



Report of the 2018 Sustainable Development Transition Forum

Accelerating Progress towards the SDGs: Enhancing the Role of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

29 to 31 October 2018

Holiday Inn Incheon Songdo, Incheon, Republic of Korea

United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD)
Incheon, Republic of Korea
Division for Sustainable Development (DSD)
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)
*In partnership with
the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)*

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Table of Contents¹

Background

HLPF: a broad assessment

Providing stronger policy guidance

Enhancing thematic reviews

Building upon experience with Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

National and local level institutions: making them fit for supporting 2030 Agenda

Stakeholder engagement

Data, indicators and science for tracking progress on SDGs

Mobilizing awareness and action for SDGs

Means of implementation and partnerships for SDG achievement

Making the HLPF fit for purpose

Conclusion

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: 2018 Incheon Communiqué

¹ Concept note, presentations, notes and pictures of SDTF can be found at the following website:
<https://www.unosd.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=163&menu=229>

Key Messages emerging from Discussions at
Sustainable Development Transition Forum²

Background

The SDTF 2018 took place from 29 to 31 October. This was the sixth annual meeting of the forum. This year's SDTF happens in the period leading up to the conclusion of the first review by the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) of the 17 SDGs, in July 2019, and the meeting of the HLPF at Head-of-State/Head-of-Government level, in September 2019, to review overall progress on the 2030 Agenda and issue a Political Declaration to guide future implementation. For this reason, the SDTF focuses its discussions in 2018 on how to make the HLPF as well as regional, national, and local institutions more effective in supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and attainment of the SDGs.

The UN Secretary-General will also hold a Climate Summit in September 2019, and there will be a high-level meeting on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which addresses the financing, technology and other critical resources required for achieving the SDGs. Then, in 2020, reform of the Economic and Social Council will be on the UN's agenda, and the Parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are expected to raise the ambition of their climate commitments.

So, how to make best use of next year to ensure effective institutions and policies at all levels – from the global to the local – to support accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and attainment of the objectives of the Paris Agreement?

HLPF: a broad assessment

- The HLPF in its first three years of convening a review at global level of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda has generally been a success. The broad and high-level engagement of governments in the Forum has been encouraging, as have the number of related events organized by other communities of stakeholders – business, local governments, and

² Annex contains the detailed Forum Agenda with the complete list of speakers, panelists and presentations.

academia for example. Even so, there are areas where its effectiveness can be enhanced, which we flag below.

- Among the noteworthy achievements:
 - National governments are engaging enthusiastically, volunteering in large numbers to report on their progress with implementing the 2030 Agenda in their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) – over 100 countries to date, another 50+ next year. [Some noted that the “reviews” are more like “reports” than critical reviews, urging as far as possible in a voluntary process to move towards a peer review approach, and others proposed to dispense with the travelogue-like videos that begin many VNRs.]
 - Moreover, the commitment to the SDGs is universal, with countries at all levels of development volunteering to report on their progress. Some of the developed countries with the most advanced data and reporting systems volunteered early on, and some have reported a second time.
 - Behind the VNR presentations lies a major effort at national level – one of data collection, cross-ministerial coordination, and consultation with a broad array of stakeholders. What we witness in New York each July is only the tip of the iceberg, and there is tremendous value added in the national preparations and consultations. [It was suggested, however, that the process could be even more nationally-owned if VNRs were prepared by governments themselves, with stakeholder engagement, and not as happens in some instances by consultants.]
 - The preparation exercise also serves to focus government and other stakeholder attention on the what and the how of SDG achievement.
 - What policy, regulatory, incentive changes are needed to progress rapidly towards the SDGs?
 - How should the government and other stakeholders organize themselves to advance the highly integrated SDGs and the 2030 Agenda?
 - In the future, as implementation of the 2030 Agenda advances, more attention should be given in the VNRs to assessing the impacts on SDG progress of

various policies and measures introduced with the new Agenda, not simply reporting on what those policies and measures are.

- Some of the proposals for improvement in the HLPF include:
 - Providing stronger, more concrete policy guidance to governments, other stakeholders, including in the political (ministerial) declaration
 - Agenda-setting, identifying new and emerging issues and challenges
 - The thematic reviews could focus more on interlinkages across the SDGs and 2030 Agenda rather than a goal-by-goal review; likewise the VNRs
 - Achieving a proper balance between thematic reviews and VNRs, allocating time accordingly; also, more closely linking VNRs with thematic reviews including by inviting 'early achievers' among VNR countries as panelists on relevant thematic panels
 - More interaction of VNR presenters with other member States and stakeholders would be desirable to foster peer learning
 - VNRs could more systematically describe what it will take to achieve the nationally adapted SDG targets in terms of capacity and resources.
- A few other suggestions were advanced for strengthening the HLPF:
 - Encourage formation of 'early achievers' alliance – to highlight how those countries have accelerated progress on specific goals, targets
 - Build in time for more cross-cutting, cross-regional, peer learning type discussions, even at expense of time for VNRs
 - Make the HLPF part of a learning cycle on SDG implementation, with VNR Labs at the HLPF and Peer2Peer exchange projects the whole year through.
- A few suggestions were advanced specifically for 2019 HLPF:
 - Take advantage of meeting at Summit level to take stock of progress in first 4 years of SDGs, and to make course corrections as needed
 - Secretary-General could consider appointing a high-level panel of sitting and former heads of state, practitioners on the ground to provide ideas for possible inclusion in the Political Declaration at the SDG Summit in September, including issues needing greater emphasis, how to enhance HLPF's effectiveness, how to accelerate progress on SDGs

- September 2019 SDG Summit presents a political opportunity to introduce new leaders to this agenda, to get their buy-in.

