

EGM ON LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE HLPF
6-7 MAY 2019, NYC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - KEY MESSAGES / TAKE AWAYS

General: The meeting was attended by very few member states, the dominant member states were missing, with the exception of the EU, UK, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, China, Mexico Argentina. On a positive note Amb. Donoghue (former PR of Ireland, now no longer with Irish government but a visiting fellow at ODI) attended the meeting as an independent expert, taking notes of recommendations (and raising a very good point about the lack of urgency in implementation so far, despite promise to reach the furthest behind first). Very dynamic first day with large number of constructive inputs. Second day we experienced a backlash in enthusiasm and rather had the impression there is reluctance to advocate for change. General mood seemed in accordance with UK's statement that "HLPF has partially fulfilled its role."

Member states raised concerns about when the HLPF review process would start (under UNGA 74) and how this timing will affect HLPF 2020 (including around SDGs in focus, theme, etc.). Suggestion from Marion (UN DESA OISC) that political declaration for 2019 decide theme for 2020, and subsequent themes to be decided as part of review process. Mixed reactions to this, and concerns (including from Argentina) that preparing for 2020 HLPF could be difficult if the thematic part is not sorted, especially for governments planning to present VNRs in 2020.

Donoghue suggested abandoning SDG-specific sessions during thematic review, but governments seemed to be averse to making this change, at least not for the second HLPF cycle. Governments indicated their appreciation for the thematic reviews because they are interactive (and give something for their HLPF delegations to do?) and didn't seem very concerned with discussing whether they are politically relevant or long/in-depth enough to be effective. Germany suggested starting preparations for HLPF 2020 before the review concludes, and to revise structure so far on an interim basis, perhaps suggested by the PGA. Suggestion by several MS that co-facilitators for the HLPF review need to be appointed ASAP and that the changes to HLPF that don't require a change in mandate should be taken quickly.

DESA promised that the report of this meeting would be ready within a week, and indicated their intention to hold a similar meeting in the autumn.

Recommendations - thoughts (second day lunch discussions among MGoS)

- Regional level VNRs must be introduced. Shadow reports to be considered and published at all levels. Incorporate lessons/outputs of regional fora.
- VNRs must have action oriented outcomes, MGoS making key recommendations in writing.
- MSs are comfortable, we see on second day a backlash compared to the first day when we had open dialogue with progressive points. Today, there is fatigue and a reluctance to be ambitious.

- Ministerial declaration is detached from HLPF itself, its just a repetition, it doesn't reflect action oriented outcome. This has to change and cannot be pre-negotiated, but reflect the actual resource of process.
- There are excellent ideas how to strengthen the HLPF, however first we have to consider to give more political weight to the forum.
- Ministerial declaration should contain recommendations and be followed up at the following year at HLPF.
- Realistic approach in suggesting changes.
- Principles are not operationalized, they remain rhetoric.
- Little appetite to change thematic week, some push back on focusing more on cross-cutting issues vs silo-d goal discussions. Feeling was that MSs want both cross cutting (barriers to implementation) as well as silo-d goals. However the format has remains debated (panel vs. moderated dialogue with provocative questions). In addition invite Special Rapporteurs and also members of the Expert Committees of Treaty Bodies .
- Gaps, systemic issues and policy change. Systemic issues shall be topics.
- Parallel sessions could be considered which will allow for more participation.
- Indicators, data, evidence to be used and support all the dialogues. Assessments and analyses.
- Instead of learning from other mechanism MGoS participants felt that emphasizes on peer review would be the way forward. Moving, building on regional would also be a step in the right direction.
- Emphasis on bottleneck vs overall progress. Will not require change in mandate. Better organisation, spotlight and shadow reports available and be published.
- HLPF not just space, it is a global space that transcends, no leadership
- Human Rights Standards can serve as benchmarks to measure progress (UDHR is the charter of the UN besides the 2 covenants and the many other conventions
- Participation of the Private Sector should follow the guiding principles for businesses and the Guiding Principles on Economic reforms and Human Rights (OHCHR)

First day

Welcome and opening remarks

Marion Barthelemy: welcome

H.E.Amb. Inga Rhonda King President of ECOSOC: 2030 Agenda placed HLPF in a prominent position to review the SDGs; July HLPF will complete first cycle, under auspices of ECOSOC; in September at HLPF Summit under auspices of General Assembly; identification of areas for improvement necessary; working methods need to be reviewed; Group of Friends of VNRs has been established - to review main messages from VNRs; identify best practices, challenges, sharing of experiences, peer learning element; thematic reviews will have resource persons to interact with participants to address interlinkages; will try to capture thematic discussions and VNR discussions in Chair's summary. Aim to have the best HLPF ever; there is scope to elevate impact of HLPF; how to improve HLPF to maximize impact.

H.E. Vale De Almeida (EU); committed to success of SDGs; we must do better; HLPF cannot be solution to all problems; national governments must be committed; financing problems; this year is an important milestone for the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC and the General Assembly.

HLPF is a tool, not an end of itself; how does it help Member States to deliver?

1. VNRs - if more harmonized, it will be easier to compare. Improvement needed.
2. Accountability and critical assessment of action by Member States necessary; sometimes reports are like propaganda. Input of other stakeholders necessary to ensure better assessment of implementation of SDGs.
3. Strategies must be considered - financial, policy - must outline road ahead. In some countries, SDGs are not consensual; in some countries, problem is financial; in others, question of priorities.

Must be bold, ambitious, provocative. Credibility of multilateralism system is at stake.

President of ECOSOC: called attention to book on SDGs written by Amb. David Donoghue.

Mr Zhenmin Liu, Under-Secretary General, UNDESA: achieving SDGs is a collective endeavour. The HLPF needs to track progress, understand trends and the key challenges. This EGM is important in preparing the GA review of the HLPF.

At the end of this HLPF, we will have reviewed all 17 goals and discussed thematic priorities, like leaving no one behind. Looking at lessons learned, DESA will try to do more assist countries - policy coherence.

DESA has put in place a preparatory process for the VNRs. Some of the lessons learned vis-a-vis the positive role of the VNRs:

- Preparing a review important reminder of whole-government, whole of society approach
- Opportunity to anchor sustainable development at highest political level
- Enhanced peer learning and knowledge exchange, fostering new partnerships

Challenges:

- Limited time allocated to presentations, rendering peer learning difficult
-> more time for presentations and finding more/other ways of presenting and discussing these

Session 1: Has the HLPF fulfilled its role?

Chair: Ms. Katerina Fialkova, Director, Department for Multilateral Economic Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic.

This is a key moment; this year is the last in the current cycle and it will be followed by a review of the current structure. The review process must start no later than autumn 2019.

The HLPF has been successful in overseeing the follow-up and review, and maintaining the momentum of this process, bringing together the community, and supporting countries in carrying out VNRs, and providing a platform for stakeholders to contribute to our efforts.

Something to look at strengthening is the accountability.

I would like to invite you to also address issues that were not highlighted in the agenda, such as the organisational arrangements, such as its interface with other ECOSOC meetings, role of the general debate, inputs the HLPF needs from the SG report, issues around outcome document, and our expectations in this regard.

Amb David Donoghue:

Co-edited book with Felix Dodds; recommending that written by Ambassador Kamau too.

Disagreement among states as to how rigorous the review of SDG implementation should be; there was one group that felt strongly about the voluntary nature of the monitoring. A compromise between the different views is what is reflected in Agenda 2030. While things may not have developed as fast as some of us would have liked, what is important to remember is that this is something that all member states have to agree on. We cannot impose a different architecture.

A mix of strengths and weaknesses; there has been a lot of development over time. States are now producing higher quality reports, more informed by data, addressing in most cases the full set of SDGs, which wasn't always the case in the beginning, and some more attention is being paid to the interlinkages. In 2015, we honestly thought some countries would resist taking part in the VNRs. To my surprise, we have seen a high level of enthusiasm and several countries have carried out many VNRs.

Weaknesses:

- too much attention to the structures put in place at national level. This is really part of their homework. More important to look at the interlinkages; we won't achieve the transformation unless we work on the connections between the goals. We have to find ways of using the HLPF to highlight how connected all the goals and targets are.
- We haven't gone beyond individual MS reporting on their own, which means that the lessons learned haven't really been addressed. The sought after exchange on best practice, learning from each others' reporting is yet to take place. Countries don't make reference to each other.
- Leaving no one behind: we are missing concrete examples of what countries are doing. A lot more detail and specificity is needed as to what is being done.
- 'We will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first' implies a sense of urgency that we seem to have lost in the VNR exercise, .

Moving forward:

- Reorientation of thematic reviews to address interlinkages

- Format encouraging inter-regional and cross-regional dialogue and exchange
- We probably are at a point where we could drop the individual goals and rather deal with cross-cutting issues.
- More attention to dilemmas and trade-offs; countries are good at acknowledging the synergies but it would be important to elaborate on the tensions and trade-offs - this would be key also for supporting other countries.
- Necessary to find a different format for countries doing reviews for the second time, maybe more of a panel or interactive debate
- Necessary to find a more genuine way of exchanging around the VNRs, avoiding the pre-prepared statements
- Necessary to look at the role of civil society, also given the role it played in the negotiations on the SDGs. why cant civil society be more directly involved in the negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration
- We shouldn't have a pre-cooked Declaration but rather one that can take the discussions of the HLPF into account, maybe even commit to actions.

Felix Dodds: on the criteria, 67/290 mandate specifies the criteria for assessing the HLPF and these should be looked at, including the obligation to look at 'new and emerging issues'. Also important to look beyond the SDGs; HLPF should look at Agenda 2030 as a whole.

Stakeholders are also having challenges implementing the SDGs, and there has to be a forum for exchanging on these challenges faced, not just by the states but by all stakeholders.

Argentina: looking back at what was expected when we negotiated Agenda 2030, voluntary nature was important - and remains important. We cannot impose anything on MS. 7 of the 17 countries submitting a 2nd review in the first cycle are from LA, showing a great interest in this. Of course we cannot do anything about the fact that some countries are complacent.

- One of the neglected aspects is the regional level; much work is being done at the regional level, and we have a lot of lessons learned, particularly on the difficulties faced. ECLAC has been good at bringing together countries and discussing areas of shared challenges
- When we negotiated the UPR review mechanism in HR Council, there were a lot of expectations. And there is a lot of criticism. My question is how to make these processes less voluntary - adding more and stricter guidelines to MS is unlikely to get support from MS. this is a difficult moment in multilateralism; it is difficult to agree on things - we are far from the situation in which SDGs, AAAA and Paris Agreement was agreed. We will not be able to agree on anything more ambitious than we did in 2015.
- I'm not complacent about the HLPF, but what the HLPF has supported in terms of national-level action and implementation is impressive.

