



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018)

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Opening remarks by H.E. Ms. Marie Chatardová,  
President of the Economic and Social Council  
at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
9 July 2018, Conference Room 4**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you to the 2018 High Level Political Forum on sustainable development.

The HLPF is the opportunity to look back at the tremendous achievement that the SDGs have been for the international community. We are here to take stock of how much closer we are today from realizing the goals.

Your presence here confirms that the commitment for the SDGs is alive and well. Over eighty ministers and vice ministers will gather in this room during these eight days. We received 600 applications for side events.





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[Engaging civil society in realizing the SDGs]



I am particularly heartened that 250,000 non-state actors have registered to attend this session.



Their presence exemplifies the continuing rallying power of the SDGs.



The goals are ambitious. They are not only about change --they are about transforming the world.



Given their aspirations and their breadth, they require more than the dedication and good will of governments.



The commitments world leaders made in September 2015 actually engaged our societies as a whole.

Transforming the world requires mobilizing our communities, our organizations, business enterprises and people.

The SDGs must inspire all of us to aim high. They must be the yardstick for people and institutions to measure the success of their activities. They should be the programme on which people hold governments accountable.



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How to give people a say in the decisions that impact on their lives – this has been a theme running through my presidency of ECOSOC.



We explored how civil society, the private sector, academia and other actors can help move the SDGs forward.



Milan Kundera, a writer from my country, wrote that “the worst thing is not that the world is unfree, but that people have unlearned their liberty”



Too many people have unlearned that they have the right to be engaged in policy and decision-making.



This too is a commitment of the 2030 Agenda: the sixteenth SDG has a target on making decision making participatory and inclusive.



This is why I am pleased to welcome all of you together -- government officials, non-governmental organizations, major groups and other stakeholders – in this HLPF.

[HLPF preparations]

Our meeting culminates a rich preparatory process.

First of all, this year has shown again that the 2030 Agenda carries very strong ownership at the regional level. The UN regional commissions and host governments convened five regional forums. They offered an



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invaluable opportunity to discuss challenges and practical solutions and address transboundary issues.



Second, DESA convened expert group meetings on each one of the six SDGs under review to gather the views of experts, academia, scientific community and the UN system.



Third, the 2018 meeting of the multistakeholder Forum on Science Technology and Innovation (STI) highlighted how STI can promote sustainable and resilient societies through the lens of the six Goals under review. We witnessed many practical achievements of private sector leaders, innovators and thinkers, some of which can help us find ways to reach our goals.



Four, the agreed conclusions from the ECOSOC forum for financing development will enrich our discussions on SDG17 and means of implementation.

Finally, a number of contributions were received from intergovernmental bodies and platforms that reviewed progress on the SDGs and the theme. ECOSOC itself convened various events on the theme.

[Programme]

During the coming days, you will share your experiences and reflect on the challenges and obstacles that are holding you back on the road to the SDGs. We will learn from each other as we are striving to achieve the SDGs.



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The Secretary-General's progress report, which Under Secretary-General Liu will introduce in a moment, tells us that we still have a long way to go to reach the goals. We clearly need to step up our efforts and to target them much better at the areas and people who are lagging behind.

This report will serve as the evidence underpinning our discussions. Our numerous speakers from governments and other walk of life will also keep us focused on practical aspects and the reality of people's lives.

We have a rich programme.

We will dedicate a full session to each one of the six SDGs we are reviewing this year.

We will also discuss the theme of this year's HLPF "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". It is fundamental to eliminating poverty, augmenting shared prosperity and leaving no one behind.

This is also why we will also dedicate sessions to countries in special situations and to finance, technology and innovation.



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In line with the pledge of the 2030 Agenda - to leave no one behind – our last session will allow us to take stock of whether we are indeed managing to improve the lives of the furthest behind.



Next week, our ministerial segment will be dedicated to the Voluntary National Reviews.



[VNRs]



An unprecedented number of 47 countries will present their Voluntary National Reviews at this year's HLPF. I am heartened by the elevated level of commitment, ambition, and sense of ownership that are reflected in their reports.



I encourage you all to actively participate in the presentations of the VNRs and in interactions that follow. These presentations are extremely useful for mutual learning and exchange of experiences.



The Secretariat is also preparing for the first time this year a VNR Lab that will take place during the ministerial segment of the HLPF. I encourage all countries and stakeholders who are interested to register and attend.

In addition, eight special events and 190 side events will be held in the margins of the 2018 HLPF, highlighting various issues and aspects of the Agenda's implementation. CEOs of major companies, Mayors of multiple cities and representatives of the top universities will join us.



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[Conclusion]

Before I close, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Bangladesh for spearheading the informal consultations on the Ministerial Declaration.

It is my hope that the Declaration will encapsulate a strong political message on the international community's unwavering commitment to realizing the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the ECOSOC Bureau, and to the DESA team, for their support in organising this HLPF.

I am looking forward to our discussions.

I would like now to give the floor to DESA's Under-Secretary-General of DESA, His Excellency Mr. Liu Zhenmin.

Mr. Liu, the floor is yours.