Providing stronger policy guidance

- The HLPF is meant to offer high-level political guidance to UN Member States for achieving the SDGs and 2030 Agenda. There was a sense that it could do better.
- The annual Ministerial declaration needs to be anchored in the VNRs and discussion at the HLPF of lessons learned from them
 - should benefit from deliberations in the HLPF, not be finalized in advance
 - should build on the outcomes of other fora that lead up to the HLPF, including thematic fora as well as regional fora including those organized by the UN regional commissions; in this regard, such regional fora could be strengthened, and appropriate time made available for a thorough and adequate involvement of major groups and relevant stakeholders
- VNR Labs provide useful opportunity to go into greater depth on specific topics like leaving no one behind (LNOB), data, stakeholder engagement.
- Beyond a negotiated outcome, there are other ways to provide useful policy guidance from HLPF – including the discussions in and outcomes of various stakeholder fora (e.g., business forum, local government forum, youth forum, women’s forum, persons with disabilities forum, academic institutions forum) that happen (or could happen) around the HLPF
- HLPF could devote greater emphasis to and provide stronger policy advice on how to address interlinkages across the agenda and the goals – to take advantage of synergies, minimize trade-offs.
- It was suggested that the HLPF can provide a new implementation model based on partnerships – where vertical linkage from local and national level to global level can help foster a dialogue at HLPF not just between governments but among all stakeholders – a multilateralism based on partnerships. This then would feed back to national and local levels as guidance not just for governments but for all actors.

Enhancing thematic reviews

- Deeper dives into a limited number of subjects, with greater focus on intersections, nexuses across sectors, goals

- The complexity of the 2030 Agenda is related to our need of solutions for interconnected sectors, for short- and long-term horizons, and for the local, national, regional, and global spatial scales
- A more prominent role of scientific input, strengthening of science-policy interface in each year's HLPF would help in this regard
- Thematic reviews need to be solution-oriented not simply problem-oriented. In each thematic panel at least one country could be represented which has made exceptional progress on a particular SDG. Also include a 'change-maker' from private sector or civil society who has pioneered an innovative solution
- Panels could be designed to bring together experts from different interlinked sectors – water and energy, health and infrastructure, etc. – to enrich discussion beyond siloes (specialties) and allow trade-offs and synergies to inform policy making
- Thematic reviews should identify and discuss systemic barriers to achievement of the SDGs – e.g., factors which exacerbate inequalities, lock in polluting technologies, misappropriate government funds, discourage organizational and behavioral change towards sustainable consumption and production.

Building upon experience with Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

- VNRs have improved over time in quality and scope, though there remains considerable variability; number of countries reporting grows year to year, but first-time reporter numbers likely to level off as near saturation. Suggestion to define *de minimis* requirements for what a VNR should contain.
- Greater standardization would allow more peer learning, cross-country comparison and experience sharing.
- VNRs need to be data-driven as far as possible.
- Second-time reporting should be encouraged but with a difference. SDG champions who are reporting for second time could be expected to show the progress they have made, in order to encourage others to measure their own progress.
- Guidance is needed for such second-time reporters. Presentation format could also be different from first-time reporters, with more of a comparative setting via panel discussion for "peer review".

- VNR should not become an end in itself, rather a means to foster better policies and outcomes. It should show connections to the actual national policy process.
- In VNRs, highlight what is new with the adoption of the SDGs. Map existing policies and budgets to SDGs, then highlight new policies, budget allocations.
- Also explain the impact on the ground of strategies and policies, not just the strategies and policies themselves.
- Strengthen role of HLPF in support of follow-up to VNRs, including through brokering partnerships, matchmaking. Ultimately, national governments need to make formal arrangements for follow-up of their VNRs, including perhaps through a post-VNR national debrief, multi-stakeholder stock-taking conference.

National and local level institutions: making them fit for supporting 2030 Agenda

- Governments have made significant efforts at closer coordination in implementing this holistic agenda – identifying ministries responsible for specific goals and targets, often involving shared responsibility
- Many governments have built the SDGs into the hardware of national strategies, legislation, budgeting processes
- Take-up at the local level has been very strong, and there are many attempts by sub-national levels of governments, sometimes supported by the central level, to define local versions of the goals, implement and monitor them
- The SDGs have strong resonance with civil society, and many governments have actively engaged with civil society in implementing and monitoring implementation of the goals
- The holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda poses challenges to the simple governance model, calls for new flexible, multi-faceted model (which has been called metagovernance)
- Public-sector organizations need to be able to combine governance styles – including hierarchical, network and market governance – to adapt to needs of specific domains of the agenda.
- Tension can arise between the prioritization of targets and goals based on technical assessment of country's needs and political assessment of priorities; these should be aligned as far as possible.

