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## High-Level Political Forum Background Guide 2020

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# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). This year's staff is: Directors Vincent Carrier (Conference A) and Chase Mitchell (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Dominic Tierno (Conference A) and Aemin Becker (Conference B). Vincent completed his MSc in Biology at Laval University and is currently pursuing a PhD in Molecular Microbiology at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø and an MBA in Strategic Projects Management. Chase earned his BBA in Economics and Global Business in 2015 and currently works in international development in Washington, DC. Dominic completed his BA in Political Science at Stockton University in May 2019, and returned to Stockton where he is currently pursuing an MA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Aemin completed her BA and BS in Political Science and National Security Studies at the University of New Haven and is currently pursuing a Masters in International Security at Sciences Po Paris, France.

The topics under discussion for High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development are:

1. Building Partnerships to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
2. Ending Abuse, Exploitation, Trafficking and All Forms of Violence against and Torture of Children

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 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 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 March 2020 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - 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 pre-written 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](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

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 the Under-Secretaries-General for the General Assembly Department, Collin King(Conference A) and Leah Schmidt (Conference B), at [usg.ga@nmun.org](mailto:usg.ga@nmun.org).

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

Sincerely,

**Conference A**

Vincent Carrier, *Director*

Dominic Tierno, *Assistant Director*

**Conference B**

Chase Mitchell, *Director*

Aemin Becker, *Assistant Director*



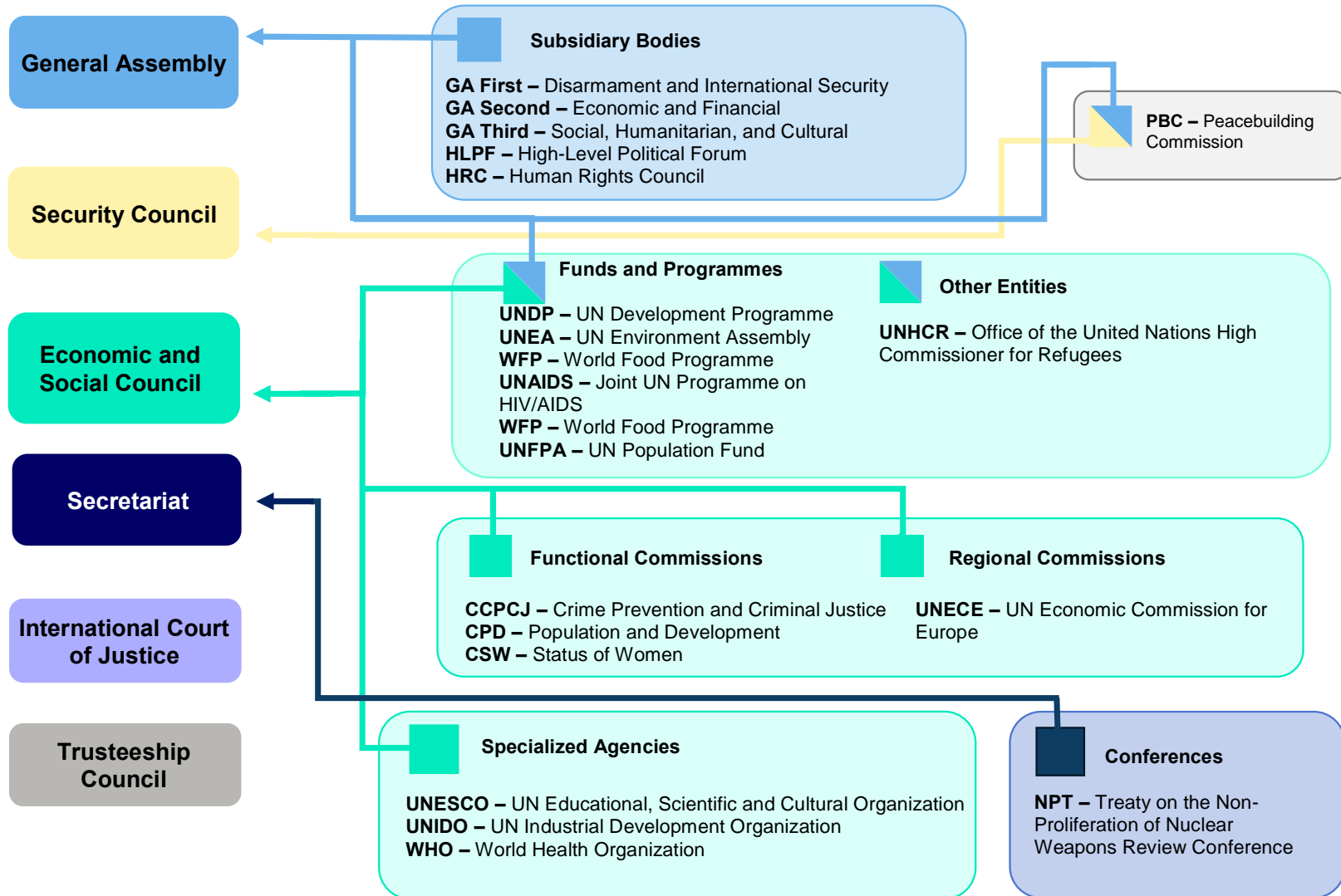


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## United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



## 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.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

The World Commission on Environment and Development, in 1987, presented a new concept to frame multiple dimensions of future global development and the international community started working on a compromise on how sustainable development could be implemented across the globe.<sup>2</sup> Still, it took several years until the outcome document of the United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want* (2012), finally delineated the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.<sup>3</sup> These steps were milestones on the path towards the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).<sup>4</sup>

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.

In 1993, a year after the adoption of Agenda 21 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the UN General Assembly established HLPF’s predecessor, the Commission on Sustainable Development, to monitor the outputs of UNCED.<sup>5</sup> The CSD was responsible for keeping sustainable development on the agenda, coordinating the sharing of knowledge and best practices to achieve a global sustainable development, and for reviewing the implementation of UNCED recommendations.<sup>6</sup> However, stakeholders from all three dimensions of sustainable development were not sufficiently included in policy decisions and several representatives, particularly from the global south and from developing Member States, had insufficient funding to participate.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, although the work of the CSD was based on a multi-year program which facilitated preparation for the meetings, Member States felt that it prevented discussion on new and emerging global issues.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, among its most notable achievements, the actions of the CSD demonstrated the vital importance of a structure that gathered all stakeholders, including representatives from indigenous peoples, and children and youth, that actively reviewed global progress toward sustainable development.<sup>9</sup>

In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) established the HLPF to build on the experience of CSD and replace it.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the 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.”<sup>11</sup> In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda, including the 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets.<sup>12</sup> The SDGs address topics including the promotion of peaceful societies by

<sup>1</sup> UNECE, *Sustainable Development - Concept and Action*; UN WCED, *Our Common Future*, 1987, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; UN DESA, *Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)*, (2016).

