



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND GUIDE 2018

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NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2018 National Model United Nations Galápagos Conference (NMUN•Galápagos)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). This year's staff are: Director Mariana Odete Andrade and Assistant Director Katherine Troya. Mariana holds a Bachelor's degree in law from the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, and she is currently pursuing an LLM in business law at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar. Katherine is currently in the final year of her degree at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, where she is studying international relations, political science, and history. She is also interning at the Department of Pre-Investment and National and International Cooperation in the Ministry of Agriculture, Aquaculture, Livestock, and Fisheries.

The topics under discussion for HLPF are:

1. Promotion of Sustainable Industrial Development and Innovation in Rural Areas
2. Implementing SDG 6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All

HLPF is a pivotal organization within the United Nations system as it has the primary responsibility to follow-up and review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides an inclusive forum for global discussions on development and constitutes a crucial institution for successful implementation of the SDGs. While other organizations focus on concrete actions to implement the SDGs, HLPF facilitates efforts to monitor progress, identify current challenges, and improve joint efforts for a more sustainable future.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and to use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a [Position Paper](#) by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 December 2017 in accordance with the guidelines in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

On the [NMUN website](#), you will find two resources that are essential to your preparation for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions.

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#): This document explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism and the prohibition on prewritten working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#): This document includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure in committee.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact info@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Mariana Odete Andrade, Director
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Committee Overview

“Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹

Introduction

With this statement, the World Commission on Environment and Development, in 1987, presented a new concept to frame multiple dimensions of future global development and explained why change was needed and how it could be realized.² After the report was published, the international community started working on a compromise on how sustainable development could be implemented across the globe.³ Therefore, it took several years of debates and multiple conferences, such as the Millennium Summit in 2000, until the outcome document of the United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want* (2012), delineated the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.⁴ These steps were milestones on the path towards the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).⁵ The following paragraphs will explain the history of the UN and sustainable development, draw on the lessons learned from the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), and expand on the 2030 Agenda. Afterwards, the governance, structure, and membership of HLPF, as well as its mandate, functions, and powers, will be explained, before an analysis of recent meetings and the road ahead.

Tasked with reviewing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the **High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** (HLPF) reports to both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

Before the *Brundtland Report (Our Common Future)* was published in 1987, the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) had paved the way for global debates on protecting the environment and sustainable development.⁶ With its definition of sustainable development and its call for the international community to foster this new concept, the *Brundtland Report* was a keystone on the way to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and resulted in *Agenda 21*.⁷ In the following year, the UN General Assembly established HLPF’s predecessor, the CSD, which was designed to monitor and foster the outputs of UNCED, including *Agenda 21* and the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992).⁸ Established by UN General Assembly resolution 47/191 (1993), the CSD had the responsibility to follow up on UNCED by reviewing the implementation progress of the conference outcomes as well as the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*.⁹ In contrast to HLPF, which includes all Member States, the CSD had only 53 members since it was a functional commission under ECOSOC.¹⁰ The current UN Secretary-General, in his report on “Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development” (2013), emphasized that the CSD was able to keep sustainable development on the agenda and bring major groups together to work on a common solution.¹¹ However, it lacked the ability to flexibly respond to new challenges because its agenda was planned ahead for years.¹² The participation of civil society worked well for the

¹ UNECE, *Sustainable development - concept and action*; UN WCED, *Our Common Future*, 1987, p. 24.

² Ibid.

³ ILO, *Newsletter October 12, No. 32*, 2012; UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*; UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

⁶ Ibid.; UN DSD, *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference)*.

⁷ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*; UN WCED, *Our Common Future*, 1987.

⁸ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - United Nations System*.

⁹ UN DESA, *About the CSD*; UN General Assembly, *Institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (A/RES/47/191)*, 1993.

¹⁰ UN DESA, *About the CSD*.

¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/757)*, 2012, p. 2.

¹² Ibid.

CSD; as a consequence, HLPF tries to incorporate institutional aspects of the CSD's integration of civil society and other groups, such as by giving them the opportunity to actively participate in its sessions.¹³

In 2000, the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the roots of the SDGs, were adopted by world leaders at the Millennium Summit.¹⁴ In 2002, the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* was adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development to strengthen the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the policies and processes of regional and international institutions.¹⁵ In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) established HLPF, which held its first meeting in 2013, to build on the experience of the CSD and replace it.¹⁶ The purpose of the creation of HLPF was to “follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and [...] avoid overlap with existing structures, bodies and entities in a cost-effective manner.”¹⁷ In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda, including the 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets.¹⁸ The 2030 Agenda introduced a new era of international dialogue and partnership for fostering and facilitating all three dimensions of sustainable development.¹⁹

Governance, Structure, and Membership

HLPF meets in two different formats: once every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, and once every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).²⁰ Under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, heads of state and government officials meet for two days.²¹ At the end of their meeting, they adopt an international declaration on sustainable development, which is ultimately submitted to the UN General Assembly.²² Under the auspices of ECOSOC, Member States, UN system entities, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders meet annually to discuss the progress on the 2030 Agenda.²³ This is followed by a three-day meeting at a ministerial level, which is attended by ministers and other government officials who work in different departments, such as environment or foreign affairs.²⁴ As of 2016, these meetings, chaired by the President of ECOSOC, have replaced the annual ministerial reviews of ECOSOC's high-level segment, which were established to follow up on the MDGs.²⁵ While the meetings held through the UN General Assembly focus on basic progress with the SDGs, those convened through ECOSOC follow respective themes and concentrate on a set of SDGs.²⁶ The thematic focus is decided by the UN General Assembly.²⁷ At the end of each meeting, a ministerial declaration is adopted, which is then integrated into ECOSOC's report to the UN General Assembly.²⁸ The forum conducts

¹³ Strandenaes, *The high level political forum: Strong enough to achieve the future we want, or merely as good as it gets for now?*, *Sustainable Development 2015*, 2013.

¹⁴ UN DPI, *Millennium Development Goals – Background*; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*, 2000.

¹⁵ UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, *Draft plan of implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.199/L.1)*, 2002, p. 69.

¹⁶ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012, p. 16.

¹⁸ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁰ UN DPI, *New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013.

²¹ *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

²² UN DPI, *New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013.

²³ *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

²⁴ UN DPI, *Adoption of Declaration Commits Ministers to Leaving No One Behind in Implementing Sustainable Development Agenda, as High-Level Political Forum Concludes (ECOSOC/6790)*, 2016; UN DPI, *New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

²⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Annual Ministerial Review – Mandate*; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

²⁶ Martens, *The HLPF 2016: First global meeting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*, 2016.

²⁷ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4; UN General Assembly, *Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level (A/RES/70/299)*, 2016.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

voluntary reviews on the follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in both developing and developed countries.²⁹

Like its structure, HLPF's membership is also designed to be very inclusive: all Member States of the UN and specialized agencies take part in HLPF and, according to UN General Assembly resolution 67/290 (2013), all meetings should seek to find a consensus.³⁰ The Forum's work is funded through a voluntary trust fund, which includes remaining funds from the Trust Fund for Support of the Work of the CSD, as well as voluntary contributions from Member States.³¹ The Forum's financial resources are oriented to ensure the participation of least-developed countries and representatives of major groups in the Forum's meetings.³² Also, the budget should ensure that the body has sufficient financial resources to prepare for and conduct its sessions.³³ Inside the UN system, the UN Division for Sustainable Development, which is part of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), provides substantive and administrative support to HLPF.³⁴

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

HLPF's mandate is set out in *The Future We Want*, as well as in UN General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 2013, which collectively defined HLPF's format and clarified organizational aspects.³⁵ Furthermore, clauses 47 and 48 of the 2030 Agenda explain HLPF's responsibilities concerning the implementation of the SDGs.³⁶ In general, the forum is mandated to conduct follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.³⁷ Therefore, it shall monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs, ensure that all three dimensions of sustainable development are integrated in all processes and outcomes, and verify that emerging issues in the context of sustainable development will be on the international community's agenda.³⁸

Other UN bodies, such as the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC, and a number of programs, organizations, and specialized agencies, play a pivotal role in implementing the SDGs and therefore in HLPF's work.³⁹ The UN General Assembly and ECOSOC are directly involved in HLPF's working processes since the Forum's meetings take place under their auspices.⁴⁰ In its meetings, the UN General Assembly further contributes to HLPF's agenda and decides on the Forum's themes.⁴¹ ECOSOC has the responsibility to follow up on "all major past international conferences linked to the three pillars of sustainable development" and particularly focuses on the exchange of knowledge and learning.⁴² The Council therefore works closely with HLPF and other UN organizations, such as the Development Cooperation Forum.⁴³

Additionally, HLPF is part of a broader network of UN entities working on sustainable development issues. The UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), which is part of the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), supports Member States "in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies, notably through knowledge sharing, research, training, and partnerships."⁴⁴ While it shares some areas of expertise with HLPF, UNOSD focuses on providing Member States with concrete support, while HLPF monitors the implementation of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – States Members of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies*; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

³¹ Ibid., p. 6.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ UN DSD, *Division for Sustainable Development*.

