

THE HLPF - SUCCESS OR FAILURE THE FUTURE WILL DECIDE

**format, questions and possible future for
HLPF**

A few thoughts and concerns

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Stakeholder Forum

1 –

HLPF IS MODERNISING THE

UN –

IT IS UNIQUE

What will HLPF be dealing with the next 20 years?

Resolution 67/290 gives HLPF a wide-ranging mandate. Among many points, it

- ▣ defines in broad terms the agenda for HLPF - 25-29 agenda points
- ▣ works with the integration of the three dimensions of Sustainable Development
- ▣ deals with emerging issues, reviews, SD report, regional input, evidence based decisions
- ▣ will be the home of the SDGs (any numbers)

Still - the resolution is general and vague and subject to various interpretations

The HLPF and SDGs effect on the UN

- ▣ The Rio Outcome Document, its 14 processes, the HLPF and the SDG dialogues and eventual goals are all contributing to the modernization of the UN

HLPF incorporates unique elements

- ▣ It is universal
- ▣ It deals with implementation, reviews, agenda setting and has convening powers
- ▣ It is an intergovernmental system and is transparent and involves civil society and members of major groups to a very high level
- ▣ It will be the home of the post 2015 development agenda/ the SDGs

2 –
THE TWO FIRST HLPF YEARS
– 2014-16

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

A pilot period for the HLPF– at least for the time being

To what extent are we allowed to:

- ▣ Improve what we see needs improving**
- ▣ Strengthen what we see needs strengthening**
- ▣ Interpret what we think is unclear**

**”building on the strength of CSD” –
paragraph 84
from the Rio Outcome document**

Issues we need to deal with/ think about

- ▣ **HLPF strengths**
- ▣ **HLPF weaknesses - if any**
- ▣ **HLPF challenges**
- ▣ **HLPF compared to CSD**
- ▣ **HLPF and position in the UN hierarchy**
- ▣ **HLPF , the GA and ECOSOC**
- ▣ **HLPF and all stakeholders**
- ▣ **HLPF and the SDGs**

Do we have an adequate institution?

- ▣ HLPF – a hybrid? How is this understood?
- ▣ Under the auspices of ECOSOC and the GA, what?
- ▣ Its decisions – reporting to what? To ECOSOC and the GA (like the Peacebuilding Commission)?
- ▣ Who/what/how will implement HLPF decisions?

Do we have an adequate institution?

- ▣ What does it really mean when we say the HLPF will be the home of the SDGs/post 2015 development agenda?
- ▣ What does its governance structure allow?
- ▣ Is there a conflict of interest and modus operandi between the HLPF, ECOSOC and the UNGA bodies?
- ▣ House rules at the UN and major groups/NGOs in relationship to §15 of the HLPF resolution, a conflict?

HLPF strengths

- ▣ **It is innovative**
- ▣ **Its governance structure will allow integration of all stakeholders, in all contexts at all levels**
- ▣ **It is transparent**
- ▣ **It is flexible and dynamic**

HLPF, points to the future

- ▣ Points in the right direction
- ▣ Is politically high level
- ▣ Is universal and inclusive
- ▣ Conducts reviews and build accountability
- ▣ Is a new construct, a hybrid – ref wording: “under the auspices of”
- ▣ Focuses on science and evidence based decisions
- ▣ Will be responsible for “the Global Sustainable Development Report”
- ▣ Sets new governance standards, integrates reviews, identifies emerging issues

HLPF Challenges

- ▣ It has a broad and undefined mandate
- ▣ It has a weak and untried structure – the hybrid – “under the auspices of” meaning what in a political reality
- ▣ It lacks a steering mechanism, bureau or advisory board
- ▣ It does not own a secretariat
- ▣ It integrates major groups and NGOs in a way never done before at the UN, how does this challenge existing procedures?

Areas of tensions and conflicts

Under the auspices of ECOSOC and UNGA

The relationship between these bodies and the HLPF has been called “light subsidiarity”. But will this grant HLPF an independent position, or integrate it into ECOSOC? How will “light subsidiarity” be practiced?

The Presidents of ECOSOC and UNGA

convenes HLPF, while consulting with the Bureau of ECOSOC, the UNGA Bureaux :

Can that make decision making, participation and access difficult?

