

## Summary of the 2023 Session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 10-19 July 2023

At the halfway point between the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 and its 2030 deadline, only 12% of the SDG targets are on-track, and some targets are regressing below the 2015 baseline. This message from the UN Secretary-General's progress report on the SDGs haunted participants at the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The theme of general debate during the Ministerial Segment of the 2023 HLPF was "Building Momentum Towards the SDG Summit." The second SDG Summit, scheduled for 18-19 September 2023, was top-of-mind for delegates throughout the entire eight days. At nearly every session, speakers voiced their wish lists and expectations for the Summit.

Five SDGs were under review at HLPF 2023: SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Many status updates confirmed the somber tone of the Secretary-General's report. SDG 6 is "alarmingly off-track." Achieving SDG 7 by 2030 poses "an unprecedented challenge" but is still achievable with scaled-up ambition and the right policies. Regarding SDG 11, there is a growing urban divide, inadequate housing is a pressing problem, and only half of the world's urban population has access to public transport. For SDG 9 "there is hope" with progress on some targets such as mobile network access, but the implementation pace on others needs to quicken and more support for innovation and infrastructure in least developed countries (LDCs) is needed. As for SDG 17, while there have been advances in areas such as development aid, remittance flows, and access to technology, funding for development remains a major challenge, particularly in low-income countries. Participants discussed possible responses to accelerate implementation for each Goal reviewed.

HLPF 2023 also held sessions on the implementation challenges faced by different groups of countries, including small island developing states (SIDS), Africa, LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and, for the first time, middle-income countries (MICs), which are not considered poor enough to receive concessional financing yet face significant difficulties in raising capital for SDG implementation initiatives. In addition, a session

was held to examine how to "localize" the implementation of the SDGs and another spotlighted the perspectives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS).

Thirty-eight countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during HLPF 2023: one for the first time, 36 for the second, and one for the third. The European Union (EU) presented the first-ever supranational review. These sessions facilitated the

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sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned.

HLPF 2023 was convened at UN Headquarters in New York from 10-19 July 2023. Several hundred side events, special events, VNR Labs, and exhibitions took place during the HLPF, which was attended by more than 120 ministers and vice-ministers, as well as other representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society.

### **A Brief History of the HLPF**

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) established the HLPF in July 2013 in 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) and 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, 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
- 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 UNGA resolution [70/1](#), “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” a package that includes the 17 SDGs, 169 targets, and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. The 2030 Agenda called on the HLPF to take a central role in the follow-up and review process at the global level, and to carry out country-led voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

### **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 several concrete proposals on the role of the HLPF, saying it 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.

**2016 HLPF Session:** 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, and 22 countries shared their experiences with the 2030 Agenda. This session was also the first where elements of the Ministerial Declaration were put to a vote. A controversial paragraph relating to the Paris Agreement on climate change remained intact following the vote.

**2017 HLPF Session:** In-depth reviews of the SDGs were initiated at 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) was also reviewed and would henceforth be reviewed annually. Forty-three countries presented VNRs. 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, several countries abstained from voting, protesting that the voting process itself diluted a strong political signal from the HLPF.

**2018 HLPF Session:** This session (9-18 July 2018) focused on the theme of “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” Five goals were reviewed in addition to SDG 17: SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation); SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy); SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production); and SDG 15 (life on land). Forty-six countries presented VNRs. A Ministerial Declaration was adopted, following a vote on the text as a whole, and on three paragraphs relating to: means of implementation and global partnerships; peace and security; and gender equality.

**2019 HLPF Session:** This session (9-19 July 2019) completed the first four-year cycle of the HLPF. The key message from the meeting was that the global response to implementing the SDGs had not been ambitious enough, and renewed commitment and accelerated action was needed to deliver the SDGs in time. The session focused on the theme of “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” Five SDGs were reviewed in addition to SDG 17: 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). VNRs were presented by 47 countries during the Ministerial Segment, with seven countries presenting for the second time.

**First SDG Summit:** The SDG Summit (24-25 September 2019) was the first HLPF session to convene under the auspices of the UNGA since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Heads of State and Government reviewed progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, with just over a decade left before the target date of 2030. A political declaration was adopted on “Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development: Political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.”

### **Recent Meetings**

**2020 HLPF Session:** This meeting was originally intended to initiate a new four-year cycle to review SDG implementation and assess progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Instead, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held virtually, and the agenda focused on the impact of the pandemic and how to “build back better.” Forty-seven countries presented VNRs, with 26 presenting for the first time. The meeting ended without the adoption of a ministerial declaration, due to lack of consensus and lack of voting procedures for a virtual meeting.

**2021 HLPF Session:** This session took place in a hybrid format and focused on the theme of “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” To that end, the Forum reviewed progress

on nine SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships). Forty-four countries presented VNRs, including 10 first timers, 24 second timers, and 10 third timers.

**2022 HLPF Session:** The first in-person meeting in three years reviewed four SDGs in addition to SDG 17: SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), and 15 (life on land). Forty-four countries presented their VNRs. HLPF 2022 also began planning for the second SDG Summit. The Forum adopted a 142-paragraph Ministerial Declaration, with one paragraph on “the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation” subject to a vote.

### HLPF 2023 Report

In her role as HLPF Chair, ECOSOC President Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria), opened HLPF 2023 on Monday, 10 July. Delegates adopted the agenda ([E/HLPF/2023/1](#)).

UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Jinhua conveyed the main messages from the VNRs. He noted some progress and persistent challenges such as data gaps and limited finance, but also several innovative strategies, policies and partnerships adopted to overcome these challenges. Li urged all to learn from the valuable insights provided by the VNRs.

ECOSOC Vice President Arrmanatha Christiawan Nasir (Indonesia) summarized messages from ECOSOC. He urged focus on: stressing interlinkages among the SDGs, breaking down silos; conducting an honest review of gaps at this midpoint towards 2030; and scaling up concrete, transformative action going forward.

Delegates watched videos on the SDGs and “Voices for Change,” featuring calls for action from across the globe.

Edward Ndopu, SDG Advocate and youth representative, South Africa, stressed the importance of meaningfully integrating youth in decision-making processes. Recalling the 2030 Agenda call to “leave no one behind,” he highlighted the need for inclusion and strengthened equal opportunity to achieve the SDGs. He called for an accessible, equitable and sustainable global financial system.

Li presented the Secretary-General’s report on SDG progress ([A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)) noting some progress but also regression due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized the need for Member States to:

- advance policies that leave no one behind;
- strengthen national and subnational public sector capacity and accountability;
- use effective regulatory frameworks for public-private sector alignment;
- mobilize resources and investment;
- bolster multilateralism;
- reform the international financial architecture; and
- have accessible, timely and disaggregated data.

### Overcoming the Crises, Driving Transformation for the SDGs, and Leaving No One Behind

In a townhall on [Monday, 10 July](#), panelists from the UN system and MGoS discussed what transformations are needed to catalyze action towards 2030. Among other things, in discussion and response to delegates’ interventions, panelists stressed:

- more efficient, resilient, inclusive and sustainable food production systems;
- putting children and young people at the heart of SDG efforts;
- risk-informed decisions that emphasize risk prevention beyond disaster management;
- the importance of country leadership to leverage international partnerships;
- the need to recognize the indivisibility of the SDGs in national and global responses;
- addressing refugees, the displaced, and other highly vulnerable groups to ensure they do not get left behind; and
- considering SDG data and data infrastructure as an investment rather than a burden.

### SDGs in Focus

**SDG 6 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Clean Water and Sanitation:** On [Tuesday, 11 July](#), ECOSOC President Stoeva convened this session. Jaap Slootmaker, Vice Minister, Infrastructure and Water Management, the Netherlands, reported on the UN 2023 Water Conference, co-organized with Tajikistan, which produced a concrete action agenda for achieving SDG 6, one-fourth of which could be considered “game changing.” Kelly Ann Naylor, lead writer, SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2023 on Water and Sanitation, said the report provides a clear blueprint to accelerate progress. The need for strengthening transboundary water diplomacy was underscored, with many speakers calling for convening of more regular UN meetings on water and sanitation.

The subsequent discussion featured 41 interventions. Many delegates lauded the Water Conference and expressed support for a Special Envoy and greater transboundary cooperation on water issues, with some calling for a UN system-wide water strategy, and a process towards a UN Water Convention. Many interventions highlighted new initiatives that tackle water scarcity as well as water-related natural disasters and foster greater transparency and accountability in water resources governance at all levels. Speakers further underlined the critical need for finance, technology transfer, capacity building, and other means of implementation.