³⁵ UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012.

³⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, pp. 11-12.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² UN ECOSOC, *Sustainable Development*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UNOSD, *United Nations Office for Sustainable Development*, 2017.

the 2030 Agenda.⁴⁵ UN DESA fosters international cooperation for sustainable development and builds on the 2030 Agenda while providing “analytical products, policy advice and technical assistance“ to Member States and the public.⁴⁶ As the principal UN body for issues related to the environment, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also provides the international community with guidance on how it can support sustainable development.⁴⁷

To fulfill its mandate, HLPF provides political leadership and guidance to the international community on how sustainable development can be implemented and monitored.⁴⁸ The Forum publishes the *Global Sustainable Development Report* annually, and it seeks to strengthen communication and cooperation between science and policy makers (science policy interface).⁴⁹ With the support of ECOSOC, HLPF also promotes technology and knowledge transfer in order to achieve sustainable development and improve cooperation and coordination inside the UN.⁵⁰ The Forum works closely with governments and civil society.⁵¹ It cooperates with the Development Cooperation Forum, is involved in regional preparatory processes for the implementation of sustainable development, and facilitates global partnerships for sustainable development.⁵² It conducts state-led reviews with participants from the ministerial level as well as other relevant actors.⁵³ Furthermore, NGOs and other organizations shall hold special rights to participate in the dialogue and contribute to HLPF’s work, as they are permitted to attend and even intervene in official meetings.⁵⁴ They will have access to all information, may submit documents and oral statements, make recommendations, and organize side events during the Forum’s meetings.⁵⁵

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

HLPF 2016 was the first meeting of the Forum since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. It was held from 11-20 July 2016 under the auspices of ECOSOC as part of ECOSOC’s high-level segment.⁵⁶ Following the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind,” the meeting was complemented by numerous official sessions and side events.⁵⁷ Issues discussed included alleviating poverty, combatting climate change, the role of science and technology for sustainable development, and mainstreaming SDGs into national policies.⁵⁸ Twenty-two states submitted voluntary reviews on their actions for sustainable development to the Forum in 2016.⁵⁹ Voluntary reviews led by Member States are regularly conducted under the auspices of ECOSOC and elaborate on progress on sustainable development objectives.⁶⁰ At the end of the 2016 HLPF, the Forum adopted a ministerial declaration in which it pledged that no one will be left behind while implementing the 2030 Agenda.⁶¹

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ UN DESA, *Who we are*.

⁴⁷ UNEP Sustainability, *Who We Are: Overview*.

⁴⁸ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

⁴⁹ UN DESA, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2016*, 2016; UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - Global Sustainable Development Report*; Sustainable Development 2015, *The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*.

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Martens, *The HLPF 2016: First global meeting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*, 2016.

⁶⁰ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

⁶¹ UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results” and Ministerial declaration of the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind” (E/HLS/2016/1)*, 2016.

In July 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 70/299, in which the future themes of HLPF were decided.⁶² The Assembly stipulated that the themes for the next sessions of the Forum will be “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world” in 2017; “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” in 2018; and “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” in 2019.⁶³ The resolution states that all following sessions of the Forum should be focused on a particular group of SDGs and incorporate all three dimensions of sustainable development.⁶⁴

HLPF 2017 convened under the auspices of ECOSOC from 10-19 July 2017.⁶⁵ Focusing on poverty reduction and promoting prosperity around the world, HLPF conducted an in-depth review specifically of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17, with the aim of “[revitalizing] the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.”⁶⁶ In the various side events that accompanied the official meetings, a great number of different activities took place.⁶⁷ They included sessions on the role of data in achieving the 2030 Agenda, gender equality, and the contribution of youth to the SDGs, as well as dialogues between UN bodies, international organizations, governments, and civil society.⁶⁸ In a significant increase from 2016, 43 countries presented their national voluntary reviews to HLPF 2017.⁶⁹ The session concluded with the adoption of a ministerial declaration that recognized the importance of “bolstered partnerships and urgent action” to achieving the SDGs.⁷⁰

Conclusion

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, HLPF, as the successor of the CSD, has become the primary institution to conduct follow-up and review of the progress made by the UN and Member States to implement all three dimensions of sustainable development.⁷¹ Tremendous challenges, such as combatting climate change, eliminating poverty, and guaranteeing peace and security, are connected to the 2030 Agenda, making HLPF one of the most important political forums for a better future for the entire planet.⁷² Its inclusive membership and openness to civil society participation make HLPF a key forum for building consensus to foster the implementation of the SDGs and raise awareness for sustainable development in general.⁷³

Annotated Bibliography

Martens, J. (2016). The HLPF 2016: First global meeting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. *Global Policy Watch*, 11: 1-6. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from:

https://www.globalpolicywatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/GPW11_2016_08_09.pdf

This article analyzes the structures and processes of HLPF and provides valuable insights into the Forum’s challenges and advantages. It comprehensively explains how HLPF works and provides a detailed overview of the Forum’s agenda for the next few years. The article further evaluates the

⁶² UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts Resolution on Follow-up to, Review of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in Consensus Action (GA/11809)*, 2016; UN General Assembly, *Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level (A/RES/70/299)*, 2016.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - High-Level Political Forum 2017*.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ UN DPI, *Concluding Session, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Adopts Ministerial Declaration Aimed at Expediting Fulfilment of 2030 Agenda (ECOSOC/6864)*, 2017; UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges” and Ministerial declaration of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world” (E/HLS/2017/1)*, 2017.

⁷¹ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – States Members of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies; UN General Assembly, Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

role of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs for the Forum's work and the international community in general. It explains what national voluntary reviews are and looks at the road ahead. Accordingly, this article may be used by delegates as understand key resource for understanding what HLPF is, its challenges and opportunities, and where action is needed. It will also help delegates find more resources on this topic and better understand the content provided in official sources.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)* [Website]. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/csd.html>

The website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs summarizes relevant information on the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was established by the General Assembly in 1992 as an instrument to follow up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. As the predecessor of HLPF, CSD's experience with fostering sustainable development helps HLPF to define its agenda and shape its strategies and actions to follow up on and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to listing information on all of the Commission's sessions, the website contains explanations of its history, mandate, and governance. Accordingly, this source can serve as a valuable instrument for delegates to explore information about HLPF's predecessor and simultaneously learn about possible future paths for HLPF.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). *Global Sustainable Development Report 2016*. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from:

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2328Global%20Sustainable%20development%20report%202016%20\(final\).pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2328Global%20Sustainable%20development%20report%202016%20(final).pdf)

This comprehensive report summarizes what HLPF wants to achieve under the motto "Ensuring that no one is left behind and the 2030 Agenda," as well as how the goals can be implemented into concrete strategies. For instance, some strategies include strengthening economies and social protection standards. It further addresses key aspects that are on HLPF's agenda, such as the role of science and technology, infrastructure, and emerging issues for sustainable development, and it explains in detail why these aspects are important and how they can contribute to overall sustainable development. Accordingly, this report offers in-depth analysis of current debates and HLPF's agenda, which can help delegates to understand key aspects of HLPF's work and priorities.

United Nations, Division for Sustainable Development. (n.d.). *Division for Sustainable Development* [Website]. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/about>

This website summarizes important information on the Division for Sustainable Development (UN DSD), which is a key player on the path to sustainable development. By explaining the Division's mission statement, mandate, governance, and structure, this source will help delegates understand what the institution does and how it works. Accordingly, it serves as a valuable source to delve into the topic and gather ideas for further research. Furthermore, UN DSD provides HLPF with administrative and substantive support. The website therefore allows delegates to get to know more about one of the Forum's important partners and how HLPF's work is connected to UN DSD's programs and actions.

