

HLPF 2017 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY 11 JULY 2017

The second day of the 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) started with a review of implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger). In the afternoon, a thematic review on “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world: Multi-stakeholder perspectives,” took place.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION: SDG 1

Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe and President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), chaired this session.

Highlighting findings from the 2017 Sustainable Development Goals Report, Stefan Schweinfest, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), said three quarters of a billion people still live in extreme poverty, despite progress, and social protection coverage varies worldwide and misses many vulnerable populations.

Moderator Carolina Sanchez-Paramo, World Bank Group, said those who remain poor are the hardest to reach, with many concentrated in areas that are fragile, in conflict, or have a high risk of natural disasters.

Panelist Martin Ravallion, Georgetown University, said while progress has been made in reducing absolute poverty, challenges remain in reducing relative poverty; and better anti-poverty policies are needed to complement economic growth.

Panelist Yang Zhi, Mayor of Jingzhou, China, highlighted China’s pledge to lift 70 million out of poverty by 2020, noting efforts to: mobilize all sectors of society towards this end; scale up infrastructure investments; strengthen social protection systems; and advance e-commerce networks in villages.

Highlighting that close to 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land is found in Africa, Panelist Yaw Ansu, African Center for Economic Transformation, emphasized the need to: improve access to land and tenure security; improve productivity on farms; and make agriculture profitable.

Panelist Janet Gornick, City University of New York, highlighted drivers of high poverty levels including market income inequality and meager state redistribution.

Lead discussant Deborah Greenfield, International Labour Organization, identified decent work and universal social protection as critical drivers of poverty and inequality reduction.

Lead discussant Wellington Chibebe, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), highlighted the importance of quality job creation, access to democratic decision-making, and comprehensive social protection systems.

During the discussion, INDONESIA identified areas for international cooperation, including, *inter alia*: improving data collection and analysis; addressing child poverty; and empowering local governments to plan and implement policies for poverty reduction. AZERBAIJAN said progress on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) is necessary to accelerate progress on

SDG 1. MALDIVES, for small island developing States (SIDS), emphasized that SIDS are a special case because of their unique vulnerabilities, and their progress toward SDGs will require reversing environmental harm.

Noting that 80% of the poor live in rural areas, the FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO) underscored the importance of holistic approaches to poverty reduction. SWITZERLAND observed that one in eight people in his country are threatened by poverty and, with KENYA, stressed the importance of education as a catalyst to ending poverty. CHINA emphasized that more than 55 million people have been lifted out of poverty in rural China from 2013 to 2016. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for governments to: abandon austerity programmes; consider implementing universal basic income schemes; and impose caps on maximum incomes.

In closing, Ansu called for improved agricultural productivity in Africa, while addressing environmental preservation and SDG 8. Ravallion stressed the need for redistributive policies to reach the poorest, and markets that work for the poor. Yang highlighted the need to tailor solutions for poverty alleviation. Gornick urged countries to connect their microdata to ensure its rich information can be harnessed.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION: SDG 2

This session was chaired by ECOSOC President Shava and moderated by Gerda Verburg, Scaling-Up Nutrition Movement.

Providing statistics related to SDG 2, Min Yongyi, DESA, noted that while agriculture is an important means to poverty reduction, domestic and foreign investment in agriculture is declining.

Panelist Esther Penunia, Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development, emphasized: access rights to natural resources for the poor; market infrastructure and access; and addressing climate change.

Panelist Elizabeth Mpofo, La Via Campesina, stressed: education; better measures of human progress; and negative impacts of budget cuts on social goals.

Lead discussant Eugenio Diaz-Bonilla, International Food Policy Research Institute, stressed that a universal poverty-based safety net would cost less than 0.1% of world GDP.

Lead discussant Meena Bilgi, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, urged identification of emergent challenges in rapid urbanization and in the increasing disconnect between food and nutrition.

Lead discussant Patrick Caron, Committee on World Food Security, called for: local innovation to improve natural resource management; development of institutional frameworks; and inclusive and cross-sectoral national policies to ensure the right to food.

Underscoring that the gains made against hunger are at risk, FAO, also on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, called for putting smallholder farmers at the center of food policy.

SOUTH AFRICA lamented that malnutrition in Africa depresses GDP by 11%, and highlighted his country’s integrated National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (2017-2022). ARGENTINA said

achieving SDG 2 requires eliminating economic and commercial distortions, including fisheries subsidies. FINLAND said improving gender equality could allow women to increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and emphasized the importance of policy coherence.

BENIN identified land degradation as a key challenge and said countries with high consumption levels have a role to play in addressing this. The WORLD BANK GROUP highlighted the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, established by the Group of 20 to prevent crises, and emphasized the need for interventions to be recipient-led. INDONESIA highlighted challenges such as inequitable food distribution and called for multistakeholder collaboration to address food insecurity. NGOs said SDG 2 is a good driver for integration of other SDGs and called for a rights-based approach to addressing conflict, natural disasters, and migration. FRANCE underlined the importance of addressing malnutrition.

CHINA emphasized the need for: agricultural modernization; reduction in trade barriers; and agricultural technology financing for developing countries. SUDAN called for: an increase in agricultural productivity; sustainable food systems; and natural resource management that involves women's empowerment. The US urged bridging the gap between humanitarian and development action by taking preventative action. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES called for physically and financially accessible health and nutrition programmes by mainstreaming disability into food security programmes.

