



**Statement by the Republic of Maldives
on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States
at the informal meeting on the follow-up and review at the global level of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development**

6 April 2016

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). *We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.*
2. We greatly appreciate the open brainstorming discussion held last week which provided an opportunity to share our initial thoughts and reactions on the follow up and review process. Our intervention today highlights our positions in further detail.
3. AOSIS would like to begin by restating that the principles outlined in paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should underpin all our discussions today, and the outcome of these discussions and should be reaffirmed as such.

Success of the HLPF

4. The starting point for us is the question of what determines a successful HLPF. We see the HLPF – the central forum that oversees a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level – as a forum that recognizes successes, evaluates failures, addresses challenges and limitations, identifies new and emerging issues, provides political leadership and ultimately inspires action and the maintenance of high levels of ambition at all levels.
5. Success may mean different things for different actors; but what is important is that the various stakeholders, have the space to share their experiences in a meaningful way, and learn from each other. It is also important is that everyone takes away something that can be applied, something that can be used in their respective contexts. It is therefore critical that the HLPF provide real space for interaction and concrete solutions, not merely serve as another repetitive talk shop.

6. The challenge is how to make this happen: and that is the purpose of our discussion today.

Countries in Special Situations

7. As we have presented in previous sessions, it is critical that SIDS have space to dive into our follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the follow up and review process related to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. This should be done in accordance with the HLPF modalities resolution 67/290 and the 2030 Agenda, which asserts that “effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant UN Conferences and processes, including on LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs”. The now dissolved Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was the only forum that provided dedicated space for discussion on our sustainable development challenges. In the dissolution of the CSD, it was our understanding that the HLPF would serve as a CSD *plus*. Therefore, we cannot go lower in our ambition than what is already determined in the HLPF modalities resolution. We also note that the SAMOA Pathway, and subsequent resolutions on following up to the SAMOA Pathway, specifically reiterated this understanding.
8. In determining how this will be realized, we need to consider whether the allocated time allows for detailed and focused discussion, as well as effective high level representation. Logistics and other factors often hinder effective and timely participation of SIDS Ministers in discussions here in NY, and these limitations must be taken into account.

Integration and Themes

9. We are glad to hear many delegations reaffirm the indivisible, integrated nature of the SDGs. We continue to believe that it is important that no single goal be prioritized over other goals throughout the reviews. We also strongly support the notion that the Means of Implementation, Goal 17, has to be reviewed every year.
10. Having said that, we recognize that “focus goals” may need to be chosen for each HLPF in order to avoid overburdening the agenda, which has been allocated a limited amount of time. Each set of “focus goals” must include a balance between the three pillars of the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, in addition to taking account of the centrality of the overarching and the common focus on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.
11. We don’t necessarily see this approach as prioritization of some goals over others as we believe that each goal, or each group of goals, could be approached from a number of angles, given the high number of inter-linkages between the goals and targets.

12. In determining the theme, we should consider the overall objective of determining themes in the first place: whether they are distinct for the session and the thematic reviews or not. The annual themes for the HLPF should not serve to compete with the goals, but instead help focus the Forum's discussion and drive it forward, while also speaking to enabling the relationships between the goals. That said, the process for determining themes must be open, accessible, and transparent, and take into account the needs of small Missions.

Inputs to the HLPF

13. The "inputs to HLPF" determines a "successful" HLPF: they determine what kind of HLPF we will have - one that would hear reports and reflect on them, or one that analyses of reports and discusses trends, opportunities and shares best practices and knowledge.
14. In our understanding, there are two specific reports that have been mandated through the 2030 Agenda to feed into the HLPF: the SDG Progress Report and the GSDR. The HLPF should also consider other materials produced within and outside the UN system, but the SDG Progress Report and GSDR are intended to guide discussions from the national reviews to thematic reviews at the HLPF.
15. The SDG Progress Report gives an account of the "state of play" taking its data and information from the reporting by countries and regions on the indicators. This report will measure the progress on the targets and goals, identifying the situation on the ground. On the other hand, the GSDR, we hope, will provide the "state of the art", a scientific assessment of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda. It could also help to explain why the trends identified in the SDG Progress Report exist. The GSDR will be able to analyse scientific data, knowledge and research to provide best practices and suggestions for trends and identify emerging challenges.
16. The discussion on the scope, methodology, frequency and relationship to the SDG progress report is ongoing under the guidance of Switzerland, and we hope to make a successful conclusion of those discussions soon. And perhaps, in a similar manner, we might also need to discuss the SDG Progress Report a bit more during these discussions (The report of the Statistical Commission can be acknowledged here).
17. The 2030 Agenda also states that the thematic reviews will be supported by reviews by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other inter-governmental bodies and forums which should reflect the integrated nature of the goals as well as the inter-linkages between them. They will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into, and be aligned with, the cycle of the HLPF. Given our