United Nations, Division for Sustainable Development. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* [Website]. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

The Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, which is the official resource on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides specific information on HLPF. By explaining the Forum's history, mandate, structure, and governance, it constitutes a useful resource for delegates to delve into the topic. The website further summarizes information on past and upcoming sessions of HLPF and thus provides an overview of recently discussed issues. It helps delegates to keep track of HLPF's work and agenda and it helps them to understand the mandate, functions, and powers of the committee.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-sixth session. (2012). *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/66/288>

In this pivotal document on the path towards the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, among other important aspects, the three dimensions of sustainable development are introduced and explained. Accordingly, it can serve as a valuable resource to gain thorough understanding the principles, ideas, and history underlying sustainable development. As a consequence, it can help delegates to learn about past achievements and developments on the road towards future sustainable development. It further helps to understand why the Forum was established and how its mandate is designed.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-seventh session. (2013). *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)* [Resolution]. Adopted on the report of the First Committee (A/70/460). Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/67/290>

This UN General Assembly resolution is one of the most important documents in which HLPF's mandate, structure, and governance are defined. All organizational aspects related to HLPF's work are explained in detail, including the difference between meetings conducted under the auspices of the UN General Assembly and those held via ECOSOC. Accordingly, this document serves as a valuable source for delegates in researching what HLPF can and cannot do and how its governance and processes should work. Especially when it comes to writing position papers and working papers, this document helps delegates to understand the purpose of the Forum and what its resolutions can consequently encompass.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-seventh session. (2013). *Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/757)*. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/67/757>

This report from the UN Secretary-General critically analyzes the work of the CSD and emphasizes achievements as well as potential for improvement. It helped the UN General Assembly to define the format and organizational aspects of HLPF and is therefore an important foundation for UN General Assembly resolution 67/290 (2013). The document helps delegates to understand what the CSD has achieved and which key aspects should be on the agenda for HLPF. It further makes clear how the processes of HLPF need to be designed to assist in effective and efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are the most frequently discussed and most important elements of the current discourse and actions on sustainable development. They provide Member States with examples and incentives on how they can develop more sustainably and thus combat climate change, decrease poverty, establish peace and security, and deal with many more challenges. The SDGs influence almost every aspect of the international development agenda and therefore are of utmost importance for the UN and the international community. This document should be among the first that delegates read since it is one of the key resources HLPF uses in its work. It is a pivotal instrument for monitoring how Member States intend to comply with all three dimensions of sustainable development and how HLPF will continuously evaluate whether the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are being applied.

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I. Promotion of Sustainable Industrial Development and Innovation in Rural Areas

Introduction

Rural areas have traditionally been excluded from sustainable development initiatives, thus threatening the full economic, social, and environmental viability of states.⁷⁴ Sustainable rural development is vital for poverty eradication since “global poverty is overwhelmingly rural.”⁷⁵ In this regard, it is essential at a global, regional, national, and local level to coordinate rural development initiatives that target sustainable industrial development and innovation.⁷⁶ Sustainable development “seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future,” and “far from requiring the cessation of economic growth, it recognizes that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment cannot be solved unless” the current model of growth is changed.⁷⁷ Innovation in rural areas is a key factor in generating “increased competitiveness,” since it contributes to “more creative uses of natural resources and human assets,” and thus can help achieve sustainable development in a rural context.⁷⁸

International and Regional Framework

In October 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), established by the United Nations (UN) to tackle the deterioration of the environment and natural resources, issued the report *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, which defined “sustainable development” for the first time: “meeting the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future.”⁷⁹ The report emphasizes that, although sustainable development does not require “absolute limits,” it does imply limitations “imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities,” considering that both “technology and social organization can be managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth.”⁸⁰

The importance of sustainable development was furthermore highlighted with the adoption of *Agenda 21*, a non-binding action plan of the UN elaborated as a result of the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.⁸¹ This document established several objectives relating to sustainable development, such as disseminating “information on effective legal and regulatory innovations in the field of environment and development.”⁸² *Agenda 21* also looked forward to “developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns,” thereby shifting the “existing production and consumption patterns that have developed in industrial societies” and are emulated in much of the world.⁸³

Subsequently, on September 8, 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Millennium Declaration*, containing eight chapters and key objectives previously agreed upon by 189 world leaders during the Millennium Summit, which reaffirmed Member States’ support for the principles of sustainable development and resolved to create an environment which is “conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.”⁸⁴ The Declaration committed states to a “new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty” and set out a series of eight targets – with a deadline of 2015 – known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁸⁵ The MDGs enjoyed varied success: for instance, MDG 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by “reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, was achieved in 2010, ahead of the 2015 deadline.”⁸⁶ On the other hand, MDG 7 on ensuring environmental

⁷⁴ UN Commission on Sustainable Development, *Report on the 17th session of CSD (E/2009/29-E/CN.17/2009/19)*.

⁷⁵ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁷⁶ UN Commission on Sustainable Development, *Report on the 17th session of CSD (E/2009/29-E/CN.17/2009/19)*.

⁷⁷ UN WCED, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (A/42/427)*, 1987.

⁷⁸ Alpine Convention, *Third Report on the state of the Alps, Sustainable Rural Development and Innovation*, 2011.

⁷⁹ UN WCED, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (A/42/427)*, 1987.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ UN Conference on Environment and Development, *Agenda 21*, 1992.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*, 2000.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 2015.

sustainability was not achieved satisfactorily, considering that although deforestation has slowed, global emissions of greenhouse gasses continue to increase.⁸⁷

In this sense, although a considerable amount of the targets set for the MDGs were accomplished and more than one billion people were lifted out of extreme poverty by the 2015 deadline, it was clear that further progress and a long-term effort would be required in order to achieve the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.⁸⁸ The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, published by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) to assess progress towards the MDGs at the end of the 2015 deadline, established that big gaps still existed between rural and urban areas, and that “greater funding and innovation are crucial to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.”⁸⁹

As the MDGs era came to a conclusion, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was adopted in 2015 by world leaders at the UN, calling upon all countries to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a deadline of 2030.⁹⁰ These goals are considered a “universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.”⁹¹ Although it builds on the successes and achievements of the MDGs, it also “includes new areas, such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, and sustainable consumption,” among others, thus emphasizing that the goals are interconnected, in a way that the key to succeed on one will involve tackling issues connected with another.⁹² In regards to the topic at hand, Goal 9 focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation as crucial “drivers of economic growth and development,” with a set of eight targets to measure progress in the achievement of this objective.⁹³

More specific instruments targeting the issues of industrial development and innovation have also been adopted within the last decades. In March 1975, the General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) gathered in Lima, Peru, and issued the *Lima Declaration and Plan of Action*, which called for the redistribution of the world industry and set out the main principles of industrialization that must be followed by states in order to close the gap between developed and less developed countries.⁹⁴ Furthermore, in December 2013, the General Conference of UNIDO “adopted a new *Lima Declaration* that charted the Organization's development priorities for the coming years, placing special emphasis on inclusive and sustainable industrial development.”⁹⁵

In December 1986, the UN General Assembly issued the *Declaration on the Right to Development*, establishing that “the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”⁹⁶ Additionally, in July 2015, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* declared that “the creation, development and diffusion of new innovations and technologies and associated know how, including the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, are powerful drivers of economic growth and sustainable development.”⁹⁷ The Agenda also emphasized the need to promote rural development, as the majority of the poor live in rural areas.⁹⁸

⁸⁷ UNDP, *Ensure environmental sustainability: Where do we stand?*, 2017.

⁸⁸ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, p. 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ UNDP, *Goal 9 Targets*.

⁹⁴ UNIDO, *UNIDO General Conference adopts Lima Declaration with focus on inclusive and sustainable industrial development*, 2013.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)*, 1986, art. 1.

⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015, p. 51.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Role of the International System

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

HLPF was established for the follow-up and review of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.⁹⁹ It provides “political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development; follows up and reviews progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments”; enhances the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; is a platform for regular dialogue and agenda setting to advance on sustainable development; and reports on significant achievements undertaken by the public and private sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁰⁰

The most recent session of HLPF took place in July 2017, with the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.”¹⁰¹ A ministerial declaration was adopted as an outcome document from the meeting; it acknowledges that “while extreme poverty has fallen globally, progress has been uneven,” and poor people are still disproportionately concentrated in rural areas.¹⁰² In this sense, HLPF recognizes that “inclusive and sustainable industrialization is integral for the structural transformation” of economics to create decent jobs for all, “promote productivity growth, energy efficiency, innovation, social inclusion, enhance incomes, and achieve sustainable development,” as well as that “resilient, sustainable and inclusive food systems that protect, enhance and restore natural resources, sustain rural ... livelihoods and provide access to nutritious foods from smallholder producers must be at the heart of efforts to simultaneously eradicate poverty and hunger.”¹⁰³

Furthermore, a call was made for development partners to “support developing countries in improving infrastructure and connectivity to allow all access to basic services,” in order to improve “industrialization, including by technology transfer”; and the “importance of sharing the benefits of innovation” was highlighted.¹⁰⁴ It was stressed that it is essential to support “small and medium-sized enterprises and microenterprises, through access to financing and ICT for trade,” for instance.¹⁰⁵ It is also “important to ensure that industrialization does not harm the environment,” through the implementation of resilient, green infrastructure that safeguards citizens while simultaneously providing “solutions for mitigation and adaptation to climate change,” while ensuring the provision of basic commodities, such as food, energy and water.¹⁰⁶

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

A specialized agency of the UN since 1985, the UNIDO seeks “to promote industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization, and environmental sustainability.”¹⁰⁷ With 173 Member States, a renewed mandate for the organization was adopted at the General Conference in December 2013, which focuses on inclusive and sustainable industrial development, in order to address the multidimensional causes of poverty and realize the full potential of industry’s contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.¹⁰⁸

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is a “global development network that seeks to connect countries to knowledge, experience and resources,” including by providing “expert advice, training, and support to developing countries.”¹⁰⁹ The Programme supports countries’ efforts to achieve the SDGs by helping states with building and sharing solutions in three main areas,

⁹⁹ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, *Expert Group Meeting on the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in post-2015 development framework*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ UN DESA, *High-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 (HLPF 2017)*.

¹⁰² UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges” and Ministerial declaration of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world” (E/HLS/2017/1)*, 2017, p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰⁴ UN DESA, *President’s Summary of 2017 High-level political forum on sustainable development*, 2017, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Devex, *United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; UNIDO, *Industrial Development Report 2016*, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ UNDP, *About Us*.

including sustainable development.¹¹⁰ For instance, “UNDP supported the installation of advanced solar power systems in isolated desert towns,” such as in Fezna, Morocco, which resulted in students from this area feeling safe on their way back from school thanks to this public lighting project.¹¹¹

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Since 1946, as the first specialized agency of the UN, the ILO has worked to promote decent work for all.¹¹² Concerning the achievement of the SDGs, the Organization recognizes that “over 600 million new jobs need to be created by 2030 just to keep pace with the growth of the global working age population,” and conditions need to be improved for the 780 million women and men who are currently working but living on only \$2 a day.¹¹³ In this sense, the importance of decent work in the achievement of sustainable development must be highlighted for each individual SDG: in the case of sustainable industrial development in rural areas, it must be recognized that rural poverty is a multidimensional issue, and that focusing on protecting workers’ rights in these areas and generating new jobs through innovative initiatives will help to address this multiplicity.¹¹⁴

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The CSW was established in June 1946 and serves as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council.¹¹⁵ It is the “principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.”¹¹⁶ Industrial growth in the past has occurred too often without the participation and reward to significant segments of the population, particularly women.¹¹⁷ Therefore, it is essential to better integrate women in the process of creating a sustainable industrial workforce.¹¹⁸ In this sense, the experiences and recommendations from the CSW can serve as valuable information for the HLPF in terms on how to achieve sustainable industrial development and innovation by improving gender equality.¹¹⁹

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

It is of vital importance to recognize that national governments cannot achieve such ambitious goals as the SDGs on their own. Collective and individual efforts at the local, national, and regional levels are necessary, as well as input from stakeholders, especially CSOs.¹²⁰ Considering that “Leaving no one behind” is an underlying principle of the SDGs, CSOs may represent the voice of the poorest and most marginalized citizens, who are often left out of the discussion or are unable to reach the government.¹²¹ CSOs may also act as agents of accountability by making sure that states are held accountable for their actions concerning the 2030 Agenda, and can even collect data, report, and monitor the progress towards these goals.¹²² For instance, in Uganda, CSOs are well organized under national platforms and have been involved with the Ugandan government to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs.¹²³ Many CSOs are already engaging with various government institutions to monitor the progress on this matter, such as with the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, to discuss clean water and women’s empowerment, respectively.¹²⁴

Furthermore, one of the most successful initiatives by a CSO has been the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Pakistan.¹²⁵ Since its beginning in the 1980s, the Project has directly and indirectly assisted approximately one million people in

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ UNDP, *Sustainable Development*.

¹¹² ILO, *About the ILO*.

¹¹³ ILO, *The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*.

¹¹⁴ ILO, *Decent Work for Food Security and Sustainable Rural Development (DW4FS)*.

¹¹⁵ UN-Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ UNIDO, *Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development*, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ African Civil Society Circle, *The Roles of Civil Society in Localising the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2016.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Action for Sustainable Development, *Learning by doing: Civil Society Engagement in the High-level political forum’s National Review Process*, 2016.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Hasan, *Orangi Pilot Project: the expansion of work beyond Orangi and the mapping of informal settlements and infrastructure*, 2006.

the rural region of Orangi (Karachi) with improved sanitation facilities.¹²⁶ The Project has also promoted availability of housing, better health, credit for entrepreneurs, and education through innovative initiatives, thereby addressing some of the biggest challenges associated with promoting sustainable development in rural areas.¹²⁷

Sustainable Industrial Development

Although industrialization does not necessarily equal development, it is undeniable that with sufficient investment, inclusiveness, and innovation, industrialization can have “enormous multidimensional benefits,” being a key tool for achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development in rural areas.¹²⁸ In order to achieve these benefits, it is necessary to step away from two models that did not result in the achievement of the former MDGs: first, low industrialization and productivity levels, and second, large-scale industrialization.¹²⁹

Low Industrialization and Productivity Levels

One shared feature of rural areas in developing countries is that agriculture accounts for a large part of gross domestic product and employment, while industrial development is left behind.¹³⁰ This results in low levels of scientific and technological capability, which are at the same time major constraints on industrial expansion.¹³¹ Industries contribute to the creation of jobs, which alleviate poverty.¹³² Without industrial expansion, states cannot compete with other producers of goods and services in a globalized world, which weakens their economies and contributes to food scarcity, unemployment, social and gender inequality, and lack of education.¹³³

For instance, the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC) has the highest inequality rate in the world, and its GDP grew by only 1.1% in 2014, its “slowest annual expansion rate since 2009,” attributable to the region’s high dependence on commodity export prices, in addition to its low productivity and industrialization levels.¹³⁴ A significant consequence of this low economic growth has been weak job growth, which has affected women more than men, widening the gender labor gaps.¹³⁵

Large-Scale Industrialization

Although low industrialization and productivity levels can pose problems in rural areas, large-scale industrialization with no regard to sustainability is undesired as well.¹³⁶ Heavy industrialization has a profound impact on natural resources through the entire cycle of exploration, extraction of “raw materials, transformation into products, energy consumption, waste generation, and the use and disposal of products by consumers.”¹³⁷ These impacts may cause heavy pollution and depletion of natural resources, which in turn affect people’s quality of life.¹³⁸

Taking the example of China: its high-level economy and large population highlight the magnitude of its environmental, social, and health-related challenges.¹³⁹ Studies by the World Health Organization show that air pollution contributed to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010, and “according to a recent Deutsche Bank report, China’s air quality will become 70% worse by 2025,” due to the increases in coal burning and vehicle and industrial emissions.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, corruption is a serious sociopolitical problem in China: the industrialized economy has created new opportunities, but it has also made “corruption more pervasive than in previous decades.”¹⁴¹

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ UN DPI, *Better Policies, Investment in Infrastructure, Industrialization Key for Creating Thriving, Sustainable Societies, Speakers Tell Economic and Social Council*, 2017.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Kumar, *Major Characteristics of Developing Countries*.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ UNIDO, *Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in Latin America and the Caribbean Region*, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ UN WCED, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (A/42/427)*, 1987.