Finland: at time of negotiations there was a lot of scepticism on the usefulness of voluntary reporting - but this has been proven wrong. There has been great buzz at the national level and the interest and inspiration there - due to Agenda 2030.

- I would like to contest Donoghue's 'complaint' about emphasis on governance in the country reporting as it is impossible to deliver on the integrated nature of SDGs unless you have the right architecture in place. It takes time to get these structures

into place. Finland has had a national commission for 25 years, yet lots of work and challenges remain.

- Welcome integrated approach and focus on interlinkages, but we also need to make sure that there is attention to the 17 goals. Cross-regional cooperation - network of sustainable development officials in European region; it is a peer learning platform for people working on implementation on a daily basis.
- Leaving no one behind is the big challenge moving forward, how to really monitor this. Data is a challenge here.
- Role of civil society: fundamental that we continue working together. HLPF important as a forum bringing people together. **Declaration should acknowledge and reflect the multistakeholder nature of HLPF.**

Germany: highlight challenges

- Time constraints in thematic reviews, in VNRs cause frustration
- Interlinkages

Opportunities:

- Strong interest in HLPF. Opportunity to draw on sectoral inputs, unique global platforms for exchanging on Agenda 2030 in its entirety.
- Need to look at better and more targeted use of sectoral inputs - how can we better use them?? Need for more systematic analysis and reflection on different recommendations put forward.
- HLPF impact needs to be increased. VNR follow-up would be key.

European Union: original ambition was to create THE platform for Agenda 2030 and this is the case today, which is a great success.

- Must not lose the ambition - looking at the different aspects of sustainable development in an integrated way.
- Ministerial Declaration must become more interesting, it is a bit flat at the moment, the path is to involve other stakeholders - civil society and academia.
- Interlinkages important but we don't want to lose the energy around looking at specific SDGs
- VNRs are important - countries reporting what they are doing to the UN but the peer learning has to be further developed, maybe in part through regional avenues.
- Leaving no one behind needs more attention
- Necessary to find better and more innovative ways of involving civil society

Stakeholder Group on Ageing: need to distinguish between SDG implementation and the functioning of the HLPF; clear that lots have happened at national level but what has come from the HLPF - or is it rather that national things have happened IN SPITE OF HLPF?

- HLPF failing to "provide political leadership, recommendations and guidelines" as originally envisaged. How can this be assessed - what difference can be observed, legal and/or policy level for instance.
- Failing to address some of the big global issues, such as Illicit financial flows, international financial system, hunger
- Reports submitted to the HLPF play little role; difficult even to find reference to these. Over a dozen reports made available, but no discussion and no recommendations

based on these. Reports of EGM ignored too. Starting point to make reference to docs in the HLPF agenda and programme,.

- How can panel discussions feed into the process? How can the outcomes become more action-oriented?
- No political significance of chair's summary.
- Necessary to extend the 8 days.
- HLPF should have its own separate bureau and secretariat. We cannot expect the HLPF to be effective unless it is adequately resourced.
- National governments receive no input from the HLPF. Is national SDG implementation taking place without any input from the HLPF, without political leadership, recommendations and guidance?

OHCHR: breaking the silos between different SDGs. UN HR Council had intersessional meeting on SDGs, resulting in a strong call for integrated approaches. It is a HR-based agenda and it means that HR need to be integrated. This includes the involvement of national HR institutions. Regional meetings and EGMs have grown and they are turning into conferences in their own right. Necessary to find ways of integrating the results in the HLPF process. Inputs - many institutions and stakeholders make great efforts submitting inputs to the HLPF - maybe there should be guidelines on how to make inputs more relevant or suitable.

Senegal: growing interest of countries positive. Trade-offs in the implementation; need for targeted country support, e.g. MOI and data. All African countries far from reducing number of people living in extreme poverty - adds urgency to our deliberations.

- Emphasis on interlinkages doesn't automatically lead to more coherent policies.
- More time for VNR discussions needed.
- Future meetings should focus on cross-cutting issues.
- Independent evaluation is important

China

- Modality of HLPF: generally - HLPF functions in good manner and performs its mandate. General debate it allow MSs to give political guidance on SDGs implementation. On panel discussions: good recommendations on concrete implementation. Should stay as it is.
- Cross-cutting issues: important BUT thematic review on individual SDGs are just as equally important. SDG 1 is the most important for developing countries, if that is not achieved the rest of SDGs are not achievable.
- VNRs: current arrangement limited time and not interactive. Good to discuss challenges and to work together share good practices. More space for peer learning and experience sharing.
- Stakeholder participation: HLPF is intergovernmental process and ownership should be maintained by MSs. But stakeholders should be fully involved as they are mostly implementing SDGs. However: **general principles of no-objection should be observed.** Geographical representation is not maintained, it should be more balanced.
- Difficult time for multilateralism, but we should not lower our ambitions and not lose the momentum.

- Countries in special situations: more focus and attention should be given to the LDC, LLCs and African countries as they have limited financial resources available, call for more funding and transfer of technology.

OECD

- Risk of overburdening. We focus too much on technical aspects vs having a political conversation. Identify capacity development, partnership needs. Enable HLPF to provide recommendation and guidance. Lets focus on political dialogue.
- Focus on conversation on interlinkages however not viable in current context, there has to be conversation around them.
- Responding, cross VNRs, bottlenecks must be identified, focusing what is coming out of it.
- LNOB: must be a rolling agenda, and must be back up with real evidence.
- Peer pressure should not be underestimated. The larger number of MSs to produce of VNRs is better, VNRs should be preserved. Reporting on regular basis first reporting should be baseline and second and third round should be more of panel-style.

UNW

- People centered, gender centered and focusing on the furthest behind. VNRs has to respect the gender perspective, are they based on gender analyses on the needs of women. No consistent approach how VNRs are drafted.
- What happens after VNRs at national level, what extent does HLPF influences the national level afterwards.
- Concern about presenting 2nd 3rd VNRs as little time passed to really showcase advancement on SDGs implementation.
- VNRs can they be linked to other processes, such as UPR, Treaty Bodies, Beijing and linking these other processes with VNRs.

Rina

- Regional processes must be further strengthened. Regional process gives accessibility and proximity, makes SDGs implementation more realistic, as engagement in global processes is expensive.
- Regional roadmap exists for SDGs implementation and this could be used a good practice and its important to attach to this a good accountability network.
- HLPF has only one session on regional outcomes and it is not an inclusive and interactive dialogue.
- HLPF outcome Presidents summary has no effect and reflects little on the political declaration.
- VNR process starts at regional level, talks about regional best practices, but this could be scaled up. For example regional VNR could be first start and Global VNR could build on the regional VNR. But then its important to again go back and hold again VNR on the regional level and address recommendations from Global level.
- Stakeholder coordination mechanism should be institutionalized and financially supported in all regions.

UNESCO

- Chair of UN Evaluation group not as UNESCO
- They are looking into effectiveness of HLPF. Looking at HLPF it is important to see what we want to change and achieve.
- Having reports with evidence at all levels is very important.
- Issues of knowledge management: recognizing little happens with these reports at HLPF level. 800 evaluation reports on 8.5 but all are different. One key issue is that better data is needed. Some of the evaluations are way too late. Therefore often synthesis is not happening.
- Advocating for more evaluations, more jointly and more system wide level evaluation is needed particularly with more partnership.
- What policy changes need to be addressed should be the focus.
- HLPF cannot be the end of discussions, but this has to continue on the country level. Using regional economic commissions is important.

UK

- HLPF a tool and not an end in itself.
- HLPF fulfilled its role partially: not yet, or partly met. Question remains: what we want to achieve by 2030 will we be able to do it? Are we confident? No.
- Crucial that VNRs move beyond inward looking. There is a huge amount of data and reports and stakeholders that need to be encompassed.
- Cross-cutting issues: GSDR hope that it will address how to better implement the SDGs. UK is in favor to go beyond clustering the SDGs.
- Complexity, lots of criteria, we are not addressing in a fundamental way, share practicalities it comes down. Difficulties of reading 16-17 reports ahead of HLPF, cuts complexity is important. Will make it easier for all to take part. Multistakeholder approach is extremely important.
- Is the balance for HLPF right, LNOB, we must lose sight we need to work in the current format now.

RCNYO - Regional Commissions of Regional NY Office (Director, Amr Nour)

- Criteria assessing HLPF performance: HLPF is a platform, successful in mobilizing stakeholders, but we are not on track.
- Crises of multilateralism, weakness of addressing the fiscal policy space of countries, it is also the role of the flora. We have not addressed all the flora of implementation.
- VNR and the way they move forward will determine HLPF success or failure. Support for implementation and addressing specific gaps. Reshift of thinking. Forget about presentations. Limit to 4-5 issues, clear policy, institutional data MOI issues should be discussed.
- VNRs embodied in the UNDAF guidance, acting specific actions. We have to mobilize through UNCT to address the gaps. Regional Commissions are working into this direction.
- Gap in the funding that is a barrier to achieve SDGs.
- National - Regional - Global strengthening of the LNOB.

P4R

- Thematic and VNR related issues must be addressed separately.

Mabel

- Use time allocated for HLPF more effectively.
- Emphasis on supporting VNR countries to do better and support civil society participation.
- 2030 Agenda is a human rights framework. We don't need to duplicate, so we have to learn from the Treaty bodies system.
- Involvement of civil society is not well done, its very frustrating. National NGOs should have the opportunity to ask questions.
- Important to present the civil society reports they should be available on the website together with the VNRs.
- Implementation and focus should be on the national and regional levels.

International Union for Conservation of Nature

- Broader clustering maybe around the 5P's. Starting by looking into People as the beginning.
- Accelerate SDGs: if reach out is not undertaken beyond the UN system this will not happen. Stakeholders are key, coalition, engagement at local level must be ensured.
- More systematic approach.

Colombia

- Political commitment to participate in the VNR is important.
- Side events are one of the building blocks of HLPF. These are contributing to the peer learning.

Indigenous Peoples MG

- Assessment must be made from national, regional and global level on the effective participation of people from LNOB.
- How best reach and engage by states the most left behind. Its not addressed and not picked up. Lack of concrete actions to ensure their participation. This should be addressed.
- Data disaggregation is lacking behind, as there is no capacity by states to undertake and this challenge is not addressed.
- Recommendations of actions is missing. There is avoidance to discuss the serious challenges. MOI is a standing agenda: lots of countries are saying no funding available to implement SDGs, lots of discussion on corruption, avoidance of taxes, systemic issues that are not addressed. HLPF is global forum where these issues can and must be addressed. These will propel the implementation of SDGs.