- Parliaments can find it harder to work across sectors or specific issues (to decompartmentalize) than the executive branch which has a head of government who can make coordination happen.

Governments in several countries are being asked to align budget requests with the SDGs; some report to Parliament in this regard, as Parliaments normally approve annual budgets. This increases the likelihood that the 2030 Agenda will be adequately resourced.

Strong and active and stakeholder engagement

- HLPF provides important opportunities for NGO, civil society engagement; contained in resolutions governing HLPF's mandate.
- HLPF must guarantee that major groups and stakeholders will have meaningful and real access as well as inclusion in its deliberations.
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- Yet, stakeholders must not take those opportunities for engagement for granted, as there is a worrisome tendency at both national and international level to shrink the space for civil society
- Even if NGOs and other stakeholders cannot always be expected to speak with a single voice, some degree of coordination and harmonization can be helpful. In this regard, the HLPF Coordination mechanism for major groups and stakeholders could be strengthened, likewise opportunities for interaction with the UN Secretariat
- Civil society is willing to engage and to coordinate among its member organizations to facilitate its engagement. Would be helpful to widen access of these groups to HLPF: simplified accreditation for NGOs desirable
- Shadow reports can provide an independent perspective on government's efforts at SDG achievement, offering valuable suggestions for improvement; making these more widely accessible could enhance their efficacy
- Civil society, non-state actors need to show where they are contributing towards achieving goals and targets and the overarching 2030 principle of leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest behind first
- Survey results suggest that, in Europe, NGOs most supportive of the SDGs tend to be the internationally focused ones while domestically focused NGOs have shown less enthusiasm

as they have other frameworks which may set more ambitious targets than the SDGs in areas of relevance to them

- It is possible to bring NGOs and other stakeholders, including domestically focused ones, around the SDGs as a framework for common advocacy and action. In Spain, for example, some 50 organizations managed to reach a common strategic understanding about what the SDGs mean in their context, distilling a list of ten things that need to be done in Spain to achieve the SDGs
- The private sector has mobilized in support of SDGs to some degree, including the financial sector. Some companies integrate the SDGs in their CSR strategy because of their international scope. They also provide a common language for shared challenges and objectives, and they recognize companies in their potential capacity as provider of solutions to and not just as cause of societal and environmental challenges.

Data, indicators and science for tracking progress on SDGs

- Considerable progress in statistical capacity building has happened since adoption of the 2030 Agenda, spurred by the vast data needs and large number of indicators
- Need to integrate work on statistics for SDGs into national strategies for statistical development
- Lots of existing administrative data are collected which could be tapped to enhance data availability for tracking progress
- New sources of data may be important but need to complement not substitute for traditional data sources
- Lean set of indicators: useful to create an SDG index similar to the Human Development Index – what the Sustainable Development Solutions Network is doing for example
- If no data to measure given indicator, then maybe countries can begin by using proxy data to get a fix on problem and progress
- SDGs have brought the data requirements of tracking progress to a different level; difficult to disaggregate data in surveys in global South, so hard to track ‘leaving no one behind’
- National statistical system needs to remain the core actor to ensure sustainability over time

- Statisticians need to communicate in an understandable way on what statistics are available for what uses, what are their strengths and limitations
- Data curation important to make data use easier for non-statisticians – e.g. to generate visuals
- Science: compass guiding policy makers to most burning issues; referee to check on policy and track progress; money saver by pointing to effective policy
- We have science but not always the right science for achieving the SDGs – research priorities may be skewed to areas of high private return (e.g. drugs for diseases of affluence) not high social return
- Strengthen science-policy interface: good research needs to make its way into the process of making policy; there are several types of obstacles – opportunity, cultural, political, translation of science to layperson’s language
- Legacy of MDGs, human development approach: a lot of data available on the economic dimension of the agenda; not very much on the environmental dimension
- SDGs’ targets and indicators contain implicit biases of which we may not be aware. How indicators are formulated determines what we consider important.

Mobilizing awareness and action for SDGs

- We should all have the passion to promote the SDGs, connect to people across the world
- Has the message gone out? What more can be done?
- On first question: reason to be reasonably satisfied ... google search shows broadly positive but not steadily upward trend
- Deeper level of awareness needed than simple google search can detect: what can we do? Adopt the André Cantor (football announcer) formula for raising SDG awareness in broader public: commitment; clarity; creativity; connection
- **Commitment:** persevere, be patient; adoption takes time. Awareness needs an ongoing effort; effective policy can help sustain awareness, as with Colombia’s plastic bag tax
- **Clarity:** competitive world out there; other things compete for attention; clarity on what is value added of SDGs
- **Creativity:** Gates’s Goalkeepers Report and website: soccer as metaphor for SDGs. Making use of the entertainment community, including sports heroes, to popularize SDGs

