

2019 High-level Political Forum (HLPF)

Opening & Scene setting

How far are we from the SDGs?

Tuesday, 9 July 2019

9:00-10:00 AM, Conference Room 4

Vice-President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Valentin Rybakov

Remarks

President of the Economic and Social Council,
Under-Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to join the opening of the 2019 High-level Political Forum to share the key messages from the Integration Segment that we just concluded yesterday.

Following the guidance of the General Assembly in its resolution 72/305 on ECOSOC strengthening, the Integration Segment set out to bring together key messages from ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system on the ECOSOC and HLPF theme. Through various interactive sessions, we focused on what needs to be done for empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Our discussions also brought back to the fore the close interconnections among the Sustainable Development Goals and among the five 'P's of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

Excellencies,

I am inspired that the ECOSOC functional commissions, regional commissions and expert bodies and the UN system have strongly embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and the SDGs. With their rich technical and expert analysis, assessments and policy recommendations, they helped us explore the way to accelerate progress.

The High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) can thus build on the combined policy frameworks of the subsidiary bodies for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and addressing a wide range of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues in a cohesive manner. The voluntary national review process was considered particularly useful for engaging actors and enhancing an integrated approach at national level.

Today, we are facing a different world than in 2015: multilateralism and institutions are being questioned by some actors; accelerated climate change, environmental degradation, technological advancements and protracted crises have important implications for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The subsidiary bodies and UN system told us that achieving the SDGs requires an immediate change in course where the pledge to leave no one behind is fulfilled on the basis of internationally agreed principles and standards of human rights.

For this, policies and programmes for implementing the SDGs should be designed, executed and monitored in participatory and transparent ways. This will maximize their positive impacts and ensure that policies reflect all facets of people's lives in an integrated manner.

Subsidiary bodies and the UN system also told us that we need to address deep-rooted inequalities and vulnerabilities across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Addressing inequalities requires our focus on policies that not only aim to leave no one behind, but also that address the mechanisms that lead to concentration of wealth and power at the top. We need measures to improve the situation of specific groups and ensure that no one is pushed further behind. Anti-discriminatory legislation remains an important tool, including for gender equality. We

also need to address the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls, which hinder their participation in education and employment.

The subsidiary bodies and the UN system recognize that all this means that we need a profound overhaul of our current development models. It implies that we must work with all actors to change behaviors so that they support the achievement of the SDGs, including the private sector.

It is widely agreed that, four years into the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, many policies, legislation and investments still fail to consider the potential trade-offs and synergies between the SDGs, namely the impacts of measures in one sector on the other sectors, groups of people and countries, as well as the consequences for future generations. This kind of silo-thinking continues to slow down our progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Integrated policies are one of the key transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda and a tool for accelerating progress. In some cases, too much emphasis is placed on the short-term trade-offs without the consideration of long-term synergies.

One example where we need integrated and coordinated action is hunger and poverty. It is important to deal with their root causes through mutually reinforcing actions while enhancing resilience against shocks and climate change. Another example is child-related interventions that yield relatively low financial costs and high returns, in terms of human lives and economic productivity.

Integrated policies are also needed to equip people with the skills they need to take the jobs of the future, which will be shaped by new technologies and the focus on green jobs. We need new content for education and training. Education and training should also help to uproot discrimination and infuse a sense of solidarity, including in the public sector. Macroeconomic, industrial, fiscal and labour policies also need to ensure inclusive sustainable growth, reduce inequality and prepare the ground for the deep changes that await us. Budgets need to be SDG coherent and SDG-aligned. The much needed fiscal

space can be created through innovative financing, reform of tax administration, combatting illicit financial flows and tax transparency.

Improved governance, capacity-building and public sector reform are also all necessary ingredients for advancing sustainable development. Local governments can play a critical role breaking down silos and accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

An integrated approach to the SDGs also requires a focus on the peace and security, human rights and development nexus. There is a need to ensure women's engagement and participation in all stages of peace processes. Sustainable development and the rule of law are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Crime needs to be addressed in a broader development context, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The subsidiary bodies and UN system also consider that a major challenge remains mobilizing the means of implementation for realizing the SDGs. One aspect is mobilizing resources from all sources. Another is that we need to carry out a deep review of macro-economic and fiscal policies to ensure that they do not push people further behind and help direct resources where they will have the greatest impact on the SDGs, human rights and gender equality. International cooperation is essential.

Another major challenge is the insufficient statistical capacity as well as limited disaggregation of data. Without the necessary data, the implementation of the Agenda would be seriously hindered and, the ambition of no one left behind would not be realized.

Taken together, the UN system and ECOSOC subsidiary bodies convey important and potentially transformative guidance. There is the feeling that the HLPF and ECOSOC could better build on their work.

Excellencies,

It is time to step up efforts to achieve empowerment, inclusion and equality and to realize the SDGs. To inspire concrete actions, we need to better utilise the wealth of expertise and knowledge of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system entities.

I wish you a successful High-level Political Forum.

Thank you.