CHILE identified regulations for food labeling as critical for addressing malnutrition. The EU highlighted payments to farmers conditional on environmental performance as a means to encourage sustainable agriculture.

In concluding remarks, Mpofu called for a structural transformation and an end to business as usual. Penunia underscored that sustainable agriculture must be socially just, environmentally sound, and economically viable. Diaz-Bonilla stressed the need for a facility to prepare projects with the appropriate risk-benefit profile for private sector support. Bilgi called for greater stakeholder engagement and gender sensitivity. Caron echoed the need for new institutional arrangements across levels and between stakeholders, and the breaking down of sectoral barriers.

THEMATIC REVIEW: ERADICATING POVERTY AND PROMOTING PROSPERITY IN A CHANGING WORLD: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

This session was opened by Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN and ECOSOC Vice President.

Luisa Emilia Reyes Zuñiga, Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) HLPF Coordination Mechanism, highlighted the role of the Mechanism in ensuring rights of access to, and inclusive participation in, the HLPF are upheld and potentially expanded.

While noting that governments are primarily responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation, Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, called for the active engagement of all stakeholders to build ownership of the SDGs.

MGoS: Challenges and pathways to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world: This part of the discussion was moderated by Maruxa Cardama, Cities Alliance.

Chibebe, for Workers and Trade Unions, highlighted reporting on the SDGs by trade unions to complement Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and stressed the importance of SDGs 1, 3 (good health and well-being), and 5 (gender equality) for workers.

Sehnaz Kiyamaz, for Women, stressed empowering women and girls affected by conflict, and the need for dedicated funding on women-related issues.

As a Member States' respondent, Kenya noted the importance of: international cooperation on trade that allows Africa to finance its needs; national good governance; and inclusion and participation.

Noting that companies have already begun to integrate SDGs into sustainability efforts, Louise Kantrow, for Business and Industry, said the private sector is a driver of innovation and an actively engaged partner in knowledge sharing.

Luis Miguel Etchevehere, for Farmers, highlighted access to innovation to reduce production costs, and better marketing for farm products.

As a Member States' respondent, Indonesia proposed six "I's" for poverty eradication: initiative, intervention, incentive, innovation, including all, and international cooperation.

Noting that persons with disabilities are exposed to multiple forms of discrimination, José Maria Viera, for Persons with Disabilities, urged their inclusion in national poverty reduction programmes.

Roberto Bissio, for the Financing for Development Civil Society Group, stressed that financing must "first do no harm."

Katarina Popovic, Education and Academia Stakeholder Group, said education remains underfunded despite the importance of SDG 4 (quality education).

During the discussion, the NETHERLANDS highlighted leadership for innovative government; cohesion; involvement of all stakeholders; and respect for diversity. CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK called on inclusion of climate change in VNRs and HLPF 2017's ministerial declaration. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES emphasized the need to secure indigenous peoples' land rights to ensure they are not left behind. In closing, Cardama underlined the need for trust between governments and civil society.

Leaving no one behind: Ensuring an enabling environment for effective MGoS implementation and monitoring of the SDGs: ECOSOC Vice President Schulz opened this session. Naiara Costa, Together 2030, moderated.

Saúl Zenteno-Bueno, for Children and Youth, highlighted shadow reports by youth on national implementation, and the importance of peer-to-peer learning.

Rosalea Hamilton, for NGOs, called for a participatory approach to budgeting. James O'Brien, Volunteer Groups, called on governments to reflect on how volunteers can engage in monitoring by citizens.

As a Member States' respondent, Slovenia underlined the role of volunteerism in supporting social cohesion.

Jan van Zanen, Mayor of Utrecht, the Netherlands, underlined that full ownership of the 2030 Agenda at the local level is decisive in the Agenda's implementation.

John Patrick Ngoyi, Together 2030, called upon the HLPF to establish clear and meaningful mechanisms to collect and analyze reports on the contribution of civil society towards 2030 Agenda implementation.

Noting that indigenous peoples comprise 5% of the global population but 15% of the poor, Keikabile Mogodu, Indigenous Peoples, emphasized that recognition and protection of their rights is central to eradicating poverty.

As a Member States' respondent, Sweden described her country's efforts to bring in "the entirety of society" in its VNR process.

In the ensuing discussion, countries and stakeholders raised, *inter alia*, the need to: give due consideration to barriers that prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and queer persons from active participation in society; effectively monitor progress on secure land rights for women; support faith-based groups to counter narratives of discrimination; promote peer-to-peer learning between local authorities; address the legal problems faced by persons with disabilities; and establish "unusual partnerships" with business.

Closing the discussion, Costa described MGoS as "advocates, implementers, and watchdogs."

IN THE CORRIDORS

The first-ever review of specific SDGs at the HLPF on Tuesday resulted in pleas from the moderator for heartfelt dialogue, instead of reading of statements. They seemed to fall on deaf ears, however, as speakers from the floor rushed through prepared statements, many calling for paradigm and transformational shifts to meet the SDGs. A paradigm shift may well be in order in the nature of HLPF discussions, a delegate shrewdly noted in the corridors, to prevent the Forum from becoming another "talk across each other" shop. A focused and purposeful dialogue to identify barriers and find solutions is crucial, he said, for the HLPF to find its mojo.