

Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Lessons learnt from the first cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) – How far can we go “during the next cycle?”

**An expert meeting for reviewing how to improve the HLPF**

**By Jan-Gustav Strandenaes,  
senior adviser on governance**

**Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future**

**September 10 and 11, 2018**

# This session is about:

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- **Rethinking the UN intergovernmental bodies after the creation of the HLPF:  
The roles of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and HLPF**

- This session will review options for reform of the HLPF for its second cycle:
- Ensuring it is fit for purpose;
- Continues to serve Member States, stakeholders, and the UN system;
- Functioning as the central platform for review of progress on the 2030 Agenda.
- Member States will have the opportunity to formally address the reform of the HLPF during the 74th session of the General Assembly.

## Key questions to be answered by this workshop:

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- ▶ How can we ensure that discussions in the lead-up to and during the annual HLPF serve as a catalyst for concrete action to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- ▶ What general guidance could the September 2019 Summit provide on reform of the HLPF?
- ▶ How can the review of the resolutions on the HLPF and ECOSOC be best prepared and coordinated?
- ▶ What kind of ECOSOC reform is needed?
- ▶ The GA will also have to redefine its role. What changes to committees could be envisaged, including possible alignment of their agendas to better reflect the 2030 Agenda follow-up and avoid overlaps with ECOSOC and HLPF?
- ▶ Should each SDG have a dedicated platform? Could ECOSOC or another UN body address SDGs with comparatively low coverage? If so, how?
- ▶ Are there lessons learned from the CSD that could be used to improve the HLPF?

Paraphrasing four of the recommendations from the Peer Review of the German Strategy on Sustainable Development, chaired by former director of UNDP, Ms. Helen Clark, which I also co-wrote, I would say about HLPF:

- Keep what works, elevate what is good, and change what has failed to deliver.
- Make the institutional architecture charged with implementing the 2030 agenda more effective.
- Raise the level of ambition for what we can achieve.
- Foster a more conducive enabling environment for Leaving No One Behind

**Has the HLPF been successful in implementing its mandate?**

**Then - what is the mandate?**

- The mandate is defined in two documents: A/Res/**67/290** and further expanded with assignments from “**Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**” –
- And further strengthened by a third: **70/299**

## Mandate pertaining to HLPF:

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- ➔ **From 67/290:** Found in paras: 1,6,7,11, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 29
- ➔ **From the 2030 Agenda document:** found in paragraphs: 74, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90
- ➔ **Further strengthened in 70/299:** paragraphs: 4,6,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18, 19,20

# Mandates fulfilled? 19 identified ...

<b>Provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations</b>	<b>Perhaps</b>
<b>A concise negotiated political declaration for the GA</b>	<b>Not really</b>
<b>Follow up and review</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>A focused, dynamic, action-oriented agenda - new and emerging sustainable development challenges</b>	<b>Perhaps to negligible</b>
<b>Enhance the integration of the three dimensions</b>	<b>improving</b>
<b>A thematic focus with that of ECOSOC and the 2030 agenda</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Follow up, review progress in the implementation of all major United Nations conferences</b>	<b>Improving</b>
<b>Involve relevant UN bodies, in particular WTO, the Bretton Woods institutions, their respective means of implementation</b>	<b>Not really</b>
<b>Improve cooperation/coordination within the UN system on sustainable development programmes and policies</b>	<b>Has begun, needs strength</b>

# Mandates fulfilled? 19 identified

<sup>9</sup> <b>Promote sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned</b>	<b>YES, but mostly on successes</b>
<b>Promote system-wide coherence and coordination of SD policies;</b>	<b>Improving</b>
<b>Take into account work of Development Cooperation Forum, other activities of ECOSOC relating to integration and implementation of sustainable development;</b>	<b>Begun, and improving, (Yes?)</b>
<b>Shall benefit from regional preparatory processes</b>	<b>Not really</b>
<b>Devote adequate time to the discussion of the sustainable development challenges facing developing countries</b>	<b>Begun – and improving (hopefully)</b>
<b>Identify and address new and emerging issues</b>	<b>Not really</b>
<b>Strengthen the science-policy interface</b>	<b>Begun, improving</b>
<b>Develop an independent Global Sustainable Development Report</b>	<b>Improving</b>
<b>Deal with SCP</b>	<b>Improving, but far to go</b>

## **Just a tiny bit of history**

**CSD and HLPF – cousins together or cousins apart?**

# Can the differences between CSD and HLPF teach us something?

CSD 11	HLPF
CSD established in 1993, after UNCED and the GA agreed and decided on Agenda 21	HLPF was established in 2013, a year after Rio+20 with no specific work programme
CSD was given a specific and detailed mandate with a structure to promote its mandate: a resourced and dedicated secretariat; a Bureau and a Chair; and had decision-making powers	HLPF was given a mandate which was generic and general, had no dedicated secretariat, no Bureau, no chair, and has no decision-making power
CSD was given an easily understood position in the UN hierarchy: a subsidiary body under ECOSOC	HLPF was a 'new construct' at the UN, functioning under the auspices of ECOSOC and the UNGA
CSD had a well defined work-programme outlined in general details by Agenda 21 including the Rio Principles	HLPF was given its work-programme only in 2016, after the UNGA had agreed on the 2030 Agenda and 70/299

