

## Draft Concept Note

### Conference in preparation for HLPF 2019: “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind”

3-5 April 2019/ Rome (TBC)

Co-organized by UN DESA and IDLO, in partnership with [To be defined]

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#### Introduction

The theme for the July 2019 High-level Political Forum (HLPF), under the auspices of ECOSOC, is *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*, and it will carry out an in-depth review of SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (economic growth and jobs), SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), and SDG 16 (peaceful societies, access to justice, effective and inclusive institutions), in addition to SDG 17, which is considered each year. The SDGs under review will be examined in terms of progress made and challenges encountered in their implementation, as well as in terms of their relationships with the rest of Agenda 2030.

In preparation for the 2019 HLPF, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA/DSDG) and IDLO, together with partners, are organizing, in preparation for the 2019 HLPF, a conference on progress towards SDG 16, as well as its role in advancing sustainable development and the vision and Goals embodied in the 2030 Agenda. The conference will address this role in the perspective of the contribution that its individual targets can make to these ends, but also in the context of the broader considerations and objectives that bind them and underlie the Goal as a whole, highlighting their relevance to the principles of universality, integration, justice and equality and the approaches to sustainable development contained in the entire Agenda.

In this context, the conference will take stock of global progress towards achieving the SDG 16; share knowledge, success stories and good practices; identify particular areas of concern and main challenges; and suggest ways forward in terms of policies, partnerships and coordinated actions at all levels as well as specific ways to leverage the interlinkages between SDG 16 and the other Goals. The conference will also draw on the reporting contained in the voluntary national reviews (VNRs). While sharpening the focus on SDG 16, to the Conference will further emphasize the integrated, indivisible, and universal nature of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These messages will help inform the HLPF, assist in planning its sessions, and serve to influence collaboration and programmes of work going forward from 2019.

#### SDG 16

The overarching objective of SDG 16 – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – identifies it as a Goal that is both an outcome and enabler of sustainable development. At the same time, targets under SDG 16 (see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>), while touching on distinct issues, are closely linked across

the whole set of SDGs. Several of the other SDGs have targets that are allied to those in SDG 16 and there is thus an opportunity for increased recognition of the contribution of SDG 16 to advancing other SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Additionally, several other SDG targets are directly related to peaceful, just and strong institutions.

While the diversity of the Goal's targets poses challenges for easy categorization, SDG 16 contains targets of varying scope – some narrowly defined, others broader, serving to express underlying principles of the 2030 Agenda such as peaceful, just and inclusive societies, constituting the foundations for sustainable development. For instance, promotion of the rule of law (16.3) encompasses basic principles of legality, such as the equal and systematic application of legal rules. By contrast, birth registration (16.9), although a very specific action, has an outsize role in ensuring individual rights and access to justice and social service – critical to ensuring that no one is left behind. Similarly, the principles of inclusive participation and representation in decision making (16.7) are also central to ensuring that public institutions are responsive and effective as an end to themselves, but also to facilitate progress across other SDGs.

Linkages among different sets of targets may also be addressed from the vantage point of the synergies that the integration of policies towards their implementation can create for the realization of overarching objectives of the 2030 Agenda, such as 'leaving no one behind'; gender equality and women's empowerment; the integration of policies across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; and ensuring mutual reinforcement of efforts to build peace, uphold human rights and support sustainable development.

Any thematic clustering of the targets can be approached from different vantage points. Recognizing this, the Conference will aim to bring out themes that most lend themselves to policy- and partnership-relevant commitments to the Goal and facilitate meaningful measurement and follow-up of progress towards it.

These discussions can benefit from numerous strands of work, bringing together multiple actors from governments at regional, national and local levels, civil society, private sector, academia, and the United Nations system. The conference can avail itself of a wealth of wide-ranging analyses and policy proposals related to SDG 16. Given the broad framing of discussion and workstreams related to aspects of SDG 16, the conference will consider areas where engagement at the HLPF could be most fruitful and where implementation could be accelerated.

