



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY OF

2017 High-level political forum on sustainable development¹

1. Introduction

The 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was the first held after the adoption of General Assembly **resolution 70/299, which gave further guidance on follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda** and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was the first HLPF to review in-depth a set of goals (1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14) as well as SDG 17, which is reviewed annually. This review was undertaken while being mindful of the indivisible, integrated and interlinked nature of the SDGs and the three dimensions of sustainable development, including cross-cutting, new and emerging issues. The overarching theme for all sessions was “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

The HLPF included a three-day Ministerial Segment where 43 countries presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The outcomes of regional SDGs fora were also shared.

The President convened a luncheon to facilitate interaction among Member States and the United Nations System which stressed the importance of the UN system working coherently in support of national implementation. Member States expressed support for the Secretary-General's initiative on UN reform to make the UN fit for purpose. It was noted that 100 countries had already asked the UN to help with national implementation, illustrating the confidence in the UN family to deliver in partnership with countries.

The HLPF was enriched by 147 side events, nine learning courses, a number of special events, a private sector workshop, an SDG Business Forum and a Partnership Xchange, as well as an inaugural Chief Sustainability Officers' Forum, illustrating the strong commitment by all stakeholders to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This summary reflects the discussions at the formal and complimentary events, including the general debate on the theme.

2. Where do we stand at year two of implementation?

The 2030 Agenda was adopted at a time when the world had experienced positive effects of globalization, technological progress, increased global trade and wealth, and reduction in numbers of the absolute poor, with improved living conditions in many parts of the world. At the same time, it was evident that many people were being left behind; the challenges of youth unemployment and societal fragility were becoming more and more serious; transition

¹ Res. 70/299 para. 20. “... invites the President of the Council, in consultation with the Bureau of the Council, to prepare a factual summary to reflect the discussions of the meeting.”

to low-carbon economy was meeting with resistance; forced displacement, migration, and risk of famine had increased in a number of fragile regions; and that inequality was becoming a global obstacle to achieving prosperity for all peoples.

Today, global wealth is unprecedentedly high, with the world economy now at USD 127 trillion. This is enough to end poverty, invest in low-carbon energy, combat diseases and build infrastructure for the 21st century. However, it is concentrated within a limited number of people and inequalities have widened within and among countries.

The challenges before the world community are of a global nature, requiring reinforced international collaboration, solidarity and solutions; yet ultimately the responsibility for ensuring implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a national responsibility.

In this regard, some progress is evident at the two-year mark of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. National governments are strongly committed to the transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind. They have begun internalizing SDGs into their strategies and planning processes, coordinating internally and among ministries. Policy-making is increasingly becoming science- and evidence-based and aligned with national budgets. Decentralization is occurring as local governments and communities adapt the SDGs to their particular circumstances. Meanwhile multi-stakeholder engagement is increasing and changing as actors engage in structured implementation processes. Partnerships are gaining momentum, with financial and business sectors leading the way. The unequivocal understanding of the need for addressing interlinkages among the SDGs in line with the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, in particular through the means of implementation, was noteworthy throughout the HLPF session, as was awareness of the importance of ensuring coherence between the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed instruments, such as those related to climate change, disaster risk reduction, trade and human rights.

At the same time, there was broad recognition that challenges and risks ahead are daunting, giving added weight to the need for strengthened solidarity, collaboration and coordinated action to ensure that no one is left behind. While progress was noted in addressing poverty, hunger and malnutrition, they remain the overarching challenges of the 2030 Agenda, with trends in some regions moving in the wrong direction. More than 767 million people continue living on less than \$1.90 a day, with many of the extreme poor concentrated in fragile settings, where conflict and other systemic issues hamper effective interventions. In this context, the need to transcend income per capita assessment through indicators that would include access to education and health services, life expectancy, etc. was also discussed.

Environmental stressors were seen as impacting health in myriad ways, with impacts expected to grow in strength and severity unless action is taken. Climate change exacerbates natural disasters and intensifies vector-borne disease prevalence, while steps to mitigate climate change effects can have collateral benefits for health. Many highlighted the strong links between ocean health and human wellbeing, in particular in the context of SIDS.

