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#### **High-level political forum on sustainable development**

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Agenda item 2

#### **Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders**

##### **Note by the Secretariat**

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the HLPF website <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>.

## I. Women

The statement submitted by the Women's Major Group made the following points:

1. Women today find ourselves in very difficult times. We see this in rising protectionist governments; xenophobia, misogyny, and discrimination; governments turning more inward and backward to the detriment of the world; and power ever more concentrated among the elite and corporations. We see this in environmental destruction, violations of women's human rights, privatization of public goods, and further marginalization and exclusion.
2. It is hard to see a light at the end of a long and dark tunnel. Colonialism and unbridled neoliberalism's effects - including massive poverty, unemployment, landlessness - interacting with patriarchy and other systems of oppression, reinforce inequalities, deny women agency, and block progress towards sustainable development.
3. Realising the transformative intent of the Sustainable Development Agenda and ensuring women's human rights and gender justice require more than just efficiency; it must be purposeful. We cannot allow for siloed responses to the world's multiple crises.
4. This Agenda's success necessitates political changes so the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) truly benefit the marginalised and systematically excluded. There must be a profound shift from the dominant yet discredited fixation on economic growth to institutionalised leadership for development, justice and peace. This means moving away from extra-activist industries, military investments, and emaciated humanitarian, gender equality and human rights action, and reorienting towards empowering feminist and social movements and human rights for all. Governments, corporations, the military industrial complex, international financial institutions, and other power holders must be held accountable to human rights and commitments to leave no one behind.
5. The 2019 HLPF is critical because the goals under review speak to some of the most pressing structural challenges the world faces:
  - SDG 17 – Finance and trade rules that restrict poor countries' policy space to follow their human rights and development objectives must change.
  - SDG 16 – Militarized economies must shift to economies guided by human security of all – women and girls, indigenous, LGBTI, disabled, refugee, and other marginalised communities across the lifespan -- for just, equitable, and nonviolent governance. Governments must prevent attacks and ensure safety and leadership of women human rights defenders, peace activists, and environmental defenders. Portability and progressivity of rights should be ensured.
  - SDG 13 – Unaccountable leaders guided by irrelevant ambitions are bringing irreparable consequences to our biosphere and population. Agenda 2030 is the lighthouse to guide measures to remain under 1.5 degrees, ensuring ecosystem integrity while promoting gender-responsive climate action and women's participation.
  - SDG 10 – Policy coherence and strengthening the public sector is critical to reduce inequalities between and within countries. This requires reforming macro-economic dynamics. Goals 10, 16 and 17 are closely intertwined: illicit financial flows, unfair trade rules, debt unsustainability, and undermining by international financial institutions of developing countries' right to development must be addressed.

- SDG 8 – Corporations can help realise SDGs when they pay taxes, refrain from predatory practices, and ensure labour rights and decent work and working conditions. Social protection is a far more solid priority than private investment. It is also the entry point to the macro-economic dimension of unpaid domestic and care work, and other challenges around women’s economic rights.
  - SDG 4 – We expect meaningful and comprehensive facilitation, support and strengthening of lifelong education and learning. Austerity and other measures impede investment in transforming people’s lives.
6. Accountability cannot be postponed: Agenda 2030 was agreed voluntarily, but it should be technically and politically promoted by the High-Level Political Forum. So far the HLPF has proven a disappointing space. Unless it transforms modalities to deliver follow-up and review processes needed to advance the 2030 Agenda for women and girls of every age, place, ability and status, it remains an empty shell.

## **II. Children and Youth**

The statement submitted by the Major Group on Children and Youth made the following points:

1. Inclusion of all people is needed to collectively move towards the future we want while leaving no one behind. This will require transformations in our economy, social structures, financial systems, and political institutions.
2. There are clear interlinkages and tradeoffs across SDGs. Putting society on a path consistent with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda depends on our ability to effectively address them.
3. The trajectory towards sustainable development remains far from desirable. The accumulation of inequalities are undermining sustainability, peace, and resilience. The continued wave of anti-collectivism and globalism is further catalyzing these adverse effects. The lost sentiment of Agenda 21 to confront historical injustice hinders the efforts of the HLPF. This should be a central focus in assessing the first cycle of the HLPF (2015-2019) and developing modalities around the second cycle (2020-2024).
4. Inclusive formal and informal quality education and lifelong learning are fundamental human rights and key drivers for sustainable development, yet barriers fail to be systematically addressed.
5. “Decent work” needs to be further defined and protected, especially with the uncertainties of the future of work. Alternative measures of ‘growth’ need to be integrated into formal indicator frameworks as GDP alone fails to capture the well-being of people and planet.
6. Inequalities continue to deepen, due to factors such as discrimination; illicit financial flows and unfair trade agreements; human rights violations; various forms of censorship; political and corporate capture; stigmatization and marginalization.
7. Actions towards climate change mitigation are not on par with the commitments made. Transgression of planetary boundaries and biologic carrying capacities continue to undermine development efforts and weaken the likelihood of attaining peace, security, and equality.
8. Protracted and emerging issues continue to jeopardize progress. These include: a neoliberal

