HLPF 2022 Highlights: Tuesday, 12 July 2022

The HLPF held a dialogue with civil society representatives during the morning. Twelve VNRs were presented during morning and afternoon sessions.

Vision of Civil Society: Leaving No One Behind in Recovering Better

Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted the important role of civil society in reaching those furthest behind, and their valuable role in informing the 2023 Summit, emphasizing “we need to hear your diverse voices everywhere.”

MGoS Coordination Mechanism Co-Chair, Mabel Bianco, President, Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer, recalled the appreciation civil society had felt at the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, but noted progress is lacking. She urged governments to make meaningful political commitments that leave no one behind.

MGoS Coordination Mechanism Co-Chair, Ajay Jha, Director, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society, India, moderated the session. Among civil society’s priorities, he highlighted: improved vaccine equity, addressing the debt crisis, and stronger climate action.

Wezzi Chimwala, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), Malawi, called for stronger government recognition of the value volunteers bring to SDG implementation and accountability.

Wali Haider, Focal Point for Farmers’ Major Group at UNEP, prioritized: access and control to land for a more sustainable prosperity; and community farming over corporate, industrial farming.

Emilia Reyes, Women’s Major Group, called out “disaster profiteering,” which prevents vaccine equity, and called for a fourth financing for development conference.

Speaking as a refugee from the war in Ukraine, Svetlana Slesarenok, Founder and Director, Black Sea Women’s Club, Odessa, stressed that the war is directly linked to fossil fuel extraction and urged an end in public investment in oil and gas.

Saad Alfarargi, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, said the right to development is a holistic, multi-stakeholder process, and underlined the need to revise tax and finance policy to address the concerns of the most vulnerable, including women.

Denison Jayasooria, All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on SDGs, proposed the establishment of a 10-member panel under the auspices of ECOSOC on the status of civil society organization (CSO) engagement and participation.

Participants expressed concern over the diminishing space for civil society and political repression against CSOs in Belarus and Russia. They stressed the need to: improve education; end discrimination in the workplace and against older persons; improve economic transparency and revise fiscal regulations to curb tax evasion; and promote data collection and adopt data-driven solutions.

Delegates highlighted various efforts to include civil society in national and local SDG processes. They also noted the need to: address systemic barriers to equality such as sexism and misogyny; protect civic space and human rights defenders; combat disinformation; shift power to children, communities, and local organizations; and provide girls with high quality education and information on sexual and reproductive rights.

Voluntary National Reviews

Presenting Latvia’s second VNR, Anita Mužničee, Minister of Education and Science, noted that the country’s greatest challenge lies in reducing income inequality and addressing the gender pay gap. She highlighted progress in knowledge, skills and education (SDG 4); CSO and youth engagement (SDG 17); sustainable finance for biodiversity (SDG 15); and the transformative power of museums and libraries for sustainability and peace (SDG 16).

Presenting the Philippines’ third VNR, Enrique Austria Manalo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the country’s focus on innovation for sustainable development. He noted progress in addressing SDGs 14 (life below water) and 15, with an increase in protected areas in the ocean and on land but said the pandemic has caused a reversal on education. He also highlighted progress on private sector engagement.

Jacques Ducrest, State Secretary and Delegate, Federal Council for the 2030 Agenda, Switzerland, highlighted efforts to digitize and thus democratize the country’s VNR process. He noted the need for further progress on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) (SDG 12), especially related to energy consumption, and on addressing inequality (SDG 10), particularly related to the gender pay gap and migrants.

Marisol Merquel, President of the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies, ARGENTINA, highlighted CSO engagement and strengthened healthcare system as a response to the pandemic, and reported on SDG alignment with national strategies to promote production and human well-being, and eradicate poverty. She highlighted redistribution of wealth and tackling inequality among remaining challenges.

George Gyan-Baffour, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission, GHANA, reported on the country’s inclusive VNR preparation process and the recovery of school enrollment rates after pandemic restrictions were eased. He showcased the improvement of gender parity in schools and decision-making bodies, as well as efforts on deforestation and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. He also stressed digitalization and strengthened partnerships as a way to ensure social inclusion and equality and improve data.

Addressing questions from GHANA, LIBERIA and the NGO MAJOR GROUP, Mužničee (Latvia) highlighted the country’s focus on good governance, quality education and climate; its establishment of a digital literacy policy to address setbacks in education during the pandemic; and its expansion of broadband access and literacy to address the national digital divide.

Responding to questions from GUATEMALA, PAKISTAN, SWITZERLAND, VIETNAM and the CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP, Manalo (the Philippines) pointed to innovations in transit infrastructure as well as forest monitoring; expansion of blended learning programmes; the launch of the...
SDG Watch for online dissemination of the country’s SDG indicators; and the promotion of a whole-of-government approach to achieving the SDGs.

Addressing questions from GHANA, FINLAND and the NGO MAJOR GROUP, Ducrest (Switzerland) noted the country’s focus on addressing SCP, highlighted measures to address negative spill-over effects related to SCP through operationalizing OECD and EUROSTAT indicators, and shared the country’s CSO engagement strategy.