¹³⁹ YaleGlobal Online, *China: The Dark Side of Growth*.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Benefits of Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development

In this regard, it is necessary to implement initiatives that promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development in rural areas that erases the negative effects of both low levels of industrialization and large-scale industrialization. This model of industrialization requires the following core aspects: 1) “every country achieves a higher level of industrialization in their economies, and benefits from the globalization of markets for industrial goods and services”; 2) “no one is left behind in benefiting from industrial growth”; 3) “broader economic and social growth is supported within an environmentally sustainable framework”; and 4) “the unique knowledge and resources of all relevant development actors are combined to maximize the development impact of inclusive and sustainable industrial development” in the global development agenda.¹⁴² Finally, these initiatives must not be limited to their implementation in rural areas by third parties, but must be effectively transferred to users, so that they utilize them efficiently and thrive within their rural lifestyle.¹⁴³

One of the main benefits of sustainable industrial development in rural areas is poverty eradication, since unsustainable production practices may result from limited livelihood choices for the poor.¹⁴⁴ In this sense, the “promotion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to further process the primary products generated from these sectors would provide alternative livelihoods for rural communities, and generate employment opportunities” while stimulating growth.¹⁴⁵ Finally, it is important to emphasize that, due to the complexity of sustainable industrial development and its close linkages with all other SDGs, sustainable industrial development in rural areas will lead to great improvements in job creation, sustainable livelihoods, better health, technology and skills development, food security, green technologies, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation.¹⁴⁶

Innovation in Rural Areas

Considering that almost 80% of poor people in the world live outside of towns and cities, it is of utmost important to address the conditions faced by population in rural areas.¹⁴⁷ Most of these people depend on agriculture and have limited connectivity and access to markets, resulting in isolation and weak infrastructure with a direct impact on incomes and livelihoods.¹⁴⁸ In this sense, “investment in rural infrastructure, diversifying rural employment, and improving rural-urban linkages” through innovative solutions and initiatives can result in more opportunities for sustainable rural livelihoods, which promotes growth as well.¹⁴⁹ This can be done through creating employment in non-agricultural activities by providing people with “affordable access to technologies and infrastructure,” thus accelerating poverty reduction and contributing to other areas, such as improved health.¹⁵⁰ For instance, in Finland, telemedicine services allow a specialist doctor in Helsinki to provide diagnoses based on X-rays taken in sparsely populated regions thousands of kilometers away.¹⁵¹

Rural industry can thus be supported on improving technologies: for instance, in Guinea, modern shop-floor management systems were implemented to minimize waste and improve hygienic conditions in plants, which along with quality control systems, allowed fisheries in this country to successfully meet European Union standards for fish export.¹⁵² In Burkina Faso and Mali, hybrid drying techniques for preserving fruit and vegetables were introduced to reduce post-harvest losses and waste.¹⁵³ Furthermore, although over the last decade the mobile sector grew dynamically, Internet access is still limited and not affordable for most people in less developed countries, especially in rural areas; therefore, providing access to the Internet for individuals and enterprises can be a

¹⁴² UNIDO, *Sustainable Industrial Development for Shared Prosperity: ISID Programme for Country Partnership*, p. 5.

¹⁴³ Eurekalert, *Innovative technologies in rural areas improve agriculture, health care*, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ UNIDO, *Review Report on Africa Industrial Development for CSD 14*, 2006, p. iv.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ UN Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, *2017 HLPF Thematic Review of SDG-9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*, 2017, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Asia-Plus, *Almost 80% of the world’s poor live in rural areas and rely mainly on agriculture for their incomes*, 2015.

¹⁴⁸ FAO, *Sustainable Development Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ OECD, *Innovation in Rural Areas: An Exception or a Must?*, 2007.

¹⁵² UNECA & UNIDO, *African Regional Implementation Review for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14)*, 2006, p. 34.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

prominent objective of Member States, since Internet access can improve access to services, resources, and information that could help promote sustainable development and target other deficits in rural areas.¹⁵⁴

However, lack of technology is not the only challenge that rural areas face. Unemployment, gender inequality, lack of competitiveness and access to markets, migration, and depletion of natural resources are conditions that have root causes that go deeper than lack of technology, and can therefore be addressed through innovative approaches that do not necessarily require advanced technology to be implemented.¹⁵⁵ To target unemployment, for instance, governments and civil society could implement initiatives that search for new sources of employment in culture, leisure, services, the environment, or development of traditional know-how, as well as creating possibilities of insertion through voluntary work.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, to approach the lack of competitiveness of agriculture in rural areas, projects that shift the concept of farmer to the concept of “rural entrepreneur” could be of great importance to attract business opportunities.¹⁵⁷ Finally, strategies that improve local conditions for young people to start up a business could help reduce the rural exodus, or migration of people from rural to urban areas.¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

Although the international community was not quite able to achieve all the targets comprising the MDGs, the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* presents a new opportunity for states, with the support of the civil society and international institutions and organizations, to tackle the most relevant challenges to sustainable development. Rural areas are most certainly the ones left behind from development initiatives, with higher rates of unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, lack of healthcare access, and overall low levels of productivity and industrialization. Given that large-scale industrialization could bring environmental, socioeconomic, and health-related problems, it is essential to place emphasis on initiatives that are sustainable and innovative.

Further Research

Delegates should take note of the interconnection between all SDGs, since in order to achieve one of the goals, they will have to address others. HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC from 10-19 July 2017 and reviewed a specific set of SDGs comprising Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17. For example, delegates should consider: what can HLPF do concerning poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), gender equality (Goal 5), or conservation and sustainable use of marine resources (Goal 14) that could help them tackle Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation?

Annotated Bibliography

Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators. (2016). *Final list of proposed Sustainable Development Goal indicators*. Retrieved 31 May 2017 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf>

The list contained in this document comprises the global indicator framework that measures the progress on the accomplishment of the SDGs. Indicators are divided by relevant categories of income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, among others, and will help delegates analyze where Member States are on the path to achieve the SDGs.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). *Global Sustainable Development Report - 2016 edition*. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2328&menu=1515>

The Global Sustainable Development Report 2016, drafted by 245 scientists and experts based in 27 countries, seeks to contribute to strengthening policies for sustainable development in the context of HLPF. This publication will help delegates to identify fundamental concepts of the topics at hand, such as inclusive institutions and emerging issues for sustainable development. The

¹⁵⁴ UN Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, *2017 HLPF Thematic Review of SDG-9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*, 2017, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ LEADER European Observatory, *Innovation and Rural Development*, 1997, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

report establishes key definitions and strategies to target the 2030 Agenda, including examples of strategies used in various SDG areas and how they are geared to reaching those left behind.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 31 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

This landmark resolution establishes the 17 SDGs and 169 targets that comprise the new universal Agenda and seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals for the next fifteen years upon its adoption. This document provides delegates with the principles and vision that must guide the achievement of the SDGs: the eradication of poverty in all its forms. Delegates should review SDG 9 in particular, which relates specifically to sustainable industrial development and innovation.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization. (2015). *Industrial Development Report 2016*. Retrieved 2 June 2017 from: <http://www.unido.org/publications/flagship-publications/industrial-development-report-series/industrial-development-report-2016.html>

This report's theme is "The Role of Technology and Innovation in Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development." It provides delegates with valuable information on the need to move towards sustainable and inclusive development and serves as a guideline on how to promote social inclusiveness in industrialization, create environmentally friendly technologies, and design industrial policies for innovation. Delegates will also find valuable data and statistics concerning economic growth, technology, social inclusiveness, and productivity, among others.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2008). *Innovation for Sustainable Development: Local Case Studies from Africa*. Retrieved 2 June 2017 from:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=35&menu=1515>

Comprising several case studies on how innovation has been implemented in rural areas in Africa, this document will assist delegates with enriching the discussion on how important implementing innovation in rural areas is for progress and development, and will serve as an example of the initiatives that can be implemented in order to progress towards achieving SDG 9. These initiatives revolve around the enhancement of agriculture & fisheries, water management, protection of ecosystems, health improvement, and sustainable tourism.

