



SDGs KENYA FORUM

Coalition for Sustainable Development

2024

HLPF NEWSLETTER

Spotlight on The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York



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INTRODUCTION

What is the High - Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development?

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development, adopted in 2016. At the global level it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Forum provides a unique opportunity for the full and effective participation of member states, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to come together, exchange knowledge, and foster partnerships aimed at accelerating sustainable development worldwide.

Role of the HLPF

- Facilitates the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned and provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up.
- It promotes system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.
- Ensures that the 2030 Agenda remains relevant and ambitious and focuses on assessing progress, achievements, and challenges faced by developed and developing countries and new and emerging issues.

How often does the HLPF meet?

The HLPF meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days in July, which includes a three-day ministerial segment. It also meets every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly for two days in September. Every year there is a theme agreed upon and an in-depth review of five Goals conducted. Goal 17- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development - is reviewed annually.

2024 HLPF

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was held from Monday, 8 July, to Wednesday, 17 July 2024, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. This included the three-day ministerial segment of the forum held from Monday, 15 July, to Wednesday, 17 July 2024 as part of the High-level Segment of the Council. The last day of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC was on Thursday, 18 July 2024.

The 2024 theme was “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

Recognizing the nature of the Sustainable Development Goals - *integrated, indivisible and interlinked* and without prejudice, this year the HLPF reviewed in-depth: **Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere; **Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; **Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; **Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all

levels; and **Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.



This year 36 Member States carried out voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the 2024 HLPF, and these included; Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belize, Brazil, Chad, Colombia, Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Palau, Peru, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

HLPF in Numbers

Who was there?

- About 90 Heads of State and government, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Vice Ministers and Ministerial level Officials
- 125 Keynote speakers, panelists, lead discussants, respondents, moderators in townhall meetings and panels.
- About 1000 MGOs and NGOs accredited to ECOSOC

Other events, including side events, VNR Labs, Special Events and Exhibitions were organized on the margins of the 2024 HLPF.

- 13 Special Events
- 13 VNR Labs
- 236 Side Events-162 in person and 74 virtual
- 14 Exhibitions

VNR Labs at the HLPF



The 2024 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was marked by deep and formative tensions arising from geopolitical and economic challenges that confront the multilateral system. This theme resonated throughout the meeting, reflecting the complexities and struggles nations face in achieving sustainable development. A significant highlight was the vote on two contested paragraphs of the Ministerial Declaration, a rare occurrence that underscored the divisions among delegates. One paragraph stressed that sustainable development is unattainable without peace and security, while the other addressed the adverse impacts of unilateral coercive

measures, such as economic sanctions, on poverty and food security, along with other SDGs. Despite these contentions, the Ministerial Declaration was ultimately adopted, encapsulating the current situation, challenges, and future actions necessary to reinforce the 2030 Agenda.

Voluntary National Reviews

36 voluntary national reviews (VNRs) were presented at the 2024 High-Level Political Forum with South Sudan and Yemen presenting for the first time, marking a significant milestone for these nations.

Among the VNR presenters, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Mexico, and Sierra Leone were notable for being fourth-time participants, reflecting their ongoing commitment to the SDG process. Most countries were either second or third-time presenters, indicating a sustained engagement with the VNR process. Specifically, 16 countries, including Austria, Brazil, and South Africa, were second-time presenters, while 15 others, such as Armenia, Costa Rica, and Kenya, were presenting for the third time. This diverse group of nations shared their experiences, successes, and challenges in SDG implementation, highlighting both common and unique issues faced at the national level.

Key Issues from the 2024 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report for Kenya

Kenya presented its third voluntary national review at the High-Level Political Forum. Kenya's VNR report was presented alongside the Civil Society Organizations' report.

Progress and Challenges

According to the VNR report, Kenya has registered mixed results across the 17 SDGs. Of the 168 indicators tracked, 60% showed positive progress, 12% stalled, 17% regressed, and progress on 11% was indiscernible due to data limitations. Significant progress was noted in SDGs related to health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). However, SDGs focusing on no poverty (SDG 1), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) showed slower progress. The least progress was observed in reducing inequalities (SDG 10), zero hunger (SDG 2), and life below water (SDG 14).

