



HLPF 2016 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY 11 JULY 2016

The 2016 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) opened on Monday, 11 July 2016, at UN Headquarters in New York.

Following an opening plenary, the first day started with a session on “Where do we stand at year one” of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. This was followed by three panel discussions related to the 2016 HLPF theme of “Ensuring that no one is left behind,” on: “Envisioning an inclusive world in 2030”; “Lifting people out of poverty and addressing basic needs”; and “Fostering economic growth, prosperity, and sustainability.”

OPENING PLENARY

Oh Joon, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN and President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), opened the Forum by noting that the role of the HLPF in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is extremely important in charting the way forward in new and innovative ways.

Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted six elements for success: leadership; institutions; interlinkages; monitoring; an agenda for all, with contributions from all; and international development cooperation. He said the HLPF’s review of SDG implementation must be robust, voluntary, effective, participatory and integrated.

WHERE DO WE STAND AT YEAR ONE?

This session started with a presentation of the UN Secretary-General’s report on “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/2016/75) by Wu, who noted that achieving the 2030 Agenda requires an enhanced global partnership that brings together all stakeholders and mobilizes all available resources.

A panel discussion followed, moderated by Paula Caballero Gomez, World Bank. Caballero encouraged participants to move from incrementalism towards structural shifts to achieve the promise of the SDGs.

Panelist Debapriya Bhattacharya, Centre for Policy Dialogue, highlighted the challenge of estimating the finance needed to achieve the SDGs, and said the report could be more comprehensive in the area of global partnerships.

Panelist Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, emphasized the need to lift up those that are the most vulnerable and marginalized first, underscored the importance of national

baselines for measurement of progress, and called for investment in data sources.

On integration of SDGs into national plans, Bhattacharya stressed the importance of addressing interlinkages between systemic issues. Figueres urged sustained political attention on the SDGs.

Discussant José Maria Viera, World Blind Union, called on States to guarantee sustained stakeholder participation through consultations, and noted the critical role of access to information in making participation a reality.

Discussant Martin Tsounkeu, African Development Interchange Network, noted gaps in integrating the SDGs into national plans, relating to how participatory assessment processes are, and the inclusion of qualitative aspects into national statistics.

From the floor, WOMEN asked how to best address the data gender gap. KENYA argued that the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on the right mindset. CHILDREN AND YOUTH expressed concern regarding the lack of participation in the development of the Global Sustainable Development Report. COLOMBIA and BRAZIL noted the overlap between the mandates of UN agencies in the implementation of the SDGs, and the need for integration of their efforts. The MALDIVES for the Alliance of Small Island States called for further investment in capacity building on data collection and analysis.

In her concluding remarks, Figueres noted that no one working on sustainable development has risen to the top of their potential performance so far, but this is the moment to do so.

ENVISIONING AN INCLUSIVE WORLD IN 2030

Héctor Alejandro Palma Cerna, Deputy Permanent Representative of Honduras to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, chaired this panel discussion.

Inviting speakers to reflect on the meaning of inclusion, moderator Lisa Foster, US Department of Justice, said the recent shootings in the US were a painful reminder of the inequality challenges facing her country.

Panelist Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania to the UN and Chair of the 54th session of the Commission for Social Development, stressed the importance of SDG 10 (reducing inequality).

Panelist Onalenna Selolwane, Mosadi Khumo Socio Economic Empowerment Forum for Women, stressed the importance of retaining a significant portion of wealth where it is created.

Urging Member States to respect human rights, discussant Alvaro Esteban Pop Ac, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, highlighted possible adverse effects of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

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Discussant Ibrahim Ismail Abdallah, Arab Organization of Persons with Disability, provided recommendations to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

In the ensuing discussion, SRI LANKA announced the launch of an engagement platform to support the country's planning process for an inclusive transformation. WOMEN called for accountability mechanisms and inclusive policies. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for investments in youth empowerment and capacity development.

The EU noted that data disaggregation is essential in leaving no one behind, as missing data implies missing people. NGOs highlighted the need for fiscal policies to reflect a human rights perspective, and social protection for weak and marginalized people.

In concluding remarks, Jinga highlighted the importance of monitoring progress in including persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda. Selolwane emphasized the need for sustainability of both process and outcomes through the inclusion, in particular, of vulnerable people.

LIFTING PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY AND ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS

This session was chaired by Sven Jürgenson, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President, and moderated by Sarina Prabasi, WaterAid America.

Prabasi said Member States are currently subject to a major test to ensure basic services are provided to those left behind.