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II. Implementing SDG 6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All

“The new agenda is a promise by leaders to all people everywhere. It is a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world. It is an agenda for people, to end poverty in all its forms. An agenda for the planet, our common home. An agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership. It conveys the urgency of climate action. Above all, it pledges to leave no one behind.”¹⁵⁹

Introduction

Since its inception, the United Nations (UN) has sought equality and prosperity for all human beings by “reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”¹⁶⁰ Likewise, by “confirming that the right to development is an inalienable human right,” the UN has committed to improving the conditions in which people live.¹⁶¹ Human beings have always been at the center of concerns for sustainable development, since “they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.”¹⁶² It is this principle that drives the UN’s commitment to promoting sustainable development, as expressed in the *Millennium Declaration* (2000) and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹⁶³ Within this document, the topic of sustainable development was already displayed in MDG 7: “Ensure environmental sustainability.”¹⁶⁴ With target 7.C, access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation gained special attention.¹⁶⁵

Not every MDG was achieved, so Member States decided that efforts could not end with the *Millennium Declaration*.¹⁶⁶ The resulting *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) thus reaffirmed and built upon MDG commitments across all societies.¹⁶⁷ With the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets, Member States “have embarked on this collective journey, [and] pledge that no one will be left behind.”¹⁶⁸ SDG 6, which is “to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all,” builds on MDG 7 and ensures that water and sanitation remain a priority in the 2030 Agenda.¹⁶⁹ All the objectives specified are meant to motivate societies to take effective actions in order to achieve them, thereby protecting human beings and the planet.¹⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, in light of the achievements of the expired *Millennium Declaration* and the MDGs, societies were able to see in the new agenda a way of “transforming the world to better meet human needs, while protecting the environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.”¹⁷¹

International and Regional Framework

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) specifies in article 25 that all human beings are entitled to have a standard of living adequate for their health.¹⁷² Although safe drinking water and proper sanitation services are necessary to maintaining good health, the right to these elements was not explicitly stated in the UDHR.¹⁷³ It was not until the 1977 *Mar del Plata Action Plan*, developed at the UN Water Conference, that access to water and sanitation was finally qualified as a human right.¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, more needed to be done on the part of

¹⁵⁹ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

¹⁶¹ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)*, 1986.

¹⁶² WHO Executive Board, *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio +20*, 2012.

¹⁶³ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)*, 1986.

¹⁶⁴ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*, 2000.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁶⁷ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁷¹ UN Department of Information, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, p. 9.

¹⁷² UN, General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

¹⁷³ UN Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, *Making water a human right*, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ UN Water Conference, *Mar del Plata Action Plan*, 1977.

all UN Member States to ensure the right to water and sanitation. Accordingly, in 2010, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in which it declared water and sanitation as universal human rights.¹⁷⁵

Changing the way water and sanitation are managed to fit the parameters of SDG 6 requires economic resources to adapt to the needs of the new agenda.¹⁷⁶ There have been multiple actions implemented at the international level with respect to financing the SDGs.¹⁷⁷ A key document is the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (2015).¹⁷⁸ Adopted in July 2015 at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* anticipated the adoption of the SDGs and set out a strategy for financial support thereof.¹⁷⁹ Another is the *Monterrey Consensus* (2002), considered one of the pillars and main supporting documents for the former *Millennium Declaration*, since they shared common ideals: “to eradicate poverty, achieve sustained economic growth and promote sustainable development.”¹⁸⁰ Financial support through strategies such as the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* and the *Monterrey Consensus* is necessary for sustainable development, as voluntary economic donations at their highest level represent only 2% of official development assistance.¹⁸¹

The *Millennium Declaration* was set at the beginning of the century as a “collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.”¹⁸² The MDGs helped improve the lives of more than one billion people in different ways, including advancing the fight against hunger, decreasing the number of people living in extreme poverty, and giving girls more opportunities to attend school.¹⁸³ MDG 7 specifically tackled issues related to environmental sustainability.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Target 7.C was to “halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.”¹⁸⁵ Clear progress was made toward reaching this objective. For instance, in 2015, 91% of the global population already had access to an improved source of drinking water, marking an increase of around 25% compared to statistics from 1990.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, almost half of the global population gained access to piped drinking water.¹⁸⁷ In the issue of sanitation, by 2015, there were 147 countries that had achieved the target of providing safe and potable water to their people.¹⁸⁸ In addition, 2.1 billion individuals had access to a better system of sanitation.¹⁸⁹ However, despite positive numbers and the changes that took place during the *Millennium Declaration*’s 15-year mandate, there is much more to be done.¹⁹⁰

Created almost 17 years ago, the MDGs were very ambitious but did result in significant achievements, leaving behind plenty of successes for the SDGs to follow on.¹⁹¹ The importance of continuing that momentum led to the current *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹⁹² One main difference between the MDGs and SDGs is the idea that “what gets measured gets done”: compared to a total of eight MDGs, the 2030 Agenda features 17 SDGs and 169 targets.¹⁹³ Despite the small amount of time that has passed since the 2030 Agenda came into effect, concrete improvements have already been made.¹⁹⁴ In regard to ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, encouraging data has emerged. For instance, from 2000 to 2015, the number of people using an improved sanitation system rose from 59% to around 68% of the global population.¹⁹⁵ In addition, a 2016-2017

¹⁷⁵ UN General Assembly, *The human right to water and sanitation (A/RES/64/292)*, 2010.

¹⁷⁶ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁷ World Bank Group, *Aid Flows to the Water Sector*, 2016.

¹⁷⁸ UN General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ UN International Conference on Financing for Development, *Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development*, 2012.

¹⁸¹ World Bank Group, *Aid Flows to the Water Sector*, 2016.

¹⁸² UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)*, 2000.

¹⁸³ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 2015, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, Foreword.

¹⁹¹ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 2015, p. 3.

¹⁹² WHO & UNICEF, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*, 2017, p. iii.

¹⁹³ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 2015, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, p. 6.

survey showed that 80% of 74 responding countries have clearly defined procedures intended to engage service users/communities in water and sanitation management.¹⁹⁶

SDG 6 Targets

In order to accomplish SDG 6, there are specific targets and indicators to guide present and future actions. They set boundaries and expectations for the process of ensuring safer water and sanitation for all. The first target is achieving universal and equitable access to water, the indicator for which is the amount of people with access to safe drinking water.¹⁹⁷ The second target is to provide equitable sanitation and hygiene, paying special attention to girls and women in less favorable situations.¹⁹⁸ This target is measured by the proportion of individuals using safe sanitation services.¹⁹⁹ The third is to improve water quality by preventing all forms of water pollution, such as chemical contamination, in addition to increasing the practices of recycling and reusing.²⁰⁰ This target will be gauged by two indicators, namely, the amount of wastewater that is being treated and the number of bodies of water that present good ambient conditions.²⁰¹ The fourth SDG 6 target focuses on increasing the efficient use of water so that the number of people affected by its scarcity will decrease.²⁰² This target will be assessed based on progress made towards water-use efficiency and level of water stress.²⁰³ The fifth target is to ensure integrated water resources management through transboundary cooperation.²⁰⁴ It will be measured by the degree of integrated water resources that have been implemented for proper management of water resources. Unlike the first five targets, which are set for 2030, the sixth target is scheduled to 2020; it consists of protecting water-related natural environments, such as mountains and rivers.²⁰⁵ Progress for this target will be determined by the changing size of water-related ecosystems over time. Target 6.a aims to enhance international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in order to facilitate the objectives mentioned above.²⁰⁶ The last target, 6.b, calls for supporting local communities and encouraging them to improve water and sanitation services.²⁰⁷

Role of the International System

Upon requests by Member States for “a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum, building on strengths, experiences, and resources” to keep track of the development of the 2030 Agenda, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established.²⁰⁸ Indeed, HLPF “was mandated to play the central role in overseeing follow-up and review processes at the global level.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, Member States have decided that HLPF will develop reviews on the progress of the 2030 Agenda.²¹⁰ These reviews are meant to ensure that no one is left behind: both developed and developing countries, as well as any other entity that the UN may find significant, will be taken into account.²¹¹ One of the most important topics is water and sanitation, one that is at the very center of both sustainable development and the survival of people and the planet: SDG 6 addresses issues related not only to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene, but also to the quality and sustainability of water resources worldwide.²¹² Various entities have partnered with HLPF to support its work toward achieving the SDGs. It must be mentioned that diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are of great importance to HLPF.²¹³ It is because of

¹⁹⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2016/75)*, 2016.

