



**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the
auspices of the General Assembly at its 74th session**

24-25 September 2019, New York

CONCEPT NOTE – LEADERS DIALOGUE

Introduction

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the General Assembly – the SDG Summit – will take place on 24 and 25 September at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It will be the occasion for Heads of State and Government together with all relevant stakeholders to review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over the past four years, considerable progress has been made on a number of SDGs and targets. The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, show that many Governments have prioritized the integration of the SDGs into their national plans and policies, including local government and cities. Institutional arrangements have been made to drive and monitor progress. Initial progress has been achieved and challenges identified.

There has also been significant response from stakeholders, including international organizations, businesses, civil society, academia, youth and others, who, through a wide range of actions and initiatives, have identified entry points to advance SDG implementation. The United Nations Development System has also been undergoing the deepest reform in decades to better respond to the paradigm shift at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

At the same time, progress has been slow on many SDGs, and the most vulnerable people and countries continue to suffer the most. The global response thus far has not been ambitious and transformative enough. There is need for a major effort to move faster towards the vision of the 2030 Agenda and accelerate our efforts.

The SDG Summit therefore aims to not only review progress but also to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda. It aims to mark the beginning of a decade of delivery and to provide space for all actors to identify SDG acceleration actions that will speed up the transformation of our societies and economies.

The Leaders Dialogues are intended to provide platforms for Heads of State and Government to share insights, give specific guidance and make recommendations on the six main themes that will be addressed during the Summit. The themes are inspired by the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), written by a team of Independent Scientists, and by the Secretary-General's Special Edition of the annual SDG Progress Report.



Leaders Dialogue 1:

Megatrends Impacting the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

(Tuesday, 24 September 2019 at 17:05 -18.00)

Important changes are taking place at a global scale that impact all our lives and set the stage on which actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda will play out. These trends include population and economic growth, environmental degradation, climate change and developments in science and technology. They are set in motion by human activity and can represent the aggregated impact of individual and collective decisions at various levels. They have ripple effects in a world that is increasingly interconnected through how its natural systems interact, and also through increasing flows of goods, capital, people, information and knowledge.

At a macro-level, these trends are indeed global – however, the ways in which they impact specific populations, communities or countries depend on the context. For example, demographic changes are taking place across the world, but certain regions are currently experiencing rapid growth in numbers of young people, while others face a relatively faster increase in older people. Recent global assessments indicate an accelerating decline in the quality and integrity of natural systems across the world, with a million species faced with extinction, even as areas under protection in some parts of the world are increasing. Critically, trends like biodiversity loss and climate change are reaching tipping points where negative impacts may become irreversible. Rapid advances in science and technology offer the promise of addressing many challenges, but also bring to the fore issues such as increasing inequality across and within countries.

Taken together, these (and other) megatrends indicate that a forward-looking approach to SDG implementation is needed, which anticipates these on-going changes while also taking into account the impact of implementation actions on them.

Objective

This session will consider implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the context of megatrends: the response of governments in planning and adapting SDG actions; opportunities presented by these trends for accelerating progress across multiple goals and targets; and the potential impact of collaborations and partnerships towards more sustainable outcomes.

Guiding Questions

- What are the most critical global trends that are already influencing SDG actions and how?
- How can trends such as demographic changes, technology, global integration be leveraged to maximize positive synergies across the SDGs? What institutional, policy and partnership mechanisms are needed to ensure positive outcomes?
- Are there emerging trends, not fully evident today, but expected to present challenges or opportunities for the 2030 Agenda, five or ten years from now? How can the science-policy interface be strengthened to forecast and better prepare for new challenges?



Leaders Dialogue 2:

Accelerating the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: Critical Entry Points

(Wednesday, 25 September 2019 at 10.05-11.00)

The true transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda lies in achieving the SDGs and targets through an integrated approach that builds on the interlinkages between the goals, maximizing the synergies while alleviating the trade-offs. An integrated approach requires finding entry points where the potential interlinkages are particularly strong, so that addressing them jointly and effectively would accelerate progress in implementation towards a broad sweep of the Agenda. One such entry point identified in the GSDR is strengthening human well-being, which implies eradicating deprivations, closing opportunity gaps and expanding capabilities, including through access to quality education. Other entry points include: (i) shifting towards sustainable and just economies, (ii) building sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition patterns, (iii) achieving energy decarbonization with universal access to energy, (iv) promoting sustainable urban and peri-urban development and (v) securing the earth's shared natural resources in the global environmental commons. Each of these areas encompasses multiple SDGs and targets and are entry points for cross-cutting progress across the 2030 Agenda within relatively short timelines. But entry points for transformation are not exclusive of these examples.

