



SPOTLIGHT ON 2020

HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF)

INTRODUCTION

The meeting of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development in 2020 was held from 7 July - 16 July 2020, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and limitations on in-person meetings and international travel, the HLPF 2020 was held virtually for the first time including all side and special events.

The HLPF annual meeting is the core United Nations platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The HLPF provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development. It reviews progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the aim to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This year's theme was "Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development" and included the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum.

The SDGs Kenya Forum, a platform promoting meaningful Civil Society Organization (CSO) engagement and participation in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of SDGs in Kenya, is keen in this special Newsletter edition, to highlight the global HLPF 2020 process and country level conversations and participation. It also seeks to amplify national CSOs voices and promote dialogue with key representatives of the Kenya government as well as regional and global stakeholders.

The Newsletter focuses on the following thematic areas; HLPF 2020 proceedings, Africa's engagement at HLPF 2020, Kenya's Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report

presentation, side events that the SDGs Forum hosted in collaboration with various partners, key takeaways and recommendations post HLPF 2020.



THE HLPF 2020 PROGRAM

The programme was designed to allow attendees of the HLPF discuss ways to operationalize the Decade of Action and accelerate the shift towards transformative development pathways. The programme of the event therefore placed special emphasis on the kind of approaches and policies that can accelerate progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda and bring the most transformative changes in development pathways.

In addition, the program allowed participants to debate on the status of member states on the SDGs in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would enhance reflection by the international community, on how to respond to the pandemic in a way that puts member states back on track to achieving the SDGs and accelerate progress during the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development.

The sessions of the 2020 HLPF focused on ten cross-cutting areas where actions could have an impact on the SDGs across the board listed below:

1. *Leave No One Behind*
2. *Mobilizing adequate and well directed SDGs financing*

3. *Enhancing national SDGs implementation*
4. *Strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions*
5. *Bolstering local action to accelerate SDGs implementation*
6. *Reducing disaster risk and building resilience*
7. *Solving challenges through international cooperation and enhancing global partnerships*
8. *Harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development*
9. *Investing in data and statistics for sustainable development*
10. *Strengthening the High Level Political Forum*

Additionally, 47 countries (16 African, 11 Asian, 11 European and 9 Latin American & Caribbean) presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) capturing their implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the 2020 HLPF from Friday, 10 July to Thursday, 16 July 2020. This included Kenya who presented its Voluntary National Review on 13 July at 4:20 p.m EAT for the second time.

To read the full HLPF 2020 Program and the official ECOSOC events, click on the link herein: <https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/a2cab48a33dca574.pdf>

OPENING OF THE HLPF 2020

The programme started with the opening session, where the ECOSOC President, H.E Mona Juul spoke along with the ECOSOC Vice President, H.E Mher Margaryan.

In her statement, she recognised the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that has revealed weaknesses in systems and societies. However, she stated that the HLPF 2020 was critical as it marked the onset of the Decade of action and delivery on SDGs. Thus, momentum in the realisation of the SDGs should be maintained as stakeholders create a new dynamic to overcome the negative impacts of the pandemic. This process, she urged, should be guided by the values enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the framework for financing sustainable development in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the sharing of experiences from the 47 countries who would present their Voluntary National Reviews.



She encouraged that committed multilateral effort and action to control the pandemic and resume SDG progress would ensure that the world rebuilds better as we all celebrate the United Nation's 75th anniversary.


To read the full opening statement, please click on the link below.

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/publication/statement-ecosoc-president-7-july-2020.pdf>

KEY THEMATIC AREAS DURING HLPF 2020

Financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The year 2020 has witnessed an unprecedented COVID-19 crisis where many human lives have been lost coupled with a high magnitude and speed of collapse in economic activity – something unseen in our lifetime. This is certainly alarming particularly in the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where prior to this crisis, the world was already falling behind in efforts to achieve them. Unlike typical financial crises, where instability in the financial sector may impact the real economy, COVID-19's most direct impact is on human health and well-being, with immediate effects on economic



activity and jobs, which then feed into the financial sector. Indeed, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects global growth to fall to -3 per cent this year, making it the worst recession since the great depression and much worse than during the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Already, the crisis has led to the disruption of global supply chains; a collapse in travel and tourism; rising unemployment and a decline in consumer demand, a sharp rise in fear and insecurity; and financial market volatility. Managing the crisis will be particularly difficult for countries with limited fiscal space and weak social protection. Together, these effects are compounding existing financial and debt vulnerabilities.

The United Nations system and partner international organizations have recently outlined measures to address the impact of the unfolding global recession and financial turmoil in the recent 2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report: bit.ly/fsdr2020. The report urges policy makers to take immediate steps and coordinated response to address the economic and financial havoc wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens to destabilize poor countries' finances.