**SDG 7 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Affordable and Clean Energy:** On [Wednesday, 12 July](#), ECOSOC Vice President Paula Narváez Ojeda (Chile) chaired the session on SDG 7. Damilola Ogunbiyi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All, and Co-Chair, UN Energy, noted lagging progress toward SDG 7, but said “We have the opportunity and obligation to reverse this trend.” She pointed out energy is linked to achieving two-thirds of the 169 SDG targets and discussed Energy Compact achievements, including enhanced electricity access for six million people, 88 gigawatts (GW) renewable energy capacity installed, and 2,450 GW hours saved through energy efficiency measures.

Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said achieving SDG 7 while halving emissions by 2030 will require correct enabling policies, clear and ambitious targets, scaled-up deployment, redirecting capital to renewables and energy conservation, and ending fossil fuel subsidies. Hans Olav Ibrekk, Special Envoy for Climate and Security, Norway, proposed establishing an intergovernmental panel on energy and prioritizing clean cooking on the agenda.

In the ensuing discussion, many delegates reported on national and regional efforts towards the clean energy transition. Delegates emphasized, among other things:

- the need for democratization and diversification;
- the creation of new jobs in the green energy sector;
- the need for safeguards against greenwashing and calling out “false solutions”;
- the need to promote energy efficiency and manage energy demand;
- innovative technologies and solutions, such as green hydrogen, heat pumps and residual heat use, that can accelerate the transition;
- the health impacts of investments in SDG 7; and
- investment in weather and climate services to ensure climate-resilient energy infrastructure.

**SDG 9 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** On [Wednesday, 12 July](#), ECOSOC Vice Presidents Albert Ranganai Chimbindi (Zimbabwe) and Narváez chaired the session on SDG 9. The panel emphasized the role innovation, industrial policy and sustainable infrastructure, particularly inclusive and widely-accessible digital infrastructure, can play in realizing other SDGs. Norichika Kanie, Keio University, Japan, and Member, Independent Group of Scientists writing the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023, underscored the role science, technology and innovation (STI) can play in scaling up solutions and enabling needed transformations.

Melike Yetken Krilla, Google, emphasized connecting under- and un-connected populations to high-speed internet to bring them into the modern economy and enable their participation in the most important technological advances.

Axel Berger, German Institute of Development and Sustainability, said “industrial policy is here to stay,” so we might as well green it and make it sustainable. Nagesh Kumar, Indian Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, said lessons from India’s industrial policies are that well-crafted and executed strategies do deliver, and well-formulated strategies can help achieve a green transition with positive spillovers for other Goals.

The ensuing discussions gave delegates the opportunity to highlight their commitment to, and outline in-country and regional progress on SDG 9, emphasizing the realized and potential role of partnerships in effectively closing gaps and achieving this Goal. Speakers underlined the breadth of sectors that require integrated, optimized, and innovative infrastructure, from transport to broadband to food production. Many noted the central role of the private sector in driving innovative and resilient infrastructure development, with governments’ parallel role in creating enabling environments.

**SDG 11 and Interlinkages with other SDGs – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** On [Thursday, 13 July](#), Sokunpanha You, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, presented the highlights of the Secretary-General’s report on SDG progress, focusing on SDG 11.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat, stressed the [New Urban Agenda](#) (NUA) offers a clear vision, targets and commitments. Ana Ciuti, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Argentina, focused on cities’ growing leadership for combatting climate change. Recalling the high number of pledges made by cities and local communities to the Global Compact’s Migration Multi-Partner Trust

Fund, António Vitorino, Director General, International Organization for Migration, stressed that migrants and local authorities must have a seat at the table.

Noting SDG 11 cannot be achieved without ensuring access to sustainable public transport, Maruxa Cardama, Secretary General, Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport, Marc Workman, CEO, World Blind Union, and youth speaker Paul Stout decried car-dependent transport systems and emphasized the importance of making cities more walkable and ensuring public transport accessibility for all.

In the subsequent discussion, many welcomed outcomes from the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in June 2023, particularly the resolution on adequate housing for all, and voiced their continued support for implementing the NUA.

**SDG 17 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Partnerships for the Goals:** On [Monday, 10 July](#), delegates conducted an in-depth review of SDG 17 on partnerships, through the lenses of finance and STI in two panels.

**Financing Our Crisis Response and Investing in the SDGs:** ECOSOC Vice President Maurizio Massari (Italy) chaired the first panel. Addressing the financing crisis response and investing in SDGs, panelists discussed the need for:

- considerably increasing and upscaling private capital mobilization and blended finance;
- debt cancellation;
- financing for climate solutions through mechanisms that are not debt-generating; and
- the need for investments in frontline communities.

**Science, Technology and Innovation: Triggering Transformation and Sustaining a Science-driven Recovery:** ECOSOC Vice President Narváez chaired the second panel. Participants discussed messages from the 2023 STI Forum ([E/HLPF/2023/6](#)), and the role that connectivity, closing the digital divide, and utilization of generative artificial intelligence might play in helping developing countries leapfrog in their SDG achievement.

**Transformation from the Ground Up: Acting at Local Level**

Mathieu Mori, Secretary General, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe, opened this session on [Tuesday, 11 July](#), by noting local action is a precondition for delivering the promise of the SDGs. He called for national governments to give local leaders the powers they need to do so. Panelists urged:

- equipping local officials with greater administrative powers to take the initiative;
- facilitating the exchange of experience among such officials;
- translating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs into accessible language that address local needs and day-to-day problems;
- empowering youth to drive community change;
- involving previously unreached populations in realizing the SDGs; and
- featuring a greater role for Voluntary Local Reports at the HLPF.

In the subsequent discussion, participants called for using localized approaches for monitoring SDG progress and identifying gaps between the Goals and the situation on the ground. They also stressed:

- using a whole-of-society approach;
- better resource sharing across governance levels;
- establishing multi-level dialogues within countries;

- demand-driven, context-specific investment; and
- effective finance channeled to local levels.

### ***Small Island Developing States: From Recovery to Resilience in the Face of Multiple Shocks***

On [Tuesday, 11 July](#), Gaston Browne, Prime Minister, Antigua and Barbuda, and Co-Chair, High Level Panel of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), opened the session, noting the crucial role of debt reduction for SIDS to successfully achieve the 2030 Agenda. Panelists discussed:

- the need for debt relief and grant-based and/or concessional finance for SIDS;
- adequate prioritization for SIDS in international financing;
- more finance for resilience, risk reduction, and climate adaptation;
- investment in early warning and data collection systems; and
- the role of digital transformation in resilience building.

During the subsequent discussion, speakers highlighted the inherent vulnerabilities that SIDS face, with many welcoming work on a MVI that better reflects their reality. The international community was called upon to, *inter alia*: expand access to affordable and climate-indexed financing tailored to SIDS contexts; center capacity building for disaster risk reduction in development cooperation efforts; tackle the high cost of data collection arising from geographically dispersed SIDS settings; and consider the specific vulnerabilities as well as contributions of women and excluded groups.

### ***Progress Report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns***

On [Thursday, 13 July](#), ECOSOC Vice President Nasir opened the session, noting that while Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) is not under review in 2023, it is an important enabler for other SDGs and targets.

Giovanna Valverde Stark, Co-Chair, Board, 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (SCP), highlighted the report's five calls to action:

- convening a multilateral and multi-stakeholder dialogue process under the aegis of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and ECOSOC and reporting to HLPF or the UNGA;
- focusing on high-impact industry sectors;
- harnessing digital technologies;
- strengthening public awareness of sustainable lifestyles; and
- prioritizing policies that foster SCP along the entire lifecycle of products and services.

### ***Overcoming Middle-income Countries' Challenges in Advancing the 2030 Agenda***

On [Thursday, 13 July](#), delegates held the first-ever HLPF session focusing on the challenges faced by MICs, which often fall in a "trap" of no longer qualifying for concessional aid, yet have difficulty finding funds to implement the 2030 Agenda. Panelists outlined potential solutions to this trap, with Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), underscoring that MICs' debt crisis has real human costs and causes socio-economic upheaval across borders.

In the subsequent discussion, delegates welcomed having a MIC session on the HLPF agenda and urged for the periodic examination of MICs' progress. Most delegates called for an intergovernmental

process and the introduction of multidimensional poverty and vulnerability indices, in addition to gross domestic product (GDP), for better allocation of development financing.

### ***African Countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries: Turning the Tide, Regaining Lost Ground and Embarking on the Road to the SDGs***

On [Thursday, 13 July](#), panelists and delegates shared examples of policies, measures and actions underway to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in this cluster of countries that are among the most marginalized in the world economy and furthest behind in achieving the SDGs.

Rabab Fatima, High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), called for the full implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for the Decade 2022-2031 ([DPoA](#)) adopted at the Fifth UN LDC Conference.