Other entry points may be best suited to specific regional, national or local contexts. The SDG Progress Report also identifies eight systemic and cross-cutting areas where urgent action is required and they are (i) leaving no one behind; (ii) mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing; (iii) strengthening effective and inclusive institutions for implementing integrated solutions; (iv) accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs locally; (v) building resilience; (vi) investing in data for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda; (vii) realizing the benefits of science, technology and innovation for all; and (viii) solving challenges through international cooperation

Objective

This session will consider how strategic actions can be applied by multiple actors and institutions at critical entry points for transformations that will accelerate progress across multiple SDGs. It will focus on how an integrated approach to policy-making and partnerships for the 2030 Agenda can be applied in practical terms through tangible entry points and actions in systemic and cross-cutting areas.

Guiding Questions

- What are some specific examples of actions that can be taken through some of the above entry points to generate positive synergies across the 2030 Agenda?
- What kind of policies are needed to accelerate action in cross-cutting areas?
- What new partnerships and institutional arrangements are needed to strengthen integrated approaches for action across the SDGs? How can different actors and institutions be encouraged to work across sectors?
- An integrated approach is likely to reveal trade-offs as well as synergies. How can the science-technology-policy interface be strengthened to help inform actions and to transfer knowledge across different contexts?



**Leaders Dialogue 3:
Leveraging Progress Across the Sustainable Development Goals
(Wednesday, 25 September 2019, 11.05 -12.00)**

The 2030 Agenda is unprecedented in its level of ambition and range of interconnection across goals and targets, and it will be achieved only when a diverse array of actors – local and national governments, the private sector, academia, civil society organizations, youth and others – work together. The GSDR identifies four “levers of transformation” available for use by these actors: governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology.

Several of these levers are enumerated in the Agenda itself as the ‘means of implementation’, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that they must be deployed in strategic, innovative and integrated ways if they are to reach their transformative potential. At the same time, it is also clear that SDG progress itself can end up improving the efficacy of these levers or how they work together – which is also critically important. Governments, civil society and the private sector can advance the SDGs through effective, transparent and participatory institutions, given sufficient means of implementation: adequate financing from a range of sources (including Official Development Assistance); latest scientific evidence and technological solutions, among others. Likewise, academic and government institutions can strengthen the role that science and technology play in policy making in part by supporting innovative approaches to sustainability science, emphasizing cross-disciplinary partnerships, and by committing support and resources to scientific institutions in the Global South.

Objective

The session will explore how these levers (governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology) can be used in strategic combinations and partnerships to drive the transformations towards sustainable development. Participants will discuss concrete interventions that draw on a mix of policy measures, financial mechanisms, effective partnerships, and insights from science and technology to drive change. The emphasis will be on success stories and approaches that can be transferred from one national or sub-national context to another, including through partnerships, capacity building programmes, city networks, and other collaborations. Difficulties or challenges in operationalizing such initiatives will also be discussed.

Guiding Questions

- How can policy makers use the GSDR “levers of transformation” – governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology – in innovative combinations? How can they overcome the roadblocks to these collaborative approaches?
- How can non-government actors, including business and community leaders, academic institutions, and civil society organizations, team up to drive change and encourage new and increased financial investment in the 2030 Agenda?
- What can the United Nations and other relevant entities do to build capacity in developing countries to fully and effectively deploy the levers of transformation?



**Leaders Dialogue 4:
Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals
(Wednesday, 25 September 2019 at 12.05 – 13.00)**

The VNRs conducted at the HLPF have shown that the 2030 Agenda has generated extensive implementation efforts in many countries. Goals and targets have been mapped and/or adapted to national situations and included in new or revised development plans and strategies. The SDGs are also being pursued through multisectoral policies, though ensuring policy coherence across sectors and levels of government remains an important challenge. For example, few countries appear to have costed the SDGs, making it difficult to develop an integrated financing framework.

Many countries have mobilized their institutions around the SDGs, or created new institutional arrangements to promote, coordinate and review the implementation of the SDGs. Some have even involved their parliaments or other oversight institutions in their effort to implement the SDGs, and in many cases those institutions have taken their own initiative and conducted dedicated hearings and discussions. Additionally, they have a critical role to play in helping to keep the momentum on SDGs implementation within the business sector and civil society.