ILO

- Exercise of decentralization. HLPF will be APEX of process. Reports have no visibility, although there is an immense amount work invested in these reports.
- Different Assemblies and conferences can review individual SDGs. Like World Health Assembly the goal 3. And they could with legitimacy come to HLPF and report.

Arelys

- Already a robust amount of inputs are existing: DESA should collect all and develop a non-paper.
- Valuable inputs are collected prior to HLPF are posted on website. Number of groups are preparing and providing shadow, parallel reports that should be considered.
- Para 89, stakeholders wish to contribute, however discouraged as it may land on the UN's website without any further consideration.
- LNOB: we no longer unpack it, we said it all. We need to go back to the origin and how we arrived at developed this principle. It refers to the most vulnerable: it refers to faces such as children, persons with disabilities, indigenous and etc...
- Interlinkages: 55 targets are linked to prevent violence. But there is no action plans how to mention.

Sri Lanka

- Economic and social aspect is often not mentioned. Peace and security is a global issue and it is part of Goal 16 that has to be further emphasized.

UN Foundation

- Surveys and one annual retreat has been carried out by UN Foundation.
- World accepts that we come away with an understanding whether we are with the SDGs. However, the diversity of SDGs makes it impossible to come away with an understanding how well we are doing. This makes it difficult to know what needs to be addressed. This is where HLPF fails.
- Individuals MSs and learning from one and other. Countries are different, situations are different and we need to get to the individual level and contextualize. (Ethiopia and DK as example).
- VNRs to be used to check progress on governments in order to hold them up. ReCHAIR: HLPF is a tool; did well on some parts, but not on providing political guidance; served well as platform for discussion; political/technical; more compromise is necessary; trust is needed. Modalities resolution should start as soon as possible; reports submitted to HLPF do not play any role. Difficult to read everything. Interlinkages essential; not everyone can come to NY to take part in discussions – where are those left behind? Not courageous yet to abandon individual SDGs; agreement that VNRs are crucial, worked well, will remain voluntary; too much focus on coordination frameworks – governance must be in place to deliver. Discussions could take place in panels [?]. Many complained about lack of time. But perhaps more efficient use of time? Should not be just a beauty context. Gender issues? Multistakeholder participation praised. Should be increased, but recognized the process is government. Business/private sector should be involved. MD should be made “more interesting”? LNOB must be the rolling agenda, focusing on the most vulnerable.
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- Agenda 2030 must be safeguarded – not to be re-opened. Side events play an important role.
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- ally being honest with progress, hold governments accountable. Governments do not want to be named and shamed = they have rather beauty contest. SDGs is a massive agenda its difficult to get governments on board.

Albania

- All the countries are developing policies. Planning and monitoring are very much related.

Bangladesh

- Emphasizing that for developing countries the HLPF and the VNRs have been a very important opportunity and had galvanizing effect on national development.

Chairs Summary

CHAIR: HLPF is a tool; did well on some parts, but not on providing political guidance; served well as platform for discussion; political/technical; more compromise is necessary; trust is needed. Modalities resolution should start as soon as possible; reports submitted to HLPF do not play any role. Difficult to read everything. Interlinkages essential; not everyone can come to NY to take part in discussions – where are those left behind? Not courageous yet to abandon individual SDGs; agreement that VNRs are crucial, worked well, will remain voluntary; too much focus on coordination frameworks – governance must be in place to deliver. Discussions could take place in panels [?]. Many complained about lack of time. But perhaps more efficient use of time? Should not be just a beauty contest. Gender issues? Multistakeholder participation praised. Should be increased, but recognized the process is government. Business/private sector should be involved . MD should be made “more interesting”? LNOB must be the rolling agenda, focusing on the most vulnerable.

Agenda 2030 must be safeguarded – not to be re-opened. Side events play an important role.

II. What has the process of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) taught us thus far? (The session will discuss the lessons learned from the first cycle of VNRs)

Chair: Mr. Thomas Wollnik, Head of Programme, Partners for Review

Overview of guiding questions, in context of AM session (reminder by Argentina of voluntary nature of process)

Some countries reporting for 2nd and 3rd times - what are the lessons learned from first VNR and how does it impact subsequent reporting, towards achievement of SDGs?

Lead discussant: Ms. Julia Cela, Coordinator, Directorate for Policy and Priorities for Development, Unit of Policy for Development and Good Governance, Department for Development and Good Governance, Albania

3 elements: structure that each country has established for coordinating SDGs + VNR specifically; process of preparing VNR; content of VNR

I. Structure for SDGs - Albania experience

We used this structure also in process for preparing VNR

June 2017 - order of PM to establish 2 new structures coordinating SDGs in national level:

- Political level: Committee for SDGs (comprised of ministers, chaired by Dep PM); Dept for Devt and Good Gov is secretariat
- Technical Working Group for SDGs, led by Dir of Devt and Good Governance; members are directors of line ministries.

In meetings of these two structures, different actors can participate as guests (CS, UN, business sector, academia, MPs etc)

When we decided to present VNR – first step in progress for 2030 Agenda and SDGs Process lasted Jan-June – very short period

Hardest part was deciding what focus the VNR should take: on 5 priorities of European integration process of Albania, six government priorities for 2015-2017, and two important transformational process – justice sector reform and urban renaissance program.

Also part of VNR: SDG budget expenditure prepared by Min of Finance and Economy, plus statistical annexes

Then process began to coordinate all through Technical Working Group, with joint calendar/timeline for preparing VNR. TWG organized 7 meetings over the 6 months, during which 10 institutions presented their direct contributions to VNR depending on their responsibility vis. VNR focus

Then consultation process. March: 1st draft of VNR report and consulted with actors based on this

In total, 120 comments and suggestion from different stakeholders including civil society organizations. Not all were incorporated into the document because considered not relevant Clear matrix with all comments and institutions that presented, and explanation where comments were not included

VNR as annexes included

- Financial implication of state budget for implementing 2030 Agenda
- Statistical annex presented 30 indicators with relevant data of Albania

Doc approved by SDG Committee 2nd meeting in June, VNR presented in July by Dep PM

II. Process

Challenges

Collaborating with many institutions, aiming for document to be comprehensive – a lot of actors/groups involved

How to include CSOs in the process and make them more effective in giving their contribution

Actively participated in consultation meeting and were invited to give written contributions and suggestion for the report – of which only 2 did. Gap between discussions we had and practically what we gathered as contribution.

How to meet advance deadline for exec summary when full report was still in drafting process

Lessons learned

Successes:

Engagement of all actors at national and local levels, broad and diverse institutions, central and local govt, biz orgs, CS, academia, devt partners, UN agencies, other domestic and donor orgs active in the country

Public consultation was very important – distinguished as a separate process. Since 2014, Albania has a law in place mandating public electronic consultation of main strategic documents, and every institution has to present drafts online and give possibility to all to comment, give suggestions and recommendations (with a coordinator in each institution mandated to collate the suggestions)

Thomas Wollnik

3 core elements – structure including after NY, review mechanism; content – process of political prioritization, what to present on; process of alignment with other political processes/agendas

Interesting to learn from different country representatives how alignment with other processes can look

Discussion

Colombia

Someone mentioned this morning that presenting more than once already is a lot at this point. In Colombia's case, the VNR has been the motivational element that has brought a lot of change. Process has been incremental ever since

2016 report taught us the don'ts – made in an office in Bogota, draft not shared with sectors involved, government report based on the indicators

Upon return from HLPF – motivation to keep the momentum up (organized side event on this with Finland for 2 years already), to start a local process that led to a national strategy with a group of national indicators and targets, with intermediate targets at 2018 (end of that government)

2018 – wanted the report to be very different, and it was in several aspects:

Whole of society and whole of government approach – pilot projects; to showcase contribution of PS, developed 11 indicators based on GRI standards to measure contribution of PS in 5 SDGs we prioritized to report (focus ones for that cycle). 70 companies reported
Launched process of SDG progress tracker just recently

Wanted CS to be part of this report – had 5 regional workshops, to socialize and inform them what we were doing but also to document initiatives from CS that were successful in contributing to achievement of agenda

Had a project to track resources allocated to the SDGs – public and international resources, with an algorithm

Event before coming to NY to show the draft to all stakeholders, who commented on the draft

Report itself doesn't have one particular section dedicated to challenges, the presentation did, on common challenges e.g. localizing, measurement, involving stakeholders and how we have addressed them

After 2018, had a change in government, were afraid of impact on implementation of the agenda.

Through drafting process of national devt plan, were able to sensitize new government and this plan was approved by Congress last Thurs and the SDGs are at the core of this plan
Having an institution is important – in Colombia, the SDGs leading institution is also the one drafting the VNR so worked to keep the momentum up even though we had a change in government

For subsequent VNRs, have been thinking about a peer drafting process e.g. working with peer governments on different pieces. Independent evaluation is very difficult but have to be creative. Need peer learning, safe spaces to share challenges Side events are a good way to do this.

Argentina

We are all learning by doing.

Main lesson for our country and many in the region – presentation of VNR was a good opportunity to galvanize support for 2030 Agenda at the internal level.

Process was not perfect, there were lessons learned.

CS engagement in prep of VNRs is something we have to do better

First VNRs – 2016 and 2017 – were government-led, coming from top to bottom. Didn't have the structures, had to adapt national institutions to new agenda, develop statistical capacities, talk to CS and local/provincial governments (federal system compounds implementation challenges)

Learned that we didn't have the statistical capacities to deal with all the indicators, have to adapt indicators to national reality, adapt goals, make sure these align with policies of the government, go through budgeting process

Challenge: make sure that we involve all the stakeholders – private sector is an impt partner for Argentina, in implementation of 2030 Agenda. Need to broaden the scope of engagement with all actors – very difficult. Some people question this process but we have the mandate to do so from the agenda.

15 minutes of actual presentation should signify a year of advance preparation and a year of follow-up on what was presented. HLPF is not one shot only – useful to galvanize support, mobilize internally etc

Government ownership at national, provincial, municipal level – have to make sure that this is transmitted to the next government, even after elections/transition. Need a template to pass over to the next government

Senegal

VNR can be a very long process, but inclusive and integrated process.

Opp to galvanize political will, strengthen national planning and partnerships

Should transform the attitude of stakeholders

Local, regional, national dimensions

Regional/continental level – impt to have a mechanism of peer learning and benchmarking.

Also a challenge. Africa has 2 agendas – Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. The VNR process is an opportunity for mapping, integrating these agendas

Benchmarking

Decentralization aspect – impt for local governments to integrate SDGs and mobilize grassroots actors

2018 VNR – and after that, increase in taking on board of SDGs in national and sectoral plan; integration of SDG targets (from 77% to 97%)? Senegal plan is in line with the SDGs – different phases of the plan, right now in second phase.