Namira Negm, Director, African Union Migration Observatory, discussed ongoing efforts by African countries to address the continent's vulnerability to multiple crises. Stressing they cannot do it alone, she urged partners to support efforts to maximize the value of Africa's rich natural endowments.

In the subsequent discussion, delegates explored ideas to help Africa, LDCs, and LLDCs, including:

- expanded trade access;
- debt relief;
- international financial system reform; and
- providing special funding windows for these countries for sustainable energy, transport, water, food security, and climate action.

### ***Perspectives from Major Groups and Other Stakeholders at the Mid-point of the SDGs: Towards Inclusive Transformation***

On [Friday, 14 July](#), the HLPF held a consultation with the MGoS. ECOSOC President Stoeva set the tone, emphasizing that MGoS are "woven into the fabric" of the HLPF, and a concerted effort has been made by organizers to include MGoS in all HLPF debates, with a special effort to elevate youth voices at this year's session.

Joan Carling, Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Rights International, urged states to provide enabling environments and mechanisms for citizen participation at local and national levels. She endorsed the UN Secretary-General's idea of adopting a new social contract at the World Social Summit in 2025. Ali Jillani, Vice Chair, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Organization (CSO) Engagement Mechanism, said it is high time for Asia and the Pacific to democratize development policymaking. Panelists lamented the loss of, and threats to civic space, with Marianne Haslegrave, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, calling for its prioritized restoration. Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, highlighted the need for a planet-centered participatory development model.

Mary Maker, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Goodwill Ambassador, expressed hope that future meetings include and spotlight more voices to represent the 110 million displaced people worldwide.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates highlighted the importance of civil society engagement for combatting inequality and achieving sustainable lifestyles and production and consumption patterns. Some highlighted inclusion of the contributions of CSOs in the content and process of developing VNRs, as well as national efforts to build multi-stakeholder partnerships, platforms, and dialogues.

### ***Voluntary National Reviews***

Thirty-eight countries and the EU presented their VNRs: two for the first time, 36 for the second time, and one for the third time. The summaries are listed in the order presented.

**Friday, 14 July:** On [Friday](#), the following nine countries presented VNRs: Liechtenstein, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Zambia, Barbados, Viet Nam, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, and Cambodia.

**LIECHTENSTEIN:** Foreign Minister Dominique Hasler mentioned the development of 69 indicators linked to the SDGs, which suggest that 12 SDGs are moving toward sustainability with three showing negative trends. She noted Liechtenstein recently made it mandatory for every government bill introduced to parliament to include an SDG analysis. She highlighted work on SDGs 4 (education) and 8 (decent work), as well as her country's Education Strategy 2025+ and Climate Vision 2050. She noted the need to further improve SDG data and emphasized her government places high priority on state and non-state collaboration for SDG implementation.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Josip Brkić reported that his country adopted its SDG Framework following its first VNR in 2019 and aligned key development policies with the Framework. He noted "headwinds" faced during the pandemic slowed its implementation, but said the government had initiated the SDG localization process in 2022 and increased efforts to engage the private sector, citizens, and academia, citing the launch of an online platform and e-consultation process to help prepare the second VNR. He explained an SDG Financing Working Group recently offered recommendations that the government intends to implement later in 2023. He also noted his country's participation in regional cooperation for exchanging SDG implementation experiences and lessons learned, particularly on how to overcome bottlenecks.

**COMOROS:** Daniel Ali Bandar, Secretary General of the Government, underscored the participatory and inclusive processes used for this second VNR. He highlighted national progress on digitalization, the blue economy, and leaving no one behind, before reporting: expectations to surpass targets on potable water access before 2030 (SDG 6); full territorial electricity grid connection (SDG 7), noting progress and challenges in operationalizing renewable energies; improved transport infrastructure and increased participation of women and youth in advancing industrialization (SDG 9); progress and needs in leveraging resources for social housing (SDG 11); and the Emerging Comoros Plan for 2030 in working towards revitalized partnerships (SDG 17).

**ZAMBIA:** Lois Mulube, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, highlighted the government's increased investment, through a new national development plan, in areas including renewable energies, healthcare, education, and gender equality. She noted Zambia's recent debt restructuring, which has enabled increased progress in achieving the SDGs. She highlighted comprehensive social programmes improving

accessible healthcare and gender equality, stressing that poverty and inequalities remain pressing challenges. She ceded the podium to Glenda Mulenga, Zambian CSOs, who urged the government to fully realize its commitment to leave no one behind and to focus on achieving the "low-hanging fruit" of the SDGs like the meaningful participation of youth and marginalized groups.

**BARBADOS:** Shantal Munro-Knight, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, reported that close to half of the 95 SDG targets identified as most relevant to their national context have been met or are on track to be met by 2030, with the remaining showing fair progress. She emphasized the multiplier effects of global crises on pre-existing challenges in SDG achievement and stressed climate change is a "lived reality" for SIDS. Munro-Knight highlighted ongoing initiatives under a social partnership umbrella that rally all sectors and stakeholders, including a renewed national economic recovery plan; socially integrative and innovative sustainable development models that center SDG alignment, noting progress in increasing low- and middle-income households' resilience to climate-related shocks; and the Bridgetown Initiative, underscoring it enables climate-threatened developing countries to tackle such disasters without increasing their sovereign debt burden.

**VIET NAM:** Planning and Investment Minister Nguyễn Chí Dũng explained the VNR was developed following an inclusive process and entailed full integration of the SDGs in national roadmaps and strategies. Noting areas of progress include improved access to clean energy (SDG 7) and affordable housing (SDG 11), he stressed the need to implement multi-level, cross-cutting measures to develop a modern, synchronous, and climate-adaptive socio-economic infrastructure. Nguyễn further outlined Viet Nam's work to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion, particularly for ethnic minorities, and highlighted the prioritization of STI, financial structure reforms, and inclusive, comprehensive educational and vocational training systems. He stressed ongoing challenges include climate shocks, systemic gender inequality, and undernourishment of children in ethnic minorities. Nguyễn called for improving data availability, increased community resilience, and better partnerships to address the VNR's identified challenges.

**RWANDA:** Claudine Uwera, Minister of State for Economic Planning, outlined the advances made by her country, including:

- life expectancy improvements from 49 to 69 years since 2000;
- swift action to ensure recovery from COVID-19, including social safety nets for the most vulnerable;
- establishing the Recovery Plan and Economic Recovery Fund; and
- transformation of the energy and digital sectors.

She highlighted the "Made in Rwanda" industrial policy and construction of the first-ever vaccine production facility as key achievements.

**BURKINA FASO:** Aboubakar Nacanabo, Minister of Economy, Finance and Forecasting, outlined national development and stabilization actions, which aim to restore territorial integrity, improve governance, and work towards national reconciliation and social cohesion, considering domestic terrorism afflicting Burkina Faso since 2015. He stressed peace as a main goal for achieving the SDGs, lamenting destroyed public infrastructure, closed education facilities, and reduced access to basic services as consequences of the ongoing security crisis. He acknowledged strides made despite this, including progress on SDGs 6 and 7, and called on the

international community to strengthen partnerships and prioritize action for peace on the road to 2030.

**CAMBODIA:** Tuon Thavrak, Secretary of State, Ministry of Planning, highlighted on-track progress for over two-thirds of SDG indicators. He reported barriers to full SDG achievement include the volatility of global politics and economies, ongoing technological and trade wars, and the emerging digital divide. Thavrak noted the need to strengthen demographic resilience for inclusive growth, alongside Cambodia's commitment to supporting citizens at all stages of life through better opportunities and training to realize their full and meaningful participation in national development strategies. He further highlighted Cambodia's strategic approach focuses on improving political stability and partnerships; strengthening public finance management reforms; and aligning public budgets and strategies with the SDGs.

**Monday, 17 July:** On [Monday](#), the following six countries presented VNRs: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guyana, Romania, Central African Republic, Chile, and Uzbekistan.

**DRC:** Judith Suminwa Tuluka, Minister of Planning, noted governmental initiatives on infrastructural reforms, including a localized development plan and improving taxation systems; national economic growth and recovery rates increasing from 6.2% in 2021 to 8.5% in 2022, due in large part to mining; and the multiple challenges arising from persisting conflict situations in the eastern regions, which have forcibly displaced over five million people domestically. She outlined national programmes to increase access and affordability for clean water and energy services, highlighting work to liberalize these two sectors; national strategies to diversify the economy, including using mining sector tax revenue to industrialize the agricultural sector; regulatory governance for formalized housing and urban transportation to accommodate high urbanization rates; and a national framework for sustainable development financing.