growth economic paradigm that puts profit above the well-being of people and planet, militarisation of economies and politicization of peace efforts for national interests; corporate concentration and the rising power of transnational corporations (TNCs) that further wealth inequalities, exhaust the planet's regenerative biocapacity, engender modern colonial divides, and lead to regulatory capture.

9. The UN, in its growing need for funding, is leaning towards the private sector without accountability mechanisms. It is critical to assess the implications of various funding sources and continue thoughtful debate on guidelines for establishing public-private-people partnerships;

10. In order to align our global architecture to achieve this Agenda, the UN MGCY emphasizes the following:

11. Integrated territorial development is indispensable to localise this global agenda. It addresses inequalities between different types of human settlements;

12. Building on the work of UNEA, agreeing on a universal protocol on plastics is needed. Forests should be given status as protected global commons. Efforts towards the Global Pact on the Environment should be assured to strengthen international environmental law and environment-related instruments to enhance the environmental dimension;

13. Policy approaches should align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development. Concrete initiatives like UNEP's E-RISC<sup>1</sup> and ETR<sup>2</sup> should be universally applied;

14. Gender oppression and inequalities remain significant. Essential to overcoming structural barriers that limit agency of girls and young women is inclusion of their voices in all decision-making spaces;

15. Evidence from various sources (formal, informal, traditional, indigenous, etc.) must form the foundation of each stage of the policy cycle. Anticipatory, participatory technology assessment platforms are needed to ensure technology justice;

16. Promote greater integration and coherence of the various global frameworks and inputs from ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies and forums (e.g. AAAA<sup>3</sup>, SFDRR<sup>4</sup>, GCM<sup>5</sup>, NUA<sup>6</sup>, 10YFP-4-SCP<sup>7</sup>, SPF<sup>8</sup>, Paris Agreement, CSW<sup>9</sup>, Youth Forum, etc.).

17. Ensure rights-based participation that provides protected spaces for critical segments of society, the HLPF reform process should engage Major Groups and other Stakeholders, building on the modalities in A/RES/67/290.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecological Risk Integration into Sovereign Credit

<sup>2</sup> Ecological Tax Reform

<sup>3</sup> Addis Ababa Action Agenda

<sup>4</sup> Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

<sup>5</sup> Global Compact on Migration

<sup>6</sup> New Urban Agenda

<sup>7</sup> 10 Year Framework of Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030

<sup>9</sup> Commission on the Status of Women

### III. Non-Governmental Organisations

The statement submitted by the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group made the following points:

