

Principles paper for HLPF review

This paper outlines the shared principles for the review of the High-level Political Forum of **Action for Sustainable Development, Forus, the TAP Network and Together 2030**. These networks and initiatives have thousands of members from civil society organisations, from across the world. We have come together because we believe this review to be critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and cannot miss this opportunity to improve global-level follow up and review mechanisms, recognising the impact of the HLPF on regional and national implementation.

The HLPF must continue to have ‘a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level’ (70/299). Whilst much work has been done for HLPF to deliver on its mandate, we believe that the review is an opportunity to elevate its effectiveness, scale up to match the ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the transformative agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We outline six principles to guide the upcoming review:

1. **The ambition of the HLPF must be increased:** The review of the HLPF must ‘benefit from lessons learned’ rather than to reduce ambition (70/299). This includes:

- a. **Agreement that the HLPF should remain an open and transparent forum**
- b. **Basing the review on strengthening existing resolutions - 67/290 and 70/299** - from the lessons learned over the first four years of implementation; building on the principles within these resolutions of a coherent process for follow up and review
- c. **Basing the review on the principles and structure of the Open Working Group**, which was a successful and collaborative member-state led multi-stakeholder process

2. **The presentation of Voluntary National Reviews must be given more time:** VNRs are at the heart of the HLPF and play a critical role in fostering SDG implementation in the countries that undertake them. They are an opportunity for national assessments of progress and for effective stakeholder engagement, and they result in detailed and reflective reports on national progress, with the intention that they identify lessons. However, the current approach to the presentations lets them down: three ministerial days, with 15-minute presentations and little opportunity for constructive dialogue is insufficient.

In order to make VNRs better there must be:

- a. **Better presentations**, including: more time, more learning, more openness, more involvement of civil society. There are a number of ideas about how to achieve this, either with each VNR having a corresponding side event for more dialogue to devoting the full 8 days of HLPF to VNR presentations - all ideas must be explored in order to make this critical part of the HLPF more effective
- b. **Link up with regional forums, and other relevant bodies** (including those related to environment and human rights) should be strengthened in VNR presentations

- c. **There must be greater clarity on VNR alignment with UN guidelines** - Member States should be encouraged to follow this guidance
- d. **Member States should be encouraged to include non-government stakeholders in presentations** and to present their VNRs at national level ahead of the HLPF

3. Ensure that there is a focus on leaving no one behind: In line with the 2030 Agenda, there is a responsibility for countries - governments and all stakeholders - to ensure no one is left behind in progress towards achieving the SDGs, and that the furthest behind are reached first. The HLPF should ensure that the voice of marginalised people are heard, through:

- a. **Increasing opportunities for the voice of those left behind in the HLPF, including representative groups through civil society support**
- b. **Ensuring engagement of left behind groups in development and presentation of VNRs**
- c. **Safeguarding a space for left behind groups in goal-specific discussions**
- d. **Providing resources to facilitate travel for marginalised people to attend the HLPF**

4. Better alignment and integration of the 2030 Agenda with other frameworks, particularly environmental and human rights: Sustainable development recognises and aligns with environmental, climate, human rights and other sectors. It is therefore important that the HLPF provides more space for the input from the relevant sector mechanisms and agencies. This needs to be in both the HLPF as a whole and within VNRs. This should include:

- a. **Better link up with key international processes and agreements** - FCCC, CBD, UPRs, etc.
- b. **Better synergies with the FFD process**
- c. **Meaningful Involvement of all relevant UN bodies with HLPF** (IMF, WTO, UNIDO, etc.) to promote greater policy coherence in implementation of the 2030 Agenda

5. More opportunities for meaningful follow up, learning and review: In order to see greater focus on the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up' (2030 Agenda, 82), a rethink on the current focus on specific goals - the HLPF needs to be organised in a way for clear presentation of progress and identification of shared challenges, and add value beyond repetition of the Expert Group Meetings - it might be that they are integrated into VNR presentations (see below). This should include:

- a. **The facilitation of Regional Commissions to play a stronger role in identifying regional challenges and feeding them into the HLPF**
- b. **More use of the 'VNR labs' to allow governments and various stakeholders to discuss issues and challenges, and jointly problem-solve in less public forums**
- c. **SDG 16 needs reviewing annually, similar to SDG 17, given its cross-cutting nature underpinning the whole 2030 Agenda**

6. Major groups and other stakeholders must be able to participate meaningfully in the HLPF: Paragraph 89 of the 2030 Agenda, paragraph 14 of 67/290 and paragraph 11 of 70/299 all note the importance of the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the HLPF. This participation must be meaningful, but the major groups and other stakeholders also need to review their engagement with the HLPF to ensure the mechanisms for participation are effective, legitimate and representative. This should include:

- a. **More transparent processes for linking civil society, private sector, academia, local authorities and others from national level to the HLPF**
- b. **Investment in the capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to effectively represent and organise participation.** This is at the heart of meaningful engagement
- c. **Greater opportunity for interaction between MGoS from national level with governments in VNRs**
- d. **A dedicated platform for civil society colleagues to publish and showcase SDG “Spotlight Reports” through the HLPF, or through an online platform** - these need to be included in the official deliberations of the HLPF, or as official inputs at the very least
- e. **More opportunity and profile for reporting from MGoS on their SDG implementation**
- f. **Greater opportunity for engagement at the HLPF online,** especially for those unable to travel to New York