**GUYANA:** Ashni Singh, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, highlighted the "One Guyana" approach to tackle food, energy, and climate security, and SDG-aligned national strategies to decouple economic growth from a carbon-based economy. He noted the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated and rendered visible pre-existing challenges and remarked on the necessary diversion of already scarce resources from the SDGs to pandemic-related containment and recovery efforts. He highlighted national objectives to improve data collection on the Goals and implementing deliberate policy interventions focused on accelerating development, before reporting on the five SDGs in focus at this HLPF, including improved availability and sustainable management of water infrastructure (SDG 6), with hinterland populations' access to drinking water increasing from 33.8% in 2019 to 75% in 2022; and accelerated investments for connectivity (SDG 9), and affordable housing programmes (SDG 11).

**ROMANIA:** Mircea Fechet, Minister of Environment, Water and Forests; László Borbély, State Counsellor to the Prime Minister's Office; and Ioana Dospinescu, youth representative, noted Romania's innovative policies and strategies, including: a national action plan, an interagency committee comprising ministers from across the government to oversee the sustainable development strategy, and a training system to teach and accredit sustainable development experts. They outlined the strong focus given to education; efforts to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive

preparation process for this VNR, as well as to improve inclusivity and coherence in policies; and the national Sustainability Code, which was established based on lessons learned from Germany's version. Noting that almost two-thirds of SDG targets have been achieved, they encouraged further efforts on developing institutional capacity and enhancing stakeholder engagement.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:** Marcel Djimasse, Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reform, via video link, highlighted "modest" SDG progress, while underlining the government's commitment to proactively pursue implementation of the Goals. Against the backdrop of serious insecurity and worsening socio-economic indicators, he explained efforts to integrate the SDGs into national policy frameworks, highlighting efforts to strengthen access to safe drinking water and progress on sustainable energy and infrastructure development.

**CHILE:** Social Evaluation Vice-Minister Paula Poblete described the country's post-pandemic recovery process as a "whole-of-society" effort that took stock of all SDGs and incorporated views from different social sectors. While noting that poverty indicators had risen for the first time since 1990, she highlighted achievements include increased investment in the lithium and green hydrogen sectors, widespread adoption of disaster risk reduction approaches by local governments, and strengthened international partnerships, including through Chile's feminist foreign policy and work on marine biodiversity.

**UZBEKISTAN:** Sherzod Kudbiev, Minister, and Ilkhom Norkulov, Deputy Minister, Economy and Finance, highlighted significant results since Uzbekistan's first VNR in 2020, including adopting a national SDG agenda with 125 targets and a focus on poverty alleviation as a top priority. On lessons learned, the presentation noted the importance of inclusive economic reforms, with a close link to skills development and providing access to market infrastructure, as well as social protection measures such as affordable housing and investments in healthcare and education. The presenters further reported improvements in women's political participation and environmental protection through more efficient use of water and land resources.

**Tuesday, 18 July:** On [Tuesday](#), the following 11 countries presented VNRs: Saint Kitts and Nevis, Bahrain, Belgium, Croatia, Tanzania, Brunei, Iceland, Timor-Leste, France, Lithuania, and Singapore.

**SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS:** Konris Maynard, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Energy and Utilities, Domestic Transport, Information, Communication and Technology and Posts, noted progress on SDG 6 and reported universal electricity access, renewable energy source capacity development, and efforts to connect both islands' electricity grids. He noted good progress on SDGs 9 and 11, highlighting increased infrastructural climate resilience. The presentation underscored the importance of mainstreaming the SDGs in national development planning frameworks and development of green, blue and orange economies as keys for sustainable development.

**BAHRAIN:** Noor Al-Khulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development, noted the strong focus on an inclusive and sustainability recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including a USD 12 billion stimulus to stabilize the labor market. She identified priority targets including:

- access to water for all and improving water use efficiency;
- reducing dependence on fossil fuels;

- digitalization of public services and vital economic sectors;
- expanding access to affordable housing through public-private partnerships; and
- a commitment to multilateral partnerships for the SDGs.

**BELGIUM:** Yannis Derbali, Office of the Belgian Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal, reported that sustainable development has been enshrined in the national constitution since 2007, and all regions and stakeholders were involved in preparing the VNR. He highlighted significant progress on Goals 2, 6 and 8. Derbali emphasized the importance of future-proof development strategies that also address current needs, including for basic services accessibility, and of focusing on the most vulnerable groups to ensure a just transition. He urged embedding full-fledged SDG governance through a systemic, coherent approach, with a vision beyond the next election cycle.

**CROATIA:** Nikolina Brnjac, Minister for Tourism and Sport, reported on alignment of national policies and strategic plans. She outlined good progress in 14 SDGs, stagnation in one, and low progress for two, and noted national priority areas include digitalization, demographic renewal, and the green transition. Addressing challenges, Brnjac noted SDG 12, 13, 14 and 15 as Goals requiring further progress and targeted investment and implementation. She also outlined the inclusive and multisectoral approach in developing the VNR and underscored institutional infrastructure facilitating civil society and stakeholder collaboration.

**TANZANIA:** In a video message, Mwigulu Nchemba, Minister of Finance and Planning, highlighted the strong multi-stakeholder approach at all levels. He noted significant progress on SDGs 6 and 7, with over 70% of the population having access to water, and nearly 80% with access to clean energy, while calling for access to financing, trade, and technology support. Reynald Maeda, Co-Convener, Tanzania Sustainable Development Forum, commended the government for its meaningful engagement with thousands of civil society representatives under the auspices of the National SDG Coordination Framework.

**BRUNEI:** Haji Mohd Amin Liew Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Finance and Economy, highlighted: mainstreaming the SDGs in the national development plan, *Wawasan Brunei 2035*; enhancements in institutional arrangements; improvements in evidence-based monitoring and timely reporting of progress; and whole-of-nation partnerships. He noted steady progress on Goals 7 and 9, good progress in most others and regression in Goal 12. "We still have catching up to do," he said, but Brunei has identified priorities for accelerated actions.

**ICELAND:** Eggert Benedikt Gudmundsson, Special Envoy for Sustainable Development, alongside Rebekka Karlsdóttir, Youth Delegate, and Vala Karen Viðarsdóttir, Representative, UN Association of Iceland, noted the VNR's development in close collaboration with all members of society, outlining the CSO-led assessment report on Iceland's progress on the SDGs, which reports insufficient progress, particularly on SDG 13 and inadequate meaningful inclusion of youth; development of a national strategy on sustainable development; and the need to replace GDP with other metrics to measure progress

**TIMOR-LESTE:** Karlito Nunes, Permanent Representative to the UN, alongside José de Jesus, representing youth, Bella Galhos, representing LGBTI persons, and Cesario da Silva, representing

persons with disabilities, highlighted Timor-Leste's objective to place people at the core of work on the SDGs and turn challenges into opportunities, reporting:

- initiatives to increase school enrollment, a federal programme to provide meals for schoolchildren, and youth employment schemes;
- sustainable development plans to diversify the economy and alternative financial strategies, including using foreign direct investment to expand the green and blue economies;
- the need for judicial system reform to further ensure meaningful inclusion of LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities; and
- the need for concrete implementation mechanisms and improved collection and analysis of disaggregated data.

**FRANCE:** Nicolas de Rivière, Permanent Representative to the UN, described the multi-stakeholder approach taken to develop the roadmap to 2030, saying it covers six cross-cutting thematic streams. Among SDG achievements to date, he highlighted:

- increased gender equality in the workplace;
- increased renewable energy production;
- boosting organic agriculture alongside food security;
- creating a national council on climate challenges that received over 300,000 submissions; and
- increasing official development assistance (ODA) contributions by more than 50% since 2017.

Among multilateral initiatives, he highlighted alignment with the EU's "Fit for 55 in 2030" decarbonization strategy, spearheading the global financing pact for a fair climate transition, and raising the proportion of ODA funding channeled through civil society.

**LITHUANIA:** Simonas Gentvilas, Minister of Environment, highlighted greater integration of the SDGs into national planning, including through an open data monitoring portal. Despite heightened geopolitical tensions, he noted significant advances in fighting poverty, gender equity, and energy security, and meeting Lithuania's ODA commitments. He further noted incentives for equitable access to education, leadership in digitalization and science, technology and innovation, and decoupling carbon emissions from economic growth through "one of the most ambitious carbon taxes in region." Kęstutis Kupšys, Vice President, Lithuanian Consumers Alliance, representing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), commended the inclusive VNR preparation process, but urged prioritization of monitoring and policy coherence, also noting continuing human rights challenges in the treatment of migrants and non-recognition of same sex relationships.

**SINGAPORE:** Grace Fu, Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, highlighted progress since the country's first VNR in 2018, including:

- the launch of a whole-of-nation blueprint with ambitious targets for net zero by 2045;
- attaining universal access to clean and sustainable water, enhanced energy efficiency, and a six-fold increase in renewable energy;
- contributions to multilateral programmes and development assistance;
- scaling up green financing and low carbon solutions, including innovations in carbon capture and storage; and
- adopting a broad-based carbon tax covering 80% of high emission sectors.



