SDGs KENYA FORUM
Coalition for Sustainable Development

SPOTLIGHT
NEWSLETTER
ARFSD-11 Special Edition

11th ARFSD
Eleventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
9 - 11 April 2025
Kampala, Uganda

Theme: Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

CONTENT

ARFSD-11 Special Edition Newsletter

THEME:
Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

VENUE:
Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala, Uganda

DATES:
7th–11th April 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am pleased to share reflections from our participation in the **11th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11)** held in Kampala, Uganda from **7th–11th April 2025**. This year's theme, *"Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,"* resonated deeply with our strategic vision and work across the country.

At the SDGs Kenya Forum, **National, Regional, and Global Advocacy** is one of our core pillars. It forms the backbone of our commitment to amplify the voices of civil society, grassroots actors, and youth at every level of decision-making. It is within this framework that we were proud to attend and actively participate in ARFSD-11 adding our voice to regional dialogues and reinforcing Kenya's contribution to the continental agenda.

Our engagement included co-convening a side event with our partners from Uganda, Colombia, and the EU-META consortium, where we discussed the vital role of non-state actors in SDG coordination and reporting. We advocated for inclusive Voluntary National and Local Reviews (VNRs/VLRs), stronger CSO coordination frameworks, and improved localization of the SDGs to ensure no one is left behind.

Throughout the Forum, several key themes emerged: the need for accessible climate finance, youth-led innovation, gender-responsive climate action, and a reimagining of global financial systems to better serve African economies. The Forum also underscored the importance of investing in STEM for job-rich growth and elevating women's and youth participation in sustainable development leadership.

As captured in the **Kampala Declaration**, ARFSD-11 reignited a unified continental commitment to evidence-based, inclusive, and people-centered implementation of both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. We are honored to have represented our members and stakeholders at such a critical space and remain committed to advancing the outcomes of ARFSD at national and regional levels.

Together, let us continue to raise our voices, collaborate meaningfully, and drive impactful action toward achieving the SDGs and a just, equitable future for all.

INTRODUCTION

As the SDGs Kenya Forum, **national, regional, and global advocacy** remains one of our core pillars—and our participation in the **11th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11)** was a testament to that commitment. ARFSD continues to be a vital space for shaping Africa's unified voice, building regional consensus, and strengthening action towards both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. We are proud to have represented civil society and the Kenyan voice in these critical conversations, alongside youth, grassroots groups, and global partners.

The Forum not only allowed us to contribute to key policy conversations but also to build alliances, amplify grassroots voices, and align our work with continental development priorities. As we gear up for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2025, we draw from the insights and commitments made at ARFSD-11 to strengthen our collective voice and accelerate our efforts to ensure no one is left behind.

" KEY SPEECHES "

"The world has changed, and so must we. The current financial architecture no longer works for Africa. Reform is not optional—it's urgent." Claver Gatete- Executive Secretary, UNECA

"We must change. We must fund youth initiatives and innovations directly. Not just through intermediaries. Member states should prioritize investment in young entrepreneurs to create sustainable jobs…" Bernadette Seyram Azah, Youth Leaders Fellow, UNFPA

"We cannot understate AI's relevance or the use of science, technology and innovation in our development. At a regional level we're already working on a data governance protection law…" Jacqueline Amongin, MP East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)

"For the pact for the future to truly deliver transformational change, implementation must happen at a country level." - Themba Kalua, Director for Pact for the Future Implementation, Executive Office of the Secretary General

We cannot have individual countries championing as individual countries. There must be a connectedness of our efforts. We need to share, discuss and interrogate what means we have to achieve our goals. - Emmerson Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe

"As of now, agriculture employs 3.6 million people; industry employs 1.4 million people; services employ 5 million people; and ICT employs 46,000 people. We are just beginning but you can see jobs can be created." H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of Uganda

"Our children and the youth have made a passionate call for inclusion and intergenerational justice, reminding us that the future must be shaped with their voices at the table." Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister, Uganda