Among the midterm responses required in handling the COVID-19 crisis is the coordinated provision of stimulus packages to vulnerable populations. Additionally, to prevent a debt crisis, poor countries must be allowed to immediately suspend debt payments, reassess debt sustainability beyond the crisis and establish a regional response fund to finance the SDGs post-pandemic.

Secondly, governments and monetary authorities must continue to stabilize financial markets by continuing to inject much-needed liquidity. Furthermore, governments must partner with private financial institutions to roll over debt to SMEs and individuals.

Lastly, policy response to the financial crisis must be about rebuilding better towards sustainable development in several aspects. These include: (a) public and private investment in sustainable developmentsuchasbuildingresilientinfrastructure; (b) strengthening social protection systems; (c) additional investment in crisis prevention, risk reduction and planning; and (d) eliminating trade barriers and restrictions that affect supply chains.

This year marks the start of the Decade of Action. Although the COVID-19 crisis undoubtedly brings extraordinary challenges to the achievement of the SDGs, it also brings extraordinary opportunities for solidarity. Multilateral actors and countries should come together to rebuild a better world and ensure healthy economic, social and financial well-being for all.

The novel coronavirus has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities in both developing and developed countries, deepening poverty and exclusion and pushing the most vulnerable even further behind. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed to achieving sustainable development for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. They pledged to leave no one behind and endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. The commitment to 'leave no one behind' is a foundational cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and seeks to emphasise the critical distributional aspects of the global development agenda.



However, the COVID-19 crisis is negatively impacting global efforts to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. The UN DESA forecasts that global output will contract by 3.2% in 2020. The World Bank further predicts poverty to rise across the region, marking the first increase in global poverty since 1998, with an estimated 49 million additional people being pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. The crisis is affecting all countries across regions, but people living below or near the poverty line in the poorest regions are likely to be hit hardest. Preventive measures taken by many countries (e.g., social distancing and lockdowns) hit retail, trade, leisure and hospitality and transportation sectors and has affected sectors which employ a large portion of lower wage earners.

Many countries have developed temporary/ad hoc measures to mitigate the health and socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

However, more comprehensive medium- to long-term strategies and policies are needed to recover better and build resilience. Such strategies should not only ensure that no one is left behind, but also ensure that no one is pushed further behind.

Some individuals, groups and communities are particularly at risk of being left behind. While varying country to country, they include:

children, youth, girls and women, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, female-headed households, those who are unemployed, with low levels of education, people with low-wage jobs, working in the informal sector and engaged in precarious jobs without social protection, people living in rural and remote areas, people living in homelessness, confined in prisons, and without access to justice.

One of the recommendations that ensures a Leave No One Behind approach is the participation of vulnerable populations in policymaking processes in the

creation of policies that address their specific needs. The experiences of certain countries shows that it is possible to make significant advances towards leaving no one behind, requiring the transformation of deeply rooted systems – economic and political systems, governance structures and business models – that are often based on unequal distributions of wealth and of decision-making power. Thus, it is not enough to address inequality by focusing on those “left behind” at the bottom. It is also necessary to address the concentration of wealth, income and decision-making power at the top and break the link between economic and social exclusion and decision-making power.

Secondly, one of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is the weakening of government’s

capacity to achieve the 2030 Agenda. As a result, the international community needs to support COVID 19 response and recovery strategies of least developed countries rather than hinder and block channels through which this can be achieved. However, it is important to note that the bulk of funding required to achieve the SDGs and recover from the pandemic, will continue to come from countries themselves. Domestic resource mobilization (DRM) and reduction of corruption in low and middle-income countries is an effective way of increasing the amount of funding available particularly for social services in countries.

There is also a need for creation of post-pandemic policies that prioritize universal social protection systems and the needs of vulnerable

groups in recovery packages. Additionally, quality population data is necessary for service provision and empowering people to enjoy their rights, which as a result, enhances the capacity of vulnerable groups to engage in direct dialogue with governments and hold them accountable to their commitments.

The commitment to leave no one behind and thus ensure that every individual can participate in social, economic, political and cultural life with equal rights and enjoy the full range of opportunities expressed in the 2030 Agenda is an important step in the right direction. Framing goals in universal terms alone, however, does not ensure universality. The extent to which the 2030 Agenda will help to promote inclusion will depend on the strength and form of its implementation.



AFRICA REGIONAL HLPF 2020 ENGAGEMENT

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-organized an event – Africa Day – on the margins of the 2020 HLPF on Sustainable Development.

The Africa Day event at the HLPF was held virtually on 16 July 2020 on the theme: ***“Leveraging Digital Technology in the Context of COVID-19: An Inclusive, Healthy, Resilient and Peaceful Africa”***. Organized annually since 2018, Africa Day at the HLPF takes place as a means to popularize and promote the outcomes of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD). The ARFSD was established to follow up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa and provide input to the annual sessions of the HLPF. It provides African Member States with an opportunity to amplify at the global forum Africa’s voice, as well as key messages and recommendations, creating a space to engage partners and mobilize international support for the integrated implementation of Agendas 2030 and 2063.

