



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

### Concept Note

***“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”***

#### Introduction

The high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) will take place from Tuesday, 5 July, to Thursday, 7 July, and from Monday, 11 July, to Friday, 15 July 2022. This includes the three-day ministerial segment of the forum from Wednesday, 13 July, to Friday, 15 July 2022, as a part of the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

With 2022, we have entered the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, that has inflicted unprecedented human suffering and, with its combined social, economic, and health impact, has outpaced any other major crisis in recent history. The HLPF will take stock of the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The HLPF will also provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on how to advance the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda during the Decade of Action and Delivery, as part of ensuring sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the pandemic.

The HLPF in 2022 will also conduct an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The forum will take into account the different and particular impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all SDGs and the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals. The forum will also start to discuss the preparations of the 2023 SDG Summit.

The present note outlines key aspects of the programme of the HLPF and its preparations. The programme of the 2022 HLPF and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC is available on the HLPF 2022 website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf#hlpf2022>.

#### Background

Human beings and societies are adaptable and have adapted to the exigencies of life in a global pandemic, to varying degrees. Even with such adaptation, however, the pandemic has imposed huge human costs. Large-scale economic disruption has increased the poverty, hunger and

economic vulnerability of hundreds of millions of people. Health impacts have included, in addition to disease and deaths caused by the pandemic, deteriorations of mental health. Violence against women and children has increased. Education shifted in many countries from in-person to online instruction, but for many students around the world the latter has been a far-from-perfect substitute for the former, given inequalities in access to internet. Vaccination and care for diseases other than COVID-19 has stalled. Given unequal access to financial resources and to the vaccine, countries differ widely in their ability to cushion employment and income shocks through social protection measures.

Even before the pandemic, progress towards the SDGs was uneven across goals and countries, with many developing countries lagging behind on goals and targets measuring basic human well-being (poverty rates, food security, access to affordable health care). Many developed countries lagged behind on the environment-focused goals, and on tackling climate change. The pandemic has set back progress towards the SDGs almost everywhere and slowed implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Extraordinary efforts will be needed to make up lost ground and accelerate progress. To some degree, extraordinary measures have been taken by governments in the wake of the pandemic to cushion the impact on the poor and vulnerable populations.

Yet, inequalities across countries translate into wide discrepancies in the affordability and implementation of emergency social protection measures and stimulus packages. We have been starkly reminded of those inequalities by the pandemic itself – notably, in the different and of vulnerabilities of different social groups within countries. Inequalities in access to life-saving vaccines and therapeutics across countries and regions have caused many deaths and hinder recovery, in the poorest countries but also in the world as a whole. The world's economic recovery has been slowing down due to new variants of the virus.

If the 2030 Agenda is to be fully implemented and the SDGs fully achieved, a dramatic reduction in global inequalities and in inequalities within countries is needed. Reducing them will result from a combination of more effective governance at multiple levels: increased access to financial resources in developing countries and investment in the SDGs, including health, education, employment opportunities, social protection policies as well as fiscal measures aimed at mitigating domestic social exclusion and inequality. Trade and access to technologies are also critical.

Looking ahead to the coming few years, the international community, countries and other actors still have an historic opportunity to restore progress towards poverty eradication, substantially reduce global inequalities, address the environmental and climate crisis, as countries work to recover and build back better from this pandemic. The 2030 Agenda provides the best available framework for guiding us in this endeavor. Seizing this opportunity will require major adjustments in international financial and economic systems, in national policies

and in the way societies produce, consume and share benefits and risks.

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The HLPF will analyze whether policies and initiatives implemented at national and international level in the context of the recovery from COVID-19 are actually likely to reverse negative trends on the SDGs and launch accelerated progress. It will discuss lessons learned, good practices, course-correction that appear to be needed in light of countries' ongoing efforts to recover better. It will also examine critical actions to support the poorest countries through international solidarity and notably ensure more equal access to the vaccine, financial resources and technology. The Forum will also reflect on the possible impacts of current economic, financial and monetary policies in developed countries on developing countries' debt and financial space.

### **Key issues to be addressed in the programme**

The programme of the 2022 HLPF will assess the global situation regarding the SDGs and the impact of the pandemic. It will support discussions and peer learning to identify policies, strategies and actions to overcome the pandemic and its impacts while triggering the deep changes and transition we need to accelerate the realization of the SDGs. It will build momentum and inspire international solidarity and multilateral cooperation.

The various sessions will thus focus on:

- **Building back better and advancing the SDGs.** This session will build on the Secretary-General's SDG progress report. It will allow an exchange of experience on policies and integrated approaches that are being implemented to address the impacts of COVID-19 and achieve sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery. This session will also be informed by the findings of the Voluntary National Reviews and the experiences of countries at various development levels, including middle-income countries and countries in special situation, experts and different actors. There will be discussions on whether our response to COVID-19 is advancing sustainable development – economic, social and environmental dimensions and how it can be accelerated while leaving no one behind.
- **Reviewing the five SDGs in focus in 2022** through meetings on:
  - o Quality education (SDG 4)
  - o Gender equality (SDG 5)
  - o Life below water (SDG 14)
  - o Life on land (SDG 15)
  - o Partnerships (SDG 17)

The meetings on each SDG will first conduct an in-depth review of the situation on that SDG. The second part of the meetings will focus on the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs among that SDG and with the rest of the 2030 Agenda and practical ways to leverage these to accelerate progress.