Giving key words a context

Clear contexts are always needed to give sensible interpretations:

- ▣ What does access mean?
- ▣ What does intervene mean?
- ▣ What does participate mean?
- ▣ What do speaking rights in sessions imply?
- ▣ What does agenda setting mean?
- ▣ What do “emerging issues” mean?
- ▣ What does universality imply?

3 –

ECOSOC AND HLPF

**A CUMBERSOME
OR STRENGTHENING
RELATIONSHIP?**

ECOSOC has a formidable workload

- ▣ **In view of the efforts to reform and strengthen ECOSOC, how wise is it to add more responsibility and work to this institution?**
- ▣ **HLPF functions under the auspices of ECOSOC and the UNGA, and needs to be strengthened organisationally to work in consort with ECOSOC, be able to performs its duties outlined in 67/290 thus allowing ECOSOC to performs its core duties.**
- ▣ **A strong, autonomous HLPF will also make ECOSOC stronger.**

A strong HLPF will contribute to strengthen ECOSOC

- ❑ **With its broad mandate, ECOSOC's purview extends to over 70 per cent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system**
- ❑ **Strong bodies working within this purview, strengthen ECOSOC**
- ❑ **An institution is only as strong as its weakest link**
- ❑ **A strong HLPF makes ECOSOC 'shine'**

ECOSOC formulates - 1

policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the UN system. ECOSOC is responsible for:

- ▣ promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress;
- ▣ identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems;
- ▣ facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and

ECOSOC formulates – 2

- ❑ **encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.**
- ❑ **It has the power to make or initiate studies and reports on these issues.**
- ❑ **It also has the power to assist the preparations and organization of major international conferences in the economic and social and related fields and to facilitate a coordinated follow-up to these conferences.**

ECOSOC is the principal organ to coordinate - 1

economic, social, and related work of the bodies referred to below including receiving reports from them. In total this implies dealing with:

- ▣ 14 UN specialized agencies,**
- ▣ 9 Functional Commissions,**
- ▣ 5 UN Economic Regional Commissions**
- ▣ 3 Standing Committees,**
- ▣ 1 ad hoc body (at present),**

(more ...)

ECOSOC is the principal organ to coordinate - 2

- ▣ **3 expert bodies composed of government experts,**
- ▣ **5 expert bodies composed of members serving in their own capacity,**
- ▣ **2 Ad hoc advisory groups (one on Africa and one on Haiti), one Public-Private Alliance on Rural Development**
- ▣ **The Council also receives reports from 11 funds and programmes.**

An overburdened agenda?

- ▣ And will the HLPF with its formidable be added to ECOSOC with its even more formidable agenda?
- ▣ How does this add to the functionality of the UN, the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs?

Major groups, HLPF and ECOSOC

- ▣ Major groups and relevant stakeholders are referred to in 7 paragraphs: Paragraphs 8c; 13; 14; 15; 16; 22 and 24.
- ▣ Paragraph 16 is about the right to self-organise and include other groups in addition to the 9 - para 15 gives all out access
- ▣ Implementing these paragraphs is crucial to major groups/civil society. CSD allowed complete access, physically also to the floors. House-rules at the UN may prevent this which is contrary to the intention of 67/290.

4 –

**HOW CAN HLPF BE
STRENGTHENED
FORMALLY RIGHT NOW?**

**” ... UNLESS OTHERWISE
DECIDED”**

Based on the experience of CSD, paragraph 84, from Rio+20

CSD has been accused of being a talk shop, and failed sustainable development

CSD in the first ten year made more than 30 important decisions and initiated:

- ▣ The intergovernmental panel on forests, illegal logging
- ▣ The chemical conventions
- ▣ Developing SD indicators
- ▣ Programme of work on SCP
- ▣ Phase out lead in petrol
- ▣ Initiated green procurement policies
- ▣ Sustainable transportation, sustainable tourism
- ▣ Marine pollution, overfishing
- ▣ Developed governance and partnerships

CSD decisions were the result of a strong structure

- ▣ The mandate was strong
- ▣ The resolution establishing CSD had a chapter on a Bureau
- ▣ The resolution establishing CSD had a chapter on its own secretariat
- ▣ The structure of CSD was such that it harmonised and coordinated UN bodies to work on sustainable development
- ▣ But - over the years, it was decoupled from the reality it was set to develop, and weakened because governments did not prioritise SD

How can we add to HLPF now?