Good Practices and Initiatives

Kenya has implemented several programmes and projects that enhance SDG achievement, serving as replicable good practices. Notable among these are the Inua Jamii Cash Transfer Programme, which provides financial support to vulnerable groups; the Kenya National Fertilizer Subsidy Programme, aimed at improving food security; and the Human Resource for Health initiative, focusing on primary healthcare through the recruitment of community health promoters. Additionally, Kenya has prepared Voluntary Local Review (VLR) reports for 17 out of 47 counties, showcasing unique local interventions and demonstrating a commitment to SDG implementation at the county level.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Kenya faces significant challenges in SDG implementation, including the impact of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and economic shocks, which have constrained fiscal space and impeded progress. Data gaps and limited awareness of SDGs also pose challenges. Lessons learned highlight the importance of digitizing government services for efficiency, decentralizing services, and modernizing land offices to improve access and service delivery.

Next Steps and Areas of Support

To accelerate SDG progress, Kenya plans to upscale successful programmes like Inua Jamii, fast-track the approval of key policies and bills, and implement frameworks to end drought emergencies. Areas requiring support include financing for SDG acceleration, strengthening data collection and analysis, and capacity development for national and county government officers to mainstream SDGs into policies, plans, and budgets.

Key Messages at HLPF

The overarching message of the VNR presentations was that, despite many challenges, on the frontlines of SDG implementation differences are being set aside and multi-stakeholder partnerships taking hold to impact real lives. A recurring theme throughout the VNRs was the pressing debt crisis and its detrimental impact on the most vulnerable populations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Achim Steiner emphasized that some countries are forced to “raid” budgets for essential services like healthcare, education, and welfare to service debt interests. This situation underscores the need for sustainable debt management solutions to enable countries to focus resources on achieving the SDGs. Additionally, the VNRs shed light on the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, as exemplified by Armenia’s inclusive preparation process involving Parliament members, development partners, civil society, the private sector, and academia. This approach was praised for fostering democratic resilience and progress amid security, humanitarian, and development challenges.

Key messages from the VNRs also highlighted significant initiatives and transformative strategies. Austria aligned its report with the question of necessary transformations towards sustainability, emphasizing efforts to leave no one behind and develop skills for the future. Belize’s #planBelize strategy aimed at transforming the nation into a democratic, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient society, ensuring that all citizens benefit. Similarly, Eritrea’s main messages focused on eliminating poverty and inequality, promoting gender equality, and securing opportunities for all, with a particular emphasis on reaching the most marginalized communities first. These reports underscored the diverse approaches countries are taking to address their unique challenges while striving towards the common goal of sustainable development.

The HLPF 2024 also facilitated discussions on broader thematic areas, including science, technology, and innovation (STI); the needs

of small island developing States (SIDS), African countries, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and middle-income countries (MICs); and the contributions of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS). In-depth reviews of five SDGs—no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), climate action (SDG 13), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17)—were conducted, linking past efforts to future milestones such as the 2023 SDG Summit and upcoming critical summits.

The session’s comprehensive approach to addressing both specific national issues and broader systemic challenges underscored the interconnectedness of the SDGs and the need for cohesive, collaborative efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The VNR presentations, marked by a positive spirit despite underlying tensions, demonstrated that on the frontlines of SDG implementation, differences can be set aside in favor of impactful multi-stakeholder partnerships, driving progress and fostering hope for a sustainable future.

The Rallying Call

On the first day of the Forum, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua presented key messages from the UN Secretary-General’s 2024 SDG progress report, revealing that only 17% of SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030. He emphasized the urgent need for bold action in peace and finance and highlighted the importance of upcoming events, including the Summit of the Future (SoF), the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), and the Second World Summit for Social Development, as critical milestones for advancing the SDGs.

EVENTS



High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2024 Participation

The High-Level Political Forum was a critical platform for SDGs Kenya Forum to showcase its commitment to sustainable development, engage with global stakeholders, and contribute to the in-depth review of five specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event further provided a unique opportunity for the SDGs Kenya Forum to engage in discussions, share experiences, and strategize on accelerating SDG achievements amidst current global challenges. Notably, our Executive Director, Florence Syevuo, made significant contributions in several

sessions, including “Exploring Synergies and Trade,” “Consequences of Inequality in Achieving Agenda 2030 and the Pact for the Future,” and “Leave No One Behind.” These sessions highlighted the importance of inclusive and innovative approaches to addressing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind in our quest for sustainable development.

Engagement in Key HLPF Events

During the HLPF, the SDGs Kenya Forum was actively involved in multiple high-profile events and side sessions that aligned with our strategic priorities.