The Africa Day event provided a platform to African Member States on the margins of the HLPF to:

1. *Share key messages and good practices arising from the sixth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD), in particular on leveraging digital technology and the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063.*

2. *Keep a spotlight on the challenges that African countries face in the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063.*
3. *Mobilize greater support from key development partners to meet implementation challenges.*

Some of the key outcomes from the Africa Day side event included the following:

1. *Strengthened dialogue among African policy makers, stakeholders and development partners on common challenges and successful implementation strategies towards achieving Africa’s digital revolution.*
2. *Increased awareness on key areas requiring accelerated action to bridge the digital divide in Africa and promote greater equality and inclusion.*
3. *Increased commitment and mobilization of partnerships to support the full adoption and implementation of the African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030).*
4. *Enhanced sharing of strategies amongst African countries on addressing and leveraging the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic towards accelerating the continent’s digital transformation.*

To watch the recorded live Africa Day at the HLPF 2020 Side Event, click on the link herein:

<https://www.youtube.com/>



KENYA'S HLPF 2020 VNR REPORT PRESENTATION



Kenya presented its second Voluntary National Review on 13 July at 4:20 p.m EAT under the theme 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: Realising the Decade Of Action and delivery for Sustainable Development'. Notably, Kenya prepared its first VNR in 2017 and was among other UN member States who committed to review in 2020 for the second time. The presentation was led by Mr Ukur Yattani, Cabinet Secretary for National Treasury and Planning - Kenya.

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are part of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF, meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS HIGHLIGHTED ON THE VNR REPORT:

1. During the period 2017-2019, the Kenya VNR 2020 reports highlights key progress on SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health & Well Being, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 6: Clean Water & Sanitation, and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities.
2. The Kenyan government has prioritised 4 areas under the Big 4 Agenda that accelerate implementation of the SDGs including SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 3: Good Health & Well Being, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities.
3. A research on the alignment of the SDG targets to the National Planning Framework revealed that 97% of relevant SDG targets in Kenya are supported by Vision 2030 and the Big 4 Agenda, 67% are supported by sectoral policies and 78% are supported by legal frameworks.
4. Kenya stakeholder engagement approach follows the "whole of government" and "whole of society" and has institutionalised stakeholder engagement.



SDG 1: NO POVERTY

The government has put in place Social Protection Programs including the Inua Jamii Program that targets orphans and vulnerable groups. It has also digitised cash transfers to orphans and vulnerable groups.



SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

Kenya has prioritised education for children with special needs and has rolled out Basic Education Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). The completion rate in primary schools increased from 84% in 2017 to 85.4% in 2019. Additionally, the net enrollment in primary education increased from 91.2% in 2017 to 92.4% in 2019.



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Kenya has established Affirmative Action Programs through the Women Enterprise Fund, Uwezo Fund, National Government Affirmative Action Fund and Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO). It has also established digital platforms to report Gender Based Violence (GBV) and has made a high level commitment to end FGM by 2022.



SDG 6: WATER & SANITATION

Kenya through the Water Sector Trust Fund was awarded the prestigious United Nations Public Service Awards in 2019 for upscaling basic sanitation for the urban poor under the "Delivering Inclusive & Equitable services to Leave No One Behind" program.



SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

The renewable energy generation capacity per capita in Kenya increased from 18.8 in 2017 to 25.5 watts in 2019.

Kenya's off grid solar access project has increased access to universal connectivity. The last mile connectivity project aims to ensure increased electricity access to Kenya. The % of the population with electricity access in Kenya increased from 41.5 in 2016 to 50.4 in 2019.



SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The LAPSET Corridor Highway covering about 1858 KM connects Lamu Port to Ethiopia and South Sudan, enabling movement of people and cargo, interconnecting the region and spurring regional trade for economic development.



SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Kenya's devolved system of governance addresses inequalities within the country boundaries. The Equalisation Fund was set to provide access to basic services including water, roads, health facilities and electricity to marginalised areas.



SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

Through the Greening Kenya Programme, Kenya has committed to increasing its forest cover from 7.27 % in 2018 to 10 % by 2020 through planting trees across the country.



SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Implementation of the constitution and the ongoing legal reforms support the devolved system of governance.

Operationalisation of the Assets Recovery Agency aims to recover proceeds of crime and money laundering and the implementation of the Leadership and Integrity Act (LIA) 2012 to help fight corruption. In addition, judicial transformation has resulted in the increase of high court stations from 23 in 15 counties in 2013 to

39 in 38 counties in 2017. Moreover, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has presence in all 47 counties and sub counties where court stations exist.



SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The Kenyan government coordinates and brings together stakeholders to share lessons and experiences in the implementation of SDGs through the developed Stakeholder Engagement Framework.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Kenya experiences financial gaps to finance development. However, it has come up with strategies to finance the development agenda.

- 1. The Kenya Revenue Authority has embarked on an aggressive tax compliance strategy to ensure that all eligible taxpayers pay their fair share of taxes and seal loopholes for tax evasion.*
- 2. The authority has also enhanced its tax education to create awareness among Kenyans with an emphasis on the informal sector.*
- 3. A modernised income tax bill is being drafted to ease administrative bottlenecks, improve compliance and boost revenue collection thereby supporting governments fiscal consolidation efforts.*
- 4. It has also established a Public Investment Management (PIM) Unit at the National Treasury to enhance efficiency in identifying and implementing priority social and investment projects.*
- 5. The Kenya 2019 Medium Term Debt Management Strategy ensures that external borrowing is on sustainable terms and is responsible.*



ADDRESSING COVID 19

- 1. The Kenyan government has designated a National Coordination Committee to evaluate the evolving risks, advice on appropriate measures for preparedness, prevention and response.*
- 2. Additionally, the economic stimulus package was put in place to reinvigorate the economy.*
- 3. Post COVID 19 recovery plans have been unveiled focusing on specific key areas.*

1. Are there plans from the government to engage civil society organizations for COVID 19 response?
2. Are there plans from the government to take into account citizen generated data to improve tracking of the progress of SDG implementation?
3. What are the plans of the government to fast track the registration of communal land tenure in the country?
4. What strategies is Kenya utilizing to obtain quality and inclusive data in the measurement of SDGs implementation progress?
5. What are the strategies that Kenya is utilizing to communicate the #SDGs to various stakeholders, to ensure their participation and #LeaveNoOneBehind.

ANSWERS FROM THE KENYA GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE

1. Kenya conducted an SDGs awareness survey in 2018. Its outcomes are utilized in guiding SDGs sensitisation awareness campaigns leveraging on multi stakeholder partnerships.
2. Kenya through Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) coordinates all national statistical systems to ensure quality and inclusivity in data. KNBS partnership with Kenya National Commission on Human Rights implements a Human Rights based approach to data to Leave No One Behind.
3. Kenya utilizes a multistakeholder framework developed through a consultative process with various stakeholders including civil society, media, academia among others to inform its projects and activities. One of the examples is the county community dialogues that are conducted to raise awareness on the SDGs.

Lastly, the SDGs Kenya Forum conducted a Twitter Poll to determine the effectiveness of Kenya's integration of development plans and activities parallel to the SDGs. The results are presented below:

QUESTION 1: Are you knowledgeable of the 17 SDGs against which Kenya reports at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)?

Of 25 votes, 76 % said they were knowledgeable of the 17 SDGs while 24 % mentioned that they were not knowledgeable.

QUESTION 2: Do you agree that the Constitution of Kenya & priorities of the Government under the Big Four Agenda adequately cover the 2030 Agenda targets?

Of 16 votes, 68.8 % agreed that the constitution of Kenya and the Big 4 Agenda adequately cover the 2030 Agenda targets while 31.3 % disagreed.

QUESTION 3: Do you believe that Kenya's 2030 Agenda is mainstreamed at both the national & sub-national development frameworks through consultative & interactive processes with various stakeholders?

25 % of 16 votes agreed that Kenya's 2030 Agenda is mainstreamed at both national and sub national development frameworks through consultative processes while 75 % disagreed.

QUESTION 4: Do you think the government is meeting the needs of women & girls, persons