explanation above, these inputs will need to feature into the two reports that have already been mandated.

18. All inputs to the HLPF, including the reports of functional commissions and inter-governmental bodies, could be uploaded in full on a portal or website for easy access for those delegations wishing to study them closer.

National and Regional Reviews

19. Moving onto the voluntary national reviews, it is important to clarify that we are not discussing the nature and purpose of the national reviews themselves: those are determined in paragraphs 78 and 79 of the 2030 Agenda. We are discussing the presentation of the national reviews to the HLPF.
20. The written version submitted could follow a simple guideline or template that offers space for highlighting specific actions taken to localize SDGs, challenges to implementation, how those challenges were overcome, best practices and successes and continuing limitations. The template provided in the SG's report on critical milestones is a good initial basis in this regard, while recognizing the need for flexibility for national governments. Written reports can also be uploaded to the website for access by other interested parties, as we have already seen with the 2016 country reviews.
21. Comparatively, the presentations made during the HLPF should be as open and made in any form as decided by the Governments. This opportunity for sharing of information is not only important and valuable not only for countries to share with other countries in their same region; it is also important that all countries have the opportunity to learn from one another, provide feedback, and offer their different perspectives. To do this, parallel sessions should be avoided.
22. Similarly, the general purpose of the regional level review and follow-up is outlined in paragraphs 80 and 81 of the 2030 Agenda. Review and Follow-up at the regional level and sub-regional levels can, where appropriate provide useful opportunities for peer learning. At the same time, the regional level should not be a substitute for the presentation of national reviews at the global level.

Outputs of the HLPF

23. The key output of the HLPF is the Ministerial Declaration. This represents an important document, that takes into account the progress made over the year, by assessing limitations, challenges and successes and identifying gaps and ways to address them.

24. It is our hope and understanding that the Ministerial Declaration will be concluded before the actual meeting of the HLPF. Given this arrangement, it might be important to find a way to capture the discussions during the HLPF itself. One option could be a summary of the discussions.
25. We have also mentioned the need for a portal or website. We hope that the website is able to serve as a platform for the research and best practices presented at the HLPF, not only for governments to reference throughout the rest of the year, but also to increase accessibility for representatives unable to attend in person. One possible example is for the site to include an interactive map that would collect the reviews, research, and lessons learned from each country and allow users to see activity country by country.
26. Furthermore, we look forward to having this platform be linked to the partnership platform. Future partnerships are a concrete and anticipated outcome of the HLPF, and it will be important to have these made public and available to increase transparency and opportunities for other countries to learn and replicate where possible.

Role of the Secretariat

27. Countries will require support for ongoing monitoring and improving data capacity, as well in localizing and building capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda. This is where the Secretariat and the UN System's role are important.
28. The Secretariat would undoubtedly benefit from improved internal coordination and system-wide coordination in relation to SDG follow up and review processes. While various departments and divisions may deal with various aspects of the 2030 Agenda and the follow-up process, they are working towards the same goal; the same vision. Therefore these departments along with the wider UN system, needs to work more closely together in a more coordinated manner so that there is no duplication of effort and wastage of already limited resources. Member State expectations of the Secretariat are very high - they have significant responsibilities in the support they provide Member States. Therefore coordination here in New York, as well as on the ground is necessary.
29. In conclusion, Co-Facilitators, we commit our full support to your endeavours during this process. We will remain your constructive partner.

Thank you.