Vani, Fiji Council of Social Services

Samoa started the rush in the Pacific to participate in the VNR in 2016

UNDP created a joint platform for CS and government to work together on this.

SDGs were completely new in the region, even CSOs were struggling to understand – set the benchmark for the region

Kiribati followed in 2018 – their process was a bit more inclusive, government included CS and UN support for the region to ensure part and parcel of that. Highlight – watching a colleague from a CSO present alongside govt minister at the HLPF

2019: Palau, Vanuatu, Fiji will present.

Fiji – a bit different because until a week or so ago, no processes articulated by govt for stakeholder consultations. Complete silence about what government was going to do about the VNR until a week ago.

The VNR has been a catalyst for coming together of CSOs – in interacting with government representatives, general lack of awareness about what SDGs were – Fijian govt cherry-picking goals – envt and sustainability

CS task force established last year, bringing together NGOs that wouldn't normally work together

Trying to do a mapping of CSOs that contribute across 2030 Agenda, to gauge contribution. Done it on own with no support. Reporting template may go to other CSOs in the region, shared it at regional gathering of CSOs 2 weeks ago

6-7 months that we've done this, a lot of coherence has come into the work we do at community, sub-national, national levels, more coordination

Working together on UPR shadow report, just submitted

Looking at CRC, Beijing reporting

Anticipating our VNR is helping to build solidarity. NGOs working with local employers, PS, trade unions for the first time – helped to galvanize public ownership in governance and accountability

Haven't been able to get good support from UN system in region or country

Want to incentivize impact reporting, not just what is happening

For VNR to work, need to clearly articulate how UN regional and national systems should provide support to various actors, ensure multi-stakeholder partnership or dimension works

Also need to address what happens to countries with narrowing civic spaces? Related to credibility of VNR report, ineffective development

Bangladesh

Re: What has the process of VNRs taught us thus far?

Presented first VNR in 2017, planning to submit next one in 2020

No other viable option except VNR to review process of achievement of SDGs. Unless we come up with a better mechanism, VNR is fine.

Process is voluntary but states own it – we can compare it with UPR of HRC - though voluntary, states are enthusiastic to submit VNRs

Political commitment from the top – so credible VNR was submitted.

It's like submitting your tax returns – inspires tidying up

Collected a lot of data, and found out we have full data for only 17 indicators, partial for 108 indicators, none for 63 – rigorous process just to determine that

Process helps us realize what we can achieve.

Showed bag that govt has given to all senior government officials, including national action plan on SDGs, SDGs needs assessment and financial strategy; training manual on SDGs implementation; data gap analysis; monitoring and evaluation fwk; mapping of ministries and their SDGs tasks (monitored by OPM); SDGs progress report 2018

All offices have to report on SDG implementation every 6 months

Switzerland

Preparing VNR for this year (2018?)

All departments of federal chancellery participate in ?

Some local level governance areas are on board, some are not

Re: how many people actually know about the SDGs in Switzerland – if we have 20-30% of people we are lucky

Multi-stakeholder participation – we do usually include non-governmental stakeholders in our delegation, as well as in process of developing VNR and implementing the agenda, especially science, private sector, civil society and youth

No one here from PS – PS should play an impt and increased role

We support CS inclusion in other countries

Project on LNOB in Switzerland and elsewhere, as we believe very much in universality of the agenda

UN Reforms for the 2030 Agenda paper – a lot of what we refer to is there. (Marianne Beisheim paper?)

Marion Barthelemy (both personal and secretariat capacity)

Nice to hear that the value of the VNR is not only in the presentation here but very much in what it achieves at home – very impt to recognize for the process

As Secretariat thinking how to make the most of these 15 minutes of interactive time. Step missing is reflection on where we have been successful and want other countries to learn from us, where are we being challenged and want to hear from others – then it's a hook for the conversation in the HLPF

This is a bit the idea behind the Group of Friends of VNRs – informal arrangement

Can be done in the runup of the meeting – but haven't seen it happening that much

Flag ahead of time areas where you need support, something that needs to be done to advertise so that others can be prepared to offer support

Been thinking whether it would be useful to proactively make known what kind of support can be provided to the VNRs – could be useful to have a repository of which UN orgs, countries etc are ready to support

Should encourage countries to have innovative, ambitious approaches to VNRS – e.g. what Colombia said, having peer component, Germany's experience

VNR lab to hear about those experiences during HLPF

Czech Republic

VNRs have been successful according to our assessment. Interventions heard so far testify to that.

Huge opps to participate, tangible effects on national level, motivation factor is there. Use as domestic tool rather than something to impress other countries with

Re: next round – shouldn't be only about presentations but should be more feedback on those presentations, discussions are insufficient

Should be more attention devoted to the discussions that follow presentations

Current time format is appropriate – otherwise could go on and on. Work with the time allotments we have and use in a slightly different manner.

Need strengthening of peer learning character, more accountability in those VNRs

Would be good if DESA would update voluntary common reporting guidelines that would help countries focusing on the challenges, gaps, Mol

Good practices from other peer learning mechs can be employed
Group of Friends on VNRs positive step
Appointing rapporteurs could be explored
Stakeholders have impt role – fulfilling or implementing 2030 Agenda is not just government effort
Process has taught us that if we make effort we can deliver.
First cycle of VNRs has surpassed expectations and should be maintained for future with some improvements.

Mexico

Has presented 2 VNRs already
Change of government recently
VNRs have evolved, not only here at UN but also nationally
VNR brought us together as partners at country level – first exercise was valuable
Second VNR was not only coming together to open table, but about being more inclusive for CS, bring other institutions, legislative bodies, indigenous peoples, etc
Second VNR was also more based on data, had annex with stats and baselines to guide / make clear where we started and where we want to be in 2030
Not a static process, evolving
Have seen that UN have evolved – in scope (including all SDGs); expectation of element consultation, shaping country's experiences
Future of VNRs is not only the 15 minutes of discussion in NY but added value is after NY, rest of the year, when our own society will ask us more information and clarification about the report
Report is a written testimony of commitments
2-step approach – helps nationally for coordination processes, needs to help international coordination better. Room for improvement – tricky part. How do we compare exercises that are different in nature. Start regionally, with those that have similar challenges. Will influence the overall expectations – already existing about what a VNR should look like, since we have the guidelines and the good examples
For subsequent VNRs: merit in having a high-level discussion on VNRs, but also about what you do with that information nationally and at the UN, the rest of the year. Accountability, identifying gaps. How can we have a better dialogue?
Can come up with a setting that will allow us to have a more technical discussion.
VNRs are the info, need to move from info to action (that's what the 2nd round should do)

Finland

Key message – not only about reporting. Review is more broad – means also the time between the reports. Should focus on societal learning and doing processes.
2016 first VNR, will report again in 2020 and every 4 years at UN, but reporting to parliament officially every year – and that is the key point.
Once you have accountability cycle in place at national level, can build on regional and international reporting and review
Things that happened after our first VNR

- Updated national strategy to be more in line with 2030 Agenda, negotiated amongst members of national commission on SD (80 reps from different stakeholder orgs + government, ministries)
- Government adopted own implementation plan, based on this national strategy (2017)

- Then nailed down follow up and review cycle, adopted by parliament so not tied to specific government/term
- Realized we need to put more emphasis on participation of youth, established youth 2030 Agenda group of 20 young people from different part of Finland, participating and communicating messages
- Started to work on establishing national indicators for SD which are now ready – because if we use just global SDG indicators the picture would be too rosy so need more disaggregated data, etc
- Have been reporting with these 50 indicators to the parliament already twice
- Have engaged 300 operational commitments by PS in partnership with government
- SD is integrated into state budget this year, under each sector (all ministries had to report how much \$\$ they are committing to implementing 2030 Agenda, analysis e.g. on harmful subsidies)

Peer learning between Finland and Colombia. Maybe more meaningful to do so among the same region or economic group, but found it fruitful to have this cooperation (Colombia nodding) even though realities are very different, found there are things you're doing better than we are, showed example of what they're doing etc

Amr Nour, RCNYO

A 15 minute process is never going to do justice to process at country level and implementation

At last ECLAC SD forum, did have the space to listen in detail for an hour and a half, to a draft VNR of a few countries e.g. Chile

Around the table, many of the national actors who were addressing constructively the gaps in the presentation being prepared for the HLPF, colleagues from neighboring countries involved in the region, interacting with presenting government on various issues

Can afford to spend this time in the region, where you may have around five VNRs – have opportunity for serious interaction – which can never be absorbed at the global level

Need to see moving forward how we can address this.

Refocus on implementation, thematic strategic issues so that HLPF second cycle could bring outcomes of in-depth discussion in the region to the global, make presentations more rigorous and harmonized etc

How then can we bring the regional perspective even stronger?

OHCHR

Many approaches (Consultations, sharing presentation space with stakeholders etc) that have been developed – a lot to learn from that.

Knowledge management – would be useful to gather all those different approaches so they can also inform peer learning

A lot of info exists and can be tapped into

2030 Agenda is broader than SDGs

SDG targets missing in the discussion but are important

Sri Lanka

VNR was a good opportunity to identify gaps (policy, implementation) and identify way forward with regard to SDGs.

Success of VNR process depends on how much we are committed to implementing recommendations uncovered in the VNR process

Developing digital platform to strengthen data collection
Will assign each govt organization the responsibility of collecting the data, calculate these targets and upload
Process gave us a good push to involve stakeholders

[coffee break]

European Union

VNRs successful – attracts attention to the HLPF

EU policy fwk for devt cooperation, multi-stakeholder platform etc – exist because of the HLPF (in line with Finland list)

Not presenting a VNR but will organize a side event at HLPF 2019 to present our efforts on external and internal implementation, together with Finland who will be EU pres at the time
Impt that in addition to this process there is a real debate – that's where we need to improve, need more time, need discussions on real issues

Only exp with peer learning is OECD DAC peer reviews – what happens is that a few identified issues are discussed by all. Not so much challenges of the country that is presenting but more to take as an example the points raised by a particular country, to have a deeper discussion

Content – another area of improvement in VNRs. Agenda is complex but a more qualitative assessment would be helpful, policy coherence for SD is lacking. More mechanical reporting on basis of existing data, without having qualitative look on issues that were cross-cutting, tradeoffs etc.

Need stronger links between VNRs and national policise including FINANCING strategies – identify gaps in costing

Need to look at coherence with other reporting processes (Paris, Addis, Sendai etc)

Welcome what Marion said about repository of available modalities of support – something to explore

Germany (Veronika ?, from the mission)

Have made at least two updates of our national sustainability strategy, have conducted exchanges of views with other countries

Share experiences through Partners for Review

Outputs from this process will feed into next review of national sustainability strategy

Exercise we can recommend to others – fruitful for your own national implementation process and the way forward

Value of the VNRs lies in what is happening before and after the presentation at HLPF.