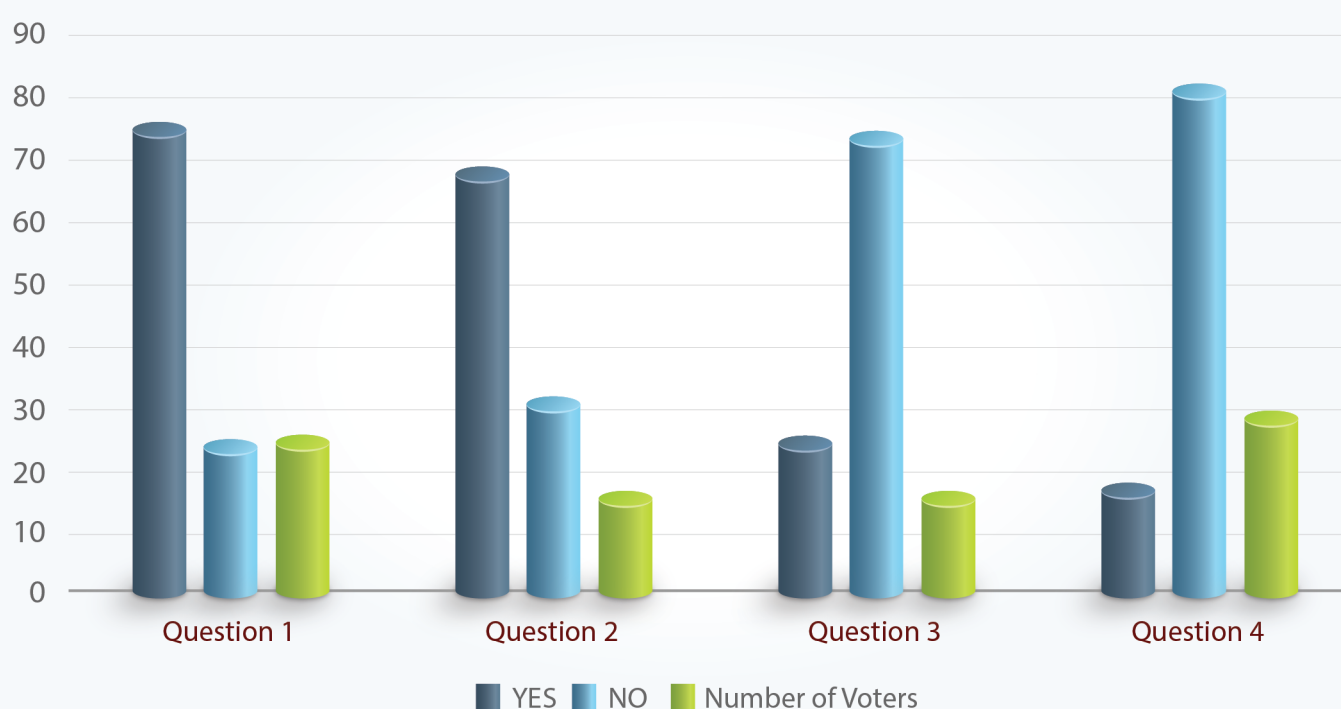
with disabilities (PwDs), the youth, the elderly as part of The National Social Protection Policy?

17.2 % agreed that the government was meeting the needs of vulnerable persons including women, girls, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities while 82.8 % disagreed.

The recommendations by participants to the government of Kenya to ensure the realisation of the SDGs by 2030 post VNR 2020 in line with Policy & Laws, Activities, Projects, Systems & Structures included the following:

1. *In order for the Government of Kenya to make sustainable progress in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, multi-sectoral collaborations and partnerships are necessary.*
2. *There is a need for more disability inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement & communication with continuous consultation with persons with disability & organizations of people with Disability.*
3. *There is a need for disability inclusion in capacity building programmes & SDGs curriculum while strengthening capacities of the national & county government in mainstreaming the SDGs.*
4. *A more bottom up approach in the implementation of the SDGs and policy formulation using the Leave No One Behind principle to reach out to those most left behind in the implementation of the SDGs.*
5. *A collective approach to the realisation of SDGs by 2030 through meaningful stakeholder participation as opposed to token inclusion.*

The chart below represents the results to the Twitter Chat poll conducted on 13 July 2020 on the effectiveness of Kenya's integrational development plans in line with the SDGs:



Following Kenya's VNR Report presentation to the HLPF on 13 July at 4:20 p.m EAT, The SDGs Kenya Forum as a Co-chair of the Interagency Technical Working Committee was given a slot to join the Kenyan Delegation virtually. The Forum invited a total of 15 goal group leads to jointly follow Kenya's VNR live proceedings at Sarova Panafric Hotel. Kenyan Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) through Samuel Macharia Theuri made an intervention to the Kenya government representative on COVID19 response, citizen generated data to improve tracking of the progress of SDG implementation and the registration of communal land tenure in the country.



To read the Kenya Government VNR Report, please click on the link below:

➤ <https://bit.ly/2C87Vs5>

To read the Civil Society led VNR Report, please click on the link below:

➤ <https://bit.ly/3fB1rIH>

To read the full highlights of Kenya's presentation to the HLPF 2020, click on the link:

➤ <https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/f724721f22f3c39f.pdf>

To read the full Kenya Civil Society intervention, click on the link:

➤ <https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/7864519af6360adb.pdf>

KEY SIDE EVENTS

SDGS KENYA FORUM SIDE EVENT: SDGs implementation in the Global South

The SDGs Kenya Forum in collaboration with The Civil Society Advance Forum of Sustainable Development - Nigeria and The Civil Society Platform Ghana held a side event on 15 July 2020 at 1500H EAT. The event aimed at discussing the role of Civil Society in accelerating SDGs implementation in the midst of a global pandemic with prioritization at national level.

The virtual side event was held to provide a platform for panelists from different continents all drawn from the Global South to share experiences, reflections and recommendations to advance sustainable development while conforming to the Leave No One Behind principle. It also sought to inspire new strategies, commitment and concrete actions among Global South citizens to achieve sustainable development by 2030.