- **Connect:** translating SDGs into local languages as in Côte d'Ivoire. SDG ambassadors can become advocates among their constituencies, for example, leading sustainable businesses in a particular industry. Mobilization of young people and women is crucial to broad progress on the 2030 Agenda
- Action will not come from awareness raising alone: Colombia's VNR contains a section on fiscal measures as incentives to behavioral change. Perhaps the HLPF could have a session on policies for behavioral change as a cross-cutting issue

Means of implementation and partnerships for SDG achievement

- **Finance (government budgets & revenue):** deserves greater emphasis: not much past emphasis, which has been on ODA, attracting private sector funds. Strengthening capacities of tax authorities remains a priority in many developing countries
- Illicit financial flows and loss of tax revenue to tax shifting by multinational corporations also need to be effectively addressed as part of financing strategy
- Financing the SDGs, which will require a few trillion US dollars a year through 2030, calls for mobilization of new funds and redirection of existing investments
- There is a strong business case for achieving a number of the SDGs but public finance will continue to be crucial in achieving others where private returns fall well short of social returns
- Financial innovations can also make a valuable contribution towards SDGs, including green bonds and social impact bonds. A shift in investor preferences towards more 'sustainable' portfolios will drive expansion of these markets
- **Laws, regulations and policies:** Considered main enabler in other policy areas, but not often part of sustainable development discussion. Need more systematic approaches to comparative assessment, knowledge sharing, adaptation and scaling-up of successful policies
- Government policies, regulations have for the most part not been aligned with attainment of the SDGs, especially the social and environmental dimensions. Fossil fuel subsidies in many countries, weak social protection measures in some, unwillingness to tax carbon in most – these are some examples

- Public-private and other multi-stakeholder partnerships are playing a key role in SDG implementation in some countries – the example of Chile having been presented in detail, with cooperation focusing on solving specific and urgent sustainable development problems
- The Bretton Woods institutions should be more actively engaged in the HLPF. Some of the biggest challenges to SDG achievement are ones where they have considerable expertise and a strong mandate
- The UN implementation system also needs to be brought more centrally into the HLPF, as various UN Development System members work to integrate the SDGs into their plans and strategies.

Making the HLPF fit for purpose

- What is the HLPF's purpose? Is it the same as its mandate, which is complex?
- In following up and reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at global level, which is widely understood to be its main purpose, the HLPF is a success in some parts but it has to be strengthened and made more effective
- It is critically important that what happens at the HLPF has relevance to what happens at the national and local levels. Otherwise its impact is severely limited
- 2019 is the opportunity to strengthen the HLPF. The preparation process for next year's HLPF should aim high
 - HLPF at Head-of-State/Government level should be producing a political declaration that not merely pats us on the back; it should point to emerging issues, sustain momentum for progress, strengthen multilateralism
 - 2019 is a moment for agenda setting for the next round of HLPF; that agenda remains in large measure a 'blank slate'. Science should help inform that agenda setting, including the Global Sustainable Development Report, along with inputs from a variety of stakeholders
- The HLPF needs to combine politics and policy, sustaining political commitment to the 2030 Agenda while offering practical policy guidance for implementing that Agenda
- Science can provide evidence to make sound, cost-effective, coherent policies. Science should inform all the thematic sessions at HLPF

- VNRs: there is need to find creative solutions to make the most of the VNRs for reporting countries, to be able to take home good advice
 - Quality of reporting can be improved
 - Guidelines can be further strengthened, including reference to role of science in informing policies and solutions on the ground
 - More institutionalized follow-up to VNRs is needed at national level
- Stakeholder engagement with 2030 Agenda needs to be enhanced: this could include a more formal structure for shadow reporting, and greater reflection of civil society views in the political declaration of HLPF
- Stronger emphasis needed on interlinkages across goals, sectors; on policy coherence and trade-offs in implementation
- Better utilization by HLPF of inputs coming from other parts of the UN system, other fora. Inputs are synthesized but have hardly any impact on the actual discussions. Perhaps the new Integration Segment of ECOSOC, which comes right before HLPF, can be a place to make use of these.

Concluding Thoughts

Ambassador David Donoghue provided a concluding keynote in which he laid out a vision for a future enhanced HLPF and follow-up and review process. He noted general agreement among meeting participants on main strengths and weaknesses of HLPF. There was also broad agreement on ways in which the HLPF could be further strengthened.

Engagement of countries in the HLPF is voluntary by design, to ensure universal buy-in to the follow-up and review process. Whatever is proposed to strengthen HLPF needs to recognize this baseline. This still leaves considerable scope for improvements. The broad scope of the HLPF's mandate also allows for practical improvements.

Voluntary National Reviews: this part of the HLPF has improved. The confidence level of countries has built up over several years and a critical mass has been achieved.

There is need to approach VNRs going forward with a fresh eye. Could we adjust the VNR arrangements? From a political point of view, it is important for each member State to have an appearance at the HLPF. For example, Ireland's VNR in 2018 focused minds; it took a year or two to get national coordination in order. Only when it was committed to a VNR did the Ireland government machinery get into high gear.

For a second cycle of VNRs, the time allocated could perhaps be curtailed, to allow more time to focus on aspects of the agenda which need greater emphasis – e.g., interlinkages; leave no one behind – as well as on greater dialogue among countries. Also need to address emerging issues, which are flagged in 2030 Agenda but not allocated sufficient time at present.