1. Stories collected from NGOs leading up to the 2019 HLPF demonstrate the interconnectedness of the goals and the continuing need to take holistic approaches to achieving them. Challenges noted by NGOs consistently reflected exclusion, disempowerment, reduction of diversity, lack of disaggregated data, separation of sectors, unilateralism, and lack of political will. Where NGOs observed progress, the processes that brought about progress had at their core human rights, inclusion, empowerment, cultural and environmental sustainability, disaggregation of data, cooperation and true collaboration and integration across sectors, multilateralism, and not only will or commitment but also action taken with all stakeholders and with human rights at the centre.
2. Member States, the UN System, and civil society have committed to people-centred and inclusive partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the NGO Major Group calls upon Member States to ensure that civil society and those most affected by policy-making are guaranteed an active and meaningful role in the process of decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation, and assessment ensuring accountability, empowering people to lead their own development, and leaving no one behind.
3. Empowerment, inclusion and equality are the outcomes of and the means for achieving sustainable development for all humanity and for our shared planet.
4. For the 2019 SDGs under review, the NGO-MG calls upon Member States with their unique responsibilities, and all stakeholders to work collaboratively to:
  5. (SDG4) Ensure free and accessible quality education for all, in particular for girls and women; support educators through professional development and adequate financial compensation; expand the vision of education beyond 'preparing workers' to be more holistic and inclusive, using formal and informal structures, and respecting local and indigenous cultures, native languages, and cultural diversity in order to prepare global citizens to contribute to a sustainable society;
  6. (SDG8) Use goal-driven development rooted in human rights to achieve economic growth, opportunity and decent work; take action to reduce CO2 emissions, decouple economic growth from environmental and socio-cultural degradation; eradicate human trafficking and slavery in all forms; and review and revise current GDP-based indicators for SDG 8 in order to capture and learn from a disaggregated picture of growth that shows the impacts of growth on marginalized groups and on workers;
  7. (SDG10) Ensure equality and freedom from discrimination for all, respecting human rights and providing comprehensive social protections; address inequalities between countries, eradicating abusive trade practices and tightening global restrictions on speculative trading; monitor global food prices; reform international financial bodies to ensure more equal representation of low- and middle-income countries; ensure equitable financing for the SDGs including through redistributive fiscal policy; and uphold the Global Compact on Migration;
  8. (SDG13) Align actions with the Paris Agreement; adopt disaster risk-informed planning that includes all stakeholders, especially those most vulnerable to climate risks; empower local communities to strengthen their own resilience; place long-term resilience at the core of disaster preparedness and response actions; prioritize ecologically sustainable practices; and act with urgency on climate

change impacts already affecting lives and ecosystems, engaging multilateral cooperation and cross-sector collaboration;

9. (SDG16) Ensure transparency and meaningful access to government systems at every level and for every person; empower the most vulnerable with full and equal access to justice mechanisms; promote peace to ensure sustained security, rule of law, justice, and inclusiveness; uphold the independence and integrity of the judiciary; and integrate the rule of law and governance-oriented approaches throughout sustainable development efforts and priorities;
10. (SDG17) Form partnerships that include civil society and are sensitive to local socio-cultural contexts; improve transparency; expand access to technological tools, while ensuring their ethical use; and include in meaningful ways the voice and committed actions of civil society in the process of designing and effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda.

#### **IV. Local Authorities**

The statement submitted by the Local Authorities Major Group made the following points:

1. Local and regional governments (LRGs) understand the global agendas as one single universal framework addressing many of the planet's most urgent priorities. The 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, the New Urban Agenda – which we conceive as an accelerator for implementation – constitute a key asset to preserve our planet and the wellbeing of communities around the world.
2. LRGs mobilization and involvement to localize the SDGs is progressing in all regions: there is mounting evidence worldwide that LRGs are taking action and innovating to achieve the 2030 Agenda. LRGs associations at national, regional and international levels are creating a favorable momentum to raise awareness and push for bottom-up implementation of the SDGs. LRGs have been able to foster capacity-building and mutual training and sharing lessons. The first ever LRGs' Forum organized in the 2018 HLPF provided an important space for dialogue between LRGs, Member States, and the UN system involved in the definition, implementation and follow-up of this Agenda.
3. With over 65% of the SDGs targets closely related to the delivery of basic service provision in the hands of LRGs, it will be critical to strengthen local institutions. Although the 17 SDGs are integrated and indivisible, special attention should be paid to SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13 16 and 17 as critical accelerators of strong local ownership and empowerment.
4. Increasing mismatches between responsibilities, development expectations and means of implementation are preventing LRGs from contributing their full potential to achievement of the SDGs. Restrictive legal, financial or institutional frameworks have limited LRGs' ability to mobilize funds for sustainable investments in all world regions.
5. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) do not sufficiently reflect involvement of LRGs in the implementation of global agendas. LRGs have been consulted in VNR drafting processes in only 45 of the 102 countries that reported to the UN between 2016 and 2018. To fill in this gap, Voluntary Local and Regional Reviews are being promoted by the LRGs networks around the world to foster reporting on localization.
6. Our constituency commends the content of the Seville Commitment, promoted by the Governments of Spain, Ecuador and Cape Verde, which calls for cementing a global-local movement to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. We reiterate the importance of the localization of the Global Goals to be fully owned and shaped by local actors.