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, *Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/757)*, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> UN General Assembly, *Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/757)*, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

<sup>11</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children (SDG 16), and the need to build and strengthen partnerships to achieve the SDGs (SDG 17). Thereby, the 2030 Agenda introduced a new era of international dialogue and partnership for fostering and facilitating all three dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>13</sup>

### **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).<sup>14</sup> Under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, heads of state and government officials provide political guidance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and discuss emerging challenges.<sup>15</sup> At the end of their meeting, they adopt an international declaration on sustainable development, which is ultimately submitted to the UN General Assembly.<sup>16</sup> 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 under thematic reviews.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, while the meetings held through the UN General Assembly focus on basic progress with the SDGs, those convened through ECOSOC follow respective themes determined by the UN General Assembly and concentrate on a particular subset of SDGs.<sup>18</sup> These meetings are followed by a meeting attended by ministers and other government officials who work in different relevant departments, such as environment or foreign affairs.<sup>19</sup> The forum also conducts voluntary reviews on the follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all Member States.<sup>20</sup>

All Member States of the UN and specialized agencies take part in HLPF and all meetings seek to find a consensus.<sup>21</sup> 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 CSD, as well as voluntary contributions from Member States.<sup>22</sup> The Fund is exclusively dedicated to facilitate the participation of developing countries and to support the preparation of the Forum.<sup>23</sup> Following the lessons learned from the CSD on the financial incapacity of some Member States to be included, 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.<sup>24</sup> The budget ensures that the body has sufficient financial resources to prepare for and

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<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> UN DGC, *New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> UN DGC, *New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Martens, *The HLPF 2016: First global meeting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*, Global Policy Watch, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> UN DGC, *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.

<sup>20</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

conduct its sessions.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup>

### **Mandate, Functions, and Powers**

Overall, the mandate of the HLPF is to provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations at all levels to all stakeholders in a holistic approach to follow up on and review progress towards the implementation of sustainable development commitments.<sup>27</sup> The HLPF promotes the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in an action-oriented agenda and considers new and emerging issues.<sup>28</sup> The 2030 Agenda assigned a central oversight role to the HLPF to assess the progress of implementing the SDGs.<sup>29</sup> In general, the Forum is mandated to facilitate knowledge-sharing and lessons learned between all stakeholders, and to support and assess regular voluntary reviews conducted by Member States.<sup>30</sup> In July, 2019, 141 Member States presented national reviews of their efforts toward the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>31</sup> In addition, HLPF includes all relevant stakeholders in the discussion, especially representatives from vulnerable groups, and verifies that emerging issues in the context of sustainable development are on the international community's agenda.<sup>32</sup>

In parallel to the HLPF, the UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) supports Member States “in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies, notably through knowledge-sharing, research, training, and partnerships.”<sup>33</sup> While it shares some areas of expertise with HLPF, UNOSD focuses on providing Member States with concrete support, while HLPF monitors the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

The Forum publishes the *Global Sustainable Development Report* annually, and it seeks to strengthen cooperation between science and policy makers.<sup>36</sup> With the support of ECOSOC, HLPF also promotes technology and knowledge-sharing in order to achieve sustainable development and improve cooperation and coordination inside the UN.<sup>37</sup> The Forum works closely with governments and civil society.<sup>38</sup> The HLPF 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.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> UN DSD, *Division for Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>27</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Special edition: progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2019/68)*, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> UNOSD, *United Nations Office for Sustainable Development*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> UN DESA, *Who we are*.

<sup>36</sup> UN DSD, *Global Sustainable Development Report - 2016 Edition*, 2016; UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – Global Sustainable Development Report; Sustainable Development 2015, The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*.

<sup>37</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

organizations hold special rights to participate in the dialogue and contribute to HLPF's work, as they are permitted to attend and even participate in official meetings.<sup>40</sup>

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

The HLPF first met in 2016 under the auspices of the ECOSOC following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>41</sup> During the forum, government representatives and relevant stakeholders discussed means for “ensuring that no one is left behind” and set the first steps toward a globally inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>42</sup> Ministers acknowledged that groups such as communities in rural areas, women, and youth are at risk of not benefiting from upcoming initiatives for global sustainable development and that collecting quality data and including vulnerable groups in decision-making processes is necessary for the achievement of the SDGs.<sup>43</sup> In 2017, the HLPF gathered to focus the discussion on “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities, and addressing related challenges.”<sup>44</sup> While each meeting is thematic in nature, participants have acknowledged the interlinked nature of the SDGs and that initiatives should address all three dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>45</sup> For instance, halting the decline in oceanic productivity and using marine resources sustainably, by increasing decision-making based on scientific research, would not only maintain healthy environments, but also serve to reduce and eliminate poverty; similarly, building partnerships is a key mechanism to support least developed and developing countries that are resources limited.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, participants at the Forum emphasized not only North-South; but also, South-South cooperation and partnerships as critical for achieving the SDGs.<sup>47</sup> In 2018, the HLPF addressed the need to support the “transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” at all levels of society as 2.1 billion people are still lacking safe water supply.<sup>48</sup> Participating government representatives underlined the need for long-term planning of urban and rural communities to include vulnerable groups, such as children, women and people with disabilities, and that emphasize innovation-driven development and sustainable consumption of resources.<sup>49</sup>

Recently, the HLPF gathered in July 2019 to discuss “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.”<sup>50</sup> UN officials recognized that the most vulnerable people and Member States will suffer the most when facing global challenges and shared concerns on rising inequalities that undermine social cohesion and prosperity.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the HLPF met under the auspices of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly at the SDG Summit in September 2019.<sup>52</sup> For the first time, Heads of State and Government convened to review the progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to discuss

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> UN ECOSOC, *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.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> 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” (E/HLS/2017/1)*, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Ministerial declaration of the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme: “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” (E/HLS/2018/1)*, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – High-Level Political Forum 2019 under the auspices of ECOSOC*.

<sup>51</sup> UN News, *Inclusion, empowerment and equality, must be ‘at the heart of our efforts’ to ensure sustainable development, says UN chief*, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – SDG Summit*.



results based on the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019.<sup>53</sup> The report, yet to be published, will provide world leaders with guidance from a scientific perspective on the progress of achieving the SDGs, considering all three dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, HLPF 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.<sup>55</sup> Tremendous challenges and obstacles to establish cooperation and build partnerships, in addition to protect children from violence and torture, are connected to the 2030 Agenda, making HLPF one of the most important political forums for a better future for the entire planet.<sup>56</sup> Its inclusive membership and openness to the participation of civil society make HLPF a key forum for building consensus to implement the SDGs and raise awareness for sustainable development.<sup>57</sup>

## Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). *Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)*. Retrieved 26 October 2019 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, established 1992 as an instrument to follow up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. CSD's experience with fostering sustainable development helps HLPF to define its agenda and shape its strategies and actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 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, Division for Sustainable Development. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 26 October 2019 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 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-seventh session. (2013). *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)*. Adopted on the report of the First Committee (A/70/460). Retrieved 26 October 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/67/290>

*This UN General Assembly resolution defines HLPF's mandate, structure, and governance. 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*

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<sup>53</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – SDG Summit*.

<sup>54</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*.

<sup>55</sup> UN DSD, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System*.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> 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.