The side event was an opportune time for participants from the Global South to voice the ongoing inequalities particularly the levels of extreme poverty worsened by the COVID 19 pandemic. It concluded that SDGs implementation, monitoring and review ought to urgently prioritize the engagement of vulnerable populations in SDG processes at national and sub-national levels.

Click on the link below to follow the recorded conversation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wub4TM_9YHM

SIDE EVENT: Accelerating Transformation to Build Back Better and Achieve the 2030 Agenda: Nature - Based Solutions for People and Planet



The event organisers were Costa Rica, United Kingdom and the Delegation of the European Union Partners including United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The objective of the event was to call for more member states to translate their commitment to maintain the integrity of the 2030 Agenda, including by ensuring ambitious and continuous action on the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with a 2030 timeline, into

action by starting with investments and scaling up of nature-based solutions. Additionally, it sought to showcase practical examples of how nature-based solutions contribute to the decade of delivery and action on SDGs as well as bringing critical benefits to people and reducing the risk of future pandemics.

IMAGINE A POST COVID 19 WITH WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS.

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This side event aimed at addressing the backward trend in the realization of the SDGs due to the disregard of women and girls' rights in the response and post COVID 19 recovery strategies despite various commitments by governments such as the Beijing Declaration among others.

Panelists shared their concerns and called for immediate protection of the gains made in fulfilling women and girls' rights especially post COVID 19. Additionally, they stressed the importance of women's participation in the SDGs processes to highlight their experiences, priorities and needs emphasizing a top down approach and vice versa.

Some of the solutions proposed were: mobilization of resources to ensure continued work on women empowerment, gender disaggregated data to measure the impact of the pandemic on women and girls and the need for solidarity among women's rights organisations to ensure a bigger impact.

To follow the conversation, please click on the link.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxeC5by2570>

CSO COALITIONS' ROLE IN THE DECADE OF ACTION AFTER COVID-19

This side event was held on 8 July 2020 and aimed to explore the crucial role played by Civil



Society Organisations (CSOs) in guaranteeing a 'whole of society' approach in both the SDG monitoring and review process around Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) as well as for the recovery measures after COVID-19.

Notably, CSOs contribute to the participatory quality of SDG implementation by being vehicles for representation of people's interests. CSO networks have pushed their governments to implement the SDGs, and to monitor progress around its implementation, ensuring that all

voices of vulnerable groups are adequately involved to live up to the principle of leaving no one behind.

This side event provided an opportunity to have discussions about civil society's role in working towards policy coherence for sustainable development and bringing transformative change during the Decade of Action.

To listen to the recording of the event, download it here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/29zf4cqakmiqmd/AACqVwq9h7zfdLAI2mp5QAv1a?dl=0>

WHOLE OF SOCIETY FOR AN ACCELERATED DECADE OF ACTION

The SDGs Kenya Forum, led by its National Country Coordinator, Ms Florence Syevuo participated in the side event: Delivering a whole of society approach to an accelerated Decade of Action. The event discussions led to the conclusion that governments are key in enabling a functional multi stakeholder approach on SDGs. Non-state actors including CSOs are often left behind in VNR processes in countries where there is low/no government will to involve relevant stakeholders.



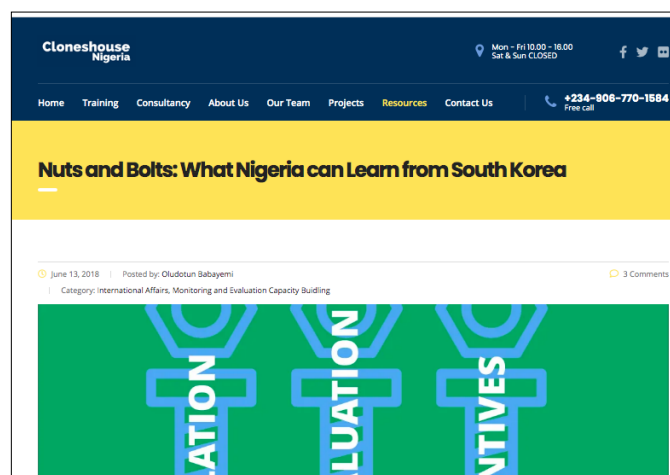
The decade of action therefore calls for the whole of society approach in order to accelerate SDGs implementation, monitoring and review and enable strong civil society engagement in the Voluntary National Reviews and the wider SDG follow up and review process.

MAKING VOICES HEARD AND COUNT

The SDGs Kenya Forum presented the Kenya case study on 9 July 2020 at the Making Voices Count Side Event. Its objective was to reflect on the potential of community-driven data to serve as a transformative means for accelerating SDG implementation and improving SDG monitoring and review.