We already had a national strategy since 2013, but impt to involve all stakeholders including in follow-up to VNR, and adjustment of national policies to SDGs

Impact of VNRs on implementation of 2030 Agenda – varies a lot from country to country

Peer learning could benefit from process of collecting written questions from MS And stakeholders, which would allow written replies

Crucial that VNRs widen their focus, also on identifying challenges and gaps in implementation process, take into account all SDGs and their interlinkages

Impt that VNR clearly outlines developments that have occurred between current and previous VNRs – to identify trends in implementation and policy, discuss underlying drivers, challenges, success factors

UNESCO/UN Eval Group

It's about the process, not the final report

Evaluation is rarely mentioned and where it is mentioned it does not reflect the value add that could come from asking the right questions, explaining counterfactuals and why changes happen

It's not just about looking at data but explaining why we are progressing in one area and not another and how they affect each other

Evaluation community needs to do more to convince policy makers that evaluation is imp

Opportunities for partnership with academic communities, other review mechanisms – if you want to explain a complex devt cannot just look at one piece of evidence but at the wealth of info out there

Countries should be asked to explain their M&E systems, potentially in their VNR

Could require evaluation policies, processes through VNRs

- Address causes and effects by looking at what has changed, for whom, how and why
- Pay attention to vulnerable pops and environments – LNOB
- Assess roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders

Need not to look just at quantitative indicators but qualitative indicators and explanations, use different sources of data to help with analysing

Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities (Orsolya)

In capacity as VNRs task group of MGoS

[explain process of VNR survey] – because engagement in VNR session should not be reserved only for those who can come to NY and participate in HLPF, but should channel voices and participation from grassroots

VNRs critical for MGoS too – so more than imp that efforts taken to strengthen national monitoring opps, exchange opps between stakeholders and governments, as permanent dialogue at national level, starting before HLPF, during regionals, HLPF and after VNRs should be introduced at regional level

Global level should only address what has not been resolved at regional

VNRs should result in Action-oriented outcomes that are taken back to the national level to then take back for further discussion with stakeholders

Would like to achieve and realize the SDGs for all, forging partnerships and be constructive – VNRs an excellent opportunity

Parallel reports, spotlight reports, shadow reports absolutely key. In other mechanisms, proven as valuable to have stakeholders/CS present these reports. Why is there no space for this at the [HLPF] global level?

Would like more opportunities at global level, e.g. to work on VNR labs from the very start and include accessibility e.g. for deaf, deaf/blind

Need informal interactions beyond the official level e.g. an exchange with experts who have been writing and compiling VNR reports e.g. through one-day PrepCom before HLPF with MGoS reps. The more opportunities the better

Side events with volunteering champion countries open to have a dialogue, not a presentation style but interactive, to result in concrete actions, partnerships, collaborations

Having reliable data is absolutely critical – disagg data – should be further emphasized in modalities review that VNRs should be supported by data. Evidence-based policy-making, changed on the basis of what data is reflecting

World Vision

Enthusiasm around the VNRs, accompaniment by DESA has been very important
Even more important to accompany momentum with question of how to do it better.
How to make this momentum have a specific outcome both for countries regarding SDG implementation as well as CS and other stakeholders on their contribution towards the SDGs.

Reviewing VNRs – majority demonstrate some progress. Uneven across VNRs, even within the same country in multiple years. Need to elevate the process

Stakeholder engagement – have been recommending that MS go beyond ad hoc measures for stakeholder engagement for VNR process (only) and energy goes down after VNR presented

VNRs not showing extent to which policies and programs addressing the needs of those left behind (some do)

VNRs continue not to be structured around the outline of the guidelines – capture elements only but when actually review it's uneven. No guidelines for the second or third time presenting VNR.

Between 2017 and 2018, progress between first report and subsequent VNRs not really indicating trends over time.

MCGY (Jolly)

[missed first point]

Substance of VNRs should not include selected goals under review only but whole agenda, including interlinkages among goals and other SD frameworks as mentioned in 67/290
Engagement with NGOs should not be looked at as one block but distinct sectors of society with own unique views, contributions

Section dedicated to emerging issues as mandate of HLPF is required

Otherwise we are siloing the agenda and regressing

MS could submit VNRs at regional forums, exchange views with MGoS and peers, finalize by HLPF

Should find more ways to engage non-state actors more meaningfully throughout the process eg through citizen data

Mabel, FEIM – WMG

Have been working hard in CS around the HLPF

Shadow reports – I know we don't like the terminology but that's what they are called and that's what we as CS are preparing

Our efforts come here and nothing happened

Need national, regional and global level – here it's important to see how much is changing the patterns of the relations with stakeholders

WMG for last 3 years a survey among our groups worldwide, and women's groups are not so much involved because the big NGOs in capitals are involved, not the small groups.

Indigenous women are less recognized

Need to publish simultaneously with CS/shadow reports

Dialogue – need to stress this. How to do the dialogue? Not existing in HLPF

Regionally we improved it, trying to improve in LAC at forum – great advance this year, organizing CS and making a lot of exchange and discussion – but not yet here.

Need to do this here and to differentiate from the regional

Workers and Trade Unions MG (Antonia)

UNESCO talked about how barriers to progress are seldom addressed in VNRs

We would link this to lack of attention to systemic issues, lack of conversation on systemic issues at the HLPF

FfD process, Addis Ababa agenda – systemic issues seem rather sidelined in that process too

VNRs are placing all the attention on governments, as should be the case as they are the ones who signed up, but something to look at in terms of how governments can address systemic issues and barriers faced in the implementation

But also systemic issues that go beyond the borders of a nation-state, where the power of an individual state is limited

IFFs as a good example of something that would require a response that goes beyond borders

Extraterritorial human rights obligations as one way in which we could look at the impacts of governments beyond their own borders

Aid, big donors, extent to which donor-led projects are in line with the SDGs

Trade unions have had quite the call for the WB to do a voluntary review of the extent to which its activities would be aligned with the SDGs. Missing elephant in the room

Indicators – haven't been very present in conversation. At tricky moment in that about half of the targets have approved indicators, 1/6th of targets have nothing at all not even methodology for measuring progress and these are not evenly spread across the SDGs. Hit gender equality, inequalities, climate change, goal 16 – not conspiracy that many of the goals lacking indicators are reviewed this year but a particular challenge for this year's HLPF VNRs so far – some countries draw upon global indicators and some countries don't make any reference to the global indicators.

Welcome reflections from MS present here as well – how to go about this indicator challenge LNOB – there was a curious tendency in the negotiations to frame LNOB as a question of identifying particular groups rather than looking at the political, economic measures that could be taken to reduce inequalities, reduce gaps between quintiles

LNOB hasn't gotten sufficient attention, challenge re: disaggregated data, but also conversation within WTUMG membership around political tension in today's world looking at shift from universal notion of social protection towards targeted approach, where we say that not everyone needs support but we need to highlight the few that need the support. This has a serious bearing on societies that we create moving forward and extent to which our societies are truly inclusive and cohesive.

Caution against a development where LNOB is only valid when it's highlighting particular groups that are super marginalized – actually leaving no one behind has a bigger reach and would include a lot of the measures under goal 1 re: social protection systems or under goal 4: making sure primary and secondary education are free. Linked to LNOB.

OECD

Team is the custodian of the peer review methodology among OECD DAC – lots of lessons re: accountability and learning, many years of experience in learning

Will talk about it tomorrow

UNEP

Environmental dimension is lagging behind social and econ, not present in VNRs

Report today 1 million species at risk of extinction

One piece of our puzzle is really weak

Imp't to include this when we talk about integrated approaches

If we could highlight interlinkages between SDGs, ?

Targets – peer review that happened during HLPF and regional discussions are imp't not only to find out what the challenges and trends are but the solutions – would enable better cooperation, learning from each other

Indicators – just launched report on measuring progress on environmental sustainability in the targets, have seen this need for disaggregation, info at different levels – to push forward the agenda

Transboundary issues – the regional discussion can bring a lot of inputs to find solutions

IUCN/David O'Connor

Would like to hear more from countries – what is different? How have you departed from business-as-usual? What have you done that wouldn't have happened otherwise?

e.g. Goalkeepers website of BMGF

10 year time horizon, two more times to report over that time horizon – hopefully MS also thinking about what they might do with those two opportunities. Commit to milestones now that we hope to be able to report on in four years, that will really have an impact, towards transformative change.

Should look ahead and anticipate where we need to be and then talk about how to get there – would be a useful thing for the VNRs to do.

ANND/Ziad Abdel Samad

Region and network is monitoring process of 2030 Agenda implementation at national and regional level, including VNR processes

Not about assessing the process at regional level – have a big checklist of successes, lessons learned, failures in the process at national and regional level

Start from the point that David mentioned – thinking about this debate and the agenda of the meeting. If we are really looking for how to improve the whole process for second and forthcoming cycles of HLPF, to respond to real challenge of the 2030 Agenda (Transforming the world) – not only about adopting or implementing certain projects or programs for SD, but something related to the transformative agenda.

Challenges that our experience showed, but seem to be common:

- Certain terminologies we are using are becoming very technical and empty from the real sense and political meaning. Interlinkages – nice to hear we need a comprehensive agenda, across targets, goals, sectors etc – but what about coherence, harmonization, interlinkages when you see in the report printed or presented a certain vision but when in reality you see a completely different agenda being implemented? Responsibility of national governments to be more coherent and more honest with what they are committed to, and when they present to intl community in terms of national policies. E.g. if you assess state budget, austerity policies in measures are either not in line or in contradiction with what committed to at intl community. But also intl community – no coherence in terms of negotiations, commitments
- What do we mean by interlinkages, how can we make policies more coherent at that level.
- Private sector – not against it but need more analysis. In region where we lack transparency, governance, regulations, ability of the state to protect the rights of the people. Most VNRs are focusing on role of PS - partnerships, blending, foreign investments etc

without even mentioning the HRs standards or state obligations towards safeguards, standards, policies etc.