7. We underscore the relevance of mobilizing a multi-level coalition around localization, and to set up enabling national frameworks that empower local actors to develop and lead their own SDG strategies. Sound governance and integrated territorial development approaches need to be reinforced within accountable, multi-stakeholder and effective local institutional frameworks.
8. We call on national governments and the international community to join this local-global movement for the localization of the SDGs, and to partner with LRGs in this process, especially by: fostering adequate financial instruments and resources to support localization; promoting multi-level, permanent and structural dialogue between national and LRGs and their networks; strengthening the capacities, resources, technologies, innovation and data necessary for long term transformation; promoting territorial and urban-rural cohesion, and energizing decentralized development cooperation to support the implementation of local 2030 agendas.
9. We reiterate the commitment of our organized constituency towards the localization of the global agendas and the wellbeing of our communities. The task is too large for any single level of government or any single stakeholder to fulfil alone. As the closest level of government to our citizens we are committed to leave no one and no place behind and call on national governments and the international community not to leave local and regional governance and territorial cohesion behind.

## **V. Workers and Trade Unions**

The statement submitted by the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group made the following points:

1. The trade union movement calls for a New Social Contract for governments, business and workers, with a *universal labour guarantee* that provides a protection floor for all workers. This means rights and women's equality are respected, jobs are decent with minimum living wages and collective bargaining, workers have some control over working time, social protection coverage is universal, due diligence and accountability drive business operations, and social dialogue ensures just transition measures for climate, technology and displacement.

### **Recommendations to Governments**

#### **Labour Rights Implementation (SDG 8 and SDG 16)**

2. Labour rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining, hand in hand with social dialogue are not only key factors for sustainable economic growth and job creation, but are also pillars of democracy. Building democratic processes is in turn a cornerstone for sustainable development.
3. The ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining must be followed by effective implementation and enforcement systems.
4. Ensure that systems are in place to grant the enforcement at the national level of the ILO Protocol on Forced Labour Convention 29 and Recommendation 203, as well as ILO Conventions on Child Labour.
5. Ensure business accountability and transparency in investments and 'due diligence' in global supply chains as prescribed by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles on Multinational Enterprises and social policy.

6. Establish a Universal Labour Guarantee that provides a labour protection floor for all workers, which includes fundamental workers' rights, an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and ensuring safe and healthy workplaces.

#### **Inclusive Labour Markets Policies (SDG 8 and SDG 4)**

7. Through social dialogue, design and implementation of pro-employment policies - including on youth employment- aligned to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
8. Governments must urgently allocate at least 6 % of GDP on social protection floors and a further 6% on quality and free public education.
9. In the context of climate action and technological shifts, develop systems to support life-long learning, and support the establishment of an international governance system and standard(s) for digital business platforms, as well as regulations to govern data use.
10. Take concrete actions for the formalisation of the informal economy according to ILO Recommendation 204, supported by the ILO Recommendation 202 on social protection floors.

#### **Expansive policies on Wages (SDG 8 and SDG 10)**

11. Implement and enforce statutory minimum wages that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living, be evidence-based and regularly reviewed by social partners and adjusted for inflation. Collective bargaining rights must be ensured to achieve fair wages above the minimum wage level, and collective agreements with sectoral coverage should be promoted.
12. Put in place and enforce robust equal pay and gender-based anti-discrimination legislation, including implementation of pay transparency measures.

#### **Implementation of Social Protection systems (SDG 8 and SDG 10)**

13. Social protection systems should be extended to ensure universal coverage to workers in all forms of work through a combination of tax based social protection floors and contributory social security, in line with ILO standards (Convention 102 and Recommendation 202).

#### **Climate Justice and Just transition (SDG 8 and SDG 13)**

14. Social partners must be involved in the development and implementation of policies and strategies for ambitious emissions reductions, in order to ensure a just transition that guarantees decent jobs.

## **VI. Scientific and Technological Community**

The statement submitted by the Scientific and Technological Major Group made the following points:

1. The Scientific and Technological Community (STC) Major Group, co-organized by International Science Council (ISC) and World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) actively contributes to the implementation of the SDGs and supports the 2019 theme, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

2. International science and engineering organizations are well placed to foster equality and inclusiveness within the global society by enabling solutions-oriented knowledge for the benefit of all. The STC reaffirms the role of science (including natural, and social and human sciences) and engineering in sustainable development, as will also be discussed in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report.
3. The STC highlights the importance of actions to “advance science as a global public good and for enhancing engineering and technology in pursuit of sustainable development, for the benefit of all. Scientific knowledge, data and expertise must be universally accessible and its benefits universally shared. The practice of science must be inclusive and equitable, also in opportunities for scientific education and capacity development”.

