



Volunteer Groups' thematic position paper to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020

Executive Summary

Accelerating action and transformative pathways through volunteering: realizing the decade of action by volunteers' delivery on sustainable development goals

Volunteers, and support for their efforts, are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018* produced by United Nations Volunteers, an estimated one billion volunteers make a difference on the issues that affect them and their communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. As recognised by the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be realised without the 'contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers' and volunteer-driven organisations in both developing and developed countries. The transformative power of volunteering particularly has the potential to contribute to the Decade of Action if properly championed.

Although a universal phenomenon, volunteering does not occur at uniform rates and effectiveness, but volunteering is strongest when it is recognised and supported. National and local governments, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society, volunteer groups, and volunteers themselves have a role to play in **creating and sustaining an enabling environment for volunteering**. When these actions succeed, we unlock the power of volunteering and enable volunteers to make the greatest possible contribution to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

Recommendations

The Stakeholder group representing volunteers offers the following recommendations to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) for 2020, and beyond:

- 1. Formally recognise the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the SDGs in Member States' Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF 2020**

We encourage all Member States to include the contribution of volunteers in their VNRs. In 2019, countries around the world as diverse as Cambodia, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Iceland, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone all included volunteers in their VNRs.

2. Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognised and supported in national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda

We encourage every country to build volunteering into their plans and strategies. Several Member States have already passed legislation that supports and promotes volunteering. Currently, some 90 countries throughout the world now have policies or legislation on volunteering.

3. Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of A/RES/67/290, which supports the participation of non-governmental actors

We encourage all governments to continue to engage all stakeholders as contributors to and beneficiaries of policies that will allow us all to work towards the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, in 2018, resolution A/RES/73/140 – which was co-facilitated through the Third Committee of the General Assembly by the Permanent Missions of Brazil, Chile, Japan, and Russia, and co-sponsored by 124 Member States – commends volunteers and calls on Member States to increasingly cooperate with volunteer involving and civil society organisations. This resolution also calls on Member States to include information on the scale, contribution, and impact of volunteering in future VNRs, and to engage volunteers for the monitoring of progress towards achieving the SDGs at the national and subnational levels and as part of wider citizen engagement.

4. Ensure that the accountability, transparency, and review framework for the SDGs involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalised voices, as well as the volunteers who work most closely with them

We encourage all Member States to consult with volunteer groups and include volunteers and the most marginalised voices as part of the mechanism to review the SDGs at national and local levels. Volunteers and groups organising volunteers are working daily to meet the SDGs in their local communities. As such, they must be afforded an opportunity to be included in the drafting and tracking of policies that affect them.