Among lessons from the COVID-19 crisis, she highlighted new legislation to reduce women's care burden and ensure workplace fairness. Farah Hidayati Sanwari, Head of Partnerships of SpudnikLab, and Co-Founder, FiTree, reported strong youth engagement through National Youth Circles, enabling them to express their concerns and aspirations across many sustainability sectors.

**Wednesday, 19 July:** On Wednesday, the following 12 countries presented VNRs: Canada, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Ireland, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Slovakia, Kuwait, Turkmenistan, Fiji, and Portugal, and the EU presented a voluntary review.

**CANADA:** Karina Gould, Minister, Families, Children and Social Development, underscored the government's priority objective and commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, which also has cross-cutting effects for the SDGs. She outlined progress and international partnership initiatives for several Goals, including significant poverty reduction (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), and gender equality (SDG 5). Gould addressed progress underway for Goals on climate (SDG 13), and marine and terrestrial protection (SDGs 14 and 15), noting national strategies and plans to reduce emissions and increase protected area coverage, and highlighted the establishment of a fund to support low- and middle-income countries' climate adaptation.

Gould responded to questions from FRANCE, CHILE, and the NGO MAJOR GROUP. She outlined a programme on improving childcare affordability and accessibility across regions, and noted lessons learned from the participatory approach used for the VNR, adding work is ongoing to improve inclusion and ensure policy coherence through a whole-of-government approach. Gould noted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was enacted in national legislation in 2021, alongside a consultative national action plan and measures to address priorities, and reiterated the importance of reconciliation considering Canada's difficult history. Anita Vandenbeld, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, also noted actions to affirm Indigenous Peoples' rights and strengthen partnerships with Indigenous Peoples nationally and internationally.

**POLAND:** Waldemar Buda, Minister, Economic Development and Technology, underlined peace is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda, and good leadership, ownership and partnership underpin successful implementation of the SDGs. He noted the participatory, whole-of-society approach used for actions on sustainable development, and highlighted progress in achieving the SDGs since Poland's first VNR. Buda addressed strategies and actions improving social inclusion, supporting entrepreneurship, and reducing inequalities, noting the Family 500+ programme, which provides financial support to households, among other initiatives. He also outlined the national nuclear energy development programme.

Responding to questions from ESTONIA, JAPAN, GEORGIA, and the EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA STAKEHOLDER GROUP, Aneta Piątkowska, Deputy Director, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, noted nuclear energy development as critical in energy source diversification plans and reducing dependency on sources from the Russian Federation, and underlined a comprehensive preparation process based on lessons learned from other countries. She also noted the importance of engaging stakeholders such as academia and the private sector, and strategies to improve partnerships with and promote responsibility

of all relevant stakeholders in implementing the SDGs. Krzysztof Szczerski, Permanent Representative of Poland to the UN, outlined actions to integrate the 1.6 million registered Ukrainian refugees in the Polish social security system, with particular focus given to employment, housing, and education.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** Faisal Alibrahim, Minister of Economy and Planning, outlined progress since 2018, including the country's flagship green initiative with a roadmap to achieve net zero emissions by 2060, with 2030 targets including raising the share of renewables in the energy mix to 50%, raising annual production of electric vehicles to 500,000, and protecting 30% of land and marine resources. Among significant successes, he noted increased economic diversification, a rise in non-oil GDP growth, improved living standards, water security, and unleashing "a spectacular wave of innovation." Noting the role of partnerships, he said the country is the leading ODA provider relative to GDP globally and highlighted the Sustainable Development Steering Committee as providing a framework for multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance.

Responding to questions from MALAYSIA, BAHRAIN, FINLAND, DJIBOUTI, ESCWA, the PHILIPPINES, and the MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, Alibrahim described the ultimate goal of Vision 2030 as mitigating looming economic risk stemming from an overreliance on finite resources, including through accelerating the transition to a green and inclusive economy. On lessons learned from the VNR process, he noted the value of improving data availability and quality, and related strengthening of institutional capacities and partnerships for monitoring SDG progress.

**MALDIVES:** Fatimath Niuma, Deputy Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, introduced the country's VNR, complemented by a video presentation. The presenters underscored the existential threat faced by all SIDS, highlighting intensive efforts to:

- accelerate disaster risk reduction and climate action;
- further diversify the economy and strengthen policy alignment with SDGs;
- strengthen physical and digital interconnectivity for the 187 inhabited islands as an accelerator for other SDGs, with a focus on the health and education sectors; and
- invest in economic diversification and future proofing of key sectors, with a focus on agricultural value chains, fisheries, energy, and tourism.

On remaining challenges, the presentation noted "multidimensional poverty" and inequality, an aging population, and the concentration of infrastructure and services in the capital.

Responding to TAJIKISTAN, WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS MAJOR GROUP, SINGAPORE, and BELGIUM, Niuma outlined how digital solutions were harnessed in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis to foster remote working and e-learning, access to health and other public services, and facilitate timely and informed decision making for improved governance. While noting investments in climate-resilience and the country's contribution to global climate leadership, she lamented the prohibitive cost of large-scale projects, calling for increased access to climate financing and technologies.

**IRELAND:** Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, underscored government efforts to engage with civil society on the VNR's development. He noted

the national SDG implementation plan based on mainstreaming SDGs across national policies, including Ireland's development assistance programme, which prioritizes reaching those furthest behind first. While noting that many Goals are "showing real progress" in meeting interim targets, Ryan acknowledged "we still have much farther to go." He stressed the need for a strong message from the SDG Summit and expressed support for the Bridgetown Initiative. Civil society representative Mavis Ramazani discussed the difficulties refugees face in getting jobs and education in Ireland.

Responding to the DISABLED PERSONS ORGANISATION, PORTUGAL, BAHRAIN, and FIJI, Ryan said that Ireland needs to work on improving its measurements of quality of life. He noted challenges in getting civil society engagement on the VNR. Ryan stressed data, its access and sharing are crucial to building trust and engagement and for advancing progress. He agreed Ireland must increase its climate financing to match prior pledges. Ryan also voiced support for multilateral financial institution reforms and for COP 28 delivering on the Loss and Damage Fund. He suggested imposing specific levies on maritime and aviation transport and fossil fuels to be earmarked for global climate action.

MONGOLIA: Gantumur Tuvdendorj, Deputy Minister of Economic and Development, noted Mongolia has identified and evaluated nationalized SDG indicators, as well as the development of a long-term national development plan, "Vision-2050," which aims to improve and align national planning and sustainable development policies to the SDGs. He highlighted international partnerships contributing to the 2030 Agenda, such as improving digitalization, and reported some progress for 15 SDGs. Tuvdendorj noted priority actions for achieving the 2030 Agenda in Mongolia include improved monitoring and rapid assessment of progress, fostering partnerships for development, establishing effective financing and investment mechanisms, and focusing on reducing rural-urban disparities in access to basic services. He also underscored the lingering challenges posed by COVID-19.

In response to questions from UZBEKISTAN, TAJIKISTAN, and the LGBTI STAKEHOLDER GROUP, Tuvdendorj reported the analysis for identifying vulnerable groups and key obstacles to development at all levels followed recommendations from the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); the government's priority in protecting household incomes and rapid response to move education online during the pandemic; and the people-centered development actions on improving protection of human rights, noting active stakeholder engagement in the VNR process and in longer-term strategies for social inclusion.

TAJIKISTAN: Zavqizoda Zavqi Amin, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, highlighted the whole-of-society approach used to prepare the VNR. He noted progress in achieving the SDGs, highlighting significant reductions in poverty and maternal and infant mortality rates, and attributed Tajikistan's stable economic growth rates to effective implementation of policies, programmes and economic reforms. He highlighted progress on the energy transition, underscoring 98% of national electricity is produced by hydropower plants; and noted Tajikistan is the source for over two-thirds of central Asia's water resources, before highlighting awareness-raising efforts such as advocating for the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, 2025.

Responding to questions from MALDIVES, UZBEKISTAN, FINLAND, MONGOLIA, and the UNECE REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM, Amin underscored the role of the private sector in driving sustainable economic growth, highlighting policies and national councils supporting scaled-up engagement. He noted other actions include:

- the establishment of two independent "ombudsman" positions addressing human rights and human rights for children;
- the development of international cooperation initiatives on water such as intergovernmental platforms, Tajikistan's chairing of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and fostering water resource sharing partnerships with neighboring countries;
- the in-depth consultation process with stakeholder groups to prepare the VNR; and
- the entry into force of a national anti-discrimination law.