Kenya CSO Statement during Kenya’s Third Voluntary National Review Presentation at HLPF 2024

(By Florence Syevuo - Executive Director, SDGs Kenya Forum)

Honorable Delegates,

It is a great honor to address this esteemed gathering at the High-Level Political Forum. Today, we unite to discuss critical issues impacting our progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to develop innovative solutions to accelerate our efforts to meet these goals by 2030.

We commend the Government of Kenya and the Inter-Agency Technical Working Committee (IATWC) for their dedication in conducting three Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) since 2017, showcasing a strong commitment to transparency and inclusive development. However, to enhance the impact of these VNRs, we recommend strengthening coordination mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and monitoring.

Call to Action: Post - VNR Implementation

The completion of the VNRs is a significant milestone, yet challenges remain. Observations from this year's VNR show progress in some areas, but stagnation and regression in others due to crises linked to climate change and fluctuating global economics. We urge the government to prioritize implementing recommendations from the VNRs, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), and CSO progress reports by establishing clear, actionable plans and timelines to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

Engaging Youth and Fostering Innovation

Meaningful youth engagement is crucial for development. Our youth offers innovation and new perspectives, essential for progress. We urge the Government of Kenya to create transparent, accountable platforms for youth to contribute ideas and solutions, harnessing their potential to accelerate our SDG journey.

Full Implementation of Citizen Generated Data Guidelines

We commend the county's intention to integrate citizen-generated data into mainstream data systems. The realization of the intended outcome is hinged on the capacity of civil societies to generate quality

data. We call upon the Government to make direct investments in the capacity strengthening of CSOs at all levels to chart this course.

Indigenous peoples' groups in Kenya still lag behind particularly on SDGs 1,2,3 as drought continues to intensify in frequency and intensity disrupting local livelihoods. In tandem with the Decade for Action on SDGs, Kenya should urgently adopt and operationalize the National inclusive Development Framework for Marginalized communities.

In conclusion, we call on the Government of Kenya to prioritize growing the economy and jobs, building better lives, fighting corruption and combating climate change. Though engaging all stakeholders, including persons with disability, grassroots women, indigenous peoples' groups, to foster innovation and drive progress.

Together, we can build a sustainable and inclusive future, leaving no one behind.

Asante sana!



1. Exploring Synergies and Trade (July 9) -

This session focused on the intersection of trade policies and sustainable development. The discussions focused on how trade can be leveraged to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, particularly in the context of economic recovery and resilience, highlighting examples from Kenya's experience with trade policies that promote sustainable agriculture and green technology.

2. Leave No One Behind (July 10) - This event brought together various stakeholders to discuss strategies to ensure inclusivity in SDG implementation. The SDGs Kenya Forum highlighted the need for targeted interventions to address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable populations, sharing success stories from Kenya where inclusive policies have led to significant improvements in community well-being.

3. VNR Data Lab: Beyond Numbers (July 11) - This session, co-hosted by the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) and PARIS21, emphasized the integration of qualitative data and citizen engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. Our representatives highlighted Kenya's innovative approaches to integrating community data into national reporting through Citizen Generated Data initiative spearheaded by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and SDGs Kenya Forum.

4. Consequences of Inequality in Achieving Agenda 2030 and the Pact for the Future (July 12) - We delivered remarks on the global and regional perspectives of inequality, emphasizing the rising disparities in wealth and opportunities and their impact on SDG progress. The session discussed the role of policy reforms and international cooperation in addressing these inequalities.

5. National VNR Lab: Kenya's Experience (July 13) - This session provided a platform for

sharing Kenya's experiences in conducting the Voluntary National Review. We shared insights on the challenges and successes of integrating qualitative data and engaging citizens in the VNR process, emphasizing the importance of transparency and accountability in reporting.

6. Localizing the SDGs: Strategies and Successes (July 14) - We spoke on Kenya's efforts to localize the SDGs, showcasing innovative community-led projects that align with national goals. The session highlighted the importance of local ownership by communities and the essence of meaningful participation in achieving sustainable development for all.

7. Financing for Development: Bridging the Gap (July 15) - This event focused on financing mechanisms to support the SDGs. We discussed Kenya's experience with public-private partnerships and innovative financing models that mobilize resources for development projects, addressing the challenges of securing sustainable funding.

8. Strengthening Multilevel Governance for SDGs Localization (15th July) United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) organized an event Finding synergies between governments producing VNRs, VSRs, and VLRs. The conversations focused on how we can harness the work of Local Regional Governments and their associations to align Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs), and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to create a cohesive and comprehensive reporting framework. Speakers highlighted what challenges governments at all levels face in coordinating the production of VNRs, VSRs, and VLRs, and how these can be overcome to enhance data sharing and policy coherence especially in global south countries.