There is need of greater interaction in next cycle between stakeholders and member States. Civil society could play a greater role in many cases in VNR presentation. Each year one can imagine a segment of the HLPF which would bring one of the stakeholder communities into formal interaction with member States – business, academia, local governments, youth, others.

It would be helpful to have a preparatory process of some kind for the SDG Summit next year. This can be designed in different ways – a panel, commission of experts at high political level for example which could distill political recommendations for consideration when crafting the Political Declaration for September 2019.

Following a presentation by the UNOSD Secretariat of the Incheon Communiqué, brief concluding remarks were made by Ms. Grazyna Pulawska, Project Manager—Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); Dr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of Office—UNOSD; Ms. Irena Zubcevic, Chief of Branch Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

On the afternoon of 31 October, the Forum participants joined field trips to observe local sustainable development projects and cultural heritage sites.



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
INCHEON, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

AGENDA

2018 Sustainable Development Transition Forum

*Accelerating Progress towards the SDGs:
Enhancing the Role of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)*

29 to 31 October 2018

Holiday Inn Incheon Songdo, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Hosted by the

[United Nations Office for Sustainable Development \(UNOSD\)](#) of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (UNDESA), Division for Sustainable Development Goals, in partnership with the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#).

As of 26 Oct 2018

Monday, 29 October 2018 (Day 1)	
8:30 - 9:00	Registration (Grand Ball room, Floor 2)
9:00 - 10:30	<p>Opening Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and Opening Reflections (Dr. Jean D’Aragon, Senior Sustainable Development Expert, UNOSD) [20min] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of Office—UNOSD; ○ Ms. Grazyna Pulawska, Project Manager—Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) • Setting the Stage (Dr. Jean D’Aragon, UNOSD; Dr. David O’Connor, Consultant, UNOSD) [12 min] • Guest Keynote: Video Presentation on ‘The UN We Need to Support the 2030 Agenda’ (HE Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations) [3 min] • Keynote: ‘The HLPF We Need to Support the 2030 Agenda’ (Dr. Guenther Bachmann, Secretary General—German Council for Sustainable Development) [15 min] • Q&A [30 min] (Dr. Jean D’Aragon, UNOSD) • Housekeeping announcements & Group photo [10min]
10:30 - 11:00	Nutrition and Networking Break
11:00 - 12:15	<p>Session 1: How can HLPF provide the most useful policy guidance for SDG implementation?</p> <p>Facilitator, Introductory Remarks: Mr. Javier Surasky, Governance Research Coordinator, Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (CEPEI), Columbia [10 min]</p>

	<p>Keynote: Ms. Marion Barthelemy, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs — Video Presentation [10 min]</p> <p>Reflections: (1): Dr. Patrick Paul Walsh, Professor of International Development Studies, University College Dublin [10 min] (2) Dr. Mark Elder, Director of Research and Publications Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES), Japan [10 min]</p> <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [35 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do participants in HLPF expect to benefit? Are their expectations being met over past few years? ○ Are the experts, resource persons conveying knowledge effectively? ○ Is the analysis, documentation prepared for the HLPF useful, adequate? ○ How relevant is HLPF for the country's implementation of the 2030 Agenda? ○ How well does the knowledge, experience shared during HLPF inform the forum outcome? ○ What role does the Ministerial Declaration play, and could it be made a more effective guide to policymakers?
12:15 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 15:15	<p>Session 2: How can the HLPF's thematic reviews be enhanced?</p> <p><i>Opening Remarks, Facilitator</i> Ambassador David Donoghue, Distinguished Fellow, Overseas Development Institute [15 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Laurence Kwark, General Secretary, Global Social Economy Forum ○ Dr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Professor, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University ○ Ms. Elisabeth Hege, Research Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) ○ Ms. Caroline Zimm, Research Assistant, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) ○ Mr. Simon Olsen, Sustainability Governance Centre, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do Member States, stakeholders aim to achieve through the thematic reviews? ○ Are their objectives being met? ○ Are themes being adequately explored, challenges and responses well identified? ○ Is knowledge, experience sharing happening effectively? ○ Are different themes being connected, interlinkages explored and integration of the three dimensions addressed?
15:15 - 15:45	Nutrition and Networking Break

15:45 - 17:00	<p>Session 3: Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): What have we learned? How to enhance impact moving forward?</p> <p><i>Opening Remarks, Facilitator:</i> Ms. Irena Zubcevic, Chief of Branch Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [15 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [35 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roundtable participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Sugath Yalegama, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development, Rajagiriya, Colombo ○ Mr. Michael Muthara Mwangi, Senior Economist, The National Treasury and Planning, Government of Kenya ○ Ms. Kleina Kasanaj, Adviser, Prime Minister’s Office, Albania ○ Mr. Marcellin Zohoun, Departmental Director, Ministry of Planning and Development, Benin ○ Ms. Sonya Indira Roopnauth, Director, Ministry of Finance, Guyana ○ Ms. Selcen Altinsoy, Strategy and Budget Expert, Turkish Presidency Strategy and Budget Office ○ Mr. Javier Surasky, Governance Research Coordinator, Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (CEPEI), Colombia <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [25 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is a VNR process useful for countries, presenters as well as others? ○ How could the content of the VNRs be improved? (for example, in terms of analysis, showing impact of policies and strategies, integration and interlinkages, support of arguments by data) ○ Have VNRs adequately reflected non-state actors’ inputs? Could the engagement of non-state actors be improved? ○ What has been the national follow-up to VNR presentations? ○ How should the VNR process evolve in next four years?
18:00	SDTF Welcome Reception (Grand Ball room, Floor 2)