*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 26 October 2019 from: <http://undocs.org/A/67/757>

*This report from the UN Secretary-General critically analyzes the work of CSD and emphasizes achievements as well as opportunities 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 CSD has achieved and which key aspects should be on the agenda for HLPF. It further clarifies that the processes of HLPF need to be designed to assist in effective and efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved 26 October 2019 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. 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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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2038Inauguaral%20HLPF%20Release%20rev.pdf>

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## I. Building Partnerships to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### Introduction

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) was conceptualized with the goal of providing a diverse set of development milestones for Member States.<sup>58</sup> To achieve these 17 intersectional Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Member States have recognized the importance of building multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>59</sup> SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) focuses on strengthening the means of implementation of the goals for Member States and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development, which may include private entities and public entities at the local, national, and regional levels.<sup>60</sup> In regards to these partnerships, the General Assembly emphasized that their facilitation would allow for better sharing of knowledge, expertise, and financial resources at all levels of society.<sup>61</sup> Intergovernmental partnerships are key in achieving SDG 17, and they can include South-South (between developing states) and North-South partnerships (between developed and developing states), which are necessary facilitating trade, gaining leverage in negotiations with international organizations, or the sharing of technology and resources.<sup>62</sup> Other types of partnerships include public-private partnerships, regional groups such as the European Union, and networks of experts.<sup>63</sup> Since the adoption of the SDGs, new partnership guidelines were utilized to facilitate partnerships between states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as The SEED Initiative, and Electricity for All, which make up just two of the more than 1000 partnerships registered with the SDG Partnerships Platform.<sup>64</sup>

The General Assembly has expressed the intention of UN bodies to further engage with partnerships by improving private sector outreach, developing approaches which enhance transparency, and even participating in fund matching for all partnerships.<sup>65</sup> Engaging various groups and stakeholders was also a focus in General Assembly resolution 66/288 (2012), in which partnerships involving the subnational and local levels were explicitly mentioned.<sup>66</sup> Resolution 66/288 also notes how the participation of women at all levels of decision-making can enhance sustainable development policies and partnerships.<sup>67</sup> Other groups such as labor unions, farmers, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations are highlighted to demonstrate the importance of including all social and political backgrounds in achieving productive multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>68</sup> In achieving the SDGs, it is critical that groups at all levels of society participate in development issues to ensure no interests or perspectives are left out, and to prevent marginalization of vulnerable groups.<sup>69</sup> Resource management and capacity-building are also critical, as resource distribution, technology sharing, funding to achieve development projects, and knowledge-sharing are necessary to improve challenges that vulnerable groups and fragile states may face.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: A Legacy Review Towards Realizing the 2030 Agenda*, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> 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. 18.

<sup>63</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: A Legacy Review Towards Realizing the 2030 Agenda*, 2015.

<sup>64</sup> UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform*.

<sup>65</sup> UN General Assembly, *Towards Global Partnerships: A Principle-Based Approach to Enhanced Cooperation Between the United Nations and all Relevant Partners (A/RES/68/234)*, 2014, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> UN General Assembly, *The Future we Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals Through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships – Ensuring That no one is Left Behind*, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: A Legacy Review Towards Realizing the 2030 Agenda*, 2015, p. 3.

## ***International and Regional Framework***

The 2030 Agenda and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) are directly related as the 2030 Agenda resulted in the creation of the SDGs, and the HLPF directly reviews their progress.<sup>71</sup> A component of the 2030 Agenda is examining the purpose each role of society maintains in facilitating sustainable development initiatives, and how each level of society can interact together to have more productive development outcomes; this includes not just national governments, but international organizations and financial institutions, NGOs, and even regional organizations and agreements as these are the key players in multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that the 2030 Agenda reaffirms the commitment of the UN to prior agreements, resolutions, and conventions while building on their frameworks to establish the current agenda.<sup>73</sup> Within each SDG there exists multiple related targets; SDG 17 maintains 19 individual targets.<sup>74</sup> Examples of these targets include SDG 17.4 which focuses on debt sustainability and restructuring; SDG 17.11 focused on the increase of exports from developing countries; and SDG 17.15 which outlines the need to respect national autonomy in implementing poverty eradication policies.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond the 2030 Agenda lie major agreements, include the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* (AAAA).<sup>76</sup> Multi-stakeholder partnerships are one of the key areas of focus of the Agenda, which are promoted between the private sector, civil society, the scientific community, academia, among others to achieve various infrastructure, economic, health, and employment-related targets.<sup>77</sup> The AAAA notes the importance that foreign direct investment can have in sustainable development, especially when appropriately aligned with national and regional strategic efforts.<sup>78</sup> In terms of global partnerships, the AAAA also notes the importance of South-South cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation for international development strategies (also outlined in SDG target 17.6).<sup>79</sup> Other issues addressed in the Agenda are the involvement of women in decision-making to enhance their societal roles through empowerment, international trade being used for development, and the use of science, technology, and capacity-building, all of which align with target outcomes in the 2030 Agenda.<sup>80</sup>

The importance of global partnerships to achieve a range of sustainable development objectives is also exemplified in the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (2015), which identifies the role of partnerships in international recovery and risk reduction efforts.<sup>81</sup> The goal of these partnerships is to interlink the regional, national, and local levels is that they can cooperate to further infrastructure, technology, and communication development to better address disaster risk challenges.<sup>82</sup> Similar approaches have been utilized to address climate change-related issues, namely with the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change* (2015); setting climate targets that are to be achieved through the multi-level collaboration and partnerships between local, national, and regional governments along with civil society and the private sector; these partnerships being necessary for states to collaborate with private industries to develop environmentally friendly infrastructure, and to attempt to prevent further global temperature rise.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> UN General Assembly, *Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level* (A/RES/70/299), 2016, pp. 1-2.

<sup>72</sup> UN General Assembly, *Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* (A/RES/67/290), 2012, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>74</sup> UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> 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. 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-37.

<sup>81</sup> UN General Assembly, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (A/RES/69/283), 2015, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup> COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015, p. 5.

Apart from the major international agreements, there are regional partnerships that encompass various states with similar issues and goals; one such regional partnership being the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Groups of States (ACP).<sup>84</sup> The ACP focuses on addressing development issues through collaboration between states, and other international organizations such as the European Union (EU).<sup>85</sup> The Member States of the ACP joined together in solidarity to enable greater negotiation leverage at the international level so they can better achieve their collective goals.<sup>86</sup> As established in their report, *Towards the ACP We Want* (2017), the ACP has been focused on achieving the various SDGs through its policy framework, enabling the group to be an effective global player.<sup>87</sup> SDG 17 is specifically mentioned in *Towards the ACP We Want*, especially in regards to facilitating scientific innovation, improving economic and environmental efficiency, responding to fundamental needs, and the empowerment of people.<sup>88</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

The HLPF produces a yearly report on SDG partnerships, and also created the SDG Partnerships Platform, which shares progress on all partnerships.<sup>89</sup> Participating states and actors in the HLPF have access to Partnership Exchange, a platform which is designed to showcase existing SDG partnerships, while also building additional support for building new partnerships.<sup>90</sup> The Partnership Exchange meets for one day annually, is directly connected to the HLPF, and focuses on hosting panels and sessions that address challenges and questions about maintaining and creating partnerships.<sup>91</sup> The 2018 report focusing on the Partnership Exchange reviewed the 2018 HLPF session, in which SDG 17 was one of the goals in focus.<sup>92</sup> Findings from this session showed that partnerships required additional flexibility in operations, new sources for funding, and that partners would be most effective if they aligned with the 2030 Agenda.<sup>93</sup> One partnership was eTrade for All, which focused on SDG 17 and brought together a series of actors ranging from international organizations, multi-national companies, civil society, and national governments.<sup>94</sup> The goal of this partnership was to utilize a multi-stakeholder effort to better integrate and secure e-commerce development and trade in various states.<sup>95</sup>

Resources to aid partnerships such as the Partnership Data for SDGs (PD4SDGs) launched to provide greater transparency and streamlining to better facilitate the flow of information between multi-level stakeholders.<sup>96</sup> PD4SDGs encourages public-private and civil society groups to collaborate through a centralized platform to better share information with each other, which would further enhance the ability to meet the other SDGs.<sup>97</sup> In addition, The Partnering Initiative and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs released a guidebook titled *Maximising the impact of partnerships for the SDGs: A practical guide to partnership value creation* (2019), which evaluates the various partnership eras in the international system, and determine the best methods in which partnerships could be created and or maintained to achieve long-term success.<sup>98</sup> Another resource designed to aid partnerships is the Sustainable

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<sup>84</sup> ACP Group, *Towards the ACP We Want*, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform*.

