

Transcript from Webinar - Introduction to the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development: Major Groups and other Stakeholders

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Opening Remarks – Irena Zubcevic, Chief of the Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch in the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development.

I would like to welcome you all and express my appreciation for your interest and engagement in the work of the United Nations. Many of you have been engaged already in sustainable development through your actions on the ground, in your communities and your countries.

Thank you for participating in this first webinar on the 2030 Agenda, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – commonly referred to as the “HLPF”, and the important role that Major Groups and other Stakeholders play. I am happy to have the chance to speak with you directly.

I know that while some of you may already be familiar with the HLPF and how it works, there are many of you who have never participated in the HLPF, and for whom this information will be all new.

This webinar is being held to “demystify” the HLPF including its important role in the 2030 Agenda and how stakeholders can engage in the forum and its preparations

The HLPF looks to you—the global community of stakeholders in all their sectors, your networks of organizations, and civil society at large—to better understand where progress is being made, how partnerships and synergies are being created, and how progress toward achieving the SDGs can best be measured and evaluated.

We know that the work of NGOs, youth, the private sector, academia, and other groups are central to the success of the 2030 Agenda and its transformative vision. Your networks are often the engines that move progress forward, and Governments need you as equal partners in development. We are here to help facilitate that process.

We are here to facilitate your participation at the HLPF and how you can contribute.

While the webinar today is designed to give you background information on the High-Level Political Forum and its mechanisms for engagement, it is part of a series of webinars which will cover several other topics related to the HLPF more in-depth, including the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews which you will learn more about today. Our team will be in touch early next year with more information about upcoming webinars.

My colleagues and I have been working to create more spaces for informal dialogue and discussion, and we hope that this series of webinars will strengthen the connections among yourselves and your constituencies, as well as to connect you with regional forums and the global HLPF and facilitate more space for suggestions from MGoS to Member States on SDG implementation.

We always welcome your feedback. We are working also to strengthen our team and to ensure that our doors are always open to you if you need support or have questions.

So let me end here by saying again that we value your participation today and hope that you will benefit from the information and answers we can provide.

I will now hand over the floor to my team, to conduct the webinar “HLPF 101”, and wish you all a very useful session.

HLPF 101 Presentation

Slide 1

Greetings to everyone who has joined us today for the inaugural webinar “HLPF 101”: An introduction to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development for Major Groups and other Stakeholders.

I (Tonya Vaturi) will lead the first part of today’s webinar, to provide an overview of the 2030 Agenda and the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.

My colleague Emily will then present the second part, to discuss the role of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders and their participation in the HLPF.

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So, let us begin with the 2030 Agenda.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly in 2015 ushered in a new era for development. It defined a transformative vision, a **“Plan of Action for People, Planet, and Prosperity”**, as is stated in the first line of the preamble.

It is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance, accepted by all countries and applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respecting national policies and priorities.

It includes **universal** goals and targets, which involve the entire world, both developed and developing countries alike.

The goals and targets are integrated and **indivisible**, and balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The goals and targets are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable.

In all these respects, it is a very **ambitious** and visionary global agenda.

The preamble also highlights the “five Ps” or five areas of critical importance, which are:

People

-As we are determined to end poverty and hunger, and ensure dignity and equality for all in a healthy environment;

Planet

-As we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations;

Prosperity

-As we are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

Peace

- As we are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.

And Partnership

-As we are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

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The 2030 Agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals or “SDGs”. Each goal includes a set of targets, and across the 17 goals there are 169 targets in total.

The SDGs are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.

The targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account the national circumstances.

The SDGs are all interlinked with one another, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

They are also rooted in the UN Charter in seeking to realize peace, security, and human rights for all peoples.

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Here we see an early model that was developed to illustrate the interconnectedness of the SDGs and their targets.

The complex interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the 2030 Agenda is realised.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, much progress has been made in conceptualizing the many interlinkages across the SDGs.

Many experts have developed detailed mappings of interlinkages across the SDGs and their targets.

Now, after three years of SDG implementation, many of us understand the need to work across sectors, and are seeking concrete ways to put our understanding of interlinkages into practice.

Some of these “nexus models” are more advanced than others.

It is important to recognize that all models and scenarios have their limitations.

However, the process to develop, validate and use them is important.

This kind of conceptualization is an essential first step toward a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development, and achieving the SDGs.

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Q&A

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The HLPF was established in 2013, through UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 67/290, in accordance with paragraph 84 of ‘The Future We Want,’ the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The HLPF is at the apex of the system for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, which is a challenging and unprecedented endeavor in many respects.

The HLPF was a key outcome of the Rio+20 Conference held in 2012.

It is a universal intergovernmental body that replaces the former Commission on Sustainable Development.

It serves as the central platform for review and follow-up on progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the global level.

The HLPF aims to:

- ✓ Provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda;
- ✓ Track progress on implementation;
- ✓ spur coherent policies informed by evidence, science and country experiences;
- ✓ enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;
- ✓ address new and emerging issues;
- ✓ Strengthen the science-policy interface.