SDGS KENYA FORUM AT ARFSD-11: Amplifying Civil Society Engagement

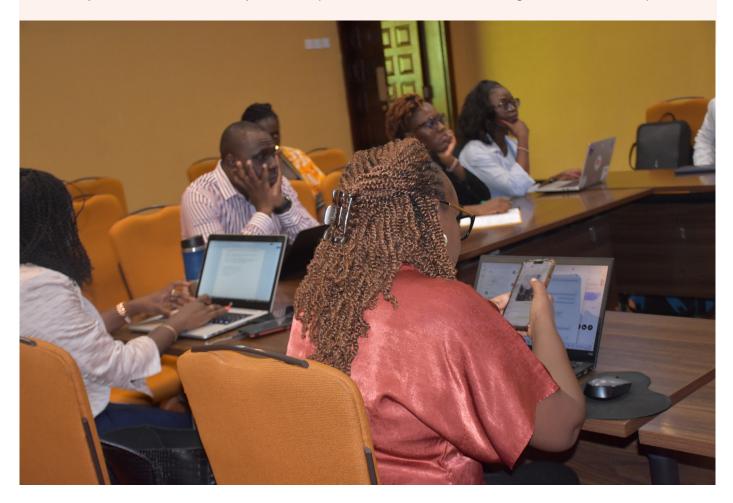## • Strategic Participation and Partnerships

At ARFSD-11, the SDGs Kenya Forum played a prominent and strategic role in amplifying the voice of civil society, particularly in relation to its contribution to policy implementation, coordination, and accountability within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. As a recognized convener of civil society organizations in Kenya, the Forum has long championed inclusive approaches to development governance—making its presence at the regional forum both timely and impactful.

One of the Forum's key contributions during ARFSD-11 was the co-organization of a high-level side event under the **EU-META consortium** in collaboration with civil society partners from Uganda and Colombia. The session, titled *"Strengthening Coordination Mechanisms to Accelerate Implementation, Reporting, and Awareness of the SDGs,"* created a vibrant platform for cross-country learning and dialogue. It brought together more than 30 participants, including senior government officials, UN representatives, civil society leaders, youth advocates, and regional development actors, all of whom are actively engaged in SDG processes within their respective countries.

The side event served as a reflective space to examine the evolving role of non-state actors—particularly CSOs—in driving national development priorities, holding governments accountable, and contributing to meaningful progress on the SDGs. Discussions delved into the structural and practical challenges that hinder effective coordination among civil society actors, including competition for limited resources, lack of formal engagement mechanisms, and policy silos. Through our intervention, the SDGs Kenya Forum highlighted the importance of establishing functional, well-resourced, and inclusive coordination frameworks that enable civil society to work collaboratively, avoid duplication of efforts, and strengthen collective impact.

Participants further emphasized the need for a shift from fragmented, project-based engagement to systemic multi-stakeholder partnerships that are built on mutual trust and shared accountability. There was a resounding call for improved budget transparency and alignment with national development priorities, as well as a greater commitment from governments to include CSOs as equal partners in planning, implementation, and reporting processes. In particular, the conversation shed light on the underutilization of citizen-generated data in national reporting frameworks and the need to institutionalize its use to better capture community-level progress and challenges.

Moreover, the session strongly advocated for the inclusion of marginalized groups—such as youth, women, and persons with disabilities—not only as beneficiaries but as active contributors and decision-makers in SDG implementation. There was consensus that the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) must adopt inclusive methodologies that reflect the voices of those often left out of policy spaces. Participants also called for increased capacity-building and funding support to enable grassroots organizations to engage more meaningfully in localizing and tracking the SDGs.

The dialogue reaffirmed the SDGs Kenya Forum's leadership in shaping civic space around the 2030 Agenda in Kenya and across the region. It demonstrated the power of collaborative engagement in creating pathways for transformative action and reminded all stakeholders that civil society is not just a watchdog—but a critical partner in co-creating solutions, driving accountability, and ensuring that no one is left behind. As we move towards HLPF 2025, these reflections will continue to inform our advocacy and partnerships at both the national and global levels.