SLOVAKIA: Peter Balik, Minister of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization, explained implementation work is based on two assumptions: integration into national planning; and the interlinkages between SDGs holding as much importance as the SDGs themselves. He noted the SDGs have been integrated into the national plan and must now be integrated into sectoral and regional plans, "then finally into real life" and projects. Balik outlined six implementation priorities: education; a knowledge-based and green economy; poverty reduction and social inclusion; sustainable settlements and countryside; rule of law, democracy, and security; and health. He called for the SDG Summit to agree on more systematic efforts to coordinate and boost SDG implementation.

Responding to the NGO MAJOR GROUP, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, and KUWAIT, Balik explained:

- Slovakia has adopted a smart cities action plan and approved EUR 106 million over seven years for its implementation;
- Slovakia will close all coal mines by the end of 2023, has approved a just transition strategy for the miners, and allocated EUR 259 million over seven years for its implementation;
- the Istanbul Convention awaits ratification by the parliament; and
- Slovakia has allocated EUR 1 billion over seven years to integrate Roma communities.

KUWAIT: Khalid Mahdi, Secretary-General, Supreme Council for Planning and Development, noted the whole-of-nation approach used in integrating all the SDGs in the long-term national plan and the participation of a range of stakeholders in the VNR process. He reported:

- near-universal coverage of clean and safe water services (SDG 6) and public-private partnership projects for wastewater management plans;
- challenges and actions on the green energy transition (SDG 7), noting a 17 MW feasibility pilot project for renewable energies;
- challenges on scaling up research and development investments (SDG 9); and
- a national platform to enhance comprehensive data collection.

Tareq Al-Banai, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN, noted the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development as a foreign development initiative providing low-interest loans and grants to support developing countries to implement the SDGs.

Responding to questions from SLOVAKIA, the MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, BAHRAIN, BRUNEI, TURKMENISTAN, TÜRKIYE, and ESCWA, Mahdi and Al-Banai addressed: the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee to ensure good governance and enhance partnership; ongoing

education system reforms; the development of water and solid waste management plans; the civil society-led sustainability compliance reports submitted as part of the VNR process; and international development partnerships and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

**TURKMENISTAN:** Serdar Jorayev, Minister of Finance and Economy, outlined the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder institutional architecture put in place for implementing the SDGs, noting a people-centered approach has yielded improvements across a broad swath of social sectors. He also noted efforts towards economic diversification, nature protection, and strengthening partnerships for the SDGs at various levels.

Responding to **KUWAIT, ARMENIA, CHILE, SLOVAKIA, and GUATEMALA**, he highlighted the creation of an inter-ministerial working group tasked with SDG implementation, noting it has contributed to improved data collection and analysis, including through periodic reviews of indicators to better reflect national circumstances. Regarding inclusion of young people in the VNR process, a youth SDG ambassador responded, stating young people have been fully engaged in raising awareness and bringing their ideas to collaborative platforms, particularly in the areas of gender quality, digitalization and climate action.

**FIJI:** Lenora Qereqeretabua, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, reflected on progress since the country's first VNR, identifying improved data collection and availability of data for 128 indicators as major achievements. Among key messages, she noted:

- overall improvements across the SDGs, but some areas of concern, such as infant mortality rates, clean energy, water and sanitation, and women's empowerment;
- improvements in the water, energy, transport and other utilities sectors could be undermined by aging infrastructure; and
- a shared need to create a more resilient economy across the Pacific SIDS is a key lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responding to questions from **AUSTRALIA, the WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP, SOLOMON ISLANDS, NEPAL, IRELAND, and CÔTE D'IVOIRE**, Qereqeretabua thanked international partners, while reiterating recent reports showing that the Pacific SIDS receive less than 0.3% of global climate finance, greatly impacting climate adaptation and blue economy initiatives. She highlighted efforts to strengthen Fiji's regulatory framework to leverage available financing, including the creation of a programme development unit to identify, develop and operationalize new investible projects. Regarding civil society engagement, she noted their inclusion on multi-stakeholder platforms and other avenues to institutionalize inclusion at all levels, concluding that "relationships are everything for us in the Pacific."

**PORTUGAL:** André Moz Caldas, Secretary of State for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, reported an inter-institutional governance approach to sustainable development, noting good progress on 59% of nationalized SDG indicators, 2% showing no change, and 17% showing regression. He highlighted high performing SDG indicators as including poverty reduction, water, energy, and economic growth, with room for improvement on SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Francisco André, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, outlined the establishment of a fund to support developing country partners in Latin America and Africa, and noted the VNR will be used in

developing a national roadmap to increase policy coherence, among other objectives.

Responding to questions from the **PHILIPPINES, TIMOR-LESTE, CABO VERDE, BRAZIL, the MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, and IRELAND**, André outlined actions to:

- improve data quality and comprehensiveness;
- support local stakeholders and institutional capacity to ensure territorial cohesion;
- incorporate lessons learned from townhalls engaging civil society and other stakeholders in the VNR process; and
- strengthen SDG monitoring and evaluation through the national roadmap.

He underlined migration is a positive driver for sustainable development, noting the increase in migrant workers registered in Portugal's social security system from 3% in 2015 to 13% in 2022. He also outlined the whole-of-government approach to mobilize expertise to support SDG implementation with partner countries, highlighting debt for climate swaps and investment in education system capacity-building initiatives.

**EU:** Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for Economy, and Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships, presented the first-ever supranational SDG progress report at the HLPF, expressing pride in the "whole of society" approach taken. Gentiloni discussed the new impetus toward socially-inclusive and climate-resilient economic recovery in response to COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and other global crises. While noting marked progress towards many goals, he stressed the importance of transformative actions to effectively respond to multiple crises, describing this HLPF and the upcoming SDG Summit as important moments to ramp up ambition on the SDGs.

Speaking on external dimensions of EU SDG actions, Urpilainen underscored three messages:

- efforts to reduce inequalities across the three dimensions of sustainability through the launch of an inequality marker;
- a focus on policy coherence across all SDGs; and
- scaling up financing and partnerships through the Global Gateway.

Discussing future priorities in EU development cooperation, Urpilainen stressed the importance of "investing in people," noting this includes building institutional capacities and the regulatory and policy environment to drive transformation. Among examples of this approach, she cited support of vaccine production and agro-processing facilities in Africa, as well as significant ODA investments in education, digitalization and gender equity. Urpilainen concluded that despite being the world's largest contributor to ODA, "we must begin with a look in the mirror," and notwithstanding the tangible progress at home and abroad, much more action is needed.

The EU delegation responded to questions from **MEXICO, IRELAND, the NGO MAJOR GROUP, NAMIBIA, BELARUS, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, and SIERRA LEONE**. Gentiloni concurred with calls for more comprehensive indicators for SDG progress, calling for reviews to "change the textbook on fiscal policy" to include new ambitious metrics for social inclusion and reducing production and consumption footprints. Oliver Röpke, President, European Economic and Social Committee, acknowledged that overconsumption in the EU is a problem, noting solutions include

fostering circular economy, coupled with making sustainable products more accessible and affordable.

Udo Bullmann, Member of the European Parliament, Germany, remarked on an underlying “deficit of trust,” noting the EU’s inequality marker is the first instrument that aims to “measure what we’re doing.” Among examples, he cited investments in digitalization to stem illicit financial flows and promoting fair global value chains.

Pilar Cancela Rodríguez, Secretary of State for International Cooperation, Spain, and Vasco Alves Cordeiro, President of the European Committee of the Regions, discussed the importance of multi-level governance and localizing the SDGs. Pointing to the high number of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) submitted from EU countries, Cordeiro described this as a process of “connecting the big proclamations with citizens’ daily lives.”

### **Ministerial Segment**

**Opening Session:** ECOSOC President Stoeva opened the Ministerial Segment on [Monday, 17 July](#). Noting world hunger has returned to 2005 levels, bridging gender inequality could take 300 years, and nearly 600 million people will still experience extreme poverty in 2030, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged leaders to change course, describing the 2030 Agenda as the path “to bridge divides and rebuild trust.” He called for all nations to come to the SDG Summit with clear plans and pledges. Noting finance is the “fuel” to drive progress on SDGs and that global financial and debt-relief architectures must be urgently reformed, he outlined his SDG Stimulus plan, which calls for unlocking USD 500 billion annually for developing countries.

Csaba Kőrösi, President, UNGA, outlined key elements for spurring the transformative change needed to realize the 2030 Agenda, including reducing negative externalities of SDG investments, and urged participants at the SDG Summit to be “courageous, ambitious and determined” in their promises.

Noting that climate change is a threat multiplier and mitigation and adaptation have more synergies than tradeoffs for the SDGs, Hoesung Lee, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), suggested that deep greenhouse gas emission cuts may be the best contribution to sustainable development.