Lack of social inclusion and widening inequality remains a significant challenge, both within and among countries. In particular, the young, indigenous people, older people, rural workers, people with disabilities and people affected by conflict are seen as vulnerable. The perils of people on the move, including migrants, are increasing. Women and girls remain deprived of basic rights and opportunities in many parts of the world. They are

disproportionally impacted by climate change, disasters and conflict, especially when living in poverty and are often being forced into child marriages and suffering from genital mutilation and violence without access to health and reproductive services and rights. At the same time, they must be recognized as significant agents of change able to drive development and prosperity, when empowered.

The resources needed to implement the 2030 Agenda are significant but obtainable. Many countries remain short of their ODA commitments, and new resources must be generated domestically as well as through addressing illicit financial flows and loopholes. The financial and private sectors must be engaged and investments directed in service of the SDGs. Access to universal health coverage, free primary and secondary education, enhanced water supply systems, stable and reliable energy, and resilient and safe infrastructure that supports national development were noted as key enablers for poverty eradication, entailing significant investment demands.

Lack of official statistics, data and effective monitoring systems remain a significant challenge to measuring progress, in particular at the SDG target level in relation to new elements of the SDGs that measure the transformative propositions of the 2030 Agenda. Lastly, science and technology must be brought to bear on the SDGs, with knowledge and know-how made accessible to all.

3. Regional and sub-regional implementation

The HLPF recognized the importance of the regional dimension in supporting effective implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. Regional cooperation and integration plays an increasing role in supporting sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation, peer learning, and the sharing of experiences among countries. The contribution of Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSD) enables connection between the national and global levels. It is important to ensure that the RFSD are inclusive multi-stakeholder spaces where coordination and engagement can be facilitated.

Although progress differs between regions, common positive trends have evolved around the improved alignment of regional and sub-regional agendas, policy frameworks and visions with the 2030 Agenda. Countries have improved inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination, adopted sustainable development strategies, and parliaments are mainstreaming the SDGs, with provinces locally adapting the SDGs for implementation.

Empowerment of women and youth was highlighted by all regions as key drivers of change. Removing barriers to women's productive employment and political participation and investing in education for youth, with equal opportunities to girls and boys, are necessary to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda. Participants agreed that mobilizing both domestic and foreign resources and improved tax management, especially addressing tax havens, is essential in this regard.

4. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

A. Addressing multi-dimensions of poverty and inequalities

Participants widely recognized that many dimensions of poverty and deprivation must be addressed in order to eradicate poverty worldwide. Deprivation in the areas of healthcare, education, economic opportunity, women’s empowerment and gender equality, housing or natural resource management, among others, have direct correlation to poverty.

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) era achieved significant progress in addressing poverty in the developing world, but progress was uneven, allowing high levels of inequity to persist and leaving many behind. Equity is therefore considered a fundamental principle guiding all efforts, while social inclusion and engagement of relevant stakeholders were identified as important preconditions for poverty eradication. Children were recognized as suffering disproportionately, and requiring particular attention.

High quality, disaggregated data was seen as central to support decision-making and efforts to eradicate poverty by addressing interlocking negative trends such as climate change, destruction of natural resources that provide ecosystem services, pollution, and other environmental stressors that can undermine progress. Meeting data needs in these areas was of paramount importance. Targeted measures (precision poverty alleviation) based on disaggregated data was highlighted. The “Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index” (MPI) was noted by some as a useful tool to analyse domestic poverty conditions, complimenting traditional, income-based measures.

B. Multi-stakeholder perspectives

Major groups and other stakeholders played a central role in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda, and are active in national level implementation. Continued effective participation of all sectors of society is important, including in reviews at national and global levels. Challenges persist in ensuring that implementation is inclusive. Governments were encouraged to find ways to further incorporate the voices of major groups and other stakeholders into national implementation and review processes, recognizing they represent both voices of advocacy and actors of implementation.