9. VNR Lab initiated jointly by the German Council for Sustainable Development and the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies, stakeholders from around the world exchanged views on the factors that determine whether the progress of the 2030 Agenda can be successfully and constructively monitored. Moderated by RNE Secretary-General Marc-Oliver Pahl, Florence Syevuo, Executive Director of the SDGs Kenya Forum and Co-Chair of the Global Forum Steering Committee emphasized the importance of available, reliable data in order to monitor the progress of the 2030 Agenda. Kenya has had good experiences in this area through its cooperation with the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, with which a memorandum of understanding exists.

in achieving the SDGs. The session highlighted successful collaborations between government, civil society, and the private sector, discussing the role of international partnerships in supporting local development initiatives. Our representative shared the community SDGs dialogue model that promotes local citizen partnerships with local vernacular media stations to foster social accountability for marginalized groups.

These events provided valuable opportunities for the SDGs Kenya Forum to share experiences, learn from other countries, and collaborate on innovative solutions for sustainable development.

10. Climate Action and Resilience Building (July 16) - Our representatives participated in discussions on climate action strategies and resilience building, highlighting Kenya's initiatives to combat climate change through sustainable agricultural practices, reforestation projects, and renewable energy adoption. Linked to our CSOs VNR Report examples of communities carrying out afforestation and tree planting efforts were shared as models of combating climate change.

Strategic Importance of Attendance

Attending the HLPF 2024 was crucial for the SDGs Kenya Forum as it provided a platform to influence global policy, advocate for inclusive development, and forge strategic partnerships. HLPF sessions and side events allowed the Forum to present Kenya's progress and challenges in SDG implementation, peer to peer learning from other countries' experiences, and collaborate on innovative solutions. Our participation reinforced our commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, particularly in the context of multiple crises such as climate change, economic inequalities, and social injustices.

11. Youth Engagement in SDG Implementation (July 17) - This session explored the role of youth in achieving the SDGs. We shared Kenya's approach to youth empowerment through education, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement programs, emphasizing the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes. The recent political turmoil by the youth in Kenya demanding for transparency and accountability was a critical reality of the need for meaningful engagement for the youth.

12. Partnerships for the Goals: Collaboration and Innovation (July 18) - The closing event focused on the importance of partnerships

The engagement in these events also enabled the SDGs Kenya Forum to amplify the voices of Kenyan citizens, particularly marginalized groups, at the global stage. By integrating qualitative data and citizen narratives into the VNR process, we ensured that the diverse experiences and perspectives of all stakeholders are considered in SDG monitoring and policymaking. This approach enhances our reports' credibility and reliability and promotes an inclusive and participatory development process.

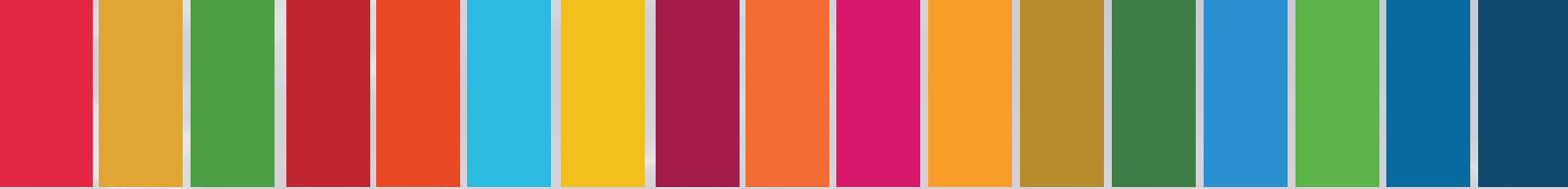
PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



CONCLUSION

The SDGs Kenya Forum’s active participation in the HLPF 2024 has strengthened our position as a key player in the global sustainable development agenda. Our contributions to the discussions and sessions have underscored the importance of inclusive, resilient, and innovative approaches to achieving the SDGs. The Civil Society VNR Report 2024 by The SDGs Kenya Forum, was a testament that Kenyan based CSOs are actively involved in the implementation, monitoring and reporting process. As we look forward to the upcoming UNGA and the Summit of the Future, we remain committed to advocating for sustainable development that leaves no one behind, ensuring that the voices of all Kenyans are heard and valued in the global arena.





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