- ▣ Paragraph 29 of the HLPF resolution states:
- ▣ “Further decides to review at its seventy-third session the format and the organizational aspects of the forum, unless otherwise decided;”
- ▣ This allows for decisions to take place affecting the HLPF in a positive way before the seventy third session

HLPF given a formidable assignment

- ▣ **The HLPF has a daunting and important agenda to implement regularly.**
- ▣ **It has been given a maximum of 8 days to work**
- ▣ **It has a weak structure – causing HLPF to do a balancing act between a process and a unit**
- ▣ **The HLPF will be the most important global institution dealing with sustainable development issues the next 20 years**

Does paragraph 7d imply that HLPF needs more of a structure?

Key assignments according to 7d for HLPF are:

- ▣ Implementation of progress of all major UN conferences on sustainable development;
- ▣ improve cooperation and coordination within the United Nations;
- ▣ Improve the system on sustainable development programmes and policies;
- ▣ promote best practices and experiences on implementation;
- ▣ promote system-wide coherence;
- ▣ Coordinate sustainable development policies within the UN;

Fulfilling paragraph 7d demands answers

- ▣ How do we engage the UN system with HLPF ? (ref§7d, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23):
- ▣ Emerging issues and agenda setting - all stakeholders shall be consulted (ref§ 18, 19, 20, 21, 22), how?
- ▣ Innovative nature and forward looking - evidence based decision making, a new methodology, continued dialogue (§19,20), how?

Added elements – to strengthen HLPF - 1

- ▣ Is enough time allocated to carry out all assignments identified in the HLPF resolution, or is more time needed?
- ▣ Is there a need for a preparatory process as well?
- ▣ If needs be, member states can allocate extra time for preparatory work. UNEP did this to prepare for the UN Environment Assembly by establishing the OECPR – the Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.
- ▣ A similar decision can easily be made by member states, if they so decide

Added elements – to strengthen HLPF - 2

- ▣ **Is a revisit to the CSD task manager system warranted? Establishing such a unit in HLPF might be a way to involve, engage and coordinate the entire UN system in sustainable development the next decades.**
- ▣ **Giving HLPF a bureau? Using language, experience and precedence from DCF which has an Advisory Committee to deal with political issues there, could be used to establish an AC at HLPF**

Added elements – to strengthen HLPF - 3

- ▣ The resolution that established CSD had an entire section outlining the role and tasks of its secretariat. A similar mandate or guidelines could be developed by member states to strengthen UNDSD (of DESA) and allow it to carry out the workload for HLPF outlined in 67/290

Added elements – to strengthen HLPF - 4

- ▣ The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) established the Interagency Committee on Sustainable Development IACSD in 1992 to identify major policy issues and follow-up to the Earth Summit to ensure effective co-operation and coordination of the UN system in the implementation of Agenda 21.
- ▣ A similar body could be established for the same purpose to enable HLPF to carry out its many assignments outlined in 67/290

The integrity of HLPF

- ▣ Because of its weak institutional structure, the integrity of HLPF is being undermined –
- ▣ HLPF is now integrated into ECOSOC as a segment of that institution –
- ▣ All events, principal or side are designated ECOSOC ...
- ▣ The HLPF documents do not carry their own symbols, but those of ECOSOC
- ▣ CSD always had its own symbols

More, not less

- ▣ The almost 100 state participating in Rio signed on to the Rio+20 document. They and the content clearly want us to do more.
- ▣ Is what we see here progress or regression?
- ▣ We have to years to improve what we see needs improving, and two years to prove that we care about sustainable development

Our future, our responsibility

- ▣ **With the Rio Outcome Document, and the HLPF resolution, 67/290, we now have the political directives to create a better future for all.**
- ▣ **We also have the means to do so.**

Our future, our responsibility

- ▣ Let us not try to predict what this future might look like.
- ▣ Let us create this future together and start now.
- ▣ If we fail now, future generations will ask us why we did not have the foresight or courage to do better.
- ▣ What will our legacy be?
- ▣ The next two years will give us that answer.

Thank you for your attention

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