¹⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013.

²⁰⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2016/75)*, 2016.

²¹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² UN ECOSOC, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2017/66)*, 2017.

²¹³ UN DESA, *Expert Group Meeting: Enhancing Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) Engagement in National Level Reviews*, 2017, p. 2.

these values that HLPF has worked to facilitate the sharing of experiences, such as lessons, successes, and challenges, among civil society, the private sector, other UN institutions, major groups, and other stakeholders.²¹⁴

Other UN system entities and related organizations working to achieve SDG 6 include the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), which focuses on water and sanitation in the urban context: one third of the SDG indicators have a direct connection to urban policies and therefore a clear impact on cities.²¹⁵ UN-Habitat provides assistance to local and national governments in line with its policy expertise in sustainable urban development, including on better usage and management of water and sanitation.²¹⁶ Likewise, the World Health Organization (WHO) pays special attention to SDG 6, due to its direct connection to health.²¹⁷ Indeed, it has been estimated that 22% of all deaths are caused by dietary risks; a healthy diet requires plenty of water not only for proper hydration but also for proper digestion.²¹⁸ The work of UN-Habitat and WHO on water and sanitation, along with that of over 30 other UN organizations, is coordinated by UN-Water.²¹⁹ In 1990, UN-Water, with the participation of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, established the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), which published global updates throughout the MDG period and will do the same with the SDGs.²²⁰

In 2016, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the President of the World Bank Group, Jim Yong Kim, created the High-Level Panel on Water, which comprises 11 state leaders and one special adviser.²²¹ The Panel’s main target is to empower and enhance the most results-driven initiatives that pertain to the theme of water within the SDGs.²²² The Panel acknowledges that there are many challenges ahead; therefore, it is constantly emphasizing the fundamental importance of cooperation between governments, civil society, and the private sector.²²³

Water and sanitation are also addressed by regional organizations, both within and outside of the UN system. The regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, including the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, regularly include issues related to water and sanitation on their agendas, and they provide relevant input to HLPF sessions.²²⁴ The African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) and the African Union Commission, with the guidance of UN-Water, held a workshop in May 2017 on SDG 6 and its monitoring and reporting at the global level.²²⁵ Relevant regional commitments include the *Sharm El Sheikh Commitments* (2008), the *N’gor Declaration on Water Security and Sanitation* (2015), *African Water Vision 2025* (2000) and *Agenda 2063* (2015).²²⁶ Similarly, the Organization of American States (OAS) is working to improve capacity-building efforts on water governance by implementing intra-state transfer of technology and information, alongside the Inter-American Program on Sustainable Development (PIDS).²²⁷

Civil society organizations (CSO) work alongside governments in furthering SDG 6 and promoting the remaining SDGs. For example, in July 2016, more than 100 representatives of CSOs including Simavi, End Water Poverty, WaterAid, and Sanitation and Water for All participated in the African Civil Society Forum, ahead of the 6th Africa Water Week.²²⁸ Attending CSOs committed to continue working with governments to support the implementation of

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

²¹⁵ UN-Habitat, *UN-HABITAT for the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2017.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ WHO, *World Health Statistics: 2017*, 2017, p. vi.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

²¹⁹ UN-Water, *About UN-Water*; WHO & UNICEF, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*, 2017, p. iii.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ High Level Panel on Water, *Action Plan*, 2016, p. 3.

²²² Ibid., p. 6.

²²³ Ibid., pp. 7, 9.

²²⁴ UN HLPF, *Reports of the regional forums on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2017/1)*, 2017; UNECE, *Annotated provisional agenda for the first session (ECE/AC.25/2017/1)*, 2017; UN HLPF, *Input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2017/1/Add.3)*, 2017.

²²⁵ UN-Water, *Africa water and sanitation sector monitoring – training workshop in Accra*, 2017.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Organization of American States, *Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS): 2016-2021*, 2016.

²²⁸ Simavi, *Africa’s Civil Society agree to support implementation of SDG6 and N’gor Declaration*.

the SDGs and the N’gor Declaration.²²⁹ Another example is Watershed, a partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IRC, Simavi, Wetlands International and Akvo, focuses on strengthening CSO capacity.²³⁰ Other activities include organizing workshops through online platforms, facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue for future lobbying and advocacy, and providing relevant training to CSOs and government workers.²³¹

The Importance of Water and Sanitation

A Human Right, Not a Privilege

Given that clean water and sanitation have been recognized as universal human rights, it is important to ensure this is being upheld by all actors.²³² Access to safe and reliable services is vital to survival and would have a number of positive effects.²³³ These include more effective prevention of various illnesses, improved health conditions, increased gender and income equality, better educational outcomes, and greater economic productivity.²³⁴

The Foundation of Sustainable Development

As the former Secretary-General stated in the foreword of the last report on the achievements and missing actions of the MDGs, “[W]e need to tackle root causes and do more to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.”²³⁵ Water is crucial for the survival of all living beings; therefore, it is a basic pillar for economic and social growth.²³⁶ In fact, “water is a vital factor of production, so diminishing water supplies can translate into slower growth that cloud economic prospects.”²³⁷ Furthermore, mismanagement of water is often disproportionately more harmful in poorer societies, which tend to live on marginal land areas that are more prone to environmental problems.²³⁸ Therefore, the poorest populations end up at a higher risk from contaminated water and inadequate sanitation.²³⁹

Relationship with Other SDGs

Water and sanitation are essential to the overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda.²⁴⁰ Indeed, both play an important role in areas such as education, health, poverty reduction, and climate change.²⁴¹ Water management and sanitation are therefore crucial not only to achieving the SDGs, but also to the possibility of shared prosperity.²⁴² Due to the interconnectedness of the different aspects of sustainable development, water is seen as the common currency that links nearly every SDG; for instance, ample water supplies are essential to food production and food security.²⁴³ Therefore, SDG 2, which focuses on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture, is directly linked to SDG 6.²⁴⁴ Likewise, “clean and safe drinking water and sanitation systems are necessary” for achieving SDG 3 on health, since better systems are less prone to bacteria, viruses, and disease-transmitting insects.²⁴⁵

Present Actions and Future Challenges

Enhancing International Cooperation

Since ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all is vital for both human beings and the planet, effective actions are taking place. As a matter of fact, “Integrated Water Resources

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Watershed, *Achieving SDG 6 through empowering civil society organisations*, 2017.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; Bos, *Manual of the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation for Practitioners*, 2016.

²³³ High Level Panel on Water, *Action Plan*, 2016, p. 10.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ UN DESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 2015, p. 3.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ World Bank Group, *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy*, p. vi.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ UN DESA, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges*, 2013, p. x.

²⁴¹ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, p. 21.

²⁴² World Bank Group, *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy*, p. vi.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁴⁵ World Bank Group, *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy*, p. vi.

Management plans are underway in every region of the world,” demonstrating universal commitment to SDG 6.²⁴⁶ Geographical blocs such as the African, Latin American, and Caribbean regions, comprised mostly of developing countries, are enhancing South-South cooperation.²⁴⁷ The goal of this type of cooperation is to share information, including technology, methods, and techniques, for the purpose of improving access to safe water and sanitation.²⁴⁸ In fact, one of the most effective actions taking place in regard to water and sanitation are the alliances being maintained both within and among geographical organizations.²⁴⁹ These alliances have produced a tangible increase in political leadership and awareness.²⁵⁰

Urban Environments and Growing Populations

Urbanization is one of the biggest drivers of employment and opportunities, helping improve the economic situation of thousands of people worldwide.²⁵¹ However, rapid urbanization also “adds pressure to the resource base, and increases demand for energy, water, and sanitation.”²⁵² With this in mind, in order to achieve sustainable development, the coordination and integration of several elements is necessary, such as land use, food security, employment creation, water conservation, waste and recycling management, and the provision of education, health care, and housing.²⁵³ Humanity will continue to face challenges over time, as “growing populations, rising incomes, and expanding cities will create a world where the demand for water rises exponentially, while supply becomes more erratic and uncertain.”²⁵⁴ It is projected that the world’s population will reach 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion over the next 20 years, and 11.2 billion by the end of the century.²⁵⁵ The loss of 5.2 million hectares of forest in 2010 represents a possible threat to water and sanitation for all humanity since urban environments are growing, affecting natural areas, and demanding even more resources.²⁵⁶ Indeed, if the world cannot change the course of human and urban growth, projections suggest that it may face a 40% deficit in water availability by 2030, and “economic growth in some regions may be cut by 6% due to water scarcity alone.”²⁵⁷

