

WEBINAR: Exploring the global architecture for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda: Reflections from the 2017 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Comments and Q&A compilation September 6 2017

This document presents an **edited compilation** of the main comments, questions, recommendations and suggestions from the participants of the September 6 webinar. Comments have not been attributed to specific participants but editing was kept to a minimum.

On the HLPF Process and Structure

- The HLPF should provide a counterbalance, an opportunity for engagement and a place where government actions can be subjected to scrutiny.
- A disappointment of the HLPF was its failure to systematically discuss the cross-border challenges that present a profound obstacle to sustainable development. Millions of Africans die in the deserts and Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Europe. There was no space dedicated for serious analysis of these global policy issues that by definition cannot be dealt with merely at the national or even regional level, to review what countries are doing to tackle them, and to suggest potential solutions through collective action.
- Q: Many interesting issues raised at the national level. We need to also make sure that the HLPF itself provides policy guidance and recommendations, otherwise what is its role? It must not be just a talk-show (words of Member states)
- Q: The question is what can the HLPF realistically be and do, and what the roadmap is to move the HPLF in the right direction?
- What did CSOs which prepared shadow reports do with them given that the HLPF currently does not have a mechanism for accommodating shadow reports?
- Many NGOs that attend the HLPF struggled to be there at their own costs. They were not supported by their governments. To worsen the case, those of us that managed to be there at the HLPF were not given space to make contributions as speakers were pre-selected. What strategy can be adopted to encourage/mandate national governments to support their national NGOs to attend HLPF in the future, and how can the voice of the CSOs be enhanced in terms of making meaningful contributions to the presentations made by various government representatives?
- How can the VNR presentations that occur in New York every year avoid creating two separate "tracks" where states participate in the formal presentations and civil society and other stakeholders critique and comment on the VNRs as part of totally separate and more informal processes (such as side events)?
- Can better quality control of presentations and panel discussions take place during the HLPF by engaging in much better advance preparation with moderators and speakers

but also to allow for online and public "rating" of the quality of the panel discussions/presentations by those participating?

Regional Work and VNRs

- Some regions face issues on holding governments accountable. How can we create leverage to enhance the necessary participatory approach in this area- either in VNR or shadow reports? Especially in regions where there are security and political volatility.
- Will there be an attempt to standardize questions and format around the VNRs? It would promote transparency at national, regional and international processes. It would also be useful to request reporting of national processes and key government actors so that CSOs can effectively hold their governments accountable in the implementation of the SDGs.
- How can the HLPF become a truly "multi-level" global process when what happens once a year in New York connects with the Regional Reviews and national preparation of VNRs? The HLPF process needs to move between these different levels at different stages of the year.
- Is it possible to organise HLPF at regional levels also so as to provide more time to participants to engage? It should be possible to have some screening of contributions at the regional level so that the number at the United Nations Headquarters is more manageable.
- We need more advocacy work to enlighten governments on the need to adjust towards SDGs. Most if them, especially those in planning and budgeting are yet to acquaint themselves with the new paradigm of development.
- There is the need for the CSOs at national, regional, subregional levels to mobilize sensitize and create awareness of the SDGs and this can only be done if we are able to partner and collaborate with each other.
- Review and concrete proposals to tackle global Means and cross-border, cross-region problems was something that needed more emphasis at the HLPF.

Agenda 2030: General Issues

- When referring to this global agenda, we should refer to the "2030 Agenda" in its broader sense, including the declaration, the SDGs, the means of implementation and the follow up and review. The SDGs are part of the 2030 Agenda.
- There's no legal binding force in the 2030 Agenda; the Paris Agreement is arguably more binding. There is some ambiguity here, going right back to the way that the SDGs merge "environment" and "development" tracks - the question is whether this ambiguity is managed constructively - to reinforce and help the goals - or whether it ultimately detracts.
- Q: Academia can, and should, play a stronger role with implementation and accountability. We are not considered by DESA to be a Major Group, though, so are there truly clear pathways for increased participation?
 - A: There is a "scientific and technological major group" convened by academic bodies (ICSU, WSSC etc.); arguably, this is slightly apart from the other major

groups: also SDSN has a special position. The "special positioning" has advantages and drawbacks

- **Q:** Can you give the names of some countries who admitted the gaps in implementation of SDGs?
 - **A:** Basically all LAC countries presenting in HLPF 2017 accept their own gaps on implementation. All of them in Data, but in FfD, Panama said they have the necessary resources to implement the Goals and they're revising how to allocate them in an efficient way. Just to point out, Belize and the countries from Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) where more 'specific' in their own gaps.