Stakeholders highlighted actions necessary to ensure successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Gender equality and the end of discrimination towards all vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, youth and the lesbian, gay, trans and intersexual community should be prioritized. Innovative funding mechanisms should be considered for global activities, such as voluntary solidarity contributions, including philanthropy; debt instruments and bonds; and market-based state guarantees, incentives, insurances and other mechanisms.

C. SAMOA Pathway

To achieve the SDGs in SIDS, commitment is required at the highest political level, supported by broad political consultation and collaboration across traditional alignments. Transformational leadership that can strategically guide all sectors must be at the core. National mainstreaming of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs, inclusive with mid-term

frameworks and budgets, is critical to foster national ownership of the 2030 Agenda and ensure positive synergies. Building capacity across all sectors, especially regarding collection and use of data, is necessary, as is public information sharing to enhance transparency and accountability and to build trust.

Stakeholder engagement and effective partnerships of all kinds are key to the implementation of the SDGs for SIDS, as evidenced by the partnerships of the SAMOA Pathway and latest pledges derived from the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Regional initiatives such as the Pacific Non-communicable Diseases Roadmap and many others were noted for addressing the overwhelming burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, strengthening tobacco control, improving nutrition and food security while combating obesity, improving the efficiency of the consumer health dollar, and strengthening evidence-based policies and decision making to ensure resources and strengthen resilience. As an example of successful implementation of a request made under the SAMOA Pathway, the FAO informed the meeting on the content of the recently launched “Global Action Programme (GAP) on Food Security and Nutrition”. The GAP is a framework within which SIDS and their development partners can work to design and implement more coherent actions to promote food security and nutrition.

D. Countries in special situations and Middle Income Countries

The HLPF recognised that only through the meaningful participation of those furthest left behind and where challenges are amplified and impacts exacerbated, can we advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Just as prosperity limited to a portion of a country does not equate to transformation, transformation will not become a reality if only a few countries achieve the SDGs.

Development finance for countries in special situations needs to be more reliable, sourced from multiple stakeholders and targeted towards the specific needs of different countries. The plight of recently graduated LDCs was also addressed especially in relation to lack of access to concessional funding, while vulnerabilities still persist. New funding sources, technologies, tradability of services, new demographic dynamics, alliances and partnerships should be explored for their contribution to driving the eradication of poverty and promoting prosperity. Domestically, systematic collaboration between governments and communities is required to address barriers to the financing of SDGs, such as a lack of capacity, accountability, tax evasion and illicit flow of funds, as well as understanding of the benefits of collaboration.

Investments in smallholder agriculture was identified as a primary means for LDCs, LLDCs and post-conflict countries to develop resilience and achieve targets related to health and wellbeing, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, climate action, and other SDGs. Unemployment remains the greatest challenge for LDCs, which means that ensuring sustained, greener economic growth remains a priority. Being landlocked poses particular challenges that should be addressed through improving all modes of transport to achieve better access to markets and to new, context-specific technologies, while post-conflict countries expressed specific development needs that often suffer from fragmentation of development planning.

Middle-income countries (MIC) account for 75 per cent of the global population, more than one third of the global GDP, and one quarter of the global export and import industry. The

shift in global distribution of poverty and its eradication is representing challenges for many. It was therefore suggested that their classification should include an assessment that transcends income per capita and take into account life expectancy, institutional development, people living in poverty, vulnerable groups, unemployment, and technological progress, among other indicators. The sustainable development of MICs would benefit other countries, including LDCs, and would in some instances have the potential of stabilizing a region in conflict.

5. Review of progress of focus SDGs

SDG1: End Poverty in all its forms everywhere

Most progress toward SDG 1 was seen in East and South-East Asia, while sub-Saharan Africa remains behind. Many who have escaped poverty are at risk of falling back. Social protection coverage varies and still misses many vulnerable populations. Less than half of the world's population are effectively protected by a social protection system, with coverage varying widely across countries and regions. The extreme poor are most often concentrated in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Half of these are children, and most have little or no education. Disaster risk is highly concentrated in low- and lower-middle-income countries. In relation to the size of their economies, SIDS have borne a disproportionate impact from disasters. Climate risks continue to impact all countries, with the poorest least able to cope. While anti-poverty policies have reduced the number of people living below the poverty line, generally they have not been able to help those living at or close to the poverty floor.