Local and regional governments have also undertaken actions to raise awareness about the 2030 Agenda and are often well placed to lead implementation. Many mayors, governors and local public officers have already committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They can play an important role in generating growth and employment through local economic development or fiscal strategies; promoting the inclusion of women and youth; raising awareness of the importance of sustainable consumption and production; and coordinating partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.

Objective

The session is intended to focus on country-level experiences in localizing the sustainable development goals, adapting them to national and local situations and incorporating them in policies, institutions, financial frameworks and ways of working. It will also discuss the mobilization of national and local actors around the SDGs.

Guiding Questions

- What are the greatest challenges for governments in implementing the SDGs and how can they accelerate progress?
- What are some good examples of policy coherence and cooperation across different levels of government?
- What are successful good practices and experiences from local-level and can they be scaled-up?



**Leadership Dialogue 5:
Partnerships for Sustainable Development**
(Wednesday, 25 September, 15:05 – 16.00)

The 2030 Agenda has called for a revitalized Global Partnership, working in a spirit of global solidarity, in particular with the poorest and the most vulnerable. Since the Agenda's adoption in 2015, Governments around the world have been working to mobilize the means required to implement it, supported by the concrete policies and actions outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and in the 2030 Agenda.

However, because of its unprecedented scope and breadth, this ambitious 2030 Agenda, and the 17 SDGs at its core, cannot be achieved by Governments alone. It is therefore encouraging that an increasing number of multi-stakeholder partnerships have been taking shape among Governments, the private sector, civil society, UN system and other relevant stakeholders, to fulfill this collective responsibility.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development have the potential to complement the global partnership, including by building bridges for cross sectoral collaboration, channeling knowledge, expertise, innovations as well as financial resources to develop concrete solutions, sometimes directly transforming the lives of those furthest behind.

In the next decade for acceleration actions for the SDGs, the effectiveness of development cooperation as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships will have a considerable impact on the success of the overall 2030 Agenda.

Objective

The session aims to discuss the progress of revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and international cooperation; identify impactful multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation and identify gaps to guide partnership development in the next decade; and to share good practices and lessons learned in overcoming the various challenges brought by the multi-stakeholder approach to improve partnership effectiveness.

Guiding Questions

- Where are we on revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development?
- Where have multi-stakeholder partnerships been most effective in SDG implementation thus far? How might these be replicated and scaled-up to maximize impact?
- What challenges does the multi-stakeholder approach bring? What has worked in overcoming these challenges?



Leaders Dialogue 6: 2020-2030 Vision

(Wednesday, 25 September 2019 at 16.05 – 17.00)

Evidence from both the GSDR and the SDG Progress Report indicates that we are not on track for realizing many goals and targets by 2030, including the eradication of extreme poverty. The ten years remaining until 2030 should therefore be considered the ‘decade of delivery’ devoted to realizing the promise of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The ‘decade of delivery’ will demonstrate that a new, more inclusive multilateralism can work to address global challenges and risks, including rising hunger due to conflicts, economic fragility, inequalities, and environmental degradation. In a fast-changing world, the focus must be on the ambitious and global solutions that are already known to work while continuing the search for innovative ones to transform our economies and societies on a healthy planet. Science and technology hold great promise for realizing the SDGs and can be transformed into a powerful force for good.

The international community should also address the 21 targets that mature in 2020, most of which are unlikely to be met. Of those, twelve relate to various aspects of biodiversity and are critical to how we continue to engage with nature and how we manage natural resources. With up to one million species currently facing the threat of extinction, an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework would be necessary to urgently address this global crisis.

In addition, there are other 2020 targets on road traffic accidents, opportunities for higher education in LDCs, SIDS and African countries, youth employment, universal internet access, disaster resilience, climate change financing (\$100 billion annually); increasing the exports of developing countries, including doubling LDCs’ share of global exports; and enhancing the capacity of developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to have high-quality, timely and reliable data. Moreover, 2025 targets relate to global water use, energy use from renewable sources and emissions.

Objective

This session will focus on the vision for the ten-year period remaining until 2030. It will also address the targets that have a completion date of 2020 to assess progress and options for the way forward. Moreover, leaders will highlight the critical actions they intend to take in the short- and long-term to ensure all targets and goals are achieved by 2030.

Guiding Questions

- What are the best options for ensuring that the 2020 targets are realized without losing the ambition intended?
- What transformative steps and long-term strategies are required to achieve the goals at national, regional and global levels?
- How might multilateralism be leveraged to accelerate implementation in last decade of delivery? What actions will have the greatest impact?