**Key messages and recommendations:**

4. The integrated and interdependent nature of the SDGs requires a significant increase in collaboration across disciplines and sectors, and engagement with policy-makers and stakeholders, as also shown in international initiatives such as Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa (LIRA 2030) and the Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) , supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and follow-up work to the 2017 ISC report on SDG interactions. The STC also calls for an enhanced science/technology/policy interface in the UN System.
5. Inclusiveness and equality are enabled also by making knowledge more accessible in order to support decision-making, innovation and benefit-sharing. The STC calls for Open Science and Open Innovation, and works towards effective operationalisation of the concept, as in the African Open Science Platform supported by the South African Department of Science and Technology, and directed by ISC CODATA .
6. The STC calls attention to the importance of strengthening critical skills and capacity in science and engineering and technology to design and implement solutions to advance the SDGs. This is also required for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and effective institutions, as demonstrated by WFEO’s Committee on Anti-Corruption which contributed to the ISO 37001 Anti-bribery management system standard.
7. Assessing the opportunities and implications of rapid technological change for science and for society, in particular with regards to digital transformations, the STC also addresses how wellbeing is impacted, as addressed in the Report on “Understanding wellbeing in the context of rapid digital and associated transformations – implications for research, policy and measurements” developed by the International Network of Government Science Advice.
8. Aligning priorities and leveraging actions by connecting international agendas (e.g., Agenda 2030, Sendai Framework, and Paris Agreement) requires strong and effective partnerships, mobilising data and information and science advisory capacities in integrated ways, in particular to address systemic and cascading risks. The STC with its global membership-based organizations stands ready to contribute to the STI Forum, CSDT-22, UN SDG Summit, UN Climate Action Summit, and related international endeavours such as the upcoming UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).
9. The STC MG (Scientific and Technological Community Major Group) thematic paper provides examples of activities by academies, scientific unions as well as international science organizations towards the implementation of the SDGs under review by highlighting relevant best practices and studies.

10. The STC MG recalls the importance of furthering the HLPF 2019 message to the upcoming UN Climate Action Summit and the UN SDG Summit which will also include the launch of the Global Sustainable Development Report; and the STC MG stands ready to contribute to these processes.

## **VII. Persons with disabilities**

The statement submitted by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities made the following points:

1. It is an indivisible and interdependent human right to ensure inclusion and equality for all persons with disabilities, which is embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and enshrined in the 2030 Agenda. In the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Goals on education, employment, reducing inequalities, climate change, and peaceful and inclusive societies, in particular, must be guided by the CRPD. There are a number of principles and rights enshrined in the CRPD that could potentially apply to most, if not all, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.
2. Persons with disabilities are incredibly diverse in their identities, and those who experience other and intersecting forms of discrimination are at further risk of being excluded from society. All persons with disabilities, and particularly those from underrepresented groups, in rural and urban areas, including persons with albinism, persons with leprosy, persons with psychosocial, intellectual, sensorial, and developmental disabilities, as well as children, women, older persons, indigenous peoples and others with disabilities must have equal opportunities to contribute to sustainable development to truly achieve the SDGs.
3. In many places, the socio-economic gap between persons with and without disabilities is increasing, because persons with disabilities experience low levels of education, higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity and a lack of social protection in comparison to their peers without disabilities. Moreover, persons with disabilities encounter barriers due to lack of or reduced access to healthcare and other services; an increased risk of violence and abuse; lack of access to justice; minimal participation in political and public life; discriminatory attitudes in sexual health, reproductive rights and the right to family life; lack of birth registration; and lack of access to an inclusive and quality education in their own language, and encounter the effects of increasing risks and vulnerability that climate change is creating.
4. Consequently, a system-wide reform is required to strengthen national policies and legal systems to ensure that all persons with disabilities can access quality education, employment, disaster risk reduction programmes, justice systems and other processes ensuring that the policies do not exacerbate discrimination, but rather promote access to mainstream and inclusive programmes. To measure these policies, programmes and activities, indicators such as the OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities should be administered.
5. Both the 2030 Agenda and CRPD require the collection of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data disaggregated by disability. Despite this, limited disability data is available at the global level. Yet, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics short set of questions and the UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module are sustainable, internationally comparable and suitable for disaggregating by disability status and monitoring progress in attaining the SDGs on an ongoing basis. Further, it is critical to foster partnerships between statisticians, policymakers and organizations of persons with disabilities to address policy gaps to achieve the SDGs and CRPD.
6. The ultimate objective of both the CRPD and 2030 Agenda is that every person with a disability is recognized as an equal citizen in every country with full rights on an equal basis with others, with dignity, respect and freedom. We, as persons with disabilities, have as much of an obligation to