Holistic approaches to rural transformation and investment in rural actors—particularly women, children and youth—was recognized as a priority, and many reiterated the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment. Those hardest to reach are often concentrated in areas with high risk of natural disasters, living in fragile states or in countries in conflict requiring particular attention. Overall, this amplifies the challenges to progress in SDG1, unless progress is made in interlinked SDGs.

Social inclusion was broadly recognized as key to ensuring that no one is left behind. Decent work with liveable wages, universal social protection, targeted poverty alleviation, and quality education remain key tools for poverty eradication, and many Member States highlighted successful practices in this regard. At the national level, the importance of quality institutions, improved coordination across the government and the relationship between governance and equity were also raised.

Investments in infrastructure, access to stable and reliable energy, and upgrading dilapidated housing were also noted as enablers for poverty eradication that illustrate as well the interlinkages with other SDGs.

SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Addressing SDG2 requires recognizing the close interdependence between poverty and hunger. At the current rate of progress, the world is not expected to reach the zero hunger target by 2030. Food security and sustainable agriculture are also closely interlinked with

other SDGs. Food systems, environment, water and sanitation, climate change, social justice, health, and peace and stability all impact each other. Agriculture is multifunctional and provides much more than food. It generates income, employment, peace and stability. Climate change, conflict, lack of appropriate policies and equitable tenure rights, and insufficient investment continue to hinder progress in ensuring food security.

It is necessary to adopt a food systems approach and to look at consumption and production together. Malnutrition remains a global problem with long-term impacts, particularly to children. Hidden hunger and micronutrient deficiencies affect the vulnerable, such as people with disabilities, the old and the poor. Obesity and related diseases such as diabetes burden health care systems. Food and nutrition systems require better governance, with behaviour changes promoted by education, tax policies and labelling systems.

Small-scale farmers are central to all food systems. Agriculture needs to become more knowledge intensive to achieve productivity targets, and diversification of production is key to avoid land and water degradation and build resilience to climate change, pests and disease. Inclusive policy processes and partnerships with a human rights based approach and involvement of all stakeholders, including the technical and financial communities, is required. Policy coherence enables synergies among sectors, but also means negotiating trade-offs. Women's empowerment and gender equality remain key for achieving food security and sustainable agriculture.

SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being of all at all ages

Countries review of SDG3 emphasized the multi-sectoral nature of successful health interventions and the need to address the social determinants of health, in order to support progress in other SDGs. Health solutions need to take a human rights approach, proactively address stigma, include awareness raising, education, women's empowerment including addressing child marriage and women's sexual and reproductive health, climate change and pollution, financial mechanisms, increasing training and provision of health care workers and devoting adequate and timely funding, technology and innovation.

While progress has been made in a number of key areas, there are still populations and regions that are at risk of being left behind, including adolescents, indigenous people, older people, people in conflict and post-conflict situations, migrants, rural workers, people with disabilities, and others. Participants universally recognized the importance of working across sectors, including the private sector. Some noted the need for institutional reform, also in that of the United Nations' support to countries.

SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The HLPF recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women was not merely a goal, but a prerequisite for prosperous societies and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. While progress was noted in ending discrimination against women and girls in laws, policies and practices since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, systemic and structural changes had far to go in some parts of the world. Violence against women and girls and child marriage are still prevalent in some regions. Women still spend more time than men caring for family members and on domestic duties. Women continue to be largely underrepresented in decision-making in public and private spheres and face constraints related to access to and

control over productive resources, limited employment in skill based industries, exclusion in skills development programmes and access to financial resources. The consequences of armed conflict and political instability on women and girls are devastating, and must be urgently addressed.