<sup>90</sup> UN DESA, *Partnership Exchange: Advancing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals Through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships – Ensuring That no one is Left Behind*, 2016, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> UN DESA, The Partnering Initiative, *Maximising the Impact of Partnerships for the SDGs: A Practical Guide to Partnership Value Creation*, 2019, pp. 5-6.

Development Goal Fund (SDG-F) which oversees mechanisms to implement joint programs in the field to better meet the SDG targets.<sup>99</sup> SDG-F also evaluates proposals from Member States for program funding, and makes determinations based on a combination of national ownership, and proposed utilization of UN groups.<sup>100</sup>

The use of multi-stakeholder partnerships is not limited to the UN, as partnership platforms are being adopted by other organizations as well; one example being the EU SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform.<sup>101</sup> The SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform is designed to assist the European Commission to integrate the SDGs within the EU itself.<sup>102</sup> This platform calls for the utilization of government at the national and local level, communities, businesses, and civil society to work together in achieving the SDGs and their individual targets.<sup>103</sup> Recommendations by the platform include adopting sustainable consumption and production, changes in climate and energy policies, and investing in people, employment, and social inclusion.<sup>104</sup> To better achieve implementation by utilizing all levels of the EU and its Member States, an accountability and review framework along with an indicator set were recommended for informing future leaders.<sup>105</sup>

### **Addressing Resource Management and Capacity for Partnerships**

The 2030 Agenda is a significant undertaking, and the UN has noted that to achieve the SDGs an unprecedented series of investments, technological sharing, cooperation, and a variety of other resources will be needed for success.<sup>106</sup> In accordance with its mandate, the HLPF can further address partnership capacity and resource management at annual meetings, or during their thematic SDG implementation reviews.<sup>107</sup> Funding, for example, will need to be provided by governments, international organizations, international financial institutions, and through other means of development aid.<sup>108</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) acknowledged that least developed countries and small island states are faced with fewer financial opportunities than countries with greater income to fully participate in various efforts toward achieving the SDGs.<sup>109</sup> While current partnerships already contribute to the flow of investments toward developing countries, additional efforts in the establishment of partnerships must be made to ensure that critical sectors, such as transports and energy, are adequately financially supported.<sup>110</sup> In addition, to aid the sharing of knowledge, technology, and other resources, it was determined that governance at all levels would have to evolve to adapt to new changes to achieve successful partnership outcomes.<sup>111</sup> In learning from prior development challenges, it was determined that intermediate deadlines on development goals could result in establishing greater accountability between governments and private groups, and that they would best be set by Member States and international organizations.<sup>112</sup> This is directly reflected in the HLPF Partnership Exchange in which Member States, private sector groups, and international organizations interact to address SDG targets

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<sup>99</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals Through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships – Ensuring That no one is Left Behind*, 2016, pp. 21-22.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>101</sup> EU, *Annex III: Summary of the Contribution of the SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform to the Reflection Paper “Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030”*, 2019, p. 126.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-127.

<sup>106</sup> UNDP, *Financing the 2030 Agenda - An Introductory Guidebook for UNDP Country Offices*, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> UN General Assembly, *Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level (A/RES/70/299)*, 2016, pp. 1-2.

<sup>108</sup> UNDP, *Financing the 2030 Agenda - An Introductory Guidebook for UNDP Country Offices*, 2018, pp. 1-10.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-10.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>111</sup> UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A Renewed Global Partnership for Development*, p. 20.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 20.



and timelines with transparency; this also allows for open discussion to determine the best ways to improve the methods in which the SDGs are addressed.<sup>113</sup>

Despite what has been learned, there are many challenges that still face Member States, the UN system, and all levels of multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>114</sup> At the national level a lack of coherent leadership and, at times, corruption, can adversely affect national level partnerships with local or international actors.<sup>115</sup> Challenges such as these can adversely affect trade, and the development of technological innovation.<sup>116</sup> Many countries rely on international trade, and private sector partnerships to introduce new technologies into their societies; many of which are necessary for containing epidemics, furthering national research and development projects, and contributing to other projects to aid the public.<sup>117</sup> To ensure these resources can reach the public, partnerships can be utilized to allow greater accountability so resources can reach the groups who most need them.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Development and Promotion of Partnerships that Include Marginalized Groups***

Despite significant economic growth in the broader international community, many states and marginalized groups did not achieve similar economic developments.<sup>119</sup> For many people, disease, hunger, and poverty are still prominent due to discrimination against various groups, socio-economic status, geography, governance, and fragility compounding to create long-term disadvantages.<sup>120</sup> For example, groups including women, LGBT individuals, refugees, the elderly, and the disabled have historically faced discrimination.<sup>121</sup> Participation of youth in civil society is also noted as being vital to achieving the SDGs, as outlined in the 2018 World Youth Report.<sup>122</sup> Agenda 2030 has acknowledged that these groups often face growing inequality in states that are focused on new development, which can adversely affect their participation in addressing development challenges.<sup>123</sup> In 2018, the UN Committee for Development Policy acknowledged these challenges in a report to the HLPF, which outlined how all voices could be heard in states going through new development and growth.<sup>124</sup> The CDP notes that it is essential for mechanisms to be established that empower all members of a society, so that they are able to voice their concerns or ideas regarding development matters.<sup>125</sup> At times there may be challenges with aiding in areas such as gender equality, which depends on the mobilization of overseas development aid as it is the only source of funding that can track spending on gender equality related issues as outlined in SDG target 17.3.<sup>126</sup>

To address these factors, the SDGs and their individual targets can be achieved in-part by a three “lever” approach focusing on examining people-driven data, the empowerment of civil society, and integration of equity-focused SDG-related policies.<sup>127</sup> It is important to know which groups of individuals are being

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<sup>113</sup> UN DESA, *Partnership Exchange: Advancing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>114</sup> UNDP, *Financing the 2030 Agenda - An Introductory Guidebook for UNDP Country Offices*, 2018, p. 32.

<sup>115</sup> UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A Renewed Global Partnership for Development*, p. 23.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A Renewed Global Partnership for Development*, p. 14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>119</sup> UNDP, *What Does it Mean to Leave no one Behind? A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation*, 2018, p. 6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, pp. 1-21.

<sup>123</sup> UNDP, *What Does it Mean to Leave no one Behind? A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation*, 2018, p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> UNCDP, *Leaving No One Behind*, 2018, p.1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>126</sup> UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 62.