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The follow-up and review architecture of the HLPF is enshrined in the 2030 Agenda through a three-tier system:

The HLPF as the overarching platform at the global level, which meets every year under the auspices of ECOSOC and every four years under the General Assembly

The regional forums as platforms to further the exchange of best practices and reinforce mutual learning

The national level as the foundation for review

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The HLPF conducts various kinds of reviews:

Every year, HLPF reviews a theme and a cluster of SDGs.

This year's theme was "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

The first week is devoted to the thematic review of a cluster of SDGs

A review of progress was undertaken on SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15—water, energy, cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, and terrestrial ecosystems.

SDG17, on partnerships and means of implementation, is also under review every year.

Each of these review sessions included:

--A short statistical presentation of the status of implementation, from the SG's report on Progress towards achieving the SDGs

--Expert panel presentations on experiences and lessons learned

--Interactive open discussion among representatives of the Member States, Major groups and other stakeholders, and the UN system, who participate at the expert level.

The HLPF thematic review also includes sessions that focus on:

-- Regional and sub-regional perspectives

-- Perspectives of SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs and MICs.

-- Advancing science, technology and innovation

-- The principle of leaving no one behind

-- Perspectives from major groups and other stakeholders

Special Events, side events and other types of exhibitions also take place during the first week of the HLPF.

Member States will decide next year if they want to keep the selection of goals under in-depth review in future HLPF cycles

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During the three-day Ministerial level segment, which follows the thematic review, the HLPF invites Member States to conduct Voluntary National Reviews and present key messages.

65 countries have already conducted VNRs in 2016 and 2017

46 countries presented their VNRs at the HLPF this year, and another 51 countries are confirmed to present their VNR in 2019.

The adoption of a Ministerial Declaration is undertaken during this segment of the HLPF, which is important for reconfirming the global commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Special Events, side events and other types of exhibitions also continue to take place throughout the second week of the HLPF.

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Here we can see the HLPF and its breakdown of events in numbers (stats on slide)

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The HLPF provides a platform for all types of interactions— formal dialogues that are conducted under the auspices of ECOSOC and serve as the central review mechanism for the SDGs are complemented by numerous informal side events, parallel events, presentations, exhibits, and smaller meetings that all feed into or complement the formal review process.

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As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79).

These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum, meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The VNRs aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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The VNR countries are expected to submit comprehensive written reports that are then made available in the VNR database. In addition, each VNR country also provides main messages summarizing their key findings. These main messages are also posted in the VNR database.

In 2019, the 51 countries (10 for the second time) below will be conducting voluntary national reviews at the HLPF.

They are conducted each year when the HLPF meets under the Auspices of ECOSOC in July.

The VNRs are at the heart of the HLPF and its follow up and review process.

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On our website, there is a database of all VNRs that have been conducted to date, which is searchable and provides a useful resource for analyzing the progress that each country has reported.

Some countries have conducted their VNRs multiple times. We hope to encourage all countries to report at least once.

In 2019, we will have

- 11 from Europe
- 16 from Asia Pacific
- 18 from Africa
- 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean

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The HLPF meets each year in July under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council for 8 days.

It also convenes every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly for two days.

GA resolution 70/299 adopted in July 2016 clarifies various elements related to the follow-up and review functions of the HLPF, including the specific themes of the Forum for 2017, 2018 and 2019, as well as the set of SDGs to be reviewed in depth in those years.

Resolution 70/299 also notes that progress in its implementation and in the implementation of UNGA resolution 67/290 will be reviewed by the UNGA at its 74th session (2019-2020) “to benefit from lessons learned in the first cycle” of the HLPF.

The next meeting under the General Assembly will be held on 24 and 25 September 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York.

It is referred to as the SDG Summit, where heads of state will come together to reconfirm their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and announce new initiatives to accelerate its implementation.

The SDG Summit aims to provide leadership and reconfirm global consensus and commitments to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

The SDG Summit will be at the Heads of State and Heads of Government level, and the Chair of the Summit will be the President of the 74th session of the General Assembly.

The UN SDG Summit will be one of three high-level events taking place in September 2019, along with the 2019 Climate Summit and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. These events will be mutually reinforcing in identifying areas for action to accelerate the progress towards sustainable development.

A Political Declaration by Heads of State and Government will be adopted, to provide political guidance on how to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

The co-facilitators, who will lead the negotiations for the Political Declaration, are H.E. Ms. Sheila Gweneth Carey, Permanent Representative of Bahamas to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

In addition, a Chair’s summary of the meeting will be prepared.

Voluntary Commitments for the implementation of SDGs will also be announced at the summit and online in advance of the meeting.

Side events, special events and exhibitions on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs will be also organized on the margins of the Summit.

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Q&A

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Ok, so now we are going to switch gears to discussing Major Groups and other Stakeholders, commonly referred to by the acronym “MGoS”.

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I’m going to give a little bit of background on the history of Major Groups and other Stakeholders generally, but want to reiterate that in this series of webinars we are referring specifically to the engagement of Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the context of the High-Level Political Forum only.