- Imptc to move from quantitative to qualitative indicators. Go further – some quantitative or materialistic phenomena like poverty or unemployment – but doesn't take into account justice, decent work – real sense of the term not really respected.
- Regional vs. national – national context is very impt, monitoring at national level must be done but many regional challenges have strong impact at national level, undermined when analysing national context. E.g. refugees, conflict, sometimes climate, IFFs, systemic issues. Impt to bring regional dimension even when discussing national context. Bringing impact of regional challenges at national
- Voluntary aspect of reporting is impt – that's why we can see increasing interest of the countries. But voluntary doesn't mean there are no obligations – so how can we hold people accountable in this context?
- CS participation – most impt way to hold the govts accountable is to enhance CS and civic participation. Civic space shrinking, freedom of expression in Arab region, and at the same time see increasing participation of CS and some delegations bringing CS on board with them. This phenomenon should be explained. CS on board with delegation doesn't mean anything about space at national level. UPR process – when you have CS contribution, can be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of the national context – not relying only on the state report because when you have shrinking space state report, not national.

Main takeaways from Day One

Annika Lindblom/Finland: highlighting some of the key messages:

- Agreement HLPF has fulfilled its role partially, i.e. no of review countries, peer pressure keeps countries alert.
- VNRs successful tool in creating national ownership but also providing overview of what's happening across the globe. Important to look at how we spend the time reviewing at the HLPF. Only fair to allow governments to reflect on positive outcomes but maybe important to give more attention to HOW these successes were achieved.
- Critical approach important also for the credibility of VNRs as a tool
- Should aim for more interactive sessions - even if ministers don't appreciate free exchange - and effective moderation in VNR sessions
- Consider new and additional ways of disseminating outcomes of VNRs and side events
- Personally surprised by how important the regional dimension was in today's conversation. Many important conversations at that level, but there seems to be a disconnect with global, so this should be looked at.
- Leaving no one behind: more than data, more than just the most marginalised; whole-society approach
- Interlinkages require more attention, particularly looking at other goals unlocking progress, identifying which goals necessary for what.
- Need to defend multilateralism and its achievements - like HLPF
- Necessity to consider VNR a milestone in a broader societal multistakeholder process. Stakeholder participation key - and is a challenge in many contexts. Communication and language important in making dialogue work.
- Impact reporting - 2nd round of VNR could include reporting on impact of first round

- Institutionalisation of SDGs crucial for long-term implementation
- Peer learning and partnerships need to be strengthened. VNR labs and side events great opportunity here. Call for recognition of spotlight and shadow reports.

DAY 2

How can we get the most out of the thematic reviews of the SDGs and of the theme? (The session will discuss lessons learned from the thematic reviews)

Chair: Ms. Gisele Fernandez, Deputy Director General for the 2030 Agenda, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico

- Thematic division is the first step to organise our work, how is it possible to have in mind the 3 dimensions of sustainable development.

Lead discussant: Ms. Sylvia Hordosch, Policy Adviser/Intergovernmental Support Division, UN Women

- Different dilemmas in relation with HLPF is very relevant to this discussion. I want to ask what is it that we want to get out of this? There are many mandates of HLPF as Felix Dodd mentioned earlier - resolution 17 to 99, talk about interlinkages.
- Over the years, HLPF has a very comprehensive programme. There were 4 themes that are very general. Some discussions on the SDGs - there should be any clusters, or any cluster will be needed to see interlinkages.
- During the HLPF, we have sessions, we also have side events + exhibitions + special events. There were around 44 inputs from different groups, also there were several 17-20 supporting documents. A lot of information, but the question how do we absorb this?
- With this programme, do we recreate silos? Seems like we don't talk more on interlinkages.
- On the cross cutting issue, one of it is gender equality; how do we link to other processes - Sendai, climate, FfD. How to link with emerging issues, and also what is the linkages between the content in the HLPF panel with Ministerial Declaration. Do we really need both, thematic review and VNR? Or should we focus only one. Some discussion yesterday mentioned should we retain the cluster or individual goals, or shall we focus on the interlinkages?

Chair:

Invitation to participants to focusing on the thematic reviews, is it working or not? Or how we can do better and differently?

Discussion:

Czech Republic:

- The issue raised is very important and UN Women listed a very useful guides for discussion. We felt the thematic review has been helpful as it is interactive but need to work on how to find interlinkages better.
- What we don't want is long discussion that prevent us to review the goals. Things should be decided early on in HLPF. We should have better arrangement, but if not,

we should retain with what we have right now. We don't want to duplicate the work of other UN Fora. Coordination should be improved and more efficiently done.

Switzerland:

- On cross cutting themes - it should be Leaving No One Behind. We can also cross cutting issues on data and statistics, financing also needs to be integrated in the discussion. Financing is very important and crucial.

IUCN:

- Agree with Silvy that Transforming our World should be our cross-cutting theme, the current themes are not clear. I don't like clustering, but grouping different goals also make sense. GSPR this year gave framework on system, there are 4-5 systems and include human capabilities that cut across. This will be used in the GA and maybe member states can see how to adopt this framework.

Germany:

- Thematic review should continue to have the aspect of interlinkages. Thematic reviews are too short (only 3 hours), we are wondering how to fill in this gap? Could it be in regional forum or other venues? Room for improvement : The inputs should be discussed prior to the HLPF and become the basis of the discussion of the thematic review. Interlinkages between thematic reviews needs to be discussed.

EU:

- The 2 mechanisms (SDG Sets) and Themes. In Germany, we are quite positive on the SDG sets (cluster goals), but we can have ways to improve. On the themes, it's more mixed, they tend to resemble one to another. What I want to highlight in particular, we should look into thematic review as process, the process should be even much earlier. We need to have discussion on facts and data, we should make the most existing mechanism report - SG report, Global SDGs report.

IP:

- It's useful to continue with thematic review. There's a disconnect with EGM, HLPF discussion is not build on the EGM discussion, need to have more concrete recommendations and actions. Important to look into gaps, barriers, and interlinkages.
- The themes of leaving no one behind is important as it touches a lot of issue - on the issue of who is the vulnerable groups but the root causes that make them vulnerable, coming back again to systemic barriers.
- Other issue is time constraint, maybe good to have parallel discussion. On social dimension, how we can integrate the human rights mechanism and recommendations - UPR, treaty bodies.
- The other area is policy coherence, emphasis on economic side but clear inconsistency of policies on environment, private sectors, etc. How do we improve participation of multi stakeholder in the thematic reviews particularly the marginalised groups.

Finland:

- Finland found thematic review are very useful, the means to engage the line ministries and other stakeholders in the preparation. It becomes means of

engagement and participation. They are quite interactive. We can pay more attention on the moderation and composition of the panelists, not enough time for intervention from the floor.

- The clusters also useful, although not sure whether the composition of the clusters are the right one. We would not mind to have the same grouping although it can be discussed further.
- Thematic review can stocktake the global review and trends, while VNR is more country-driven. I also echo what IUCN said on GSDR, we know that they will have presentations of findings on systemic issues, etc. It would be out in couple of weeks, we should see how it can feed into the discussion.

UNESCO:

- Just to flag the role of evaluation, the global evaluation community and bring them together in the surface to discuss on what's happening, interlinkages, gaps, progress and lack thereof.
- We need some predictably of the agenda, what we are trying to do is to map and find the gaps. Need to start in country level, the process itself is also important, it's not only about report. As one example, UNESCO reviewing on the issue of education and leaving no one behind, we can see the trade-offs and dilemma, then these trade-offs can lead to discussion. Use the evaluation as the critical inputs, but it should be planned ahead of time.

ILO

- A lot of interesting points have been raised. ILO has been engaged in the lead up to HLPF, one of the key issues that we have a lot different process to prepare the thematic reviews but at the end it got diluted and included to other reports. There needs to be continued focus on the interlinkages, we also don't want to dilute the specific SDGs and technical aspects of specific goals.

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OHCHR

- Thematic review have proved to be useful. We should find more concrete ways to connect with EGM. Each thematic review should still

Donahue

- No likelihood to increase time of HLPF from 8 days
- Moderated dialogues, cross regional group looking at cross cutting issues that are a problem to all of us, informal debate / dialogue [no more panel format], process needs to be reenergized, serious of informal format with leading / provocative questions well moderated, possible ministers will like the idea

Senegal

- Institutional arrangement must support the discussions on interlinkages
- Trade off and progress must be considered hand in hand, as many countries will have difficulties to reach SDGs by 2030
- Evaluation and monitoring are also required
- Key is to address barriers by focusing on action oriented solutions

DESA

- There are communities working on certain goals, so the thematic review create excitement within this groups/communities.
- WB/IMF can have little panels and use it for thematic reviews. It's very important to prepare the thematic reviews and SDGs remain live in these bodies.
- We have background notes from the sessions.
- On the GSDR, there will be a discussion on July (Science Policy Interface session). The use of GSDR can be discussed.
- In the declaration of the summit, the theme of 2020 only and then we can repeat on what have been done. The panels this year will bring panelists from various backgrounds so it can create interrelation and see the aspect of leaving no one behind.

Workers and Trade Union (Antonia)

- Agree with Marion on the relation with goals and communities. Building thematic panels should focus especially on bottlenecks rather than progress. We can probably build in the interlinkages in our structure of the panel. It's quite shocking to realise how we stay on comfortably, i.e education sectors - lots of progress but no so much on environmental side - just transition, climate justice.
- Having an SDG 4 panel, can we have panelists that can bring this 3 parallel dimensions? Agree on OHCHR yesterday on targets being left behind.

UK

- Echo on some of the points. Agree with Finland, that useful but short. How to bring more voices from private sectors and academes. In terms of themes, I think the idea about clustering is right, it serves it purpose. The indivisibility challenges remain, also the interlinkages and trade-offs. In particular, I think there's a question for me, whether the HLPF theme is really transform to different outcome? That said, it means all subsidiary body does point to right direction and align. In terms of modalities, how to make it more dynamics and interactive, roundtables with moderators and rapporteur. This have to be taken up to different resolutions so it can be action oriented

Fiji

- The thematic discussion can start at the regional level,

China: useful, the time is very limited, we should expand the time. Cross cutting issues, SDGs is very inter-related and linked together, but we have to bear in mind we need to still focus on the thematic review on specific SDGs. If we don't do that, we can't make in-depth discussion.

Rina:

World Vision

- Thematic reviews are important, flagged emerging trends, policy coherence, etc. The challenges is how we get out of comfort zones on woking in silos. We should have an

integrated discussions on technical discussions rather than sectoral discussions. The issue of time is also a challenge.

Silvia - UN Women:

- Sometimes its difficult to have the discussions in the other intergovernmental bodies and processes because it has different timelines. But we can make it to more coherent. . .

Chair: How the SDGs grouping increase the ownership, there is some merit on keeping the current organisation, but openness to seek to organise our work. How much does the theme has an impact? What would be different in your country, what would be different of the UN. Just a final thought, we have seen how VNR has evolved, and how clustering and themes have evolved. GSDR report would be useful to enlighten us to move forward.