<sup>127</sup> UNDP, *What Does it Mean to Leave no one Behind? A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation*, 2018, p. 21.

excluded from the wider aspects of global socio-economic development, and what factors lead these groups into their respective situations.<sup>128</sup> Empowerment is the key to ensuring that marginalized groups can partake in SDG framework implementation, or even local, regional, or national level decision-making on new policies.<sup>129</sup> Inclusive strategies that leave no groups or individuals behind will also be key in achieving various SDG targets, and can be effectively utilized through educational and public outreach campaigns.<sup>130</sup> Such campaigns may be accomplished through partnerships between local, national, and regional governments, but may also be adversely affected at these levels in states that are suffering from fragility, a vulnerability that results from conflict or other environmental or socio-economic issues.<sup>131</sup> Mainstreaming, Accelerations, and Policy Support (MAPS) is a system designed by UNDP to aid Member States suffering from fragility to address sustainable development challenges.<sup>132</sup> MAPS also includes a fragility-sensitive approach which is key to ensuring that all groups from all areas of society are not left behind in achieving development goals, while maintaining awareness of the unique issues that fragile states face.<sup>133</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The HLPF, in its mandate to address the SDGs in all their aspects, comprehensively reviews partnerships to achieve the targets within SDG 17.<sup>134</sup> The role of multi-level stakeholder partnerships will remain significant, and SDG 17 attempts to appropriately address how these partnerships should be facilitated.<sup>135</sup> The UN and its various agencies educate stakeholders on how to produce productive partnerships, while including all levels of society in sustainable development.<sup>136</sup> Member States, private sector industries and groups, local level governments, and national organizations all have key roles to play in sustainable development, yet challenges remain to be addressed.<sup>137</sup> There are still groups of people who have not seen the benefits from globalized cooperation and international investment, nor have their voices been taken into consideration in development matters.<sup>138</sup> This among other issues were reviewed at the 2019 SDG Summit, in which the HLPF reviewed the need for creating better partnership environments, which involved the elimination of corruption and further national level reforms.<sup>139</sup> The 2019 SDG Summit also affirmed the need for partnerships that maintain environmental standards, especially public-private partnerships for their importance in achieving the Paris Agreement targets.<sup>140</sup>

### **Further Research**

What can the HLPF do to better facilitate partnerships, and ensure that no one is left behind? What are the benefits of having full representation of historically under-represented communities? How can a state, local government, or other entity ensure these individuals or groups that their concerns will be met? What role can the HLPF maintain to ensure that countries affected by war or severe natural disaster can still work to maintain SDG targets, despite enormous challenges? In working to achieve greater development

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<sup>128</sup> UNDP, *What Does it Mean to Leave no one Behind? A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation*, 2018, p. 23.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23.

<sup>132</sup> UNDP, *UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile Situations*, 2016, pp. 23-25.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>134</sup> UN DESA, *Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: A Legacy Review Towards Realizing the 2030 Agenda*, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>135</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 10.

<sup>136</sup> UN DESA, The Partnering Initiative, *Maximising the Impact of Partnerships for the SDGs: A Practical Guide to Partnership Value Creation*, 2019, pp. 3-39.

<sup>137</sup> UNDP, *What Does it Mean to Leave no one Behind? A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation*, 2018, p. 21.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>139</sup> UN HLPF, *SDG Summit 2019*, 2019, pp. 8-9.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

status, how can Member States work to ensure that historically marginalized groups maintain active roles in new policy decisions?

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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2564&menu=35>

*This guidebook provides essential information to various stakeholders in sustainable development regarding the facilitation of more meaningful, and productive partnerships. The guidebook extensively reviews the role of SDG 17 as a means to establishing better multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships of value. Also noted are references to prior frameworks, drawing comparisons of prior shortcomings with modern partnership improvements. In reviewing this document, delegates will be able to ascertain the various nuances involved with building and sustaining partnerships in sustainable development, along with the roles of each of the actors.*

United Nations Development Programme (2018). *Financing the 2030 Agenda - An Introductory Guidebook for UNDP Country Offices*. Retrieved 23 August 2019 from:

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/2030-agenda/financing-the-2030-agenda.html>

*This guidebook addresses the various methods in which to finance the Sustainable Development Goals, namely through multi-stakeholder partnerships. The guidebook provides an in-depth look into the various means of financial implementation, and the roles of the public and private sector in funding the SDGs. Various data can also be found throughout, which explains how investment processes work, and how financing structures operate in the international system. This document is critical for delegates to gain an understanding of the actors, and the processes involved in funding sustainable development projects.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-sixth session. (2012). *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*. Retrieved 21 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/66/288>

*This resolution was focused on affirming the commitments of the UN and the international community in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other development frameworks. The General Assembly acknowledged various shortcomings in partnership facilitation, specifically in the areas of resource mobilization, resulting in inequitable outcomes. A desire to engage various groups and stakeholders at the private and public levels, even regarding corporate sustainability reporting measures. Delegates who utilize this document will see the foundational establishment of the 2030 Agenda and gain a critical understanding of the promises and objectives made by Member States and the UN at the time.*

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 21 July 2019 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/69/313>

*Agenda 2030 stated the intentions of the United Nations and various Member States to affirm their commitment to a new series of Sustainable Development Goals. One of the primary areas of focus was the facilitation of multi-stakeholder partnerships that encompassed all levels and areas of society to achieve the goals. SDG 17 specifically focused on achieving various partnerships to achieve the remaining SDGs by 2030. This resolution serves as an essential primary source that outlines the approaches of the General Assembly to establish more comprehensive financing methods for sustainable development.*

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*Agenda 2030 stated the intentions of the United Nations and various Member States to affirm their commitment to a new series of Sustainable Development Goals. One of the primary areas of focus was the facilitation of multi-stakeholder partnerships that encompassed all levels and areas of society to achieve the goals. SDG 17 specifically focused on achieving various partnerships to achieve the remaining SDGs by 2030. For delegates, this document will provide the most comprehensive and detailed view into the reasoning and objectives that established the SDGs.*

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## II. Ending Abuse, Exploitation, Trafficking and All Forms of Violence against and Torture of Children

### **Introduction**

Children, defined by Article 1 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989) as anyone under the age of 18, are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation.<sup>141</sup> In 2016, as many as 1 billion youth, more than half of the world's children, experienced violence or were victims of harmful practices.<sup>142</sup> The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* indicated that child victims accounted for nearly 30% of all detected victims, with girls primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation and boys for forced labor and other forms of exploitation, including exploitative begging and forced criminal activities.<sup>143</sup> Despite these realities, violence against children is often unreported or unseen.<sup>144</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) studies have found that self-reported child sexual and physical abuse was 30 times and 75 times higher, respectively, than the numbers included in official national and international reports.<sup>145</sup>

However, children are accorded special protection in many United Nations (UN) frameworks, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948).<sup>146</sup> In 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 titled *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which established 17 targeted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve by 2030.<sup>147</sup> The SDGs were created to encourage Member States to make progress in certain areas leading to a more peaceful and prosperous world.<sup>148</sup> The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is responsible for systematically monitoring on progress towards the achievement of these goals and their targets.<sup>149</sup> SDG 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) target 2 aims to measure progress on ending violent practices against children.<sup>150</sup> Experts have also identified that progress to eliminate violence against children can also accelerate the achievement of the rest of the SDGs, particularly SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), and SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation).<sup>151</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

UDHR was the first UN document to specifically recognize children as holding specially protected rights.<sup>152</sup> It was followed by the *Declaration on the Rights of the Child* (1959), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (1966), each of which accorded specific rights to children, notably the rights to education and protection.<sup>153</sup> In 1989, the CRC brought the rights established in previous declarations into a single

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<sup>141</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989; World Health Organization, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 Executive Summary*, 2018; World Health Organization, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>143</sup> UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*, 2018, pp. 28, 32.

<sup>144</sup> IDLO, *SDG 16 Conference: Conference in Preparation for HLPF 2019*, 2019, p. 10.