Key recommendations included:

- **Strengthening CSO-government coordination at all levels**
- **Enhancing data generation and use of citizen-generated data in SDG reporting**
- **Increasing support for localized SDG implementation**
- **Encouraging more inclusive, gender-responsive policies**

Reflections from Climate Finance, Feminist Voices, and Youth Leadership

In the lead-up to the official sessions of ARFSD-11, the SDGs Kenya Forum had the distinct honor of participating in **FEMNET's African Feminist Dialogue on Climate Finance**, a critical pre-Forum event that brought together feminist leaders, youth climate advocates, and civil society organizations from across the continent. This powerful dialogue created a vital space for reflecting on how existing climate finance systems continue to perpetuate inequality and exclude the voices of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change—particularly women, girls, young people, and persons with disabilities.

As keynote speakers, the SDGs Kenya Forum emphasized the urgent need to rethink the architecture of climate finance to be more just, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of those at the frontline of climate crises. Our intervention focused on the importance of adopting feminist financing models that recognize and account for the burdens of unpaid care work, the disproportionate exposure of women and girls to climate-induced shocks, and the systemic barriers that grassroots organizations—especially those led by women and youth—face in accessing international climate funds. We highlighted that without a deliberate effort to center equity and justice in climate finance mechanisms, global and regional efforts toward sustainable development will continue to reinforce, rather than dismantle, existing power imbalances.

The dialogue also stressed the need for **intersectional approaches** that take into account the layered experiences of marginalized groups, including those living in informal settlements, arid and semi-arid regions, and communities displaced by climate disasters. It was widely acknowledged that Africa's climate financing models must be grounded in community realities and informed by local knowledge systems. Participants called for more simplified application procedures, direct funding for grassroots actors, and dedicated financing streams for women-led climate initiatives.

In addition to our engagement at the FEMNET dialogue, the SDGs Kenya Forum actively participated in the **Sixth Africa Climate Talks**, which brought together climate experts, economists, civil society leaders, and policy influencers from across the continent. The conversations reinforced many of the same themes raised in the feminist dialogue and added a strong economic lens. Stakeholders underscored the urgent need for comprehensive debt reform, noting that many African countries are caught in a vicious cycle of borrowing to finance climate adaptation while facing unsustainable debt servicing obligations. The current global financial architecture, it was argued, continues to disadvantage the Global South—forcing countries to divert limited resources away from development priorities toward debt repayment.

Within this context, our contribution emphasized the need for restructuring multilateral financing institutions to reflect the realities and priorities of African nations. We called for fair representation in global decision-making bodies, transparent debt negotiation processes, and the redesign of financial instruments to prioritize grants over loans, particularly for vulnerable and low-income countries. The discussions also drew attention to Africa's innovation capacity, pointing to the continent's young population, rich indigenous knowledge, and growing digital infrastructure as key assets in designing locally relevant, cost-effective climate solutions.

Our presence at these pre-Forum engagements helped to elevate calls for gender-responsive, youth-inclusive climate policies and locally driven adaptation strategies that speak directly to the lived experiences of communities. Through our participation, we advocated for a model of climate justice that shifts the narrative from charity to rights, from consultation to leadership, and from centralization to decentralization of resources and decision-making power.

The momentum from these conversations carried into the main sessions of ARFSD-11, where the call for equitable redistribution of climate finance, decolonization of climate governance, and recognition of Africa's innovation and leadership potential was echoed across panels and country statements. It was clear that the continent is no longer just asking for space—it is demanding transformation. As SDGs Kenya Forum, we are committed to continuing this advocacy and ensuring that African civil society remains at the forefront of shaping a climate finance landscape that delivers for people and planet, not profit and power.