achieve this goal as we expect from others. We must ask, isn't it better, as persons with disabilities, to begin taking steps toward this goal by embodying the spirit of the global agenda, by being proactive and visible advocates and partners of transformative change? We all know inclusion is a two-way process, and we must ask ourselves, are we applying the principles for which we advocate?

### **VIII. Volunteer groups**

The statement submitted by the Stakeholder Group on volunteering made the following points:

1. Volunteers and support for their efforts are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the United Nations Volunteers State of the World's Volunteering report<sup>10</sup>, an estimated one billion volunteers are freely giving their time to make a difference on the issues that affect them and their communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. As recognised by the UN Secretary General's Synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda<sup>11</sup>, the ambition of the SDGs will not be realised without the "contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers" and volunteer-driven organizations in both developing and developed countries.
2. Volunteering is a universal phenomenon, but it does not occur at uniform rates, nor is it uniformly effective. It is strongest when it is recognised and supported. National and local governments, the UN 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 this succeeds, we unlock the power of volunteering and enable them to make the greatest possible contribution to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

#### **Promoting active citizenship and strengthening people's ownership of the SDGs**

3. Volunteering is often the first step towards active citizenship and can help strengthen people's ownership of their community's development. Some governments recognise the value of systematic legislation, policies, structures, and programmes for volunteer engagement and have structures to enable more people to volunteer. Where governments have created a conducive environment for civic engagement and more particularly for volunteers to participate – or where they have been responsive to volunteer-led community initiatives – volunteers are more effective in SDG implementation. Volunteers, too, are important for holding Member States accountable for their commitment to the SDGs.
4. The social, legal, and political context in which volunteers operate matters greatly for what they can or cannot contribute to the eradication of poverty. The political bargain between states and citizens, the constitution and legal framework, the social fabric in different countries, the interaction between local, national and global governance, and the diversity of governance actors working at various levels are all elements that affect who can and cannot enter spaces, whose voices are heard, and who influences decision-making.

#### **Promoting inclusion**

5. Embedded in communities, volunteers can often get to places that others cannot and can form a bridge between formal and informal provision of public services. Volunteers are at the forefront of responding

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Volunteers, State of the World's volunteering report, 2018, available at: [https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/UNV\\_SWVR\\_2018\\_English\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/UNV_SWVR_2018_English_WEB.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UN Secretary General Synthesis report on the Post-2015 agenda, (2014), available at: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/files/2015/01/SynthesisReportENG.pdf>

to disasters, as evidenced in the recent Cyclone Idai in Mozambique. They extend support to the most vulnerable and also empower marginalised people to take an active role in addressing the challenges they face.

**The stakeholder group representing volunteering offers the following recommendations to Member States:**

6. Formally recognise the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the SDGs in the Member States' Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF.
7. Ensure that Volunteer Groups are fully recognised and supported in the national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda.
8. 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.
9. 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 closest with them.

**IX. Stakeholder Group on Ageing**

The statement submitted by the Stakeholder Group on Ageing made the following points:

1. Ageing is a global phenomenon which has clear implications for the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to reduce inequalities which increase throughout life as the impact of discrimination accumulates and people experience new forms of discrimination in older age. The current 962 million people aged 60 and above is projected to rise to 1.4 billion by 2030, with the highest proportional growth in Africa and Asia.
2. Global ageing and growing inequalities are two trends which must be addressed together. Societal systems and policies must adapt in the context of population ageing. This change process is critical to wellbeing for all, not older people alone.
3. Lifelong learning, decent work and employment opportunities, tackling economic and social inequalities, ending ageism and ensuring equal rights in older age are frequently raised by older persons as issues of concern.
4. Member States are obliged to uphold universal values shared across continents and cultures and to ensure the equal rights of all persons in their territories in line with the principles and standards of international human rights treaties. Older persons must be protected by public policies that are aligned with these human rights principles and standards and are implemented by programmes that take a life course approach, are age inclusive, tackle ageism and address older persons' rights and needs. However, policies for ageing are often uncoordinated, fragmented or non-existent and lack attention to human rights standards.
5. Member States can accelerate progress by acknowledging and confronting ageism, a key driver of social and economic discrimination and inequalities in older age, which restricts the potential of millions to contribute to sustainable development. Ageist attitudes stereotype, discriminate and exclude older persons. Successfully confronting ageism unlocks a wealth of economic, social and individual capacity, supporting sustainable development.