<sup>145</sup> WHO, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>146</sup> IDLO, *SDG 16 Conference: Conference in Preparation for HLPF 2019*, 2019, p. 4; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>147</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>151</sup> IDLO, *SDG 16 Conference: Conference in Preparation for HLPF 2019*, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>152</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>153</sup> UNICEF, *History of Child Rights*, 2019.

comprehensive document and became the foundation for children's rights within the international system.<sup>154</sup>

Various articles within these core frameworks provide protection for children from violence and exploitation.<sup>155</sup> For example, CRC Articles 19.1, 19.2, 35, and 36 accord protection to children from physical or mental violence, maltreatment, exploitation, and trafficking.<sup>156</sup> UDHR Article 4 prohibits slavery in all its forms, while CRC Article 32.1 recognizes the right of children to be protected from economic exploitation and from work harmful to the child's health and development.<sup>157</sup> CRC Article 33 also mandates the protection of children from using, producing, and/or trafficking narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.<sup>158</sup> Article 11 of the CRC establishes that State parties to the Convention must prevent the illegal transfer of children abroad, and Article 34 requires parties to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>159</sup> Eliminating trafficking and harmful practices against children are also important elements of SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), target 3: "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation" and SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) target 7: "take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms."<sup>160</sup>

The CRC was followed by the adoption of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1998) (Rome Statute), and by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182* (1999).<sup>161</sup> Article 8.2 of the Rome Statute established that the recruitment or usage by armed groups of children under 15 is a war crime.<sup>162</sup> Article 1 of the ILO Convention encourages State parties to immediately take measures, including the provision and/or application of penal and other types of sanctions, to prohibit and eliminate the "worst forms of child labor".<sup>163</sup> Child labor is defined in Article 3 as all forms of or practices similar to slavery, the use of a child for prostitution, pornography, or illicit activities, and work which threatens the child's health and safety.<sup>164</sup>

In 2000, the UN adopted the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography*, which explicitly prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.<sup>165</sup> Article 8 recognizes the vulnerability of child victims and calls for State parties to ensure that child victims within the criminal justice system are treated with their best interests as the primary consideration, while Article 9 underscores the importance of ensuring victims are assisted with integration and recovery.<sup>166</sup> State parties to the Optional Protocol were required to submit a comprehensive report detailing their progress in implementation within two years of its entry into force, then to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on any future developments.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> UNICEF, *History of Child Rights*, 2019.

<sup>155</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>158</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, pp. 7, 18.

<sup>161</sup> ICC, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 2011; ILO, *Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention No. 182*, 1999.

<sup>162</sup> ICC, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 2011.

<sup>163</sup> ILO, *Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention No. 182*, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>165</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (A/RES/54/263)*, 2000.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*



The *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime* was adopted in 2000, the same day as the Convention itself, and directly addresses trafficking in children.<sup>168</sup> Article 9 mandates that State parties establish or reinforce existing policies, programs, and other measures such as research, information, mass media campaigns and social and economic initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and protect victims, especially women and children.<sup>169</sup>

The 2030 Agenda is a pivotal framework that explicitly discusses ending the abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children in many of its targets.<sup>170</sup> SDG 8, target 7 and SDG 5, target 2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation) and target 3 are specific examples, however children are included in most of the SDGs.<sup>171</sup> To better measure global progress in achieving the SDGs, General Assembly resolution 71/313 on “Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2017) established indicators for measuring the SDGs.<sup>172</sup> These indicators aid in calculating progress by providing universal guidelines on how to measure key statistics.<sup>173</sup> HLPF regularly examines progress on each SDG, and its efforts to address the problem of violence against children are accompanied by the General Assembly’s annual adoption of a resolution on “The Rights of the Child.”<sup>174</sup>

Regional groups and other international organizations have also developed frameworks to address violence against children.<sup>175</sup> In 2015, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) developed a policy framework, *Protection of Children in Armed Conflict – the Way Forward*, that prioritizes supporting UN efforts to monitor grave violations committed against children in armed conflict, developing standard operating procedures for reporting violence, and ensuring that the protection of children affected by armed conflict is part of any training provided to local forces.<sup>176</sup> NATO also appointed a Senior NATO Focal Point for Children and Armed Conflict to oversee progress.<sup>177</sup>

Within the European Union (EU), the *EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child* (2017) reiterates the international standards set by the 2030 Agenda and the CRC and provides recommendations for mainstreaming these standards into EU policies and programs.<sup>178</sup> The League of Arab States (LAS) *Arab Charter on Human Rights* (2004) accords specific protection to children from labor, sexual exploitation, and involvement in armed conflict situations.<sup>179</sup> The LAS Arab Childhood Committee submits reports on Member States child rights programs and activities and aids in implementing international and regional treaties.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> UN General Assembly, *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (A/RES/55/25)*, 2000.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 25.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>172</sup> UN General Assembly, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313)*, 2017.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>174</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *20 Years to Better Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict*, 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Rishmawi, *The League of Arab States: Human Rights Standards and Mechanisms*, 2015.

<sup>176</sup> NATO, *Protection of children in armed conflict*, 2018.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> EU, *Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child*, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>179</sup> Rishmawi, *The League of Arab States: Human Rights Standards and Mechanisms*, 2015, p. 84.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

## ***Role of the International System***

Many organizations within the UN system work to ensure children's rights are realized.<sup>181</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) actively works to protect the well-being and rights of children globally, with the third goal area of the *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021* (2018) being "every child is protected from violence and exploitation."<sup>182</sup> UNICEF brought more than 100 youth respondents together to create the *#ENDViolence Youth Manifesto* (2019), in which youth pledged to end violence in schools through a series of commitments and demands.<sup>183</sup> The Manifesto was drafted and presented in January 2019 at the Education World Forum as part of UNICEF's #ENDviolence campaign.<sup>184</sup> UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, also participate in advocacy and awareness campaigns concerning violence against children and occasionally work together, as they did in 2014, when they launched the campaign "Children, Not Soldiers," which sought to raise awareness on preventing the use of child soldiers in conflict.<sup>185</sup> UNICEF also works with regional partners, as the EU, to produce the *EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating Child Rights into Development Cooperation*, providing guidance on ensuring that child's rights are effectively and fully integrated into bilateral and multilateral developmental assistance programs.<sup>186</sup>

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict also facilitates UN dialogue on the plight of children in armed conflict by presenting annual reports to the General Assembly on progress, challenges, and areas of ongoing cooperation.<sup>187</sup> In the 2019 report, the Special Representative noted that the number of children killed or maimed has dramatically increased compared to previous years and that, while armed groups were largely responsible for this, 11% of child casualties could not be attributed to a specific party.<sup>188</sup> The Special Representative also noted that a large number of children continue to be abducted by armed groups, either for recruitment as human shields and soldiers or to be sexually exploited.<sup>189</sup> Additionally, the Special Representative submits annual reports to the UN Human Rights Council; contributes to the Universal Periodic Review process with information regarding children and armed conflict in specific countries; is involved in General Assembly discussions regarding the implementation of the SDGs related to children in conflict; and works closely with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to prioritize the protection of children in armed conflict situations.<sup>190</sup> In engaging outside the UN system, the Special Representative has facilitated a series of partnerships between the UN and regional bodies, including signing cooperation agreements with the African Union in 2013 and the LAS in 2014, and continuously working with the EU and NATO in developing protection policies for children affected by war.<sup>191</sup>

The UN Security Council actively discusses preventing violence against children within the context of armed conflict.<sup>192</sup> In 1999, the Security Council adopted resolution 1261 on "Children and Armed Conflict," which was the first resolution to discuss children affected by war and first placed this issue on the

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<sup>181</sup> UN DESA, *Transcript from Webinar – Introduction to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Major Groups and Other Stakeholders*, 2018.

<sup>182</sup> UNICEF, *What We Do*, 2019; UNICEF, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021 Executive Summary*, 2018.

<sup>183</sup> UNICEF, *The #ENDviolence Youth Manifesto*, 2019.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Children, Not Soldiers*, 2019.