STI as a Driver for Job Creation and Economic Growth

One of the most prominent and cross-cutting themes at ARFSD-11 was the pivotal role of **Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI)** in driving job creation, economic transformation, and sustainable development across the African continent. The Forum reaffirmed that STI is not a standalone sector, but rather a critical enabler that intersects with nearly all aspects of development—ranging from health and education to climate action, governance, and economic inclusion. As Africa faces the dual challenge of a rapidly growing youth population and persistent unemployment, the integration of STI into national development frameworks has emerged as both a necessity and an opportunity.

Throughout the Forum, a range of countries showcased how STI is being harnessed to support inclusive economic growth, foster entrepreneurship, and improve the efficiency of public service delivery. Kenya's delegation presented notable progress, particularly in integrating STI into the country's education system and youth empowerment initiatives. Highlights included

the rollout of over 103 STEM model schools, the implementation of a national STEM teacher training program, and the expansion of mentorship programs that have reached over 200,000 girls—all aimed at preparing the next generation of scientists, innovators, and problem-solvers. These initiatives reflect the country's broader commitment to leveraging digital infrastructure to reduce inequality, close gender gaps, and stimulate innovation from the grassroots level.

Other countries brought equally inspiring examples to the table. South Africa focused on its efforts to advance artificial intelligence (AI) research and craft forward-looking digital policies to manage the ethical and governance dimensions of emerging technologies. Mauritius showcased its application of marine data technologies for coastal resilience, using oceanographic innovations to monitor coral reef health, manage fisheries, and protect marine biodiversity. Uganda highlighted its strides in digitizing public services, including the use of e-governance platforms to improve service access, reduce bureaucracy, and foster transparency and citizen engagement.

Despite their diversity, the case studies shared a unifying message: **Africa must move from being a consumer of technology to a creator and exporter of homegrown innovations**. This vision, however, requires deliberate investment in skills development, digital infrastructure, policy reform, and inclusive innovation ecosystems that do not leave behind women, rural communities, or persons with disabilities. Speakers called for stronger integration of STI policies into national budgets, support for African-led research, and regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with ethical safeguards.

Crucially, gender equality in STEM emerged as a priority area. Delegates emphasized that building inclusive innovation ecosystems cannot succeed without addressing the structural barriers that continue to limit women's and girls' access to STEM education and career pathways. The Forum encouraged countries to invest in **gender-responsive STEM policies**, mentorship opportunities for young women, and safe learning environments that empower girls to thrive in scientific fields traditionally dominated by men.

Moreover, it was noted that STI solutions must be tailored to local realities. The technologies that will have the greatest impact on sustainable development in Africa are those that are affordable, scalable, and designed with local communities in mind. Examples included mobile health applications for rural clinics, low-cost solar-powered irrigation tools for smallholder farmers, and indigenous knowledge systems integrated into environmental monitoring.

In its closing reflections on STI, the Forum urged governments, private sector actors, academia, and civil society to collaborate in building a **pan-African innovation agenda** that prioritizes equity, resilience, and long-term sustainability. The discussions made it clear that if properly leveraged, science, technology, and innovation can be the bridge between Africa's current challenges and its transformative potential. For this vision to be realized, political will, regional cooperation, and inclusive investment in research and development must remain at the forefront of development planning.

Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (ARMMGoS)

The Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (ARMMGoS) convened a timely in-person session focused on building the capacity of major groups to engage more effectively in development dialogue and implementation across the continent. Bringing together stakeholders from diverse sectors, the session provided space to reflect on Africa's development trajectory in the face of shrinking funding, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and the urgency of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Discussions emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented, top-down approaches and adopt integrated, intersectional strategies that address the complex realities facing the continent. Participants called for renewed efforts to center grassroots engagement, uphold inclusive planning, and promote governance models that are both transparent and accountable.

Special attention was given to elevating the voices of persons with disabilities (PWDs), women, youth, and other marginalized groups—stressing the importance of truly inclusive processes in policymaking and implementation.