# Are there lessons learned from the CSD that could be used to improve the HLPF?

## CSD

- An elected Bureau with a Chair
- 53 members, on a rotating basis
- Had a decision-making power with a mandate to vote
- Had a dedicated secretariat with a proper mandate, staff and resources
- Time: two week preparation, two week negotiations
- A proper preparatory process through a conference
- Thematic reviews
- A Chairs summary, and a negotiated outcome based on the summary
- Multistakeholder dialogues

## HLPF

- Directed by the President of ECOSOC/UNGA
- Universal membership
- Has no decision-making powers, but has proceeded to vote
- Works with a general reference to UNDESA to support HLPF (§ 23) in a secretarial manner
- 5 days for reviews, 3 days for the High Level Segment
- A preparatory process through internet, no easy access to all documents
- VNRs from countries, on certain goals
- A drafted report and a Ministerial Declaration negotiated outside of HLPF in advance of HLPF
- Selected inputs by stakeholders from the floor

# The difficult birth and history of HLPF and the SDGs

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- HLPF was established in 2013 before anybody knew what it was going to work on and to be working with;
- The new ‘construct’, HLPF, “under the auspices of” – was not well understood;
- There were obvious shortcomings in HLPF (at least to some);
- The way HLPF was handled between 2013 and 2016 weakened HLPF
- The 2030 Agenda was agreed to in September 2015
- The ‘size’ of the SDGs with their targets motivated the clustering for the VNR, and this became the agenda – by default?
- The first ‘real’ HLPF took place in 2016, four years after its inception in Rio+20 and three years after its establishment by 67/290

**Have we understood all what we needed to understand?**

**Or have we overlooked directives we have agreed on?**

# A forgotten directive – the second preambular paragraph of 67/290:

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- ➔ “*Emphasizing* the need for an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development, which should be guided by the specific functions required and mandates involved; address the shortcomings of the current system; take into account all relevant implications; promote synergies and coherence; seek to avoid duplication and eliminate unnecessary overlaps within the United Nations system and reduce administrative burdens and build on existing arrangements,”

## Another overlooked directive – in 70/299 “Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level” also a preambular paragraph:

- *Reaffirming also* that in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Member States committed to engaging in systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the Agenda in accordance with agreed guiding principles, including those set out in paragraph 74 of resolution 70/1, and asserted that the high-level political forum on sustainable development would have a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates,

**Successful or perhaps not? The case for agenda setting and a case for reform?**

# HLPF - successful – absolutely and perhaps - not that much?

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- Two paras from 67/290 – what are they both about?
- §18. “*Emphasizes* that the forum shall provide a dynamic platform for regular dialogue and for stocktaking and agenda-setting to advance sustainable development and that the agenda of all meetings of the high-level political forum shall be focused, while allowing flexibility to address new and emerging issues;”
- § 22. “*Requests* the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council to coordinate with the Bureau of the Council and with the bureaux of the relevant committees of the Assembly to organize the activities of the forum so as to benefit from the inputs and advice of the United Nations system, the major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate;”

# What do these paragraphs say?

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- That they are about agenda setting, that the agenda setting should be regular and embrace new and emerging issues. has this really taken place?
- And that the Presidents of ECOSOC and UNGA should consult with the entire UN system and with relevant stakeholders including the major groups to establish these agendas.
- Has this really taken place?
- And if not, what can be done to address this issue?
- The clustering of SDGs have decided the agenda so far – should we continue this?

Agenda setting for the new cycle – a continuous process combining input from the **implementing partnerships in the field** with “the in-house system” (i.e. the UN)

Input from GSDR, from the UN system, the AAAA process, from stakeholders and from member states

Emerging issues, GAP analysis on implementing the SDGs, new topical and thematic identification

The new cycle and topics for the review process requires a stronger HLPF with a dedicated secretariat

# Using the system within the system

# The added agenda of HLPF from the 2030 doc and AAA

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- Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action,
  - The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway,
  - The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024,
  - Regional responsibilities, such as
    - The African Union's Agenda 2063 and
    - The programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD),
  - durable peace and sustainable development and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations
- An annual SDG Progress report by the SG based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical information collected at regional level
  - The Global Sustainable Development Report
  - The UN Interagency Task team on Science Technology and Innovation for the SDGs
  - The annual report from the ECOSOC five day special high level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD to assess follow up and result orientation on financing issues and means of implementation

# Reforming (modernising) HLPF : The case of ‘time’, ECOSOC and HLPF

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- ▶ Time – HLPF needs need more time,
- ▶ Could combining the Ffd/AAA (5 days), the science technology input (2 days) and ECOSOC partnership forum, (1 to 2 days) to be added to HLPF’ and made into one process, thus give HLPF the time needed? This ads or reorganizes 9 days to HLPFs 5 + 3; resulting in a total of 17 work days. Still short of CSD’s 20 work days
- ▶ Such a move would be consistent with several of the resolutions mentioned (67/290; 70/1, 70/299, 61/16) and make HLPF at the centre of the 2030 agenda
- ▶ It would not run contrary to the formality of the system
- ▶ It would allow for more coherence and integration of process
- ▶ This would bring the work on the 2030 Agenda by the Subsidiary bodies and Specialized Agencies including the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD into the HLPF process. As ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating the input from the Specialized Agencies, the agencies and a few subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC could function as ‘Task Managers’ for the various SDGs, and still keep their own specialties intact.

