in blue economy decision making; the 30X30 goal on marine protected areas; sustainable ocean-based economies; and addressing IUU and overfishing.

In the second panel, Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, speaking for all the regional economic commissions, highlighted work on, among other issues, addressing land-sea interactions such as pollution; and promoting financing solutions such as blue bonds, to support the blue economy.

Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary, IOC-UNESCO, reported on the development of ocean science, underlining that ocean science is critical for achieving all the SDGs, and

welcoming the significant expansion of ocean science and research.

Sanda Ojiambo, CEO and Executive Director, UN Global Compact, stressed that Goal 14 receives the lowest level of financing among all SDGs and underlined the value of introducing blue bonds and acknowledging innovative solutions proposed by youth.

Martin Visbeck, Kiel University, Germany, underlined the value of interdisciplinary ocean science for achieving Goal 14 and stressed the importance of: cooperation, sustainable human-ocean interaction, further expanding observation systems, and exploiting digital opportunities like using virtual reality to generate "digital twins of the ocean."

Delegates further highlighted: efforts to promote sustainable fisheries and renewable ocean energy; ocean pollution from personal protective equipment; the need for an ambitious marine BBNJ treaty; the importance of regional seas programmes; and integrated coastal management that accounts for Indigenous Peoples' rights and includes them in decision making.

Delegates also discussed, among other issues: the police brutality faced by young ocean defenders; the need for technical and financial assistance and capacity building for developing countries to address ocean challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution; the launch of the "NUclear TEChnology" initiative for controlling plastic pollution, the IAEA Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre, Blue Belt initiative, and the Declaration for the enhancement of marine scientific knowledge, research capacity and transfer of marine technology to SIDS; the importance of decent jobs in the transition to blue and green economies; and the need to implement the human right to a healthy environment.

In closing, panelists emphasized the need to: build on political momentum after the UN Ocean Conference; fill data gaps; leverage technology; engage local communities; forge multi-stakeholder partnerships; and ensure adequate financing. They also emphasized the importance of science and knowledge sharing to protect oceans, including through: improving ocean literacy; investing in science; directing science towards sustainable ocean management, investing in science-based marine spatial planning; North-South and South-North knowledge exchanges; and involving youth through the Early Career Ocean Professional Network Programme.

### ***In the Corridors***

Many participants commented that they would benefit from the upcoming three-day break, given the heavy discussions and mostly negative progress on gender equality and life below water foregrounded during the day. While much of the lack of progress on the SDGs over the past two years has been attributed to the global pandemic, the day's discussions brought out some acknowledgements that the SDGs would have been off track even in the absence of this unanticipated crisis. Delegates will have three days to consider the UN Statistics Division's Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022, which was launched at noontime, before returning to UN Headquarters on Monday to discuss SDG 15 (life on land).