Contribution to ARFSD-11

This session contributed meaningfully to the wider **11th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11)** by offering a critical assessment of how major groups and civil society actors can reposition themselves for greater impact. Participants underscored the urgency of moving from reactive, meeting-heavy participation to strategic, solution-driven action grounded in community realities.

A strong call was made to reimagine development models that prioritize local ownership, reduce aid dependency, and leverage Africa's internal strengths—including its youthful population and rich natural resources. The dialogue also highlighted the need for stronger governance frameworks and collaborative action that aligns with science, evidence, and sustainability principles.

Key Messages

- **Integrated Approaches Are Crucial:** Fragmented programming and shrinking funding necessitate holistic, cross-sectoral strategies for SDG progress.
- **Local Action Over Repetition:** Africa must shift from endless consultations to community-led, evidence-based interventions.
- **Governance Reform Is Urgent:** Corruption and weak resource management undermine development efforts and Africa's global standing.
- **Inclusion Must Be Prioritized:** PWDs, youth, women, and other marginalized voices must be meaningfully engaged—not tokenized.
- **Youth Participation Should Be Institutionalized:** Their voices should shape policies and be part of official government delegations.
- **Major Groups Are Key Development Actors:** Their technical expertise and lived experiences are critical to driving transformative change.

Key Outcomes & Recommendations

- **Adopt Integrated, Intersectional Programming:** Reflect the interconnected nature of climate change, gender, inequality, and other key issues in all planning and implementation.
- **Center Community-Led Solutions:** Prioritize grassroots voices and indigenous knowledge in development responses.
- **Strengthen Governance & Accountability:** Combat corruption and build systems that ensure transparent use of resources.
- **Institutionalize Inclusive Participation:** Embed representation of women, youth, PWDs, and indigenous communities in planning, budgeting, and delivery processes.
- **Build Capacity of Major Groups:** Equip them with technical tools and strategic know-how for effective engagement at national, regional, and global levels.
- **Reposition Africa on the Global Stage:** Leverage Africa's strengths to advocate for fairer financing systems and global partnerships rooted in equity.

Virtual Side Event Recap

Theme: *The Role of Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Bodies in Brokering Science and Evidence-Based Solutions to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063*

Session Overview

Held alongside the Eleventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11), this virtual side event convened a dynamic panel of stakeholders from across the continent to explore the role of multi-stakeholder advisory bodies in strengthening evidence-based decision-making for sustainable development.

The conversation aligned with ARFSD-11's core theme of *"Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063."*

Participants included experts and representatives from South Africa's Presidency Policy and Research Unit, the SDG Hub and SDG Policy Support Initiative, South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), SDGs Kenya Forum, Nigeria's Network of NGOs, and Uganda's Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD).

Through interactive dialogue and knowledge exchange, the session highlighted how advisory bodies can act as bridges between science and policy by promoting inclusive co-creation, local knowledge integration, and rigorous impact assessments. Panelists also acknowledged common challenges, including limited access to reliable data, weak institutional frameworks, and disjointed collaboration across sectors.

A strong call emerged for sustained support to these advisory platforms—through improved funding, stronger partnerships, and investment in data-driven innovation.

Contribution to ARFSD-11

This side event made a valuable contribution to ARFSD-11 by providing real-world insights into how multi-stakeholder advisory mechanisms can accelerate progress toward the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Presentations from Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Nigeria offered tangible examples of how digital tools, citizen-generated data, and collaborative platforms are helping governments align policies with local realities and community needs.

Key outcomes of the session included:

- **Reinforcing Science-Policy Integration:** Emphasis was placed on the critical role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in translating evidence into action.

- **Sharing Good Practices:** Innovative models—from digital data tools to co-created policy solutions—showed how advisory bodies are shaping national development pathways.

- **Strengthening Institutional Frameworks:** The session called for the institutionalization of advisory bodies, more inclusive policy spaces, and robust data ecosystems to inform decision-making.
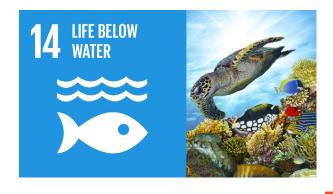
Key Messages

- Multi-stakeholder advisory bodies are crucial for ensuring that policies are grounded in scientific evidence and community insights.