Participants recognized the critical link between women's empowerment, breaking poverty cycles and enhancing economic growth. Efforts are concentrated on strengthening the means of implementation of SDG 5, addressing violence against women, supporting women's participation in the labour market and in decision-making, promoting women's health and access to services, and improving institutional frameworks by integrating SDG 5 into long-term development plans, localizing the SDGs and prioritizing investment in gender-disaggregated data. Some highlighted knowledge sharing among countries and the importance of adopting the SDG 5 indicator guidelines, with these indicators serving as a baseline for national efforts. Creating synergies and strategic alliances, including among the BPfA, CEDAW and CSW, and between state and non-state actors, can improve progress.

SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Robust and well-planned infrastructure is recognized as underpinning all economic growth. Manufacturing is seen as a principal driver of economic development, employment and social stability with transport, information and communication technologies, electricity, water and sanitation necessary for industrialization to provide jobs and economic wellbeing. A call was made to ensure that development partners support developing countries in improving infrastructure and connectivity to allow all access to basic services and to boost industrialization, including by technology transfer. The importance of equally sharing the benefits of innovation was emphasized

Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises, including through access to financing and ICT for trade was highlighted. Policy coherence, investment and policy planning need to be industry-specific, and the role of social infrastructure related to education, health, legal, financial and monetary systems should be recognized.

Formulating trade rules that promote inclusive growth, removing trade barriers, tariff and non-tariff alike was stressed, along with increasing local demand by empowering the middle classes in developing countries. It is important to ensure that industrialization and infrastructure development does not harm the environment, and that resilient, green infrastructure safeguards citizens and can simultaneously provide solutions for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Technology should be utilized to find solutions for ensuring strategic commodities, such as food, energy and water.

SDG14: Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Ocean Conference pointed to the urgent need for action to safeguard our oceans and seas and recognizing the interdependence of human wellbeing and the ocean. The double challenge of increasing output while safeguarding the ocean and seas was raised by many. With the adoption of a Call for Action enumerating a comprehensive plans of action to be

taken by all actors, the Ocean Conference made significant headway in addressing the ocean challenges in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Climate change, overfishing and marine pollution continue to jeopardize gains made in ocean conservation and establishment of marine protected areas. The proportion of world marine fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels is declining, while alarming levels of ocean acidification hinders resilience of ocean ecosystems, especially coral reefs. The ocean provides promising sources for renewable energy, such as tidal, wave and wind energy. The importance of addressing both climate change mitigation and adaptation was repeatedly stressed, as were the special challenges faced by SIDS.

The Ocean Conference forged new partnerships to achieve SDG 14, including through nearly 1400 voluntary commitments, which must be followed up on. Some speakers welcomed the proposal made by Portugal and Kenya to hold a second conference on the ocean in 2020, while others proposed utilizing the UNFCCC COP26 in 2020 to strengthen the link between ocean and climate action. Advancing discussions on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction was recognized. Some suggested revisiting the Terms of Reference for UN-Oceans to better enable follow-up work.

National efforts, including the banning of plastic bags, combating littering and the establishment of marine protected areas has yielded positive effects. Utilization and respect of indigenous, local knowledge was highlighted as one of the best ways to ensure the integrity of implementation actions, full engagement of local communities and the notion of stewardship and responsibility for future generations.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Investing in and financing for SDGs

The 2030 Agenda requires a transformation of the international enabling environment. Over the past two years, notable progress has been seen in the implementation of the Addis Abba Action Agenda (AAAA) which provides a comprehensive financing framework for the SDGs. Significant gaps remain, and the current global environment presents numerous challenges to implementation of the SDGs. The international community needs to act urgently by fully implementing the AAAA at all levels.

The 2017 ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up (FfD Forum) saw the international community deeply committed to inclusiveness, multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development, despite a challenging global macroeconomic environment and the threats posed by climate change, humanitarian crises and conflicts.

Several countries noted measures taken to ensure progress in all seven action areas of the AAAA such as domestic public resources; domestic and international private business and finance; international development cooperation (including official development assistance, South-South cooperation and development bank lending); international trade; debt sustainability; systemic issues; and science, technology, innovation and capacity building.

An increasing number of countries are mainstreaming the AAAA into national sustainable development strategies, involving a wide range of stakeholders. Some highlighted the indispensability of greater multilateral cooperation and provided concrete examples of efforts to develop integrated national financing frameworks that take into consideration all financing sources to support cohesive, nationally owned sustainable development strategies.