What can similar review processes teach us? (The session will draw best practices from review fora similar to the HLPF)

Chair: Mr. Mateo Estrémé, Minister and Director of the Directorate for International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, Argentina

Focal point for SDG implementation in Argentinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Lead discussant: Mr. Rahul Mahotra, Head of Division: Reviews, Results, Evaluation & Development Innovation, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

- Encouraging people to look at OECD Flagship development report: Joining forces to leaving no one behind (2018)
- OCED 60+ years of experience of conducting reviews, not just peer reviews. 2 independent reviewers
- OECD DAC peer review: obligatory reviews. Peer-led, not state-led, which allows for recommendations to be give. Good implementation rate of recs. OBjective is learning and accountability, aiming to create race to the top but without ranking. ODA also sensitive topic domestically so we want to be cautious. Robust analytical framework allows for comparability and consistency. Norms and standards, based on core references (legal instruments) and non-core references (guidelines etc).
- Inclusive process - conversations across government, with Parliament and in-country.
- Shadow report has proven extremely useful
- Fortunate to be able to draw on OECD stats and data
- Self-assessment submitted by MS + research, interviews, expert opinions, data.
- Report itself: political statement - main findings - and technical report. Final recs discussed and endorsed; MS encouraged to engage on challenges. Thematic conversation with leading questions and couple of respondents. Done regularly.
- Heavily values-driven; there has to be a sense of shared confidence and trust.
- Process more important than the product
- 5 lessons based on DAC experience

1. **Theory of Change** needs to be clearer - what are we trying to achieve? Behavioral change, change in mindset and impact. Important to keep HLPF political and not overburden it.
2. **Need for clear methodology:** roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, how they engage. Guidelines for VNRs need to enable comparisons and contrasting across MS
3. **Secretariat role is crucial** - needs to engage with the reviews and across membership. We need to be able to facilitate as well as make the most of insight, facilitate exchange, do case studies, manage knowledge effectively, synthesise and identify bottlenecks, and translate into learning agenda. Secretariat needs to be well-resourced.
4. **Accountability: From reporting to reviewing and from info to action.** Accountability and learning agenda needs to be thought through in context of sensitive environment and threats to multilateralism. Voluntary nature will not change - what kind of soft accountability can be introduced, and can it develop over time. Friends of VNR useful, so are shadow reports. Is there any way we can start thinking about gradual benchmarking? Accountability starts at home - inclusive process conducting reviews but also launch reviews in parliamentary as well as public setting.
5. **Learning agenda** - balance between needs of individual countries and thematic approaches. What's been useful in DAC is to identify areas where common learning is needed and underline that in guidance. How can we facilitate peer learning, regional fora important here but goes beyond. At thematic level, we have introduced thematic peer learning. Spotlight events on different themes. Convening conversations around specific SDG targets and indicators. Necessary to have safe spaces for learning, labs and side events good, but they need a sense of leading to something. One hour insufficient for deeper learning

Mateo/Argentina: elements of peer pressure and peer learning essential. Common issue not easy to identify in UN context. Questions posed by MS in VNR exchange often quite banalised, often based on agreements with country. Other issue is civil society questions that may not be well-informed.

UPR has good involvement of MS in getting more knowledge about human rights situation, but not taken well advantage of. Examples from regional level; unfortunately, we don't have a representative from AU to share the example of their peer review. There is something in AP too, would be good to hear more.

Vani/Fiji Council of Social Services: agree with OECD on importance to have a clear theory of change. I would be interested in hearing more about the 3rd Round of monitoring of the global partnership for effective development cooperation; ODA is key for our region - and for achieving SDGs

Germany: find UPR very interesting as a contribution to the VNRs. unique process because it involves all UN MS. Comparing with VNRs

- UPR mandatory; all MS reviewed during one cycle VS voluntary VNR
- UPR national report plus independent HR Experts, HR treaty bodies, and info from other stakeholders, NHRI and CSOs VS state-led VNR

- UPR assesses MS HR record and HR violations, aims to provide technical advice and support.
- Both outline action taken and results, best practice

Bangladesh: XX and [sorry, missed the first example] trade policy review of WTO interesting. Maybe worth rethinking the voluntary nature of VNR. Shadow reports part of many other good processes, either from secretariat or CSOs, we should consider this

Sri Lanka: AP Forum on SD - annual event. Regional roadmap adopted in 2017; it consists of thematic areas, technology, finance, climate change management. This is a good mechanism - supporting countries

OHCHR: great to hear that UPR could be useful. Dedicated funds to support participation of CSO and vulnerable groups in reviews, and for dedicated projects to support implementation of recommendations. VNRs supposed to support relevant project too - could VNRs be connected with trust fund? What has supported UPR is a list of things that the MS could consider addressing in next report, not prescriptive but aimed to be helpful.

Finland: Cooperation with Colombia started already during the negotiations in 2015; initiated by respective PRs to embrace universal agenda. Wasn't designed as a formal agenda but rather a practical, technical-level exchange. We organised three events in NYC and a workshop in Bogota, which included local stakeholders. Two-way street exchange - same vision, different strengths - Finland was inspired by ways Colombia engaged municipalities, and their work with data. Colombia was inspired by Finland's way of engaging private sector, including PPPs. Important to remember that peer learning doesn't have to be very formal. In Europe: network of key officials in sustainable development; it has existed for 15 years, but new energy thanks to SDGs. Every year one country invites network to come and look at their ways of working.

Argentina: regional mechanism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Peer reviews and learning are crucial. Time is tight at HLPF, more space at regional level.

Switzerland: important to learn from other reviews but UPR and DAC reviews are very heavy and time-consuming; we cannot have as heavy a process under Agenda 2030. Transformation not only about government; some companies are doing more than the government. Climate change came up at the shareholder meeting of a large Swiss company thanks in part to student mobilisation.

Argentina: thanks to Switzerland for reminding us of the realities

Senegal: want to highlight one regional perspective in Africa; we are reporting on Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. African peer review mechanism established in 2003 - new partnership for Africa - voluntary. Independent review; indicators to help evaluate performance; 4 thematic areas - democracy, economic, corporate and socio-economic development. Each review leads to national programme for dealing with problems identified, annual reports. Continental level African peer review forum. Support from ADB and UNECA, UNDP, and African Capacity Development Foundation.

IUCN: if MS do a VNR it is not thanks to the 15 min in the spotlight at HLPF. question is how to do a better VNR, and how to engage domestic stakeholders, and what additional value comes from engaging other international stakeholders. Maybe other countries want to team up, troika up even? Maybe countries should write up what they've got from VNR so far?

Mexico: at ECLAC level we have a report from the secretariat that looks at progress and challenges every 4 years, based on data. Substantive input. Another ECLAC input is integration of civil society; last year Mexico chaired ECLAC and we started process on mechanism; 2 days for CSOs before forum, and space for CSO dialogue at end of forum.

Argentina: agree that ECLAC is crucial in providing overview of situation, and involvement of CSOs give us a fuller picture of how countries are doing. It is a very good report.

China: evaluation and monitoring of SDGs in an intergovernmental process and the voluntary nature of VNRs should be maintained. Practice of UPR is not appropriate for the HLPF at this stage. Focus should be on how to better organise VNRs to provide suggestions and help accelerate implementation. MS have different national circumstances and priorities and it therefore has to be up to them to decide what to do with recommendations. Important to avoid adding complicated or controversial issues to the SDGs now, we should focus on accelerating progress. Maybe the secretariat could compile the suggestions from other countries, submitted by email, and pass them onto VNR country.

EU: very fond of the DAC review mechanism, it is both interesting and efficient. But it is different, i.e. the compulsory nature. Where we can learn a lot is the before and after, e.g. the strong methodological framework, we could look at improving guidance and support. And after, we could improve on the way we debate the VNRs, in terms of focusing on some thematic issues for instance. VNR discussions should be more interactive and focused on thematic issues, or challenges faced.

OECD: the DAC review is heavy and time-consuming; purpose here is not to replicate the process but rather look at possible lessons to be shared. Focus should be on creating safe spaces, dialogue and peer learning. The UN should definitely provide dedicated support, demand-driven, so that countries can access technical support.

Global Partnership: Set of norms and standards around effective DC cooperation and data being collected with a view towards changes in behaviour. This is data source for us.

Argentina: secretariat overstretched and resources are scarce. Little appetite to add heavy machinery into Agenda 2030 implementation. Review is a process, it is ongoing. Important to take into account the difficulties faced by some countries, some don't have the resources. Important to focus on countries in special situations.

Frances: question about DAC; could you give us an idea of the type of recommendations made?

OECD: usually try to limit no of recs to 10-15 so that it is manageable. Needs to be measurable but not too prescriptive. Look at global advocacy and engagement, policy vision and framework for ODA, organisation and system and structure around ODA, delivery and partnerships, results and evaluation and learning, humanitarian.

Vani/Fiji Council of Social Services: disconnect between regional and global - what does DESA do with inputs from UNESCAP?

Marion/DESA: reports from regional fora to HLPF; regional commissions in various panels; chair of commissions presenting to high-level segments. It is not perfect, internal review team as part of UN reform. Space for improvement.

In negotiations there was reluctance towards the VNRs; we need to be careful because the reluctance is still there. The workshops we organise for VNR countries have been positive in the sense that countries have engaged in an open way. Maybe worth considering something similar for countries doing HLPF? In terms of lessons learned, we can of course collect and compile the information by sending out a questionnaire.

Argentina: this is not going to change from one day to another. We had this discussion at length in 2015. But many opportunities at regional level. I believe that the commitment to implementation is there but we have to be cognizant of the limitations at the level of government.

Afternoon session 2 - 4 PM

Felix Dodds -

There is a difference between stakeholders and civil society - completely different things. If we want to be inclusive in your terminology, you need to use the word stakeholders.

Between 1997 - 2002 - Member states gave up two days to have stakeholders dialogue. Was a very interesting process. Suggest that there are some lessons to be learnt from that period - ensuring that governments make better decisions - involving stakeholders in decision making process. Imp thing to understand.

WaterAid (Katie Tobin)

Mandate of our participation - resolution - 67/290 includes official meetings, access to all official documents, organizing side events and so forth. What has it meant in practice over first few years of HLPF?

Actual participation in the HLPF process - if it is not clear what the outcome is, we will realize that it is not worth it. There needs to be concrete process in place. Good examples - European commission who have put money aside for major groups participation. Even DESA. Lot of work goes in to prepare - but there is no guarantee that we even get to ask questions. Actual capacity of funding the secretariat needed - dedicated budget - staff support. Yes, we have speaking spots and all but how can we make that politically meaningful? We need to make sure that the conversations we are having is in a safe spaces.