Responding to questions from SPAIN and EL SALVADOR, Marisol Merquel, Argentina, noted the country’s focus on local government involvement in the VNR process, highlighted measures to address food security for vulnerable groups including pregnant women, and drew attention to various public policy interventions and budgetary investments to meet the SDGs.

Gyan-Baffour (Ghana) responding to questions from NORWAY, DENMARK, LATVIA, NIGER, and CANADA, noted that Ghana’s food production has not been affected by the global crisis, but food transportation has been hindered due to fuel price increases. He also highlighted national afforestation strategies that include planting over one million trees and investments in youth and entrepreneurship to create jobs.

Presenting The Gambia’s second VNR, Fatou Kinteh, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Welfare, noted gains in the achievement of: SDG 4, including early childhood development and access to education centers; SDG 5, through the creation of her ministry; SDG 14, through the control of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, among others; and SDG 17, through an increase in remittances. She noted challenges in achieving SDG 15, related to forest cover loss.

Presenting Belarus’ VNR, Irina Velichko, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that despite international sanctions, progress has been observed on SDG 4, including an increase in digital upskilling, and on SDG 5, with women involved in decision making. She noted the country is promoting the Baltic and Black seas’ health (SDG 14); highlighted its rank in the top 10 most forested countries in Europe (SDG 15); and called for international cooperation (SDG 17) to ensure the non-politicization of SDG implementation.

Presenting the country’s VNR, Sifiso Gabriel Mamba, Chief Economist, eSwatini, said challenges in achieving the SDGs include: the lack of resources for implementation, and data for annual reviews; declining official development assistance; a lack of private sector involvement; youth unemployment; and an absence of regional and constituency level SDG plans.

Responding to JAMAICA, the CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP, Lootah (UAE) showcased the vital watchdog function of civil society in holding the Government accountable. She noted that the Government had canceled the 2030 Agenda with last-minute due to restrictions on protests at the venue. Several NGOs expressed concern over effects related to SCP through operationalizing OECD and EUROSTAT indicators, and shared the country’s CSO engagement strategy.

Responding to questions from SPAIN and EL SALVADOR, Marisol Merquel, Argentina, noted the country’s focus on local government involvement in the VNR process, highlighted measures to address food security for vulnerable groups including pregnant women, and drew attention to various public policy interventions and budgetary investments to meet the SDGs.

In response to SOUTH AFRICA, the ACADEMIA MAJOR GROUP, Dominick Mamba, Chief Economist, eSwatini, said challenges in achieving the SDGs include: the lack of resources for implementation, and data for annual reviews; declining official development assistance; a lack of private sector involvement; youth unemployment; and an absence of regional and constituency level SDG plans.

Addressing questions from GHANA, FINLAND and the NGO MAJOR GROUP, Ducrest (Switzerland) noted the country’s focus on addressing SCP, highlighted measures to address negative spill-over effects related to SCP through operationalizing OECD and EUROSTAT indicators, and shared the country’s CSO engagement strategy.

Responding to questions from SPAIN and EL SALVADOR, Marisol Merquel, Argentina, noted the country’s focus on local government involvement in the VNR process, highlighted measures to address food security for vulnerable groups including pregnant women, and drew attention to various public policy interventions and budgetary investments to meet the SDGs.

In response to SOUTH AFRICA, the ACADEMIA MAJOR GROUP, Dominick Mamba, Chief Economist, eSwatini, said challenges in achieving the SDGs include: the lack of resources for implementation, and data for annual reviews; declining official development assistance; a lack of private sector involvement; youth unemployment; and an absence of regional and constituency level SDG plans.

In response to the EU, the WOМEN’S GROUP, RUSSIAN PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP, Diop (Mali) underlined the need for greater investment in health systems; noted the government’s efforts to improve security; and underlined the importance of a human-rights based approach to achieving the SDGs.

In response to MOROCCO, BULGARIA, UK, the NGO MAJOR GROUP, LEBANON and ARMENIA, Skertsos (Greece) highlighted the country’s national recovery and resilience plan and noted efforts to fast-track asylum-seeker applications and highlighted the country’s small islands as sites for renewable energy generation.

In response to MOROCCO, BULGARIA, UK, the NGO MAJOR GROUP, LEBANON and ARMENIA, Skertsos (Greece) highlighted the country’s national recovery and resilience plan and noted efforts to fast-track asylum-seeker applications and highlighted the country’s small islands as sites for renewable energy generation.

Responding to the EU, the WOМEN’S GROUP, RUSSIAN PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP, Diop (Mali) underlined the need for greater investment in health systems; noted the government’s efforts to improve security; and underlined the importance of a human-rights based approach to achieving the SDGs.

In response to MOROCCO, BULGARIA, UK, the NGO MAJOR GROUP, LEBANON and ARMENIA, Skertsos (Greece) highlighted the country’s national recovery and resilience plan and noted efforts to fast-track asylum-seeker applications and highlighted the country’s small islands as sites for renewable energy generation.