To access the presentations made during the side event, click on:

<https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/73d4b16d1673c95a.pdf>
<https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/3129d31d4866f299.pdf>
<https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/59f2098e886db3f3.pdf>



STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR THE WORLD WE WANT: EMBEDDING EVALUATION IN VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

This side event showcased and shared experiences on the use of evaluative thinking and evidence in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and fostered a dialogue on the importance of positioning evidence in 2030 Agenda follow-up and reporting.

Using South Korea's case study, participants discussed South Korea's model that has led to its economic development. This has been attributed to its unique government performance system characterized by self-evaluation, all-inclusive evaluation set, and performance evaluation that contributed to its economic development (Korea's Government Performance Evaluation System and Operating Experience, 2013). Click on the link below to read more on South Korea's best practices:

<https://www.cloneshouse.com/nuts-and-bolts-what-nigeria-can-learn-from-south-korea/>

Watch the full recording of the side event here:

<https://youtu.be/SOYQPUPzIqA>



This event aimed to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable populations are heard, counted and included in SDG implementation at national and sub-national levels. To this end, cross-sector representatives from the Global South and the Global North, including representatives from marginalised communities, discussed key lessons learned, advocacy demands, and technical innovations which can boost the generation and use of community-driven data. Participants discussed how people-centred data and advocacy approach can be optimally utilised over the next 10 years, to ensure that the "SDG decade of action" will live up to its promise and leave no one behind in the course of its delivery.

THE HLPF 2020 MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

The draft Ministerial Declaration at the 2020 session of the UN HLPF on Sustainable Development has been released in zero draft form. The draft acknowledges the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, asserting that “insufficient efforts” to implement the SDGs have exacerbated the pandemic’s impacts including: overwhelmed health systems, disruption of supply chains, schools closure, exacerbated inequalities among others. However, it also lists recommended actions to be taken for the way forward in response and recovery strategies from the pandemic.

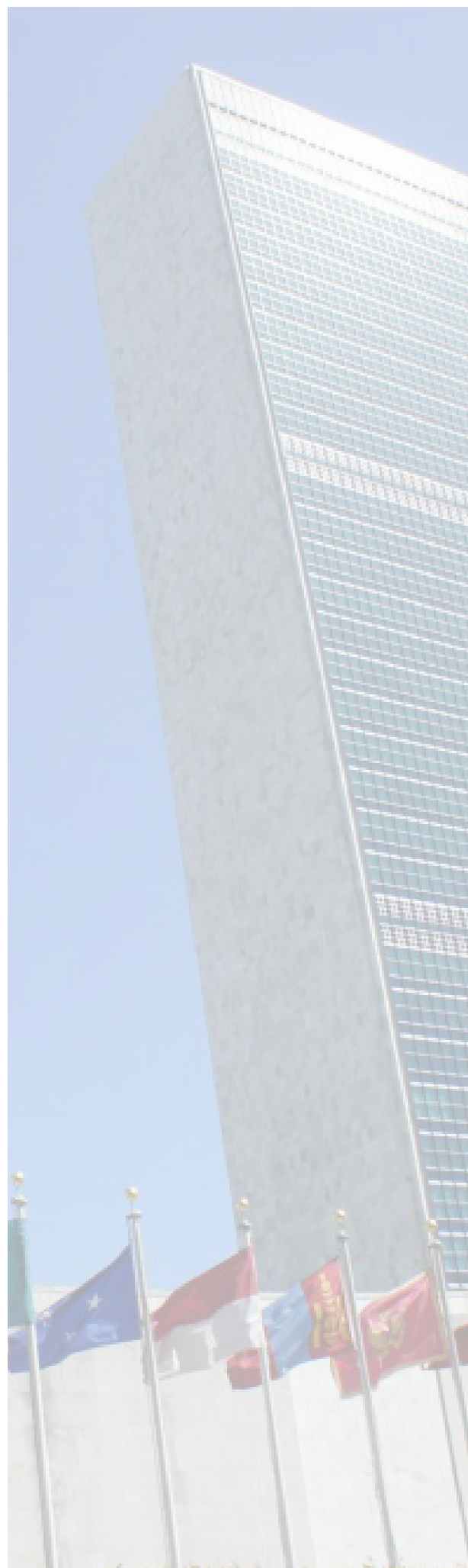
Click on the link below to read the draft ministerial declaration:

<https://sdgkenyaforum.org/content/uploads/documents/3c38d9196ec3fff3.pdf>

REVIEWING THE HLPF’S FORMAT AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

The link below is a resource to an analytical paper that identifies and discusses proposals currently under debate for reviewing the “format and organizational aspects” of the HLPF, in particular: the HLPF’s architecture and outcome, the Thematic and SDG Reviews and the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/WP_Beisheim_Reviewing_the_HLPf_s_200205.pdf





CONCLUSION

The HLPF 2020, due to COVID-19, took place virtually for the first time allowing people from all over the world with access to the internet to participate in the sessions and join the discussions through online channels, making this process more open to the public. This is critical and a very special part of HLPF 2020 because people from all over the world could hear the discussions, have their say, and hold decision-makers to account from the comfort of their own home. This had a major impact on the HLPF and was seen by many as a test case for how future UN meetings can be convened in a virtual environment, including the upcoming commemoration of the UN's 75th anniversary.