# Reforming (modernising) HLPF: The case of UNGA, HLPF and a Bureau

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- If not an elected Bureau, perhaps a Steering Committee?
- A Steering Committee (SC) for HLPF could have members from the 6 UN GA committees
- The SC would always be chaired by the President of ECOSOC, every four year, when the HLPF is convened under the GA, the President of ECOSOC becomes the Vice Chair and the GA President becomes the Chair;
- Such an SC would enable coherence between the UNGA system and the 2030 agenda, even help ‘solve’ the universality conundrum’ – ECOSOC 54 members, HLPF all member states
- An SC would ‘respect’ the two formal elements of the HLPF – that it is established under the auspices of the UNGA and ECOSOC;
- The SC would also be in a position to prepare the agendas for HLPF, and with the member states address national concerns, and with ECOSOC coordinate the SDGs across the entire UN system;
- The SC could also function as the formal link between HLPF sessions, not jeopardising ECOSOC’s authority and provide a formal sounding board for the secretariat
- An SC would function as the political governance structure of HLPF. As proposed and representing all member states of the UN, it would be formally in a position to make recommendations that are valid throughout the system, on follow-up and reviews, as requested by paragraph 2 of 67/290 and paragraph 82 of the September 2015 Summit Declaration;

## Having a dedicated secretariat was the biggest organisational novelty of the League of Nations and one of its real successes

- No proposal to strengthen or modernize HLPF will be possible without a well-resourced and dedicated secretariat. The present reorganization have gone a long way to address weaknesses in the secretariat, but a question remains – is this enough?
- The present structure needs to be strengthened, and as we seek coherence and not overlapping, parallel institutions working on the 2030 agenda should be avoided. The first CSD decade (1993 – 2002) was in many ways a strong success – and this is to a fairly large degree attributed to the secretariat of CSD.

## What needs to be improved – a short summary

- Agenda setting – developing a process
- Emerging issues, helping to identify thematic reviews
- The relationship between HLPF, ECOSOC and UNGA, a Steering Committee
- Improved integration of the entire UN system in HLPF (Specialized Agencies, Subsidiary bodies)
- Improved integration of the FfD, AAA into HLPF, Bretton Woods, WTO, UNCTAD
- Integrate the Technology Facilitation Mechanism/ The UN Interagency Task team on Science Technology and Innovation
- **Regional issues, strengthened and improved, more innovative work**
- **Integrating MEAs, Conventions and rights issues into the bigger picture of the 2030 agenda**
- Major Groups and stakeholder engagement
- Developing and negotiating the Ministerial Declaration
- Implementation and partnerships/ role of stakeholders
- How do we integrate the digital world into the HLPF equation?
- None of this is possible unless we allocate more time and more resources to HLPF

## What happens to ideas – mine and those from the rest of the seminar?

- **If you think the ideas are impracticable, not possible to carry out or implement – then do the following:**
  - 1) – find proper arguments for why the ideas are impossible
  - 2) – find concrete projects or ideas to replace the elements that I have proposed
- **If you think the ideas were good, and could be implemented, then do the following:**
  - 1) – develop arguments to strengthen the ideas and to ‘sell’ them back home so the capitals can give equal support
  - 2) – develop the process through which the ideas can be implemented

## I will leave you with two statements:

- “History does not repeat, but it does instruct, ... history can familiarize, and it can warn,” writes historian Timothy Snyder.
- An often stated truism is: unless governments own intergovernmental processes, policies will never be taken seriously. Another is: unless people feel ownership with development, little will be implemented.

Finally: if we are resourceful, we allocate resources – if not, we fail.

- Everything we have spoken of and will be speaking of these two days– reforming or modernising HLPF, making it fit for purpose, strengthening the secretariat – all this needs resources, LOTS!
- “Doing more with less” is not a truism, it is a disaster. We are faced with the biggest challenge in humanity’s existence – saving the globe. We cannot afford not to give our ideas adequate resources. We will never be able to calculate the cost of not doing enough. That cost will be astronomical and incalculable. Will you take the responsibility for such a financial disaster – or will we just leave the problems for our next generations – the youth of today and just leave everybody behind?



# Thank you for listening to me

- Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
- Senior adviser on governance
- Stakeholder Forum
- [jgstrandenaes@gmail.com](mailto:jgstrandenaes@gmail.com)