

HOLHUASHI DIALOGUE SUMMARY
MORE EFFECTIVE, ENGAGING AND IMPACTFUL HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS
29 OCTOBER 2021, UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

On 29 October 2021, the President of the seventy-sixth session the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid convened the second *Holhuashi Dialogue* on the theme, “*More Effective, engaging and impactful high-level meetings*”.

A brief summary of the main points highlighted at the meeting is as follows:

- The list of mandates for the General Assembly high-level meetings, thematic debates, interactive dialogues, and summits continues to grow, which brings into question their relevance, effectiveness, and impact.
- While the General Assembly recognizes “the value of holding interactive inclusive thematic debates on current issues of critical importance to the international community”, it has also had called for the rationalizing of such debates to ensure high-level attendance.
- Challenges confronted when organizing high-level meetings:
 - Ensuring participation of world leaders in high-level meetings (other than the High-Level Week of September) at the UN Headquarters.
 - Ensuring that all inscribed delegations are able to speak within the set timeframe for the high-level events, without organizing additional meetings.
 - Guaranteeing the participation of stakeholders who after undergoing a lengthy process of selection and accreditation, often see their speaking opportunity curtailed on the day of the event.
- The arrangements, including the format, outcome and duration of high-level meetings, have been based on established practices / precedence, with little or no appetite for innovation.
- General Recommendations:
 - For non-mandated thematic debates avoid the format of formal plenary meetings with established list of speakers, and instead focus on moderated discussions and Q&As. High-quality, engaging and analytical conversations should be prioritized to attract high-level participation.
 - Panels should be made more interactive, with Member States engaging in live discussion rather than reading prepared statements.
 - During plenary segments, more joint statements should be encouraged, including from groups of friends and cross-regional group positions.
 - Respecting time limits for statements should be the norm.
 - Gender parity panels should be a given.

- UN Headquarters need to be opened up for civil society representatives.
- Meeting practices that have evolved as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic-related should continue, including the use of virtual live platforms to engage with stakeholders around the world and listen to experts from the field, which, inter alia, could save costs for their travel to New York.
- High-level events should fit into a common objective of achieving the future we want and the United Nations we need.
- The idea of a second ‘High-level week’ was viewed as problematic. However, annual sessions of the Commission of Status of Women (CSW) and ECOSOC HLPF week could be considered for scheduling high-level debates to attract leaders from capitals.
- The General Debate of the 76th session witnessed greater attendance in the General Assembly Hall as there were no side events held in parallel.
- While hosting side-events during the High-Level Week is the prerogative of Member States, it would be useful to avoid their proliferation when the UN fully opens.
- High-level side events organized on the sidelines of the High-Level Week should address the issues of key global significance, which requires immediate attention from world leaders.
- The importance of opportunities for bilateral meetings during the High-Level Week was highlighted. This year there were only 450 bilateral meeting at the UN Headquarters, while in the pre-COVID period, there were usually over 1500 bilaterals.
- One of the ways to become more efficient with the timing of high-level meetings would be to streamline planning of the events based on subject matter.
- “Hybrid meetings” had specific organizational challenges, including ensuring access to secured and appropriate virtual platforms, and quality interpretation.