**Recommendations:****SDG4**

6. Ensure life-long learning opportunities that respond to the rights and preferences of older persons. Reskilling, training and retraining equips older persons to be active agents in a complex and changing world.
7. Adapt learning opportunities, content and methodologies to the interests and preferences of older persons.
8. Ensure basic literacy and numeracy for all older persons and enable digital inclusion, a prerequisite to fulfilling the right of all to education and ensuring full participation in society.

**SDG8**

9. Provide social protection and flexible working arrangements in order to facilitate and improve conditions for older persons in the informal and formal labour markets.
10. Recognise the specific contributions of older people in both urban and rural settings. This includes paid, unpaid and volunteer work.
11. Remove age restrictive policies on access to microcredit, loans and financial investments.
12. Enact and enforce national and global anti-age discrimination legislation and review age-related exemptions in existing equality legislation.

**SDG10**

13. Ensure all people across the life course have age, disability and gender-equitable social protection and pension systems by means of the universal implementation of Target 1.3 on social protection floors and other measures.
14. Enact affordable, high-quality, person-centred and accessible social services, including universal health care including long-term care, for all older persons.
15. Ensure meaningful participation of older persons in all planning and decision-making processes, including through information on rights and entitlements.
16. Put in place a binding international legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons.

**SDG17**

17. Prioritise and finance the collection of age-disaggregated data at the national, regional and global level.
18. Support National Statistical Offices to gather, systematize and disaggregate age-related data.
19. Take notice of, finance and support the ongoing work of the Titchfield Group on Ageing-Related Statistics and Age-Disaggregated Data.
20. Ensure systematic inclusion of upper age groups in SDG monitoring and reporting.

## **X. Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM)**

The statement submitted by the Stakeholder Group of the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism made the following points:

1. Despite progress, serious challenges remain for the achievement of the SDGs. Most of the SDG targets are off track and not likely to be met. In Asia Pacific, there are widening inequalities and poverty exacerbated by mega-free trade agreements, regressive tax systems and illicit financial flows, resource grabbing, patriarchy and fundamentalism, human rights violations, degradation of the environment, denial of peoples' access to resources and services, climate change, militarism, and shrinking democratic spaces. Such systemic issues will continue to compromise the achievement of the goals under review and the entire 2030 Agenda.
2. To realize the ambition of Goal 4, education needs to be reframed as a basic human right and a public good guaranteed by the state. Concretely, governments in the region must allocate at least 4-6% of GDP and 15-20% of total expenditure to education. Teachers' rights, welfare, and empowerment must be guaranteed to recognize and facilitate their meaningful contribution to policy development and fulfillment of education goals.
3. If Goal 8 is to be truly transformative, it must enable women and men to move out of low productivity, informal, insecure, and vulnerable work. It must promote a rights-based and human-centered employment policy that will create decent jobs that will fully respect workers' rights, especially the right to association and collective bargaining, and will promote universal social protection and genuine social dialogue. Decent work is integral to sustainable development by eradicating poverty, addressing inequality and ensuring productivity growth with a just transition for climate justice as well as full-utilization of technological advances. There is an urgent need for a Universal Labour Guarantee based on fundamental workers' rights to ensure adequate living wages, limits on hours of work, and safety of workplaces for all.
4. For Goal 10, we need to challenge economic policies, and institutions that entrench inequalities and discrimination. We must overhaul trade rules skewed to developed countries and their elites. To redistribute wealth, individuals and corporations should pay their fair share by taxing their assets, using the collected revenues to finance social services. We urge governments to promote social enterprises to increase opportunities and income-generating activities and contribute to reducing inequalities.
5. Goal 13 must translate to adequate and appropriate climate finance contributed by countries on the basis of historical responsibility for global warming and to make reparations to all affected parties. We must put an end to fossil fuels and to market solutions to climate change. Climate action must be prioritized in the mainstream budgeting and planning processes across countries in the region.
6. Achieving Goal 16 requires addressing the systemic issues at the root of conflict and marginalization in the region. Critically, governments must shift resources away from military spending to social services. Civil society space must not only be recognized but progressively expanded. Urgently, state authorities must put an end to all forms of attacks and harassment against rights defenders.
7. Goal 17 is the most vital component of the 2030 Agenda, thus, a business-as-usual approach is not an option. The long-standing commitment of developed countries to dedicate 0.7% of gross domestic income to ODA should be met unconditionally. Trade should protect policy space for development and peoples' rights. States must make human rights, environmental and SDG compatibility impact