How can we make the best of the 8 days that we have in the context of time constraints. We have two risks -it doesn't actually translate into meaningful difference on the group. But we

can't intervene in the circumstances - governments are the ones who can do that. Second risk is that it can distort our role to promote accountability. We care about what HLPF does in terms of what it can do to help us achieve the SDGs.

Arab NGO development - Three main comments -

There have been lots of focus on peer exchange and peer learning. After five years, it is time to move from the learning process to the action oriented process. Towards more accountability and implementation .

Role of the Secretariat - it should be restructured without interfering in the content. More tools for accountability. To allow other stakeholders to submit reports, especially in the countries where independent participation is not available so the VNRs are not "nationals". Independent experts (probably based in the secretariat) can review and compare VNR with other submissions

To use Human Rights Standards as benchmarks to measure progress (Right to development, Right to work: Decent work, Right to social protection: Social Protection Floors, health education access to justice etc.)

Felix - Benchmarking plays a really important role.

Women's Major Group - We have had a lot of proposals on how to improve not only for VNRs also the thematic. We need to recover on the reports - many issues - specifically shadow reports to be more visible not just in the regional level but at the global level.

More commitment from the government is needed. Relations among the regional and global level - more inputs from the regional. Would be helpful if Secretariat could help facilitate it. Finally, necessary to have extra people who can follow up Ministerial declarations on what happened, how to move forward and how can we do better. Special rapporteurs should make suggestions and be invited to the HLPF to contribute - that could be very helpful.

Felix - Not just SDGs but the emerging issues. We need to look at other aspects too - for ex microbial resistance

Indigenous Major Group - There should be continuity of engagement at all levels. Also we prepare for the questions VNR questions to the governments - useless exercise as finally it didn't happen because the government didn't allow. We need to have a clear guarantee that we can ask questions.

How do we make sure that no one is left behind? How do we facilitate the capacity building of those in the global level to raise their voices? How do we measure or monitor the outcomes of the major groups of stakeholders. When they are not taken seriously, it does not become a meaningful participation. Finally, in relation to expanding multi stakeholder participation, National HR institutions should be allowed to participate.

Fiji - One of the obstacles is FUNDING - stakeholders lose out on the opportunity to highlight the national issues.

Felix - UN DESA is planning to do some training - for ppl who have never been here. News will go out soon.

European Union - We think that we always talk about paradigm shift - one of the paradigm shifts is this conversation and this is very important. We should strengthen this as much as possible. Participation in VNRs specially - participation of stakeholders is very important.

Agree with those who said that there should be more space for the discussion of VNRs - if we want to have more meaningful interaction, then asking and addressing questions is very important.

Consultations from stakeholders is very important too. ON funding - we all should support it.

GERMANY - Stakeholders participation is key to the German Government. Hesitancy of governments to make them a part of the VNR - time constraints yes. Stakeholders participation should be improved even though it is state led and voluntary. Allowing for a limited amount of time for questions - need to be addressed. Written questions should be handed over reliable. HLPF webpage could offer a dedicated space to allow shadow reports and other reports would be good. Importance of including cities in the review process. Private sector - especially big multinational corporations - should be open for honest exchange on their contributions to the SDGs - positive or negative or both.

FINLAND - For thematic reviews, we have given the space for the stakeholders - they have always said who they represented and they have their independent statements. May be more member states could adapt to that, we could hear more from the stakeholders.

On Cities - Helsinki - they are having national/local review. They themselves found partnerships with the New York city. The Mayor of Helsinki got really excited about it. There will be a side event in the summer - the localization of the SDGs is an issue that will come more in the coming years. Cities are more closer to the citizens.

FELIX - Allowing us to speak from the governments seat - Would be great if more member states can adapt to this.

Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities (Orsolya) - Very important that we recognize what EU said - we have come a very long way - opening up the space for the multistakeholder. Negotiations and all. We are reflecting on it - that was meaningful participation - paragraph 15 of 67/290 has never been before or after. These rights that we would like to cherish and maintain.

Despite these rights agreed by 193 countries, we feel our space is shrinking and our participation is not always meaningful. We need support. The UN is a very complex process. Very few of us are fortunate to be based here and have access - we understand the process somewhat better than the ones in the ground and we need to support them. In order to do , we need to be informed and be aware of different processes and input opportunities. we are told that this is happening you will have a training, this and that - nobody asked us if we want workshops or trainings? We want to work together, we want to collaborate. We do

not only want to be discussants at the HLPF - we want to be panelists. We want guaranteed spots. We want to be part of the ministerial declaration. We would like to be there at the negotiations. Stakeholder engagement should not be an afterthought or a ticking box activity, but a meaningful participation.

SWITZERLAND - Participation of stakeholders have always been part of us. We have a multistakeholder advisory group in Switzerland. Our VNR was done with a lot of stakeholder participation.

WORLD VISION - It is an uphill road for us. Different resolutions - different mandates on how we should engage. We are not quite there. Our participation in the context of the UN - shrinking space. Nevertheless our contribution is recognized. We can bring a lot of technical expertise. Citizen driven data.

National platforms do not have space per se - they need to have their own space and seats.

There is a paragraph in Agenda 21 - regarding children and young people as agents of change. However, as agents of change, we are always having a lot of issues of access of children from 14 -18.

MEXICO - Mexico has included as part of office delegation - civil society and children. We have tried our best to include and be comprehensive. We also think that in the climate change field, cities are good at using their own channels and not the national channel - they have their own strategies. Finally, there is some merit in exploring the participation in having a technical substantive participation - having written inputs will be important.

FELIX - Local indicators - can you get it recognized in the local level?

Major Group Trade Union (Antonia) - broader level of participation - UN-NGLS - it is mysterious that they disappeared. Just pointing out it's not clear why it happened - was it an outright decision of the member states or an administrative budget? It increases the pressure on DESA, also the financial pressure for HLPF.

We were thrilled that we were included and we were excited, it didn't even occur to us that we should spell it out. Now it is important that we remind each other that what major groups of stakeholders are and our role in the implementation in the SDGs.

Final point - as major groups and stakeholders we devote a lot of time and energy as a joint structure, even when engaging as different groups - the reports that we submit is seldomly looked at the websites. There are executive summaries - they are not massive papers - they need to be brought to the central conversation.

FELIX - One of the things about the major groups - agenda 21 has nine chapters for major groups - their rights and responsibilities. None of the member states have looked back to those chapters.

Shadow reports - text in the Agenda 21 - in the SG's reports - we can input directly.

SENEGAL : Local communities - local actors - they have lots of capacity in planning and implementing.

ASIA PACIFIC (Rina) - Theme of HLPF - Imp for us to remember that the SDGs is for the people. We are talking about empowering people - different power relations between different actions. How can we challenge such unjust power relations? How can the powerful can give their power to the less powerful? Issue of accreditation, registration - we need to ensure if we want to have more ppl more community ppl - we need to make sure that we can tackle these issues.

MAJOR GROUP AGEING : Engagement is not a two minute statement - it involves a lot more than just appearing somewhere. We have heard from governments who have actually included stakeholders in the implementation. Not all governments provide that facility to civil society which is often seen as WATCHDOGS and not as partners, nor implementers. NGOs have had a remarkable history of reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized, those who have been left behind. Where government policies have not worked effectively, or reached all groups of people, NGOs have been there, providing food, shelter, education, medicines, care. They have worked to promote peaceful and resilient societies. It should be clear to everyone that multi stakeholder participation is crucial to not leave anyone behind. We need to be more inclusive.

Many reports are submitted to the HLPF but none of them are reviewed or considered, including the official report submitted by MGOS. Lots of ingredients flow into the HLPF. Instead of magnificent meal, we are just fed crumbs. Where is the political leadership, guidance, and recommendations as mandated by General Assembly resolution 67/290?

FELIX : It is also our responsibility - we need to take some power ourselves. Happy that there is strong UN security. Difference between lobbyists and implementationists.

LEAD DISCUSSANT (WaterAid) - We take responsibility for our own self-organization. Point on UN-NGLS disappearance - the website is no longer up. 40 years of work has no record. NGLS was a touchpoint, valued semi-autonomous space that we no longer have. The post has been transferred to DPI but remains unfilled. There was core budgetary support from the Fifth Committee via UN DESA to NGLS of 200,000 dollars per year - what happened to that budget line?

There should be more links between the Ffd and other forums, more links between HLPF and geopolitical realities of the world, so that HLPF is not a bubble. MGoS participation as one avenue in to a broader conversation about politics of HLPF.

OISC DESA DIRECTOR -

Good to have institutionalized in countries in the implementation of the SDGS and the VNRs. Issue of shadow reports - Member states decided against shadow reports, so SEcretariat can't publish them. There are cases where the mandates need to be changed.

When we do trainings (in consultation with the major groups) it is not funded from the UN but by bilateral donors (EU, Germany etc). We need to encourage support like this.

We have regular conversations with the coordination committee steering committee. Tell us if you think we should do something differently.

WORLD VISION - All of our colleagues have spoken about the gaps and challenges. We are not timid - we continue to work and knock doors quite often they do open. We are not afraid. We are very active, we come together, put together language proposals - we come to you with proposals. Timid is not in our dictionary.

SESSION 6: NEXT STEPS

CHAIR: MR. NAZRUL ISLAM, BANGLADESH

- Short time for presentation of VNRs
- Benchmarking possible?
- Reinvent the wheel or make current system more effective?

Ms. Verena Klinger-Dering, GERMANY

A group of EU countries are looking at the HLPF. In the short term (no requiring change in mandate)

- Thematic reviews
- Strengthened focus on interlinkages
- Continued improvement of multistakeholder participation at national level and at HLPF
- Strengthening comparability of VNRs

1. Provide planning security for DESA – as far as theme and set of SDGs are concerned; could continue current use of SDGs, theme, for 2020.
2. If there no communication from MS, DESA can use status quo, or ask PGA.
3. Co-Facilitators for HLPF Review should be appointed as soon as possible, to have a sense of what to do before starting review in 2020.
4. Survey should be organized.
5. Must not weaken HLPF, must not backslide.
6. Increase our ambition.

ARGENTINA

Time is an issue; Argentina will submit VNR next year (2015-2019, where we were in 2017). Need clarity early 2020. Secretariat will be preparing a report with some suggestions.

MARION: informal meeting will take place with Member States; report will be available in a week. No report mandated for HLPF Review. On VNRs, there is no question about their continuation.

ARGENTINA: decision on SDGs for the next 4 years. Now the GA can consult, without prejudging HLPF Review; there may be a sentence in the HLPF Summit Declaration; could have negotiations early 2020. Simple decision would be only decision for SDGs and theme for 2020.

FINLAND: Co-facilitators should be appointed as soon as possible. Why negotiations cannot take place in the autumn, to be negotiated by Second Committee?