<sup>186</sup> EU, *Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child*, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>187</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *20 Years to Better Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict*, 2016.

<sup>188</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/74/249)*, 2019.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *20 Years to Better Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict*, 2016.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

Security Council's agenda.<sup>193</sup> In 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1612 on "Children and Armed Conflict" establishing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.<sup>194</sup> This group reviews the Special Representative's reports regarding violations of international law against children affected by armed conflict and makes recommendations to ensure their future protection.<sup>195</sup> The group also produces annual reports which summarize their activities and meetings from the previous year.<sup>196</sup>

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) assists Member States with implementing measures to prevent and respond to violence against children, particularly the prevention of violence associated with child trafficking and exploitation by criminal or violent extremist groups.<sup>197</sup> In 2007, UNODC partnered with other UN entities to launch the "UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking" (UN.GIFT).<sup>198</sup> UN.GIFT works with both public and private sector partners to prevent human trafficking by reducing vulnerability, supporting victims, ensuring the prosecution of criminals involved, and increasing awareness.<sup>199</sup> UNODC has also launched the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) in partnership with the EU.<sup>200</sup> The GLO.ACT uses a six-pillared approach to prevent TIP and migrant smuggling within 13 target countries.<sup>201</sup>

The WHO recognizes the detrimental effects of youth violence on physical and mental health and on society.<sup>202</sup> The organization publishes reports, provides resources, develops strategies for addressing health-related issues (including violence against children), and facilitates partnerships with its Member States, civil society organizations (CSOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).<sup>203</sup>

Outside of the UN system, Member States and others actors concerned in ending violence against children established the "Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children," which facilitates collaboration in ending violence against children.<sup>204</sup> Products of this partnership include the "Safe to Learn Initiative," which recognized the problems posed by violence against children in schools, and the "End Violence Solutions Summit" that brought together public sector entities, NGOs, and CSOs to discuss how to prevent and respond to violence against children.<sup>205</sup> A Proclamation was published at the end of the Summit which contained conclusions jointly agreed upon by all attendees.<sup>206</sup> Among these conclusions was the need to prioritize children when reviewing progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda at the HLPF 2019.<sup>207</sup>

### **Legal Identity**

Multiple UN bodies have recognized the importance of legal identity for children, as a lack of it increases the likelihood of exploitation.<sup>208</sup> SDG 16, target 9 aims to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.<sup>209</sup> A person with a legal identity is recognized before the law and has access to rights such

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<sup>193</sup> UN Security Council, *On children and armed conflict (S/RES/1261 (1999))*, 1999.

<sup>194</sup> UN Security Council, *On children and armed conflict (S/RES/1612 (2005))*, 2005.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> UNODC, *Human Trafficking*, 2019.

<sup>198</sup> UNODC, *UN.GIFT – United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking*, 2016.

<sup>199</sup> UNODC, *UN.GIFT.HUB: About*, 2016.

<sup>200</sup> UNODC, *Overview – GLO.ACT*, 2019.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> WHO, *Violence and Injury Prevention: Youth Violence*, 2019.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> End Violence Against Children, *Who We Are*, 2019.

<sup>205</sup> End Violence Against Children, *Safe To Learn*, 2019; End Violence Against Children, *Solutions Summit*, 2019; End Violence Against Children, *Who We Are*, 2019.

<sup>206</sup> End Violence Against Children, *Agenda 2030 for Children: End Violence Solutions Summit Proclamation*, 2018.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Williams et al., *United Nations Legal Identity Agenda*, 2019.

<sup>209</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 25.

as education and healthcare; a person without legal identity may be recognized as stateless and deprived of access to these rights, which can lead to individuals being more likely to be subjected to abuse or exploitation.<sup>210</sup> UNICEF's *Annual Report 2018* (2018) showed that more than 100 countries still lack fully functioning birth registration systems and thus threatening the rights and safety of children.<sup>211</sup>

The World Bank "Identification for Development" (ID4D) initiative works toward the achievement of SDG 16 by engaging UN agencies, NGOs, and countries in promoting digital identification systems.<sup>212</sup> ID4D provides technical assistance, including guidelines on the design and usage of digital identification technology and monitoring and reviewing mechanisms for their use, to build global awareness regarding the importance of legal identity.<sup>213</sup> UNICEF also works to promote programs in support of birth registration through its community awareness campaigns, such as UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean's 2018 "Speak Up For Your Rights" campaign, which provided information on legal identity and children's rights in an accessible format to children living in a specific region.<sup>214</sup> By engaging in awareness campaigns with parents, who may believe birth registration is unimportant and therefore may not register their children, UNICEF hopes to ensure that more children have a legal identity.<sup>215</sup>

Analysis by ID4D also showed that high costs to attain an ID are correlated with lower under-5 birth registration rates in low-income countries.<sup>216</sup> ID4D also found that the quality of the equipment used for birth registration, which ensures an individual's privacy is protected, and the accessibility of a birth registration location, also impact registration rates; poor quality equipment and low accessibility were associated with lower rates.<sup>217</sup> Other issues impacting universal birth registration include bureaucratic lethargy and the discriminatory prevention of birth registration for particular groups.<sup>218</sup> The ID4D report *Principles of Identification for Sustainable Development* (2017) suggests that to promote universal birth registration, it should be accessible, free of charge, and conducted by trained staff using appropriate equipment.<sup>219</sup>

### **Armed Conflict and Youth Radicalization**

Armed conflict exacerbates children's existing vulnerability to trafficking and leads to increased exploitation and abuse.<sup>220</sup> This is often due to individuals coerced into choosing exploitation by traffickers and other criminals in order to access resources to meet their basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter.<sup>221</sup> In 2015, the UN confirmed that there had been 274 cases of child recruitment by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant within Syria, with children being used in both combat and non-combat roles.<sup>222</sup> Recruitment methods vary from youth being deceived, trafficked, forcibly recruited, exploited through the promise of economic stability, or convinced by close family and friends to join.<sup>223</sup> Regardless of how children become members of violent extremist groups, their recruitment and exploitation is considered a serious form of violence against children, which can lead to health issues such as impaired

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<sup>210</sup> UNICEF, *Birth Registration*, 2019.

<sup>211</sup> UNICEF, *Annual Report 2018*, 2018, p. 28.

<sup>212</sup> World Bank Group, *ID4D Identification for Development*, 2019.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> UNICEF, *Fact Sheet: Birth Registration*; 2017; UNICEF, *Speak Up For Your Rights*, 2018.

<sup>215</sup> UNICEF, *Fact Sheet: Birth Registration*, 2017.

<sup>216</sup> World Bank Group, *Identification For Development 2018 Annual Report*, 2018, p. 4.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 10.

<sup>218</sup> UNICEF, *Fact Sheet: Birth Registration*, 2017; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, *UN Legal Identity Agenda*, 2019; World Bank Group, *ID4D Identification for Development*, 2019.

<sup>219</sup> World Bank, *Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development: Toward the Digital Age*, 2017.

<sup>220</sup> UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*, 2018, pp. 12, 32.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 32.