As with the rest of the Agenda, while governments have a leading role to play, the achievement of SDG 16 depends on a whole-of-society approach. Civil society organizations are involved in multiple ways, as implementers, advocates for underrepresented parts of the population such as women, youth and marginalized groups and watchdogs. For its part, the private sector too can make an important contribution to efforts towards peacebuilding, inclusion, advancing the rule of law and eliminating corruption as fundamental to creating an environment conducive to development where business can thrive. Local governments, parliamentarians and the academia are other critical stakeholders in the implementation of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

## **Approach and key questions**

Given this far-reaching scope of SDG 16, and keeping in mind the theme of the 2019 HLPF—*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*—the Conference will, in the light of focused and data-driven analyses towards SDG 16 targets, undertake an assessment of the state of play in the implementation of Goal 16, and will address, through various crosscutting lenses deriving from social, economic and environmental considerations, obstacles, challenges, enablers and interlinkages. Throughout, the emphasis will be on an evidence-based review of progress under the targets, while also capturing the broader significance of the Goal.

The thematic review of SDG 16 will benefit from an integrated and balanced approach that covers both the broader thematic aspects of the Goal, as well as specifics embedded in its targets. One overarching concern is achieving better alignment and coherence between actors and institutions at various levels towards the SDGs, indicating also the need for context specific measurements that complement the global indicator framework, itself under development.

The following questions are proposed to guide discussions during the Conference:

- What is the current progress in SDG 16 implementation, national monitoring and reporting, as well as main bottlenecks and enablers for accelerated implementation? How does this vary across countries and regions?
- What are examples of good practices in integrating SDG 16 targets and indicators into national planning frameworks?
- What are practical recommendations for action that are evidence-based and cost effective?
- What are concrete examples of how SDG 16 contributes to other goals and targets, as well as the broad objectives of the 2030 Agenda: leaving no one behind, integrating across the dimensions of sustainable development, ensuring inter- and intra-generational equity?
- How can progress across other goals and targets help advance SDG 16?
- What needs to be done to scale up good practices for data collection and reporting on SDG 16?
- How can the involvement of local authorities, the private sector, civil society and philanthropic organizations, among others, be channeled and strengthened in implementation and measuring progress?
- How to engage stakeholders and form partnerships on SDG 16 implementation and follow up?
- What needs to be done to enhance sharing of experiences and learning between countries, working with and strengthening existing partnerships on SDG 16 implementation?
- What needs to be done to strengthen regional responses to SDG?
- What needs to be done to strengthen the knowledge base and tools needed to support countries in being able to properly budget and mobilize domestic and international resources for SDG 16 implementation?

### **Contribution to HLPF 2019**

The knowledge and insights of experts—both practitioners and academics—from across the world will be crucial to addressing these questions. The Conference will serve to bring together a cross-section of such expertise from a diversity of countries and regions to help:

- Provide substantive assessment and inputs into the thematic reviews at the HLPF and help inform background analysis and outcomes;

- Identify good practices on SDG 16 implementation, monitoring and reporting from regions and specific countries (including those that are conducting or have conducted Voluntary National Reviews) that illustrate challenges or highlight innovative practices;
- Provide recommendations for the effective adaptation, implementation, national monitoring and reporting of SDG 16 and reinforcing its interlinkages.
- Identify presenters for the specific sessions at the HLPF, as well as contributors to blog posts, e-discussions and other activities leading up to the HLPF, and;
- Build on and influence collaborations and programmes of work going forward from 2019.

### **Format**

A three-day meeting consisting of:

- *Plenary Sessions*, with key messages from High Level officials addressing the place of SDG 16 in the 2030 Agenda and contributions to advancing its implementation.
- *High Level Expert roundtables*, with introductory remarks by key experts on the main issues and themes covered by SDG 16 and its interlinkages, followed by interactive discussions.
- *Working Groups*, where participants will be able to interact and to elaborate concrete recommendations for action.
- *Side events* to highlight on-going SDG 16-related initiatives and their relevance to the purposes of the conference.

### **Participation and organization**

Participation at the Conference will be by invitation only, and a registration process will be put in place. Experts from governments, think tanks, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders will be invited by UN-DESA/DSDG, with financial support provided on a case-by-case basis. Experts from the UN system and other international organizations will also be invited to participate.

Except for the plenary sessions, roundtables and working groups discussions will be conducted in English. All presentations/papers/remarks will be made available online. Arrangements will be made to brief Member States on the outcomes prior to the HLPF, based on a document to be prepared following the Conference.