- **SDG 17** will be addressed throughout the programme in each SDGs session together with the SDGs to be reviewed, and through dedicated meetings on investing in SDGs, on mobilizing science, technology and innovation and strengthening the science-policy-society interface, and on other aspects of SDG 17 including capacity development and partnerships. The discussions will build on the outcomes of 2022 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, and the ECOSOC Partnership Forum. On this basis, the HLPF will address urgent measures to respond to the debt crisis and mobilize investment for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery. The debate will also focus on longer term measures to mobilize means of implementation for the SDGs and strengthen international cooperation and solidarity. It will also address changes necessary to ensure that developing countries have access to the scientific knowledge and technologies they need to recover and embark on accelerated SDG progress.
- **Ensuring access to vaccines and resources to support the recovery and SDG progress.** The HLPF will address the importance of equitable access to vaccine and therapeutics and how to support the response and recovery in the special context of African countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS while reviewing the impact of COVID-19 on their SDG progress. The special challenges faced by middle-income countries will also receive dedicated attention.
- **The regional dimension of the recovery from COVID-19 and the regional situation regarding the SDGs** will be analyzed, building on the outcomes of the regional sustainable development forums and the work of the United Nations regional commissions.
- **Exploring subnational and local dimensions.** Cities and regions have a major role in implementing the SDGs. Many have been conducting voluntary local reviews of their implementation of the SDGs and the HLPF could learn from those reviews and reflect on their link with national reviews.
- As in the past, **major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS)** will organize a meeting on the theme of the HLPF and leaving no one behind.
- Time will be dedicated to the preparations of the September **2023 SDG Summit** (HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly) and ways to accelerate SDG progress and the recovery by the time of Summit through its preparations. The HLPF will also reflect on ways to maximize the impact of the Summit on SDG progress, policies and international solidarity.

Forty-five countries will be presenting VNRs at the 2022 HLPF: 12 first timers, 28 second timers, 3 third timers and 2 fourth timers. Since the meeting is being planned to be predominantly in person, it is envisaged that the first timers will have 15 minutes for presentation and 20 minutes for Q&A. The second, third and fourth timers will have 10 minutes for presentation and 15 minutes for Q&A. The first timers will choose whether to present in an individual format or in a panel with other countries. The second, third and fourth timers will present in a panel format. More information on VNRs is available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>. In case circumstances would not allow for an in-person meeting, the time for VNR presentations would have to be shortened in line with previous years, namely 30 minutes for the first timers and 20 minutes for second and subsequent timers.

### General debate

The general debate of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment, which also serves as the general debate for the HLPF, will be conducted through pre-recorded videos and the submission of written statements that will be posted on the websites of ECOSOC (<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en>) and HLPF (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf#hlpf2022>).

### Preparations for the HLPF

A number of meetings and events are being convened by the UN system and other international and regional organizations to prepare for the thematic reviews of the SDGs, including notably the regional forums for sustainable development and various discussions on the theme. Several expert group meetings will be supported by UN DESA bringing together governments, the UN system, experts and stakeholders to discuss specific SDGs under review and their interrelations. Conferences and meetings are also being organized by other actors and countries such as the Conference on SDG 16 co-organized by DESA, IDLO and Italy.

Global and regional workshops are also being organized by DESA and the UN regional commissions to support countries preparing their VNRs. More information is available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>.

The Group of Friends of VNRs, co-chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines, is assisting countries to prepare the interaction on their VNR at the HLPF.

### Ministerial Declaration and other outcomes

The HLPF will adopt a Ministerial Declaration at the end of its ministerial days. The

information on the intergovernmental negotiation of the Ministerial Declaration is available on the HLPF 2022 website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf#hlpf2022>.

The President of ECOSOC will also produce an informal summary of the HLPF after the meeting.

The 2022 HLPF will also be used as an opportunity to share information about new and ambitious SDG actions and initiatives by participating States, including the VNR countries, the UN system and other stakeholders as was done at the 2021 HLPF. New Acceleration Actions can be submitted on DESA's online [SDG Acceleration Actions platform](#) which collects and shares information about such new initiatives.

### **Format**

All meetings of HLPF and High-level Segment of ECOSOC will be in-person. Participants will be informed in case a change is needed due to the circumstances and advice related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meetings on the VNRs will include comments and questions by the friends of VNRs, but also any other countries wishing to take the floor. There will be coordinated interventions by the major groups and other stakeholders as in the past.

The first week will include moderated thematic panels opened with short presentations by not more than three panelists and two lead discussants in order to leave enough time for interactive discussion among participants, townhall discussions and other formats.

As in previous years, ministerial participation is strongly encouraged throughout the HLPF. Countries are expected to present their VNRs at a ministerial level, as usually done. Participating States are encouraged to include ministers and representatives of various ministries and sectors in their delegations, including during the first five days. Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders will also participate.

### **Last day of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment**

The last day of the ECOSOC High-level Segment will be held on Monday, 18 July, following the conclusion of the HLPF. It will include a session on “Future proofing multilateralism for a resilient and inclusive recovery”. There will also be a panel on possible scenarios and future trends related to the SDGs and the recovery from COVID-19 and its impact on world economies and societies.

### **Special events, side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions**

As in previous years, DESA is planning to organize a number of high-profile Special Events in collaboration with key UN partners and other actors, to galvanize the engagement of key sectors

of society around SDG implementation and build their ownership and engagement with the 2030 Agenda. The Special Events expected to be conducted mainly virtually, however, some in-person engagement might be considered conditions permitting.

DESA will also coordinate a programme of side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions. The deadline for submission of proposals for side events and exhibitions will be 31 May 2022. All side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions will be held in a virtual format. The guidelines for the side events and exhibitions including registration link and form are available on the HLPF 2022 website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf#hlpf2022>.

Exhibitions will be selected based on their relevance to the theme and SDGs under review and their innovative formats, notably for virtual exhibitions.

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