<sup>222</sup> UNODC, *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>223</sup> Darden, *Tackling Terrorists' Exploitation of Youth*, *American Enterprise Institute*, 2019, p. 1.



brain and cognitive development.<sup>224</sup> It can also have a significant economic impact.<sup>225</sup> In the East Asia and Pacific region, the economic costs of health issues resulting from childhood maltreatment were equivalent to between 1.4-2.5% of regional GDP.<sup>226</sup> Stopping the abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children therefore not only aids children in leading happier and healthier lives but also helps in achieving the SDGs and promoting global economic growth.<sup>227</sup>

Article 8.2 of the Rome Statute defined the recruitment or usage of children under 15 by armed groups a war crime.<sup>228</sup> Despite this, armed groups continue to exploit youth, particularly in countries affected by violent extremism, with reportedly 58 non-state armed groups in 15 countries currently recruiting and using children for the propagation of violent extremism.<sup>229</sup> The *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* (2000), adopted by 170 Member States, recognizes the need to prevent those under the age of 18 from participating in the armed forces, with Article 8 mandating that State parties submit a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child within two years of the Protocol's entry into force describing how they have attempted implementation.<sup>230</sup> After the initial report, State parties are required to submit follow-up documents informing on CRC implementation difficulties.<sup>231</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child then evaluates this information and submits concerns and recommendations.<sup>232</sup> Concerns typically involve gaps or a lack of clarity in drafted legislation; for instance, a proposed law may not define what the term "active participation in hostilities" means, which could lead to a child under 18 participating in hostilities and the state violating the Optional Protocol.<sup>233</sup>

As of February 2018, the Committee has received 115 initial and two periodic reports under the Optional Protocol.<sup>234</sup> In its most recent report, the Committee reiterated concerns over the low pace of ratification, accession to, and reporting under the Optional Protocol.<sup>235</sup> While the Committee did note marked improvement in children's access to education and healthcare, they expressed concern regarding the access of child refugees fleeing from armed conflict to humanitarian assistance, and about the treatment of child offenders, including their sentencing to life imprisonment or the death penalty.<sup>236</sup> UNODC emphasized in its *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System* (2017) the importance of an effective justice system in preventing violence against children and ensuring that those who perpetrate violence are prosecuted.<sup>237</sup>

The Secretary-General's "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" (A/70/674) (2015) condemned violent extremism as undermining peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, and the basic principles of the UN and provides more than 70 recommendations to Member States to prevent

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<sup>224</sup> UNODC, *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*, 2017, p. 2; WHO, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>225</sup> WHO, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> ICC, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Darden, Tackling Terrorists' Exploitation of Youth, *American Enterprise Institute*, 2019.

<sup>230</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (A/RES/54/263)*, 2000; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Ratification status of the Optional Protocol*, 2019.

<sup>231</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (A/RES/54/263)*, 2000.

<sup>232</sup> UNICEF, *Guide to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, 2003, p. 36.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>234</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>237</sup> UNODC, *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*, 2017, p. 3.

violent extremism.<sup>238</sup> These recommendations include how to prevent youth radicalization by promoting their participation in decision-making processes and fostering their trust in mentorship figures.<sup>239</sup> In 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/291 on “The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review” calling for the adoption of all recommendations included in the Plan of Action through both regional and national plans, and encouraged Member States to provide technical assistance to each other in doing so.<sup>240</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Abuse and violence against children remains prevalent, despite the special protections granted by international frameworks and the work of many UN bodies.<sup>241</sup> Ensuring that children have a legal identity and are not radicalized through exploitation by violent extremist groups has been shown to safeguard them from violence, but the abovementioned barriers have slowed progress in achieving these goals.<sup>242</sup> Preventing exploitation, abuse, and other forms of violence against children aids in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and the HLPF has a pivotal role in monitoring and providing recommendations to advance its progress.<sup>243</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates pursue further research, they should consider the following questions: What role can Member States play to prevent the exploitation, abuse, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children? What challenges still exist to fully achieving SDG 16? What bodies and programs within the UN system can form partnerships to promote SDG 16? What are the gaps in existing legal frameworks concerning the protection of children against abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence? How can HLPF help support the work of NGOs and CSOs who address this topic? How can the UN work with Member States to prevent the exploitation of youth by violent extremist groups?

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[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG\\_16\\_MAIN\\_SUMMARY\\_SDG\\_Conference\\_Rome\\_May2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG_16_MAIN_SUMMARY_SDG_Conference_Rome_May2019.pdf)

*The SDG 16 conference was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Development Law Organization to discuss progress on SDG 16 before HLPF 2019. This outcome document outlines the key messages and recommendations discussed at the conference and includes a summary of important points from each conference session. It provides a clear outline of the current state of*

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<sup>238</sup> UN Secretary-General, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>240</sup> UN General Assembly, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (A/RES/70/291)*, 2016, p. 10.

<sup>241</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 Executive Summary*, 2018; WHO, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*, 2016.

<sup>242</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 Executive Summary*, 2018; UNODC, *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>243</sup> IDLO, *SDG 16 Conference: Conference in Preparation for HLPF 2019*, 2019, p. 7; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

*and problems with the implementation of SDG 16. By reading this document, delegates will gain insight into the current status of achieving SDG 16.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2018). *Annual Report 2018*. Retrieved 8 September 2019 from: <https://www.unicef.org/media/55486/file/UNICEF-annual-report-2018%20revised%201.pdf>

*Every year, UNICEF publishes a report describing their progress in aiding children around the world in the context of their goals. For 2018, the third goal area in their annual report was "Every child is protected from violence and exploitation," which is central to this topic. In this report, UNICEF reports on their progress in achieving this goal by discussing existing problems, what they have done to solve them, and what still needs to be done. Delegates can use this report to better understand the problems of child exploitation and exposure to violence, and to gain insight into how to better and more effectively solve these issues.*

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2017). *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*. Retrieved 11 September 2019 from:

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*This UNODC publication describes the role that the justice system can play in aiding children who are exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups. It discusses strategies for preventing the recruitment of children for use by these groups, the importance of justice for child victims, and ways to rehabilitate and reintegrate these children into society. Delegates will benefit from the document's depth and breadth of information discussing how terrorist and violent extremist groups recruit and exploit children.*

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2018). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*. Retrieved 8 September 2019 from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP\\_2018\\_BOOK\\_web\\_small.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf)

*This annual report uses statistics collected by UNODC to formulate a global picture of the issue of TIP. It describes the profile of human trafficking victims, including where they come from and the reasons why they were trafficked. It also includes regional overviews of the trafficking patterns and likely policy implications of their results. The report presents some comparisons of this form of trafficking with the trafficking of adults. This resource will be useful for delegates to understand the global picture of human trafficking and how the trafficking of children compares and fits within a broader context.*

United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2016). *20 Years to Better Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict*. Retrieved 8 September 2019 from: [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Twenty-Years-of-Work-Updated-Booklet\\_web.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Twenty-Years-of-Work-Updated-Booklet_web.pdf)

*The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict plays an important role within the UN system in aiding children affected by armed conflict. This document provides insight into the history of the Special Representative's position, including how and why it was established, and also describes how the Special Representative has worked with the Security Council, Member States, and civil society to better protect children. It also discusses what the Special Representative plans to focus on in the future. This document will be important for delegates to understand the role of the Special Representative regarding this topic and to look ahead to potential solutions.*

World Health Organization. (2016). *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*. Retrieved 8 September 2019 from:

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/207717/9789241565356-eng.pdf;jsessionid=388BF5FB11F3EA3ADAF77183BC6ABAAE?sequence=1>

The World Health Organization (WHO) published this document in 2016 to suggest ways to combat the problem of violence against children. In addition to describing the magnitude, types, and consequences of violence against children, the document highlights seven strategies that WHO is implementing to solve this issue. These seven strategies will provide useful insights for delegates considering how best to approach the issue of violence against children. Importantly, the document also discusses certain considerations that need to be kept in mind when implementing their strategy for combating violence. This document will also prove useful for delegates in creating more effective and detailed solutions to the topic at hand.

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