**Fireside Chat Featuring GSDR Scientists:** This session on [Monday, 17 July](#), featured a conversation with Imme Scholz and Jaime Miranda, co-chairs of the Independent Group of Scientists writing the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report ([GSDR](#)). They said the GSDR shows that change processes are not smooth, trade-offs are sometimes necessary across competing goals and targets, and as new pathways emerge, others must be phased out. They stressed the GSDR is not intended to be prescriptive but rather to provide an analytical framework to accelerate transformative actions at different levels and make the case for knowledge alliances across science, policy, and society.

**Building Momentum Towards the SDG Summit:** The Ministerial Segment’s general debate began on [Monday, 17 July](#), with spokespersons for various groups and coalitions of countries. After the group speakers, 53 speakers for individual countries, including 41 ministers, representing ministries of finance, foreign affairs, development, health, environment, planning and international cooperation, expressed commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In addition to describing national and local progress on the SDGs, they expressed concern about the negative impacts of the

COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and ongoing conflict on the 2030 Agenda. Several noted there is no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

On [Tuesday, 18 July](#), the general debate continued in the afternoon with 39 statements, including by seven ministers. On Wednesday afternoon, the general debate featured 34 statements, including from four ministers. In addition to describing national progress on the SDGs, many noted the setbacks they face. As LIECHTENSTEIN noted, the current state of implementation provides little reason for optimism. Yet, everyone agreed the upcoming SDG Summit needs to mark a turning point and build the much-needed momentum as we move to the second half of the 2030 Agenda.

The EU and BULGARIA said science tells us we can turn the tide if we work together more actively and quickly. ISRAEL said our shared environmental goals go beyond any one nation or political dispute and all must commit to greater cooperation. JAPAN said it is important to “walk the talk” in solidarity. GREECE said we cannot tackle today’s crises with yesterday’s mandates. Many, including BULGARIA and BELGIUM, called for a whole of government and whole of society approach.

LATVIA and the EU noted peace and security are prerequisites for achievement of the 2030 Agenda. BULGARIA stressed the need to focus on conflict prevention. INDIA noted geopolitical tensions have exacerbated the food, fuel, and fertilizer crises. ARMENIA called for accessibility of ODA to all conflict-affected people. NICARAGUA and VENEZUELA said the SDG Summit should call for the removal of illegal coercive measures and sanctions that are incompatible with the SDGs.

JAPAN, VIET NAM, AUSTRALIA, CHINA and the HOLY SEE all said investment in people is essential to achieving sustainable development. LATVIA and BOLIVIA said addressing inequalities between and within countries should be a key policy objective. LIECHTENSTEIN noted inequality and conflict leave people vulnerable to human trafficking and slavery. LATVIA, among others, called for achieving gender equality. URUGUAY stressed the difficulties of people in situations of vulnerability, especially women and girls. ALGERIA discussed supporting the innovation and creativity of young people so they can be entrepreneurs in a knowledge-based economy.

THAILAND and TÜRKIYE called for leveraging the power of technology. BOLIVIA noted artificial intelligence can play a central role in accelerating sustainable development but could expand the gaps between developed and developing countries. SEYCHELLES and TIMOR-LESTE stressed promoting data and evidence-based decision making by investing in data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

BOLIVIA, TUNISIA, and ECUADOR called for restoring mutual trust through the provision of adequate means of implementation. Many, including INDIA, BOLIVIA, NICARAGUA, GREECE, JAMAICA, ALGERIA, PARAGUAY, SRI LANKA, and TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, called for collective action to address debt, and reform the multilateral financial architecture and institutions. BELGIUM called for closing the finance gap. PARAGUAY said landlocked developing countries cannot be left behind.

INDIA, NICARAGUA, ANGOLA, URUGUAY, and TUVALU stressed the importance of addressing the climate crisis. LATVIA, LIECHTENSTEIN, and AUSTRALIA expressed commitment to

achieve climate neutrality, and AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND discussed increasing climate finance. GREECE, NEW ZEALAND, and EL SALVADOR described their expansion of access to renewable energy.

TÜRKIYE and JAPAN said building disaster risk resilience is essential to achieving sustainable development. AUSTRALIA, JAMAICA, and TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO supported the development of the MVI for SIDS.

**Messages from UNEA:** On [Tuesday, 18 July](#), Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco, and President, sixth session of UNEA, said the world is at a critical and unique juncture, perhaps the last chance to recommit and accelerate action in time to realize the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs. She emphasized recovery from COVID-19 and repairing the planet “are two sides of the same coin.” Benali underscored the importance of improving the science-policy interface and engaging with the private sector. She invited all to work with UNEA to achieve the SDGs, noting “nothing is more powerful than everyone rowing together in the same direction.”

**Messages from the Regions:** On [Tuesday, 18 July](#), Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, ESCAP, on behalf of the five UN Regional Commissions, provided an overview, reporting that SDG progress is off-track in all regions. She urged accelerated implementation actions, and underscored that peace, stability and resilience are preconditions for progress, with sustainable financing and transformative actions essential for realizing the 2030 Agenda.

The five regional forums on sustainable development relayed messages from their 2023 meetings. Africa noted most countries are not on-track to achieving the SDGs by 2030 and reported recommendations such as intensified transformative initiatives and more resources for data. Arab states outlined strategies to support developing countries to sustainably manage debt and facilitate access to concessional credit and stressed the need to address wasteful spending and corruption. Asia-Pacific highlighted progress in the energy, food system, and urban development sectors, as well as efforts to strengthen social protection, and to tackle rising indebtedness.

Europe highlighted regional commitments to, *inter alia*: implement pledges made at the UN Water Conference; leverage digital solutions for energy efficiency and the renewable energy transition; and accelerate access to affordable housing.

Latin America and the Caribbean stressed addressing growing drought and water stress, pollution and climate change; maintaining momentum on renewable energy; ensuring people-centered approaches to infrastructural development, industrialization and science and technology; and improving access to housing.

### Closing Session

On Wednesday, 19 July, ECOSOC President Stoeva opened the closing session, observing that HLPF 2023 had been “very intensive” and “highly productive.” Delegates adopted the draft report (E/HLPF/2023/L.1), while authorizing President Stoeva to finalize it.

Under-Secretary-General Li reflected on highlights of the 2023 HLPF and praised its exchange of ideas, noting shared calls for action included making systemic changes in finance, climate action, gender equality, human rights, and enhanced international collaboration. He further emphasized the need to unleash adequate financing, fight for true inclusivity, and reach for pathways to more

effective multilateralism. He cautioned that with only seven years left before the 2030 deadline to achieve the SDGs, “a major course correction is needed,” but stressed the Goals can be achieved if action is taken on innovative policies mentioned during the Forum. Li called on everyone to reflect on HLPF discussions and come to the SDG Summit ready to take the actions needed to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. “The world is counting on us to act. Let’s act now, and we must act together,” he concluded.

Stoeva called the HLPF a “critical gathering place” to share experiences and consider joint actions in support of the 2030 Agenda, attributing its success to its participants and urging them to bring ambition to the SDG Summit. “The 2030 Agenda is the right framework,” she concluded, “but collectively we need to do much more to achieve the Goals.” She urged all to “have an honest conversation on what is needed.”

Ending on a note of optimism, delegates were treated to a performance by Sing for Hope, a children’s singing group from New York City. Stoeva gavelled the HLPF to a close at 5:59 pm.

### A Brief Analysis of the 2023 HLPF

The 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) marked the halfway point for realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Heading into the Forum, delegates knew from reading the many reports that progress is off-track and the entire 2030 Agenda is at risk. During the eight-day meeting delegates heard repeatedly that the September 2023 SDG Summit might be the last chance to ignite the necessary accelerated action to make up for lost time and fulfill the promises agreed in 2015.

This brief analysis discusses where the Agenda and SDGs stand at the midpoint, how we got there, expectations set for the Summit, and whether this HLPF has rallied the will and determination needed to make the Summit—and the 2030 Agenda—a success.

### Where We Stand

“*Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been.*” – UN Secretary-General António Guterres

The UN Secretary-General’s latest progress report on the SDGs makes for sobering reading. Only 12% of the SDG targets are on-track. Nearly 50% of the targets are moderately or severely off-track. About 30% have either stagnated or “regressed below the 2015 baseline.” World hunger has returned to 2005 levels and, at the current pace, bridging gender inequality could take 300 years. If present trends continue, it is projected that by 2030:

- 575 million people will be living in extreme poverty;
- 84 million children will be out of school, and of those still enrolled, 300 million “will leave unable to read and write”;
- renewable sources will constitute “a mere fraction” of global energy supplies; and
- 660 million people will live without electricity and nearly two billion will have no access to clean cooking.

