

Debrief on HLPF 2019 and Exchange on SDGs Summit

Together 2030 14 August 2019

Margie Simo, Secretariat of Together 2030 and the host:

Arelys Bellorini welcomed all and introduced the webinar.

Panel:

Session I: HLPF first week – Thematic reviews main highlights

Florence Mojisola, Women for Peace & Gender Equity (Nigeria)

Had technical difficulties and could not connect but her presentation will be shared.

Alexandra Nilo, Gestos Brazil

Were disappointed with the first week of HLPF in July. Failure to deal with deep rooted policies in a minimum coherent way. Governments are not listening to us. Political and economies inequalities are growing despite small improvements in the past and will impact on those achievements. Perceptions and indicators show increased shrinking space for civil society to make governments accountable. Appalled to see short time for civil society to respond to VNRs – some with only 30 seconds to deliver from the floor. HLPF model needs to be reviewed. Declaration was developed prior to HLPF which we do not support. Most countries are concerned about language going backwards if text is open. VNRs are platforms for countries to present what they are doing but does not permit engagement around challenges that we have. We need conversation on how to better improve for September. Not describing quality of jobs or if they cover daily expenses but just numbers of increased jobs. Failure in analyzing social protection issue leaving vulnerable populations behind. Access to health and to education do not include those vulnerable populations. Have global conversation around the big players/countries & corporations which threaten multilateralism and attempts to weaken the UN. We had a meeting with the UN SG who was clear about this and said that we need to figure out together to deal with this push back. Recently he released a report on situation of human rights defenders. He is concerned about climate change and SDG 17.

John Romano, TAP Network

We had similar reflections on this HLPF presented by Alessandra. SDG 16 review – disappointment. We have been working on this moment for 4 years. It was a mixed bag: we had an opportunity for HLPF to say that this is where we are and where we need to go. Thematic review – official 3 hour session to share perspectives on status of where we are. Disappointed with limited time for civil society to interact and many member states felt the same as they too had limited time with mikes cut off after 2 minutes. Is HLPF fit for purpose? We want it to provide platform for government, civil society. HLPF reform process is hugely important for us to engage in. Need to discuss challenges. A chair's summary is not good enough. Didn't sufficiently discuss interlinkages of the SDGs mainly focusing on SDG 16 and

other SDGs under review this year. Information is siloed and we need to shift narrative. Highlight was civil society sharing their experiences – what is working and where challenges are. Rome Declaration on SDG 16+ link will be shared. Many member states are supportive of it. Voices of SDG 16+ campaign show local action. Released report on showcasing what is going well and what needs to be done. We need to push member states to be more explicit on their commitments. Decade of Action needs to be complemented by a Decade of Accountability.

Session II: HLPF second week – VNRs main highlights

Mr. Gomer Padong, Director of Philsen network of 15 civil society groups, Philippines and is a focal person of Asia Pacific Civil Society Engagement Mechanism.

He shares views of the first two webinar speakers. He came to HLPF for the second week which is mainly led by member states with civil society playing limited roles.

1. Civil society has commitment to the HLPF process.
2. Most country delegations still don't include civil society. Civil society is given at most 2 minutes.
3. Shadow reports are not really accounted for. Ask DESA how they are included.

Question if VNRs are really monitoring and implementing SDGs. Needs to be done back in the country in their own context with governments and with civil society.

We missed in 2019, the role of Parliaments and how powerful they could be and needs to be better mainstreamed into HLPF process. Parliaments have power of the purse and localize SDGs. Oversight function over executive action is not visible in the HLPF. Together 2030 sponsored one side event.

Ms. Valnora Edwin, Sierra Leone Coalition; country manager for Sierra Leone indigenous civil society entity dealing with peace building with those effected by conflict and has experience with gender issues.

She too attended only the second week of HLPF. Sierra Leone presented. Her country is co-chair of the G7+ countries. Engagement of civil society was minimal. We do have good relationship with our government ministers.