Tuesday, 30 October 2018 (Day 2)	
8:45-10:00	<p><i>Citypreneurs</i> [5 min] 2.5 min – (UNESCAP): Ms. Charlotte Arribe - Introduction to Citypreneurs 2.5 min – 2017 Citypreneur 2017 winner: Ms. Yejin Choi, CEO, DoBrain Inc. (education tech)</p> <p>Session 4: Public Institutions at National and Local Level: How ready are they to implement the 2030 Agenda?</p> <p><i>Facilitator:</i> Ms. Grazyna Pulawska, Project Manager—Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) [5 min]</p> <p><i>Opening Speaker 1:</i> Mr. David Le Blanc, Chief, Institutions for the Sustainable Development Goals Branch, Division for Public Institutions and Digital</p>

	<p>Government, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs — Skype/PPT Presentation [10 min]</p> <p><i>Opening Speaker 2:</i> Dr. Louis Meuleman, Vice-Chair of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA); Public Governance Institute, University of Leuven, Belgium [10 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Daniel Ortega-Pacheco, Director of the Center for Public Policy Development, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL) University, Ecuador ○ Dr. Ingeborg Niestroy, Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development (ps4sd) ○ Mr. Adrian Moreira Munoz, Senior Adviser, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy, Costa Rica ○ Mr. Aboua Gustave, Director-General, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Cote d'Ivoire ○ Ms. Nur Hygiawati Rahayu, Director, Ministry of National Development Planning, Indonesia <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [35 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have governments needed to change significantly they are organized in response to the 2030 Agenda? If so, how? ○ Has cross-ministerial coordination, cooperation been significantly increased with the 2030 Agenda? ○ How have Parliaments engaged in SDG implementation? How could their engagement be enhanced going forward? ○ What sorts of institutional innovations have governments tried in response to this ambitious agenda? How have they worked?
10:00-10:30	Nutrition and Networking Break
10:30-12:00	<p><i>Citypreneurs</i> [5 min]</p> <p>2.5 min - (TOP30) Ms. Nataliya Mykhaylova, CEO, WeavAir (green energy)</p> <p>2.5 min - (TOP30) Mr. Taewoo Lee, CEO ALT.A Inc. (social protection)</p> <p>Session 5: Towards Strong and Active Stakeholder Engagement at the Global Level</p> <p><i>Opening Remarks, Facilitator:</i> Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future [15 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Ms. Youngsook Cho, Chair of International Solidarity Centre, Korea Women's Associations United (KWAU) ○ Mr. Fabrice Adelphe Balou, President of NGO "Plateforme des Organisations de Jeunes de Toulépleu (POJeT)" (Toulepleu Youth Organization Platform), Ivory Coast