Natural Disasters and Water Scarcity

Based on climate change and current trends, water scarcity will likely spread to many as yet unaffected countries, and it will worsen in those where it is already an issue.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, if climate change continues to affect weather patterns, the incidence of severe drought will increase.²⁵⁹ As part of a chain reaction, this will also affect agriculture, prolonging the time it takes for products to become consumable and therefore posing a potential threat to global food security.²⁶⁰ Likewise, water scarcity could increase the likelihood of political, social, and economic tensions among countries.²⁶¹

Technology

Technology and science are crucial to sustainable development.²⁶² Development, deployment, and diffusion of technologies that fit with an environmental perspective are necessary for the achievement of the SDGs.²⁶³ Therefore, “affordable technological solutions have to be developed and disseminated widely,” including for the benefit of

²⁴⁶ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, p. 6.

²⁴⁷ UN HLPF, *Input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2017/1/Add.4)*, 2017.

²⁴⁸ UN HLPF, *Input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2017/1/Add.3)*, 2017.

²⁴⁹ UN HLPF, *Input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/HLPF/2017/1/Add.4)*, 2017.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ UN DESA, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges*, 2013, p. ix.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. x.

²⁵⁴ World Bank Group, *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy*, p. vi.

²⁵⁵ UN DESA, *World Population projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050*, 2015.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ High Level Panel on Water, *World Water Data Initiative Roadmap*, p. 5.

²⁵⁸ High Level Panel on Water, *Action Plan*, 2016, p. 8.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² UN DESA, *Technology*, 2017.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all in line with SDG 6.²⁶⁴ SDG target 6.b specifically notes the importance of capacity-building for developing countries in relation to “water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.”²⁶⁵ Although technology required to support the implementation of SDG 6 already exists, it is often not effectively used: for instance, “rainwater harvesting relies on low cost and easy-to-manage technology; it could be more widely employed where groundwater is scarce.”²⁶⁶ The potential contribution of information and communications technology (ICT) has also yet to be fully explored, especially in relation to data collection and monitoring that could better inform strategies to increase access to water and sanitation.²⁶⁷

Conclusion

After the expiry of the *Millennium Declaration* and its eight MDGs, the post-2015 development agenda was set in motion to keep on building on the progress already made.²⁶⁸ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* established a continued global commitment to achieving real success based on the 17 SDGs and 169 targets.²⁶⁹ Among these, the sixth SDG tackles one of the most important topics: ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.²⁷⁰ After years of having their importance underestimated, water and sanitation now are human rights and receiving the attention they deserve.²⁷¹ They have in fact emerged as priority issues due to their connection with almost every other SDG.²⁷² For example, SDG 11 illustrates the relationship between water and sanitation and the ideal of having sustainable cities.²⁷³ SDG 3, which focuses on health and well-being, is also directly connected, since water and sanitation are essential to the proper functioning of a living body.²⁷⁴ In light of such considerations, it is of great significance to state that many actions involving various actors are underway.²⁷⁵ Throughout different UN entities, frameworks, and conferences, among others, it is being shown that the planet and human beings are approaching the goal of sustainable development. It must be mentioned that current efforts are producing positive outcomes, such as a growing percentage of the global population that now has safer water and better sanitation services.²⁷⁶ This type of progress occurs not only through effective actions but also as a result of financing this noble cause.²⁷⁷ Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the SDGs function in a manner similar to a chain reaction, especially with regard to water and sanitation, since these issues are at the very core of sustainable development.²⁷⁸ Failure to achieve SDG 6 could put all of the other goals at risk.²⁷⁹

Further Research

It is crucial for delegates to remain aware of relevant ongoing developments, as the 2030 Agenda is in just its second year of existence, and many actions remain to be implemented over the next 13 years. Delegates should be up to date on the progress of SDG 6 in particular. How can HLPF bring together organizations, institutions, and other

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁶⁶ United Kingdom, *Access to Water and Sanitation*, 2016.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ UN Conference on Sustainable Development, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.216/16)*, 2012.

²⁶⁹ UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results” and Ministerial declaration of the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind” (E/HLS/2016/1)*, 2016.

²⁷⁰ UN Conference on Sustainable Development, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.216/16)*, 2012.

²⁷¹ UN Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, *Making water a human right*, 2017.

²⁷² World Bank Group, *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy*, p. 3.

²⁷³ UN-Water, *Integrated Monitoring Guide for SDG 6: Targets and global indicators*, 2016, p. 21.

²⁷⁴ UN Conference on Sustainable Development, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/CONF.216/16)*, 2012.

²⁷⁵ UN DESA, *Expert Group Meeting: Enhancing Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) Engagement in National Level Reviews*, 2017, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*, 2016, p. 22.

²⁷⁷ UN-Water, *Integrated Monitoring Guide for SDG 6: Targets and global indicators*, 2016, p. 21.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

major groups to come together in pursuit of SDG 6? How can monitoring and reporting of progress towards SDG 6 be improved? How can the international community facilitate technology development and transfer to assist developing countries with achieving SDG 6?

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This manual summarizes the discussion of water and sanitation in relation to human rights. It notably includes insights from Léo Heller, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. This document is particularly effective in its description of water and sanitation as human rights and the way in which states should protect, respect, and promote them. It provides a different view of the topic that both contrasts with and supports the development perspective. Delegates will find in this document a rights-based perspective on the implementation of SDG 6.

High Level Panel on Water. (2016). *Action Plan*. Retrieved 23 May 2017 from:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11280HLPW_Action_Plan_DEF_11-1.pdf

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the President of the World Bank decided that the creation of the High-Level Panel on Water would contribute significantly to the achievement of SDG 6. In this document, the Panel acknowledges that water is the issue that connects various other topics, such as public health, food security, well-being, and climate action. However, the Panel also recognizes the challenges that they face. The Panel is composed of 12 high-level representatives from different countries. This document will provide relevant information for delegates to see the way in which different SDGs are connected through SDG 6.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council, 2017 session. (2017). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2017/66)*. Retrieved 30 August 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/E/2017/66>

This is the most recent report of the Secretary-General assessing the progress and achievements towards the SDGs. It is crucial in the sense that it gives a concrete and solid idea of how the 17 goals and 169 targets have been tackled. Likewise, the report provides states with an idea of where more effort is required. In order to demonstrate concrete global outcomes, the report presents data to support the actions carried out. This report will help give delegates a clear idea of present and future actions for the implementation of the SDGs.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2015). *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. Retrieved 2 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/313>

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is of great relevance for the whole functioning of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it represents one of their main sources of funding. This document describes the compromises and partnerships to which states have committed to provide greater support to areas such as domestic, public, and private spaces. It also promotes deeper cooperation between countries. Delegates will find this a useful resource in researching in the topic of funding for the 2030 Agenda.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 2 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

This resolution is of paramount importance since it establishes the shift from the Millennium Development Goals that expired in 2015. This resolution clearly establishes the new objectives for the international community. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development determines the 17 new SDGs and the 169 targets that aim to focus international efforts more effectively on the issues that were pursued by the MDGs. In the same regard, this document reflects a deeper sense of engagement and ambition in terms of improving the condition of both people and the planet. Delegates will find this source useful as they explore issues related to establishing new goals for development, especially with regard to SDG 6.

United Nations Water Conference. (1977). *Mar del Plata Action Plan*. Retrieved 31 May 2017 from: http://internationalwaterlaw.org/bibliography/UN/UN_Mar%20del%20Plata%20Action%20Plan_1977.pdf

The establishment of the Mar del Plata Action Plan was an integral part in the process of providing clean water and sanitation for all. The most important factor to highlight is that the UN Water Conference recognized water as a human right — official acknowledgment that gave the topic greater legitimacy in the political sphere. Moreover, the Action Plan demonstrates an increase in the detail and attention being given to topics such as the quality and efficient management of water.

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