assessments of tax policies, trade and investment agreements, and new technologies. Member States should put in place a regional tax body to reform the taxation architecture and synergise regional cooperation on taxation.

8. Recognizing the significance and resolving structural and systemic barriers is necessary and should be given due attention. The way forward is to recast development as a process organized and lead by the people to achieve development justice.

## **XI. Together 2030**

The statement submitted by the Stakeholder Group of Together 2030 made the following points:

### **Realizing the SDGs for All: Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality for Every Person, Everywhere**

1. Inclusiveness, equality and equity are not just issues for developing countries. Though marginalization and vulnerability take different forms in different countries, and different groups are left behind in different contexts, the presence of these groups and individuals is universal and constant. Reducing these domestic disparities must be elevated as a priority. The significant gaps between developed and developing countries persist and even widen. We should not forget that whole countries can be 'left behind'.
2. Ensuring inclusiveness, equality and equity means approaching the SDGs in an integrated manner. The realization of the set of goals under review will not be possible if progress across the other SDGs is not also ensured. The Voluntary National Reviews should reflect the implementation of the 17 Goals in accordance to their universal, integrated and interrelated approach.
3. Over three years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, stakeholder engagement remains limited. The HLPF has the potential to have an incredibly meaningful impact on SDGs implementation; however, this can only be achieved by increasing civil society engagement. The HLPF should establish a formal mechanism for reporting that brings the contributions of civil society out of the shadows.
4. The upcoming review of the HLPF will provide crucial opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the follow up and review mechanism of the SDGs. All stakeholders must be included in the review process, which must be transparent and participatory, in the same ways as the Open Working Groups.
5. For the specific goals under review, particularly on Goal 4, Governments must ensure that everyone, girls and boys alike, including people affected by emergencies and crises, have access to free, universal, quality, equitable, safe and inclusive education. They must also ensure that both children and adults have adequate health and nutrition to allow them to achieve maximum educational attainment. Similarly, it is important to consider interlinkages across the SDGs. In SDG 4, schools can play a critical role in protecting children from violence. Consequently, there are targets in SDG 4 that can directly contribute to SDG 16 on its targets related to violence prevention.
6. On Goal 8, efforts are needed to promote job creation and improve the quality of jobs. This means strengthening implementation of labour standards going beyond payment of living wages. Efforts must likewise be made to end child labour. Governments must incorporate climate- smart and resilient thinking into infrastructure and economic plans to ensure economic growth opportunities are not washed away by disasters.
7. Regarding Goal 10, efforts are needed to address inequality within countries through measures including progressive taxation, improved implementation of social protection mechanisms as well as

universal, free and equitable public services, and ensuring greater visibility of women and persons with disabilities and equal access to justice. Inequalities also increase children's risk of experiencing different forms of violence. The failure to protect children from violence can also contribute to and exacerbate inequalities and discrimination.

8. On Goal 13, national governments need to put in place actionable plans to improve the use of renewable energy sources at every household level. High and low-income countries should initiate decarbonization in accordance with the Paris Agreement. In addition, Governments must promote traditional and local knowledge on climate mitigation to allow people to use their knowledge and practices to manage their livelihoods.
9. Regarding Goal 16, strengthening national and international norms on peace, justice and governance is required. This needs to be backed by coordinated efforts to build institutional capacities and mechanisms for inclusive participation. Similarly, Governments must prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings. Evidence-based solutions should be delivered through strong child protection systems, guided by policy solutions and multi-sectoral responses, and backed by investments that enable their application.
10. In respect to Goal 17, accountability and monitoring systems must be put in place and national governments must commit to implementation strategies that ensure a participatory and inclusive approach.