Panelist Alice Albright, Global Partnership for Education, outlined recommendations to improve access to quality education, such as: strengthening education systems; adapting to meet special circumstances and focusing on gender disparities.

Panelist Michael Park, Aspen Institute, described the Aspen Management Partnership for Health's work to increase national investments in health and improve the capacity of health ministries to deploy community health workers.

Discussant Cristina Diez Sagüillo, International Movement ATD Fourth World, cautioned against using a basic needs approach that defines poverty reduction only as material deprivation, while calling for effective, accountable and transparent institutions for poverty reduction.

Discussant Rajul Pandya-Lorch, International Food Policy Research Institute, identified three new challenges for poverty reduction: rapid urbanization, climate change, and conflicts and displacement. She called for a focus on improved access to markets, social protection and improved resilience to shocks.

In the discussion that followed, WOMEN called for addressing structural and systemic barriers to lift people out of poverty. Sharing lessons learned on poverty reduction, CHINA highlighted: the importance of well defined targets; involvement of the government at all levels; and incorporation of poverty reduction efforts into national strategies.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES stressed the importance of land rights. A representative of persons with disabilities underlined that inclusivity is not just about creating special programmes, but also about designing inclusive mainstream programmes, economics and political systems.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN said policies focusing on rural women and youth can produce dramatic and lasting change. RWANDA highlighted its efforts to put in place strong institutions and empower people through education and training.

The LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES called for increased official development assistance, capacity building, and an end to conflicts. NGOs emphasized the importance of reliable disaggregated data for policy development and follow-up. MALAYSIA highlighted his country's multi-dimensional approach to measuring poverty.

In closing statements, speakers and discussants stressed, *inter alia*: the importance of structural change; investing in human resources and systems; and prioritizing the most vulnerable.

FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH, PROSPERITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

This session was also chaired by Jürgenson. It was moderated by Vinicius Pinheiro, International Labour Organization.

Pinheiro noted the session's special relevance to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth); 10 (reduced inequalities); and 12 (responsible consumption and production).

Panelist Tim Jackson, Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, presented data indicating that economic growth delivers the biggest prosperity gains among the poorest communities, with diminished returns beyond a certain income threshold. He said this presented a strong moral case for rich countries and communities to make place for poorer countries and communities.

Panelist Bart Verspagen, Maastricht University, highlighted the need to build absorptive capacity for technology in countries through investments in innovation, labor markets and social protection policies to avoid a "low growth trap."

Dyborn Chibonga, National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, highlighted enhancing entrepreneurial skills; improving market access; and defending farmer rights.

Discussant Wellington Chibebe, International Trade Union Confederation, underlined the importance of collective bargaining for inclusive growth and urged empowerment of the labor force through education.

During the discussion, DENMARK stressed the importance of innovation for agriculture and industry. NGOs said inaccurate impact assessment methodologies were leading to an underestimation of business impacts. SERBIA urged attention to refugees and migrants. CHAD stressed tackling illicit financial flows.

CHINA called for actively implementing structural reform and pushing forward trade liberalization. SAUDI ARABIA highlighted dividends from its national policy on science and technology. UGANDA stressed his country's need to move beyond the export of raw materials.

SWITZERLAND highlighted the role of the private sector in bringing economic, social and environmental benefits to society. The Global Business Alliance for 2030 noted that job creation is the most secure way out of poverty. CHILDREN AND YOUTH said the economy could not be allowed to exceed certain environmental thresholds.

WOMEN highlighted trade agreements that are in conflict with the 2030 Agenda. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES said economic activity must respect the rights of traditional owners of natural resources.

In concluding remarks, Jackson said the UK's vote to exit the EU was a "howl of anguish from those that have been left behind." Verspagen called for innovations that promote more responsible resource use while creating decent incomes. Chibonga called for formalized support for smallholder farming organizations. Chibebe highlighted the need to deal with illicit financial transactions in Africa.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As New York geared up for "Manhattanhenge," the biannual alignment of sunset with the street grid of the city's most famous borough, HLPF 2016 started its important journey of monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, agreed less than a year ago. The UN Secretary-General's report on progress so far prompted a panelist to point out that already, there appeared to be an imbalance between the space afforded to individual goals – for instance, with too much emphasis on climate change and too little on sustainable consumption and production.

The focus of this HLPF session is on ensuring no one is left behind, and on inclusion. However, more than one panelist commented on the lack of representation of the world's poorest, and the challenges of achieving true inclusivity. The road to achieving the 2030 Agenda will clearly be a long one, but as the evening glow spread from west to east, there remained at least a glimmer of hope that the international community will be able to align the crucial factors necessary for success.