Challenges include the need for increasing the engagement of the financial sector, in particular institutional investors, in the 2030 Agenda; scaling up public and private investment in sustainable infrastructure; promoting financial innovation and building pipelines of investable projects; and mitigating the effects of climate change, both as an impediment to the financing goals of developing countries and as a harmful by-product of trade and innovation.

In response, new approaches to channel finance are needed, with implementation of the SDGs requiring participation of all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. Further efforts are needed to make a strong business case for investing in the SDGs to mobilize private capital and blended finance. At the same time, a need for increased transparency and public scrutiny is clear. Some noted that the United Nations is the right place to explore guidelines to ensure that interactions with the private sector share risks and rewards fairly, include clear accountability mechanisms, and meet social and environmental standards.

Finally, it was noted that financing and investing in SDGs was not just about finance, but also about institutions and governance in order to achieve a coherent framework.

Advancing science, technology and innovation for SDGs

Flexible and participatory science, technology and innovation roadmaps at national and global levels are essential to support SDG achievement. Attention to scaling-up smart investments by Governments, the private sector and other partners, including for building productive and human capacity for science, technology and innovation to unlock the creative potential of youth and women were discussed. More attention should be given to existing low-cost technologies requiring scientists and innovators to engage with the realities of local communities.

Positive and negative impacts from the disruptive effects of new technologies on societies were discussed. Collaborative efforts to safeguard the voice of science in support of sustainable development actions and the policy discourse must involve the promotion of, open science, universal access and knowledge sharing, and global investment in science. The UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the STI Forum were highlighted as well-placed to engage with science as an open collaborative enterprise for action on the SDGs and serve as a catalyst for multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The current approach to engage the private sector and mobilize private resources was seen as inadequate, with a need to further explore innovative engagement structures and new ways to incentivise the private sector and other stakeholders to channel their technology and innovation-related initiatives and efforts to STI for the SDGs.

6. Leveraging interlinkages for effective implementation of SDGs

The HLPF reconfirmed that the SDGs and their targets are interconnected, and these interlinkages are leveraging points for implementation. The interlinkages within the 2030 Agenda lie particularly at the target level. Leveraging interlinkages requires true political leadership, with better policy coherence and coordination as means to achieve overall objectives focused on outcomes rather than processes. A multi-sectoral, whole-of-government approach is key in approaching these leverage points to foster synergies and produce concrete results in a coherent manner. Coordination of policies and actions should be further reflected in investments and budget allocations. Integrated monitoring and assessment could further support tracking progress and ensuring accountability.

Many countries shared progress in data mapping and institutional coordination as a starting point for implementation, identifying institutional collaboration needs, conducting resource assessments and reconfiguring expenditures. A number of tools such as budgetary alignment were highlighted for policy makers to address interlinkages and increase policy coherence. However, current practices in analysing interlinkages are often driven by data availability rather than necessary data. Addressing interlinkages is a task for governments as well as stakeholders, and creating awareness of the diverse data ecosystems needed to monitor progress, along with making data useful for decision making and policy implementation, presents an important challenge for all.

Notwithstanding the interlinked nature of the SDGs, the interlinked nature of the 2030 Agenda with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction, the Vienna and Istanbul Programmes of Action, the Samoa Pathway and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda were repeatedly noted as mutually reinforcing and critical to implementation of each to be done in a complimentary manner.

7. Science-policy interface and emerging issues

Participants reflected on the importance of an inclusive science-policy interface, multi-stakeholder partnerships and evidence-based policies, and the key role of science, technology and innovation in SDG implementation. The scientific community and policy makers alike must cooperate in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. The potential of the Global Sustainable Development Report was highlighted in this regard.

The importance of identifying STI capacity gaps for implementation of SDGs, in particular in developing countries was noted. It is vital to ensure that scientists are equipped with skills to engage with indigenous knowledge and freely access information and research. At national and regional levels, the science-policy interface should be established and institutionalized following an inclusive approach that facilitates collaboration. Some suggested that STI capacity building be mainstreamed in development assistance, and research systems mobilized and steered towards development impact.