- Citizen-generated data and academic collaborations can enrich national development strategies and enhance policy responsiveness.

- Strengthening data systems and institutional capacities is essential to delivering on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

- Greater investment is needed to support inclusive, data-driven advisory mechanisms that can adapt to evolving development challenges.

Coastal Resilience and SDG 14: Life Below Water

Coastal and island states presented urgent cases for strengthening marine ecosystems. Countries like Seychelles and Mauritius showcased innovations in:

- Mangrove restoration
- Coral reef rehabilitation
- Marine data monitoring systems

Discussions underscored the interconnectedness of **ocean health, livelihoods, and food security**. The need for inclusive blue economy frameworks that engage women, fisher communities, and youth was emphasized.
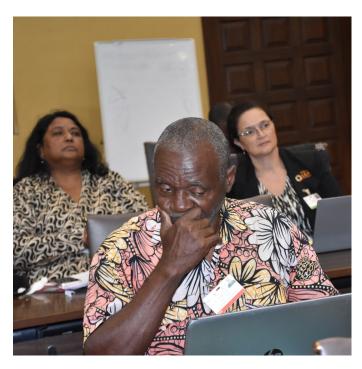

Strengthening VNR and VLR Processes

Another key highlight of ARFSD-11 was the robust and forward-looking dialogue on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)—two of the most important mechanisms for tracking, assessing, and reporting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both national and subnational levels. These sessions provided an essential platform for reflection on the current state of SDG reporting in Africa, with a strong emphasis on building inclusive, participatory, and data-driven approaches that truly reflect the lived realities of all people, especially those traditionally left behind in formal decision-making processes.

Presentations from several member states, including a particularly insightful experience-sharing session from Ghana, showcased promising practices and practical lessons on how to conduct meaningful reviews that are not only government-led but also co-owned by multiple stakeholders, including civil society, youth, local authorities, and communities. Ghana's presentation offered a valuable case study on how building multi-sectoral coalitions, institutionalizing review processes, and integrating non-state actors from the beginning of the VNR cycle can lead to more credible and impactful outcomes. These reflections demonstrated that VNRs and VLRs, when done well, can become powerful tools for policy dialogue, inclusive governance, and mutual accountability—not merely checklists for global compliance.

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Different participants shared insights on how civil society, when meaningfully engaged, can enrich the reporting process by providing community-level data, contextual analysis, and citizen perspectives that are often missing in official statistics. Their intervention stressed the importance of creating formalized spaces within national coordination frameworks where civil society can contribute not just during consultation phases, but throughout the entire VNR journey—from agenda-setting and planning to data collection, validation, and dissemination.

There was also an emphasis on the importance of data quality assurance, noting that the credibility of any VNR or VLR depends not only on the accuracy of data but on its inclusiveness, disaggregation, and ability to capture intersectional realities. CSOs advocated for increased recognition and integration of citizen-generated data as a valuable complementary source of evidence—particularly in areas where official data is outdated, inaccessible, or non-existent. This includes data from grassroots organizations, community monitors, and participatory research initiatives that reflect localized progress and challenges in real-time.

There were also conversations around the importance of strengthening coordination between local governments and civil society organizations, particularly at the county and community levels, to foster ownership and localization of the SDGs. VLRs offer immense potential to translate the global agenda into local action. However, they require dedicated resources, political will, and capacity-building support to become sustainable and institutionalized practices. The conversation at ARFSD-11 underscored that the decentralization of SDG reporting is not only a logistical imperative—it is a democratic one. Local voices, especially those of marginalized and underserved populations, must be centered in all reporting and follow-up mechanisms.