As one speaker put it, using the sports analogy that permeated every HLPF discussion, “We’re at half-time, we’re behind, and

we're losing. How do we turn this around in the second half and win?"

HLPF 2023 reviewed five SDGs in detail: SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Here, too, the reports from the field were sobering. SDG 6 is "alarmingly off-track." Achieving SDG 7 by 2030 poses "an unprecedented challenge" but is still doable with scaled-up ambition and the right policies. Regarding SDG 11, there is a growing urban divide, inadequate housing is a pressing problem, and only half of the world's urban population have access to public transport.

During these specific reviews, many delegates were struck by how often they heard panelists and experts note that we have most of the data, indicators, and diagnoses we need, as well as policy recommendations to follow, and declarations of general commitment to build upon. For example, on SDG 6, the March UN 2023 Water Conference produced what most participants regarded as a concrete action agenda, and the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2023 on Water and Sanitation provides "a clear blueprint" to accelerate progress.

Over and over speakers urged translating plans, blueprints, recommendations, and statements of support into concrete, ambitious action. As Joan Carling, Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Rights International, urged during the consultation with Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS), "Instead of lip service, it's time to turn the pledges of leave no one behind into actions, actions, actions."

### ***How We Got Here***

*"It's not just a goal to be accomplished – it's hope for a better future to be delivered."* – David Arinze, Diamond Development Initiatives, Nigeria

In recent years it has become fashionable among some politicians to blame the lack of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain constraints, the war in Ukraine, climate-related extreme events, and even the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution). But as UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Jinhua pointed out more than once during HLPF 2023, countries were already falling short of the Goals before COVID-19 struck or the Ukraine war began.

As many speakers during the Ministerial Segment acknowledged, the crafters of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the UN General Assembly that adopted the package, knew it was ambitious and aspirational. Most were not naïve or self-deluding. They knew the SDGs' predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), did not meet many of its less ambitious targets, so setting more comprehensive and ambitious targets with another 15-year timeline was aiming high. They chose to offer hope to the world for a better future all could aspire to: "the future we want."

Some of the difficulties in implementing the 2030 Agenda are inherent in the package itself. The Goals are not just about a few tangible deliverables like clean water and affordable and clean energy for all, but also harder to measure Goals that the UN has spent 78 years seeking, such as peace, justice, good governance, and equality for all.

Another difficulty is that the SDGs and targets are considered a package deal—they are all linked and should be pursued together without unduly favoring one over another. This can be frustrating to champions of particular Goals (climate, energy, water, or cities), who see their favorite as key to success in all others, the connector to them all, and want to push progress first and/or hardest on "their" SDG. But as HLPF 2023 panelists were at pains to point out repeatedly, work on one Goal affects achievement of another, positively or negatively. Everyone likes to point out synergies where they can be identified, but as a panelist on SDG 9 said, tradeoffs and unintended impacts must also be analyzed and considered, but often are not.

This large and complex package also makes it difficult to communicate the relevance of sustainable development to the average citizen. As two local officials from California in the audience remarked one day, "I understand climate or water and can explain that to my constituents, but how do I make them grasp what I mean when I say, 'I'm for the SDGs?'" Indeed, many of the presenters of their country's Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) noted they had integrated the SDGs into their national plans and programmes and were in the process of doing so for local and sectoral plans and programmes but expressed concern about how to "make it real" to the average man or woman. The chair of the session on localization of the SDGs urged participants to work on making the SDGs relatable to everyday concerns to increase buy-in from the average person.

Furthermore, means of implementation, including financial, technological, and capacity-building resources, as well as the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the global framework for financing sustainable development, have fallen short. Even funding for championed "popular" Goals such as climate, water, and energy is nowhere close to meeting the estimated needs for the transformative change envisioned by the Goals.

Last, but not least, the 2030 Agenda lacks a monitoring and accountability mechanism that can supplement bottom-up and multilateral pressure for "SDG defaulters" to change course. This concern was reiterated during a side event considering how to revamp VNR reporting processes so they are not primarily "descriptive" texts that can lean towards the self-congratulatory. They discussed how the VNRs can become self-critical and action-oriented reflections capable of spurring genuine learning and improvements in policy and implementation. While acknowledging the difficulty of including robust language to this end in a political declaration, various negotiators involved in preparations for the SDG Summit did call for referencing the need for stronger data to track progress, as well as requiring VNR analyses to explore policy implications of possible synergies and the costs of inaction.

### ***Where We Need to Go***

*"It's not time for despondency, or for looking beyond 2030. We need to double down on action."* – Rashima Kwatra, Co-Chair, Major Groups and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism

The UN Secretary-General offered his own prescription when he released the progress report in April 2023. Among other things, his doctor's orders proposed:

- a recommitment to accelerated, sustained, and transformative action;

- pledges for concrete, integrated, and targeted policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and “end the war on nature”;
- strengthened national and sub-national capacity, accountability, and delivery institutions;
- a recommitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda;
- strengthening the UN development system; and
- addressing SDG-related gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture that have emerged since 2015.

Subsequently, he called for reform of the international financial architecture and the creation of an SDG Stimulus plan to unlock at least USD 500 billion annually for developing countries. He has also called for forging a “new social contract” at the 2025 Social Summit.

Guterres also urged every country to come to the SDG Summit armed with concrete national plans and pledges, particularly ones that address poverty and inequality. He repeated this call during the HLPF Ministerial Segment, as did many ministers and other high-level officials who spoke during the general debate.

During the HLPF panel discussions, several recommendations were floated to address specific issues, such as new intergovernmental bodies for water matters, energy, clean cooking, and an intergovernmental process to agree on new development indices that go beyond the limitations of GDP.

Many of these suggestions have not made it into the draft Political Declaration to be adopted at the Summit. It also remains unclear at this juncture how many countries will come to the Summit with actionable pledges.

But most participants refuse to give up hope. Clinging to the sports metaphor that pervaded the 2023 Forum, optimists called for a pep talk at halftime and team captains that can lead everyone to double down on their efforts in the next seven years of the 2030 Agenda and eke out a victory. Using a crew metaphor, current UN Environment Assembly President Leila Benali urged synchronized teamwork, since “nothing is more powerful than everyone rowing together in the same direction.”

Perhaps the Philippines Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs put it best in his statement during the general debate: “We have not failed, because that negates all we have accomplished. We knew the Agenda had lofty ideas and we committed to this journey. We have not failed. The deadline is still ahead of us.”

### Upcoming Meetings

**2023 UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment:** This event will serve as the first global follow-up to the 2021 Food Systems Summit, where individuals and countries committed to accelerate and deepen the transformative power of food systems. **dates:** 24-26 July 2023 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** [unfoodsystemshub.org/fs-stocktaking-moment](https://unfoodsystemshub.org/fs-stocktaking-moment)

**38th UN-Water Meeting:** The 38th UN-Water Meeting will convene under the theme, “Seeds of Change: Innovative Solutions for a Water-wise World.” It will bring together UN-Water Members and Partners to advance progress on SDG 6. **dates:** 18-19 August 2023 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **www:** [unwater.org](https://unwater.org)

**Inaugural Africa Climate Summit:** Kenya and the African Union Commission will co-host the first Africa Climate Summit during the 2023 Africa Climate Week, addressing the theme, “Driving Green Growth and Climate Finance Solutions for Africa

and the World.” Bringing together leaders and investors from Africa and beyond, the event will focus on adaptation and resilience, renewable energy and sustainable development, and financing for climate action. **dates:** 4-6 September 2023 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [africaclimatesummit.org](https://africaclimatesummit.org)

**XVIII World Water Congress:** The XVIII World Water Congress will be held on the theme, “Water for All: Harmony between Humans and Nature.” The event aims to promote coordination and balance between the water needs of humans and nature. **dates:** 11-15 September 2023 **location:** Beijing, China **www:** [worldwatercongress.com](https://worldwatercongress.com)

**SDG Summit:** The Summit is the quadrennial meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of the UNGA. The 2023 Summit will be the second since the adoption of the SDGs and will take place at the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **dates:** 18-19 September 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023](https://un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023)

**Climate Ambition Summit:** This event is being organized by the UN Secretary-General during the High-level week of the UN General Assembly. It is an opportunity for “First Movers and Doers” to report how they are responding to the Secretary-General’s call to accelerate climate action. **date:** 20 September 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [un.org/en/climatechange/climate-ambition-summit](https://un.org/en/climatechange/climate-ambition-summit)

For additional upcoming events, see [sdg.iisd.org](https://sdg.iisd.org)

### Glossary

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
CSOs	Civil society organizations
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GDP	Gross domestic product
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Landlocked developing countries
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MICs	Middle income countries
MVI	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
ODA	Official development assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
STI	Science, technology and innovation
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNGA	UN General Assembly
VNR	Voluntary National Review