An important emerging issue that came out was migration and the effect that migration has on sustainable development as well as a strong link that needs to exist between right of

migrants regardless of their status and inclusion in the recipient country societies in order to achieve social cohesion and achievement of SDGs.

8. Voluntary National Reviews

During the Ministerial Segment, 43 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

Overwhelmingly, the national preparations were considered extensive and impactful, a welcome tool to keep momentum on implementation efforts, in part due to strong commitment from the highest levels of Government - a commitment illustrated as well by the level of representation of the VNRs, at the ministerial level or above. A strong show of political leadership and messaging of the importance attached to the HLPF as the key global venue for reviews and shared learning was evident.

Common threads across the VNRs included the importance of bringing all stakeholders together in a joint, multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach to implementing the SDGs. While there are different approaches on how to do this, it was central to create ownership at all levels, including with the individual citizens to create and sustain momentum for implementation and monitoring of the agenda.

Policy-making for the SDGs could become more effective, for instance through active political commitment and engagement of community and traditional leaders, opinion leaders, the media and political leaders to address the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by the countries. The reviews shared examples of how coordination between and among government agencies and civil society organizations can be strengthened. The necessity to nationalize and localize the 2030 Agenda, in order to create true ownership of the agenda by all stakeholder groups was stressed, requiring closer and more effective information flows and partnerships with development partners including UN on the one hand, and more responsibility taken at the local and community levels as well as by individual citizens on the other. There is a need to create incentives for the strengthened participation of sub-national and local levels of government, recognizing that many are already actively engaged in implementing the SDGs.

Identifying interlinkages among the SDGs and within SDGs at target level was critical and should translate into the policy making, budgeting and institutional structures and processes at national and sub-national levels. This was seen as an important principle that should also guide multilateral cooperation in order to ensure effective cooperation and policy coherence. Political will should be reflected in active measures towards achieving a whole-of-government approach, as integrated, coordinated actions will be a key to break sectoral siloes and to avoid duplication, policy incoherence and ultimately achieve sustainable development.

In their pursuit towards more inclusive, sustainable societies, countries committed to focusing more on youth, and including disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in order to ensure that no one is left behind. While countries stressed their willingness and active engagement in international development cooperation (both North-South, South-South and multilateral) to

achieve the SDGs globally, the role of international (state and non-state) partners would be critical to complement national budgets with financial support, especially in countries facing national budget constraints. In many developing countries, continued and strengthened support from the UN system could contribute to the preparation of the VNRs, as well as implementation of the Agenda.

In light of an overall lack of financial means sourced from traditional budget streams such as national taxes and ODA, an urgent need to go beyond and explore complementary and innovative financial mechanisms was recognized in order to obtain the finance needed to globally achieve the SDGs. Presentations highlighted that effective ways to tackling problems such as tax evasion and corruption are important in order to increase money available for investments in sustainable development.

It was widely recognized that data is vital for achieving the SDGs, building trust and accountability, but also constitutes a key challenge. Localization of targets and indicators, as well as capacity development and investments in data collection, disaggregation, analysis and dissemination need to be prioritized.

Presentations underlined that although national statistical offices were in many cases engaged in monitoring the SDGs, capacity assessments and measures to close capacity gaps need to be undertaken. Countries are working on developing data literacy, capacity to disaggregate traditional indicators and develop non-traditional ones. The importance of working towards integrating diverse monitoring and evaluation structures into a single national system, which will reduce parallel structures for monitoring and overlaps in data collection, was been highlighted. In this regard, a need for continued political, technical and financial efforts to strengthen data ecosystems at subnational, national and global level are needed, especially as regards data disaggregation and the development of non-traditional indicators.

Discussions at the 2017 HLPF have shown the critical role of the HLPF as the global platform for follow-up and review, highlighting the Forum's importance as a space for considering challenges and structural barriers that require coordinated action at the global level, but also serving as a platform for collaboration, partnerships peer learning and exchange of experiences and lessons learnt. The facilitative momentum of the HLPF enhanced national efforts towards SDG implementation.