The term “major groups” was first formalized at the UN during the Earth Summit in 1992, where the importance of the engagement of stakeholders to achieve sustainable development was highlighted, and nine different sectors of society were designated to channel participation of everyone working on issues related to sustainable development.

The Rio+20 Conference then recognized officially a group of “other stakeholders” beyond the original major groups, which included groups such as volunteers, and persons with disabilities.

Major Groups and other Stakeholders play an active role in the work of the United Nations, and were central to guiding and informing the development of the 2030 Agenda

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So now I would like to mention the list of Major Groups and other Stakeholders, especially the groups that are actively engaged in the HLPF

The different Major Groups include, women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers are

The other Stakeholders currently include: Persons with Disabilities, the Stakeholder group on Ageing, Volunteers, Education and Academia, Financing for Development Civil Society Group, Together 2030, the Sendai Stakeholders, the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, and importantly, any other stakeholders who are currently engaged in work related to sustainable development.

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There are several key ways that Major Groups and other Stakeholders can engage in the High-Level Political Forum. This is formally mentioned in Resolution 67/290, and includes the ability to:

- Attend all official meetings of the forum; have access to all official information and documents; intervene in official meetings; To submit documents and present written and oral contributions; to make recommendations; and to organize side events and round tables in cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat

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In addition to these formally recognized opportunities for engagement, there are a number of other ways that MGoS can engage, including:

- By attending Capacity building workshops for stakeholders' engagement at HLPF (national, subregional, regional);
- Participation in Regional Sustainable Development Forums and in regional civil society coordination mechanisms which we will cover in-depth in subsequent webinars
- Participation in Regional Sustainable Development Forums and in regional civil society coordination mechanisms
- Providing input and comments to the Ministerial Declaration

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I would now like to pass the floor to Emilia Reyes, co-chair of the Major Groups and other stakeholders HLPF coordination mechanism steering group, who will briefly provide more information on the coordination mechanism and how to get involved.

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Q&A

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In the final section of this presentation we are going to look ahead to the HLPF sessions in 2019.

The HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC will take place from the 9th to the 18th of July, 2019 at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme, "empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality"

As mentioned, 51 countries will be presenting their Voluntary National Reviews, 10 of which will be presenting for a second time. The full list of countries is on our website

There will be six SDGs under in-depth review, including SDG 4 on quality education, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships for the SDGs which is reviewed every year.

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There are a number of preparatory materials and meetings that take place in advance of the HLPF each year. The first resources that we recommend consulting when countries are preparing their Voluntary National Reviews for the first time are the Secretary General's Common Reporting Guidelines for VNRs, which outline guiding principles for the way in which the VNRs should be prepared, including being open, inclusive, participatory and transparent, and supporting reporting by stakeholders, among other principles.

The second resource is the VNR Handbook, prepared by DESA, which outlines practical information on the steps that countries can take when preparing their VNRs. It is available on the website in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, and Arabic.

DESA also holds a number of preparatory workshops with countries and stakeholders, including three "global" VNR workshops, the first of which was held in Geneva in October, and four regional VNR workshops

There are also Expert Group meetings which are convened in the year leading up to the HLPF for each of the SDGs under in-depth review and include the participation of major groups and other stakeholders.

There will be a pre-HLPF meeting for MGoS close to the July HLPF session which serves as an opportunity for MGoS to meet face-to-face and help prepare for their engagement during the HLPF. We will provide more information on this meeting as soon as it is available.

Finally, throughout the year there are a number of forums and functional commissions which meet and the outcomes of these meetings feed into the HLPF, such as the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation and the financing for development forum.

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For the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly, referred to as the summit, there are also a number of preparatory activities, including a number of preparatory meetings, reports, such as the Global Sustainable Development Report which aims to strengthen the science-policy interface at the HLPF and is prepared by the UN system, scientists, academics, government officials, and other relevant groups.

This year, a political declaration will be adopted at the Summit which will build off the outcome of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC. There will be negotiations on the content of this political declaration held in the run-up to the Summit, in which stakeholders are invited to engage.

Finally, at the summit, heads of state and governments will come together to demonstrate their continued commitment to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and announce initiatives and plans to accelerate progress.

The summit will take place at the UYN headquarters in New York 24-25 September 2019.

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As mentioned earlier, and so you can get this on your calendars for your different regions, each regional commission holds an annual Sustainable Development Forum, which is key to taking stock of the region's progress and challenges towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda and feeds into the HLPF. Here are the dates, which are also available on our website.

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Now we can take any questions on the HLPF in 2019. Q&A

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Here are some links to the resources that were mentioned, including a Q&A on VNRs and the VNR synthesis reports prepared by DESA for the past three years.

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We are planning on holding three more webinars for Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the lead-up to the 2019 HLPF on the topics of Voluntary National Reviews, Global level preparations, and opportunities for attendance and participation at the HLPF so we can go into a bit more detail on some of the topics which we mentioned today. The dates will be announced early next year through the same channels.

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So that concludes our presentation today. Thank you so much for joining. We now have time to take any general questions.