Lessons learned from previous reviews:

1. We were able to engage to get more information from the public in this second VNR review.
2. HLPF is a very good forum but needs reform to include additional perspectives than the government's. Need opportunities for more debate.
3. Side events are positive as a space for engagement with civil society in a more safe space.
4. Space for peer-to-peer learning on challenges, who were the stakeholders, who were the partners.

5. Sessions on exchanging thinking and intervention strategies.

HLPF gave her what we as CSOs need to do; how can we build on the positives to ensure that we can engage; be partners; see inclusion of the private sector; and how we can learn from countries who have made strides in achieving the SDGs. We do need more civil society space. Work of CSOs need to be better appreciated and recognized and can interact and challenging what is said.

Discussion:

Roland: added need to include local authorities.

Frances, SGA: Appreciated speakers who highlighted issues and frustrations that we all feel. See some things happening at the national level but she doesn't see anything coming out of the global level back to the national level. HLPF does not provide recommendations and regurgitates what we already know in the SDG Agenda. Would restructuring HLPF make the process better? What do member states get back at the global level post HLPF? Would like to hear ideas on what would a redesign look like?

Female from a UK headquartered civil society: first time participating meaningfully at the HLPF. We are smaller NGO who works in smaller countries on livestock linked to livelihoods. UK gave VNR this year and we told them that civil society needed to play a larger role which they did including more voices from civil society. Not sure how limited time could be changed as she found the limit sometimes useful to stop too long member state long statements that reduce time for others.

Marianne:

1. HLPF 8 days is just the cherry on the cake and it is the all year process that matters. It starts national and local efforts. She understands limited time at the HLPF.
2. ECOSOC Chair summary might be better. She invited 5 member states to help collect information for it, making political messages more possible. It is not good enough but it is pushing things forward.
3. Concerned that big players tended to neglect the HLPF. Didn't hear much from the US, Russia and China.

Penny: liaison to ECOSOC for a honors society of global nurses: US was very quiet during HLPF. How can we engage our governments to work more closely with them? It was her first HLPF and was disappointed by lack of engagement of the US.

Javier from CEPE, member of core group of Together 2030:

1. Must bear in mind that multilateralism is under attack.
2. VNRs are being used to present their successes and do not use them to discuss challenges and what support that they need.
3. Working protocol is taking over. Shared learning in open discussions is reduced.

4. States refusal to include parallel reports.
5. Unacceptable that VNR countries still have not published their reports even those presented at HLPF sessions.
6. Don't see much changes in second and third reports by countries. Why have them? Perhaps give more time to other countries to make real substantial reports.

David with the Volunteer Groups Alliance: Liked having a Decade of Accountability. Could we speak more with one voice that we are looking for countries to recognize contributions of civil society and how they are showing support for us post HLPF – using a score card to show which VNRs meet certain criteria that we expect to see?

Female who used to work with UNICEF: Civil society has to get stronger; inequalities are increasing. She is working with children's rights – Geneva commission on rights of children includes shadow reports that countries hear.

Ariel Rojas: Governments have their own priorities not always that are ours eg national security. They deal with SDGs only for political reasons. We should create our own forum to engage many eg private sector which change the mind of people and know how to engage people in a meaningful way because they sell their products. UN was made for state members with later invitation to civil society. We keep complaining but we are not presenting tangible results. We need to reimagine our role.

Panelists' responses for one minute each:

John: using accountability as a tool to get to where we need to be. VNR is voluntary. We need to think about what do we need to do to incentivize countries to engage more in HLPF process. We need to shift narrative to holding all accountable. Ground work needs to happen at the national level. We launched SDG Accountability a few months ago.

Gomer: we are focusing on action now.

Valnora: HLPF is a space to use to deal with accountability. How we engage our governments during the year is important. How we build partnerships with the private sector is also important.

Session III: What's next: SDGs Summit

Arelys Bellorini, World Vision:

Enumerated the 5 September summits. Only 6 High Level dialogues with only one civil society speaker each selected by the MGoS. Registration will be open. No opportunity to request side events in the UN except a tent built in the Rose Garden of the UN. Together 2030 will release several reports. Political Declaration was agreed prior to the July HLPF.

I had to leave at 11:00 am when the session was supposed to conclude.