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Samson Kassahun Belachew, Professor, Urban Planning and Development, Ethiopia Civil Service University ○ Mr. Murali Padmanabhan, Disability Inclusion Adviser, Light for the World ○ Mr. Oliver Henman, Global Coordinator, Action for Sustainable Development <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [25min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is the HLPF currently engaging non-state actors effectively, in preparation? In the Forum proper? In negotiation of Declaration? ○ Should non-state actors' role in HLPF be changed in any significant way and if so how? ○ Should non-state actors be asked to report on contribution towards implementing the 2030 Agenda? If so, how can this be accommodated in time available? ○ Should voluntary stakeholder and partnership commitments be featured in the HLPF? If so, what mechanism is needed for follow-up?
12:00-13:00	Lunch Break
13:00-14:00	<p><i>Citypreneurs</i> [5 min] 2.5 min - (TOP30) Ms. Ji Min Ryu, Global Partnerships Manager, Dot Incorporation (social protection) 2.5 min - (TOP30) Mr. Igor Zacek, Executive Partner, Nice Visions s.r.o. (team 6 - green energy)</p> <p>Session 6: Data, Indicators, and Science for Tracking Progress on the SDGs</p> <p><i>Facilitator, Opening Speaker:</i> Ms. Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, Inter-Regional Adviser, Statistics Division UNDESA [10 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable</i> [20 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roundtable Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Professor, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University ○ Dr. Patrick Paul Walsh, Professor of International Development Studies, University College Dublin ○ Ms. Nobuko Kajiura, Sustainable Development Officer, UNESCAP East and North-East Asia (ESCAP-ENE) Office ○ Mr. Simon Olsen, Sustainability Governance Centre, IGES <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [25 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are government data collection, statistical systems significantly different, improved as a result of the SDGs? ○ How are statistical agencies, others faring in tracking progress on overarching objective to “leave no one behind”?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where has the progress been greatest in using new, including big, data to enhance tracking of SDG progress? ○ How are new data, indicators contributing to more effective policy making, implementation of 2030 Agenda? ○ How can science better inform the work of the HLPF?
<p>14:00-15:00</p>	<p><i>Citypreneurs</i> [2.5 min] 2.5 min - (TOP30) Mr. Han Sang Jo, CEO, Startuptogether (social protection)</p> <p>Session 7: Mobilising awareness and action to make the SDGs work</p> <p><i>Facilitator:</i> Dr. Ingeborg Niestroy, SDG Watch Europe and EU Multi-stakeholder platform for Agenda 2030 [7.5 min]</p> <p><i>Opening Speaker:</i> Dr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Professor, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University [10 min]</p> <p><i>Reflections:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Oliver Henman, Global Coordinator, Action for Sustainable Development [5 min] ○ Ms. Elisabeth Hege, Research Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) [5 min] ○ Ms. Youngsook Cho, Chair of International Solidarity Centre, Korea Women's Associations United (KWAU) [5 min] ○ Ms. Laurence Kwark, General Secretary, Global Social Economy Forum [5 min] <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [20 min]</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How widely has the message gotten out? What more can be done? ○ Do the Global Goals resonate with ordinary people? ○ How can goals be made relevant for citizens of all ages? ○ How can the global goals message be used to engage multiple actors, ordinary citizens in implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
<p>15:00-15:30</p>	<p>Nutrition and Networking Break</p>
<p>15:30-16:45</p>	<p>Session 8: Means of implementation and partnerships for SDG achievement: What more needs to be done by whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Opening Remarks, Facilitator:</i> Dr. Mark Elder, Director of Research and Publications Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES), Japan [15 min] <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [30 min]</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Sarah Sabin Khan, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) ○ Mr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna, Head of Strategic Planning, Green Climate Fund ○ Mr. Patrick Seitiso, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Botswana ○ Mr. Martin Garcia Acuna, Head, Public-Private Cooperation, Social Development Ministry, Chile ○ Mr. Mohammed Al-Assaf, Head of Division, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan ○ Mr. Keping Yao, Governance and Public Administration Expert, United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) <p><i>Open Discussion</i> [24 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What have we learned since 2015 on mobilizing public finance for investing in areas that advance the SDGs? ○ What do we know about the private financial sector’s awareness of, interest in SDG investing? ○ What innovative sources of financing should we be exploring to advance the SDGs? ○ What are multilateral and national development banks doing differently as a result of the 2030 Agenda? ○ How should the scientific and technological community mobilize to support the SDGs? Is the STI Forum proving effective? ○ Have the SDGs given rise to innovative and effective partnerships involving cooperation across the goals, across siloes? If so where?
16:45-17:30	<p>Day 2 Wrap-Up:</p> <p><i>Facilitators:</i> Dr. Jean d’Aragon, Senior Sustainable Development Expert, UNOSD; Dr. David O’Connor, Consultant, UNOSD [remotely]</p> <p>Discussion of main lessons, messages emerging from the first 2 days of discussion, elements for inclusion in the Incheon Communiqué</p>

Wednesday, 31 October 2018 (Day 3)	
9:00 - 10:15	<p>Session 9: Making the HLPF Fit for Purpose: What is needed? <i>This session looks ahead to 2020 and how the HLPF’s role as global hub for SDG follow-up and review can be strengthened? <u>Take away:</u> five highest priority actions</i></p> <p><i>Opening Reflections, Facilitator:</i> Dr. Guenther Bachmann, Secretary General—German Council for Sustainable Development [15 min]</p> <p><i>Roundtable Discussion</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Sarah Sabin Khan, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) ○ Mr. Malick Diop, Coordinator, Plateforme Des Acteurs Non Etatiques (Non-State Stakeholders Platform), Senegal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Caroline Zimm, Research Assistant, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) ○ Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future ○ Ms. Irena Zubcevic, Chief of Branch Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs <p><i>Open Discussion:</i> [30 min]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussion Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is needed to make the HLPF more effective? ○ What concrete measures are needed organizationally? ○ What measures are needed substantively? ○ Can the outcomes of HLPF be made more useful to national, local implementers? ○ How can stakeholder engagement be enhanced? ○ How to make full use of other fora to assess SDG progress and build momentum towards the annual and quadrennial HLPFs?
10:15-10:45	Nutrition and Networking Break
10:45-12:00	<p>Closing Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closing Keynote: A Vision for the HLPF and Multi-Level Follow-up and Review to 2030 – Maximizing Contribution to Achieving SDGs – Ambassador David Donoghue, Distinguished Fellow, Overseas Development Institute [20 min] ● Presentation of 2018 Incheon Communiqué [10min] (Dr. Jean D’Aragon, UNOSD) ● Comments from Floor, Discussion [30 min] ● Closing Reflections and Remarks (Ms. Grazyna Pulawska, Project Manager—Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); Dr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of Office—UNOSD; Ms. Irena Zubcevic, Chief of Branch Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) [15 min]
12:00-13:00	Lunch Break
13:00 - evening	<p>Field Trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cheonggyecheon stream restoration project, Seoul ● Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul <p>(For the ones who want to stay longer: things to do near Gyeongbokgung Palace)</p>