The session ultimately reinforced the value of peer learning, with participants expressing the need for more cross-country exchanges, technical assistance, and capacity support in designing and implementing inclusive review processes. It was widely acknowledged that VNRs and VLRs must evolve beyond being technical exercises or box-ticking reports. Instead, they should serve as living documents and instruments of transformation—guiding policy reform, resource allocation, and social dialogue around development priorities.

For the SDGs Kenya Forum, the takeaways from this session will inform our ongoing work in convening civil society for the upcoming **HLPF 2025**, supporting Kenya's next VNR process, and advancing evidence-based advocacy that elevates the voices of citizens from the grassroots to the global stage. We remain committed to working with partners across government, civil society, and development agencies to co-create review processes that are inclusive, transparent, and ultimately, transformative.

Youth-Led Advocacy and Innovation

Youth participation emerged as a vibrant and recurring theme throughout the 11th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11), affirming that young people are not only critical stakeholders in sustainable development but also powerful agents of change. Recognizing this, the SDGs Kenya Forum placed deliberate emphasis on supporting and elevating youth voices across multiple spaces during the forum. Our commitment to youth engagement is rooted in the belief that meaningful inclusion of young people is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

At ARFSD-11, youth leaders from across the continent courageously spotlighted the persistent and systemic barriers they face in areas such as climate finance access, participation in innovation ecosystems, and involvement in national decision-making processes. These reflections underscored the disconnect between high-level commitments to youth empowerment and the realities on the ground. Despite being disproportionately affected by climate change, economic marginalization, and social exclusion, youth continue to be sidelined in conversations that determine their future. In alignment with the global "Pact for the Future" process led by the UN, youth delegates strongly advocated for a paradigm shift—from symbolic representation and consultation to genuine power-sharing and co-creation in policy and program design.

The SDGs Kenya Forum took deliberate steps to ensure that our youth partners were not passive observers but active contributors throughout the forum. We facilitated youth participation in our side event on strengthening coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation, where young voices enriched the dialogue with bold, practical solutions rooted in local realities.

Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow—they are leaders today. Their ideas, energy, and lived experiences must be recognized as assets in driving inclusive development.

Kampala Declaration: A Continental Commitment

- The ARFSD 11 concluded with the adoption of the **Kampala Declaration**, a bold statement of regional commitment to science-based, inclusive development. The declaration calls for increased investment in STI, stronger multilateral partnerships, inclusive governance, and urgent reforms in global financing systems. These commitments will shape Africa's regional position at the upcoming High-Level Political Forum and influence national SDG implementation frameworks across the continent.

- As we look to HLPF 2025 and beyond, the SDGs Kenya Forum remains committed to supporting civil society engagement, capacity-building, and evidence-based advocacy. We will continue to mobilize our members and partners to contribute to Kenya's national SDG reporting processes and ensure that community perspectives are not only included but prioritized.

The Declaration will inform Africa's collective position ahead of **HLPF 2025** and serves as a policy blueprint for national action.

Communication, Visibility, and Post-Forum Engagement

The Communications Department played a pivotal role in ensuring the SDGs Kenya Forum's visibility throughout ARFSD-11. A comprehensive communications work plan was implemented, which included real-time social media updates, the development of branded digital content, and the publication of a post-Forum blog reflection and communications report. We also featured in an official interview with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), where we highlighted civil society's critical contributions to SDG implementation.

Our communications team designed promotional materials, including the official side event poster, and coordinated the successful execution of the post-ARFSD webinar that brought together speakers from Ghana, Uganda, Egypt, Zambia and Kenya. These efforts not only increased our digital footprint but also strengthened stakeholder engagement and broadened our regional reach.

Looking Ahead: Road to HLPF 2025

As we prepare for the **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July**, the SDGs Kenya Forum is mobilizing its members to:

- Contribute to Kenya's civil society position paper
- Engage in national SDG dialogues and VNR preparations
- Build capacity around evidence-based advocacy and data tracking

Our participation at ARFSD-11 has renewed our resolve to **strengthen civil society influence**, foster partnerships, and ensure that Kenya remains an active contributor to global SDG efforts.

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