

37th INFORMAL WORKING BREAKFAST ON AGENDA 2030

Monitoring sustainable goals and interlinkages: what role for thematic reviews?

Hosted by the Bahá'í International Community,
the International Movement ATD Fourth World, and Regions Refocus
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A diverse group of stakeholders¹ attended a working breakfast to discuss key issues related to the role of thematic reviews and the sustainable development goals. The following are highlights of the discussion:

- The HLPF has much to accomplish over the five days of its thematic review, in addition to the three-day ministerial segment which will include the presentation of Voluntary National Review reports. It is required to report on a variety of pre-established mandates, including inputs from the ECOSOC functional commissions and Financing for Development Forum, addressing challenges of countries in special situations, report on the regional dimension, provide recommendations to the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, in addition to examining the six goals it is focusing on this year. Given the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda, it is important to look at the inter-linkages between the goals that will be reviewed and Goal 17, and their interlinkages with all of the remaining goals.
- *Official input*: SDG Progress Report – enriched by inputs from functional commissions; UN stakeholders can also input into the HLPF. This year, the UN System is preparing briefing notes on each of the goals, coordinated by the Secretariat and based on inputs from UN entities. Should be available May/June.
- *ECOSOC system* of course predates HLPF and Agenda 2030, evolved out of the charter itself. The entire system is in review. It is helpful to remember that the HLPF is a process, not a body, convened by the ECOSOC. How should the contribution to HLPF take place vis-a-vis connections to ECOSOC itself, as enshrined in resolution 68/1? Network of UN bodies and functional commissions – the added value of HLPF is to bring together all the expertise that the UN system is producing.
 - The Secretariat has also been asked to prepare a template for reports in order to streamline process for both substantive and procedural reports, and to facilitate regular, ongoing exchanges among the executive and expert bodies of all the functional commissions throughout the year. The design process is underway.
 - There is agreement on the need to work more closely, e.g. by bureau chairs attending meetings of other functional commissions; this is a shift away from a more “territorial” approach. Overall, we are aware of changes that need to take place, yet we are hopeful and optimistic.
- *Requests to Secretariat*: Immediate release of a program/timetable for HLPF to enable planning of ministers’ travel and time. Clear, coordinated guidelines on reporting would help member states.
 - Last year's HLPF was inaugural; one after adoption of Agenda, not yet guided by resolution.
- *Planning ahead* : Given pressure on time in HLPF session – is it possible to develop direction over several HLPF sessions? For example, Goal 10 will be addressed in 2019, but those issues crosscut with issues we are already addressing.

¹Permanent Missions & Government Agencies: Austria, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Honduras, Kenya, Nigeria, Switzerland. Representatives from UN: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Program, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, UN Women. Non-governmental organizations: Bahá'í International Community, Child Fund Alliance, Daughters of Charity, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Global Policy Forum, Gray Panthers, Regions Refocus, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Soroptimist International, UNANIMA International, United Nations Foundation.

- *Goal 17*: The beauty of the Agenda is that the means of implementation are integrated; we shouldn't have a separate discussion, on Goal 17. Regarding Goal 17 as cross-cutting: risk of means of implementation both everywhere and nowhere.
- *Inter-linkages*: To what extent are countries who are making voluntary reviews addressing inter-linkages in their reports? Could guidance from Secretariat encourage this?
- *Inputs to HLPF*: Gap between inputs (SG report, Major Groups reports) and outcomes (Ministerial Declaration and President's Summary). Last year, procedural reports described various panels discussing different issues and highlighted participation, but nothing to advise or recommend to governments how to move forward. HLPF needs to find a way to come up with useful recommendations, discuss inputs in a politically meaningful way, without repeating what other functional bodies have reviewed.
- *Importance of Political Will*: 2017 functional commissions: No outcome of CPD, weak outcome of CSW. Last year people left HLPF dissatisfied owing to lack of real interactive dialogue, lack of engagement. Need to achieve original ambition of HLPF space.
- *Beyond Economics*: HLPF must address issues that leave people behind (e.g. indigenous peoples, women and girls, etc.) Important to be honest about challenges in reaching these groups.
- *Moving beyond income*: Concern that in spite of SDGs 1 and 10, we are still measuring progress in terms of income/GDP only. There is a mandate to move to a multidimensional approach to measure progress - how will national voluntary reviews reflect that?
 - ECOSOC does have mandate to address new and emerging issues. Issue of inequality was prioritized by previous President, for instance. Presidents can prioritize different issues, but these are not necessarily the mandate of the ECOSOC.
- *Multi-Stakeholder Approach to the HLPF*: Major selling point of the Agenda is its openness. Aim should be not only to harmonize, but also to broaden participation for meaningful discussion. How will this be reflected in the panels?
 - We work hard to ensure this approach. Scientific expertise is brought into these discussions.
- *Seat at the table* – Need to reach children and really see them as active stakeholders. We need to allow them to meaningfully participate in the discussions that will be taking place.
- *Role of Civil Society - HLPF*: For many civil society organizations, especially at national/grassroots level, it is difficult to contribute to this process (costly, time-consuming, requires a lot of knowledge). Resources and capacity-building are required to ensure this essential input.
 - The frequent mention of multi-stakeholder approach seems to be mostly referring to private sector. HLPF includes a private sector forum - could we also organize a Leave No One Behind Forum, to ensure those left behind contribute their knowledge?
 - Difficult due to budget constraints, knowledge barriers. We want Leave No One Behind to be reflected in all HLPF discussions, i.e. by including representatives on panels, though superficial.
- *Role of Civil Society - ECOSOC*: Engagement of civil society in each of the commissions is different – is there a space where civil society could contribute with substantive suggestions on how this process could be harmonized, enhance coherence?
 - An uneven system is in place when it comes to relating to non-state actors. The NGO Committee grants ECOSOC consultative status, which applies to the commissions, but the Major Groups and other Stakeholders system applies to the sustainable development process. The system has to be rationalized in terms of relationships between intergovernmental agencies and non-state actors, updated to reflect reality of 21st century.
- *Role of Secretariat* – How can Secretariat be strengthened to support a more politically meaningful HLPF?
 - Discussion within DESA, UN as a whole to improve alignment with the Agenda.