Annex 2:

2018 INCHEON COMMUNIQUÉ

SUMMARY OF THE 2018 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TRANSITION FORUM

31 OCTOBER, 2018

1. The sixth annual Sustainable Development Transition Forum, hosted by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development of UNDESA, welcomed 130 representatives and experts of country governments, the United Nations system, policy think tanks, academic institutions and civil society from around the world in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 29 - 31 October 2018.
2. The Forum discussed how to enhance the role of the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) in accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Some of the key insights emerging from the 2018 SDTF were the following:
3. Strengthening multilateralism: Participants underlined that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an important instrument for strengthening multilateralism as the Agenda and SDGs can be achieved only through collaborative effort of all countries and stakeholders. 2019 is a critical year for multilateralism at the United Nations, with the HLPF wrapping up its first review cycle of the 17 SDGs in July and then meeting at the Head of State level in September to take stock of overall progress on the 2030 Agenda.
4. HLPF is successful but there is still room for improvement: HLPF has established itself as the global platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda reflecting implementation at all levels and of all actors. However, strengthening political guidance, outcomes, including a more action oriented ministerial declaration that reflects actual discussions at the HLPF and incorporating outcomes and policy guidance from events engaging different constituencies – business, parliamentarians, local governments, educational institutions – would be important. It would be important for HLPF to fulfill its existing mandates, in particular agenda setting and addressing emerging issues, and to strengthen guidance on leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest behind first. It was also emphasized that regional sustainable development forums could be better utilized both at the regional level as well as featuring their contribution at the HLPF.
5. 2019 HLPF under the auspice of the General Assembly: HLPF meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government is a crucial moment in strengthening political will for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Having a strong political declaration that should be inspired by political leaders identifying accelerators and drivers of implementation would bring new impetus to the commitment of the 2030 Agenda.
6. Thematic reviews at the HLPF: The first-cycle of HLPF has covered the full set of 17 goals and it was important to see where countries are in their national implementation, but also where we all are

globally. Many countries established national baselines, did the mapping of where they are, established legal, regulatory, and incentive changes. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. This could include looking more at policy coherence and better integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, deeper dives into each goal, with greater focus on intersections, nexuses across sectors and bringing panelists together from different sectors across a nexus, looking at trade-offs, and featuring successful examples of private sector, NGO innovators in specific thematic areas or cross-cutting areas as well as establishing an “early achievers alliance” to highlight how they have achieved accelerated progress on specific goals and targets. It would also be important to see input from other processes relevant for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs better inform discussions at the HLPF.

7. Voluntary national reviews at the HLPF: Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) have proven to be successful as a majority of HLPF member countries will have presented their VNRs by the end of the first cycle. At the national level the VNR process strengthened political will, national ownership and focused attention to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and engaged governments and stakeholders around the Agenda. They established coordination and adapted or created new institutions to strengthen the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. However, HLPF needs to find ways to provide stronger policy guidance to countries including by allowing more time for discussions and comments when presenting a VNR; VNR Labs were emphasized as a good model in this regard. Additionally, countries preparing a VNR presentation also need to strengthen peer learning by providing more analysis of the impacts of policies and measures taken to advance the SDGs, and by addressing all SDGs. More thought also needs to be given to what kind of guidance and what kind of format should be defined for the presentation of VNRs for the second and subsequent times. Updating Secretary-General’s guidance in this regard could be useful.

8. Data, science and means of implementation: Countries are actively engaged in data collection and use including through prioritization and harmonization of data collection, assessment of administrative sources of data, defining statistics development plans and establishing partnerships. However, many challenges persist including strengthening national statistical offices through capacity building, improving data quality and reliability, integrating data sources and sharing across sectors, and getting disaggregated data. Science is important to provide evidence-based information to assist in defining informed policies and a strengthened science-policy interface calls for providing findings to the policy-makers in a way that will be useful for them. In this regard, providing space for a scientific viewpoint across the range of policy discussions at HLPF would be a step in the right direction. Identifying what kind of means of implementation are needed to achieve goals, from financing to technology and capacity building, is an important step towards asking assistance where it is needed

and for using domestic resources when it is possible, including strengthening tax systems and curbing illicit financial flows. Partnering for implementation to assist with capacity building especially in technology to close technology divide, and collecting revenue to increase public finance, have been underlined including building trust among different actors at all levels.

9. Stakeholders, partnerships and outreach: Stakeholders are an essential part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Institutionalizing engagement of stakeholders at all levels is essential. Stronger engagement of stakeholders at the national level will also result in a stronger engagement at the regional and global levels. In this regard, it is important to strengthen capacity of stakeholders including at local and community levels. Equally important would be to find ways to strengthen official engagement of all stakeholders at the HLPF. Forging meaningful partnerships to enhance implementation including through non-traditional partners such as foundations, philanthropies as well as the private sector will strengthen implementation of the Agenda. Showing the relevance of the 2030 Agenda to every person especially those who are at risk to be left behind needs a continued effort to reach all audiences and all groups.

United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, UNDESA Incheon, Republic of Korea, 31 October 2018.