

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2019

“Messages for the 2019 HLPF Summit”

18 July 2019, 5:00-5:30 pm

Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters

Draft messages

Many messages from our discussions during these eight days of the HLPF are of high importance for informing the SDGs summit in September. We would like to highlight a few points we see as important for the summit.

Areas where we have seen progress and signs of success

1. Country ownership of the 2030 Agenda is as strong as ever. As of today, 142 countries have presented Voluntary National Reviews, and 15 of those have done so twice.
2. These voluntary national reviews, and their often extensive and inclusive preparatory processes illustrate the breadth and depth of actions being taken by governments and a multiplicity of actors to implement the 2030 Agenda. We are inspired by the variety of actions that the HLPF has showcased – within and beyond government.
3. Countries have been adapting the SDGs to their national situations, reviewing policies and plans, and organizing their institutions to drive, coordinate and review progress against the SDGs. Many reported on successful actions they took in this regard, including to ensure that the SDGs are reflected in local level actions, link budgets with the SDGs or engage stakeholders in implementing or reviewing the SDGs.
4. The VNRs also demonstrated that many countries are facing similar challenges. Many said that it was highly complex to develop integrated policies and long-term plans to achieve the SDGs, assess and evaluate the results of policies, institutionalize consultations with stakeholders or build awareness about the SDGs. Statistics and data, and mobilizing financial resources, are widely shared challenges.
5. Countries stated that the VNRs were very useful to get an overview of their situation and policies to achieve the SDGs. Countries are committed to sharing experiences, lessons learned and opportunities for implementation.

Areas where action needs to be accelerated

6. Advances have been slow with respect to various goals and targets. There have also been reversals of positive trends in important areas. Generally, we need to deeply overhaul and step

up our actions if we want to meet the SDGs by 2030 and ensure that no one is left behind: It is time to sound the alarm bell and accelerate action.

7. **Discussing the goals under review at 2019 HLPF**, there was an overall agreement that education is a powerful and central tool for achieving the 2030 Agenda. However, the world is facing a learning crisis and children are not acquiring the most basic skills they need. Shortcomings in equality and inclusiveness are among the biggest barriers to SDG 4, particularly for girls and for children in areas of conflict. There is an urgent need to impart the necessary skills to youth, women and vulnerable groups in a rapidly changing labour market so as to ensure that no one is left behind.
8. It is crucial to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, as contained in SDG 8. This also includes to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking. Inequality is strikingly high, becoming worse in parts of the world. SDG 10 must be given much greater attention in policies and actions must address the multiple dimensions of inequality. Climate change is a threat multiplier, which put many of humanity's biggest achievements in jeopardy. Progress on SDG13 is falling far short of what is needed to meet the targets of the global agenda by 2030. Building on the synergies between climate action and the SDGs will help scale up ambition in both areas.
9. Peaceful, just and inclusive societies are catalysts in fighting poverty, ensuring education, promoting gender equality and economic growth. Implementing SDG 16 is both as a and an enabler for the achievement of all SDGs and access to justice is a common thread for all SDGs. This demands responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at a massive investment in equal access to justice which is currently unavailable for the majority of people. Intensifying the fight against all forms of corruption, including through international cooperation, is necessary to meet these multiple challenges to the SDGs.
10. The required level of **sustainable development financing and other means of implementation** are not yet coming on stream. Domestic resource mobilization needs to be further addressed, including through an enabling environment for private investment, strengthening tax administrations and addressing illicit financial flows. A universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system can be a relevant means of implementation. Budgeting for the SDGs and incorporating the goals into national financial frameworks is key to operationalize our ambitious implementation plans and yet only a small number of countries have concrete plans for financing SDGs. Integrated National Financing Frameworks can support countries to address financing challenges. We need to secure the engagement of ministries of finance, as the main custodian of the budget process, in matching resources with SDG implementation plans. Parliaments also have a key role to play through their budgetary role. Significant resources can also be mobilized at the regional level. International cooperation remains of paramount importance for mobilizing the resources we need for reaching the SDGs.

11. **Better understanding of interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs:** The goals and targets are interlinked and actions taken to achieve any one target impact others, in either positive or negative ways. Leveraging these interlinkages effectively will simultaneously accelerate progress across multiple goals and targets. The Global Sustainable Development Report has provided a scientific assessment of six key entry points through which such action can be taken by governments and other stakeholders. Science, technology and innovation can help us make the most of the co-benefits while alleviating the trade-offs across different parts of the 2030 Agenda so as to spur the systemic transformations the world needs.
12. **Governance & policy coherence:** Governance is a key lever to make progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Yet, the integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda remains a challenge for our institutions, and the traditional way of policy making which happens in silos. Gaps and challenges persist in coordination structures that have been put in place. Policy coherence, both horizontal across government and vertical – from local, national to regional and sub-regional levels of government – presents a key challenge. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on the longer-term development of institutions and capacities, even if they are harder to quantify. A focus on inclusiveness is required.
13. **Data & leaving no one behind:** The data requirements of the 2030 Agenda challenge developing and developed countries alike. This has demonstrated the immense work that is done by our national statistical offices but also reveals their capacity constraints. The availability of quality, timely, disaggregated and open data and statistics, as well as the capacity to use it, are vital not only for governments and international organizations, but also for the private sector, civil society and the general public to make informed decisions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to leave no one behind. If the most vulnerable are not visible in statistics, there will not be appropriate policy action to leave no one behind and to identify the causes of inequality in opportunity. We need a major capacity development efforts in the area of data and statistics, including adequate financing.
14. **Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls:** We need to accelerate action towards gender equality. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial. Achieving gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of the human rights of all women and girls is critical to achieve peaceful, just, inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies.
15. **Partnerships:** No single government can achieve the 2030 Agenda on its own. Genuine and accountable partnerships between governments and stakeholders are critical to advance the 2030 Agenda. Many have been developed in the wake of the 2030 Agenda, but we need to accelerate efforts. Partnerships, including private public partnerships, and international cooperation are fundamental in supporting countries in special situations to get on track to meet the SDGs by 2030. Partnerships facilitate invaluable peer learning, capacity development and sharing of experiences.

16. **HLPF:** Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the HLPF has become the apex of the review and follow-up processes on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. It is the forum where countries, UN System entities, businesses, representatives of Major Groups and other stakeholders exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices. The review of the format and organization of the HLPF by the General Assembly at its 74th session is the opportunity to further enhance its role to fully deliver on its functions. This should include exploring ways to fully use the VNRs to identify challenges and mobilize support in implementing the SDGs. It should also determine how the HLPF can best review and promote progress on all SDGs while also examining interlinkages, and overall increase the impact of its work at the country level.
17. **Regional level implementation** is an important part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The regional forums on sustainable development convened by the UN regional commissions provide an important space for peer learning and for showcasing practical solutions to region-wide challenges. Their perspectives should be better integrated into the discussions at the global level.
18. The meaningful participation of all segments of society and stakeholders is vital for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the national, regional and global levels, and its follow-up and review at the HLPF.