However, the adopted virtual format excluded the 3.3 billion persons that still lack access to the internet in various UN Member States. Additionally, due to different time zones, it is possible that some participants were locked out from the annual forum.

COVID-19 has laid bare shortfalls in many areas and threatens to reverse gains made in the implementation of the SDGs. However, recovering and building back better post

COVID 19 will require cooperation at all levels, collaboration and dialogue among multiple stakeholders to ensure no one is left behind, including the most vulnerable. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda remains our shared roadmap to achieve the future we want and the extent to which it will be achieved will depend on the strength and form of its implementation. Below are key takeaways and recommendations from the HLPF 2020.

HLPF 2020 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. SDGs implementation efforts should transition from a focus on individual goals to systemic responses.
2. “Leave No One Behind” was emphasized, primarily with a focus on social protection.
3. Speakers voiced strong calls for solidarity, inclusion and multilateralism.
4. The pandemic’s economic consequences require attention, with speakers discussing associated debt relief and finance implications.
5. Major Groups made their voices heard, particularly women, indigenous people, children and youth.

HLPF 2020 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Universal provision of and access to quality basic services by ensuring no one is left behind, focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable at the global, regional and national levels.*
2. *Alignment of COVID-19 crisis policy responses and medium and long-term economic stimulus packages with the SDGs, purposefully geared towards activities that prepare Member States for long term shared prosperity and sustainability.*
3. *Recognition of the role of CSOs and enhancing partnerships with them to realise the SDGs post COVID 19. This is because CSOs around the world are responding to COVID 19 at grassroot level and are building a wealth of knowledge critical for various stakeholders.*
4. *Implementation of a rights-based approach, universal design and investment in persons with disabilities and their capacity to achieve the SDGs and build a better world as key actors.*
5. *A stronger emphasis on involving local actors and communities most at risk in decision-making. Local actors have critical knowledge and experience of the threats they face and the actions which would help to reduce existing risks.*
6. *Enhancing national implementation by proactively mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks, while respecting national processes and ensuring ownership.*
7. *Strengthening effective, accountable and transparent institutions and ensuring more responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making processes.*
8. *Investing in data and statistics for the SDGs and strengthening statistical capacities to address gaps in data on the Sustainable Development Goals in order to allow countries to provide high-quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics and to fully integrate the SDGs in monitoring and reporting systems.*
9. *Bolstering local action including at urban and peri-urban areas to accelerate implementation including by giving more autonomy and resources to local governments to engage in effective, evidence-based and inclusive participatory policymaking with an engaged and informed citizenry.*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1.

75th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA): UNGA 75 will open on 15 September 2020, and the first day of the high-level General Debate is scheduled for Tuesday, 22 September 2020. The UN will mark its 75th anniversary with a one-day high-level event on 21 September 2020 on the theme “The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism.” UNGA 75 will also include: a biodiversity summit; and a high-level meeting to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Dates: 15 September - 30 September 2020 location: UN Headquarters, New York (TBC).

<http://sdg.iisd.org/events/commemoration-of-the-75th-anniversary-of-the-un/>

2.

UN 2020 Leaders’ Biodiversity Summit: UNGA 75 will convene the UN Summit on Biodiversity under the theme “Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development.” Its aim is to provide political direction and momentum to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The Summit will consist of an opening segment, a plenary segment for general discussion, two leaders’ dialogues, and a brief closing segment. Dates: 22-23 September 2020 location: UN Headquarters, New York (TBC).

<https://www.unenvironment.org/events/un-day/un-general-assembly-75-leaders-biodiversity-summit>

3.

Beijing+20: UNGA 75 will convene the UNGA High-level Meeting to Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing, China, September 1995. Date: 23 September 2020 location: UN Headquarters, New York (TBC).

<http://sdg.iisd.org/events/unga-high-level-meeting-to-celebrate-25th-anniversary-of-beijing-womens-conference/>

4.

5th Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA): UNEA-5 will take place under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.” Its aim will be to connect and consolidate environmental actions within the context of sustainable development and motivate the sharing and implementation of successful approaches. Dates: 22-26 February 2021, Location: Nairobi, Kenya.

<http://sdg.iisd.org/events/fifth-session-of-the-un-environment-assembly-unea-5/>

5.

HLPF 2021: The 9th session of the HLPF will take place over eight days in July 2021. Date: TBC, Location: UN Headquarters, New York (TBC).

<http://sdg.iisd.org/events/high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2021/>



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