



ECOSOC NEWSLETTER | 8-19 JULY 2019



During the two-weeks High-level Political Forum (HLPF), countries and stakeholders reported on the SDG progress and presented their views and expectations towards the 2019 SDG Summit in September - Video produced by IISD

PREVIEW OF THIS WEEK ACTIVITIES | 8-19 JULY 2019



[ECOSOC Management Segment](#) (23-24 July, 10 am, ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ, New York), chaired by the Vice-President of the Council, Mona Juul (Norway), will review the latest reports from its subsidiary bodies, including the UN Regional Commissions and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. In addition, the Council will also address among other agenda items, the economic and social situation in Haiti, through the work of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, and in South Sudan. ([Programme](#))



ECOSOC Organizational Session (25 July, 10 am, ECOSOC Chamber) will elect a new Bureau for ECOSOC (President and Vice-Presidents) for 2019-2020. The outgoing President H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) will reflect on her Presidency. The incoming President, H.E. Ms. Mona Juul (Norway) will share her vision for the Council.

MAIN ECOSOC EVENTS



The [Integration Segment](#), chaired by the ECOSOC Vice-President H.E. Ambassador Valentin Rybakov (Belarus), took place the day before HLPF on 8 July, following the guidance of the [GA resolution 72/305](#) on ECOSOC strengthening. The Secretary-General introduced the [annual overview report of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination \(CEB\)](#) at the opening of the Segment. Several chairs of subsidiary bodies and representatives of UN system participated as panelists during the session, and Member States participated as lead discussants. The ECOSOC Vice-President reported on the main messages from the Integration Segment at the opening of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) the following day.



The Integration Segment demonstrated that the ECOSOC functional commissions, regional commissions and expert bodies and the UN system have strongly embraced the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. One of the strong messages from the Integration Segment was the need to address deep-rooted inequalities and vulnerabilities. There was acknowledgment that integrated policies are one of the key transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda and a tool for accelerating progress. A major challenge was the insufficient statistical capacity as well as limited disaggregation of data. The Integration Segment emphasized that macroeconomic, industrial, fiscal and labour policies also need to ensure inclusive sustainable growth and reduce inequality. Budgets need to be SDG coherent and SDG-aligned. Local governments were considered key for breaking down silos and accelerating the implementation of the SDGs. An integrated approach to the SDGs also requires a focus on the peace and security, human rights and development nexus.



The meeting of the [2019 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development \(HLPF\)](#) under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council was convened 9-18 July 2019 at United Nations headquarters in New York, including the three-day ministerial segment of the forum on 16-18 July. The 2019 HLPF under

ECOSOC constituted the conclusion of the first four-year cycle of the HLPF's review of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The HLPF reviewed progress in relation to the theme "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*". The Forum also conducted in-depth reviews of six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on: quality education (SDG4); decent work and economic growth (SDG8); reducing inequalities (SDG10); climate action (SDG13); peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16); and means of implementation and partnerships (SDG17). Forty-seven countries presented voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

The outcome of the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC will be a summary by the President of ECOSOC with the collaboration of five rapporteurs, the Permanent Representatives from Argentina, Bangladesh, Romania and Tanzania and the SDG Coordinator from the Netherlands. It will also inform the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly – the [SDG Summit](#) – in September 2019 when Heads of State and Government will gather at the United Nations in New York to conduct the first four-year follow up and review of progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs.



The ECOSOC President [stressed](#) that the “The contribution of this July HLPF to the summit is critical”.

The Forum was attended by approximately 100 Ministers and Deputy Ministers, many Heads of the UN system and other organizations, and more than 2,000 representatives of major groups and stakeholders have registered to the meeting. There were also more than 120 resource people and lead discussants. In addition, 156 side-events, 36 exhibitions, and 17 VNR Labs were convened.



UN Secretary-General António Guterres [stated](#), four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, “we are not yet on track and must step it up,” he said, citing challenges such as, extreme poverty, inequality, global unemployment, gender

inequality and climate change, among others.

The key messages from the two-week HLPF deliberations include:

- a. We are making progress on the SDGs, yet the global response thus far has not been ambitious enough, and there are worrying trends in a number of important areas. Investment in data and capacity is needed for adequate measurement to inform policies that ensure no one is left behind.
- b. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all is critical for achieving the other SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Platforms for cooperation, new partnerships, more support for teachers and increased investment in universal quality education and lifelong learning are imperative to secure sustainable development.
- c. Partnerships and international cooperation are fundamental in supporting SIDS to achieve their sustainable development goals, including notably on health and education. Partnerships facilitate invaluable peer learning, capacity development and sharing of experiences.
- d. Development strategies in LDCs and LLDCs must target goals beyond pure economic growth and encompass aspects related to inclusiveness, reducing inequality, delivery of universal social services, building resilience towards climate change and adequate financing.

- e. Decent work and economic growth are dynamically interlinked with the other SDGs. They are a means for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. New technologies, such as artificial intelligence, automation and robotics offer new challenges and opportunities in this area that need to be addressed. Special efforts are needed to integrate youth, women and vulnerable groups in the labour market. Young people want to see action.
- f. Strengthening the role of non-state actors is vital to the achievement of the SDGs. Meaningful stakeholder engagement should include broad, inclusive consultations and the establishment of formal mechanisms for sustained engagement in SDG implementation and VNR preparations and discussions at the HLPF.
- g. Science can guide governments in shaping policies that address the interactions among the SDGs—the co-benefits but also the difficult trade-offs—in a way that will spur the systemic transformations the world needs. The GSDR was seen as an important tool to inform policy makers.
- h. Inequality between and within countries remains a major obstacle to the achievement of the SDGs and inaction in this area risks derailing progress on the 2030 Agenda. Effective policies to reduce inequality require partnerships and common commitments.
- i. Progress on combatting climate change and its impacts is falling far short of what is needed. Yet achieving SDG 13 is still within reach -- implementation of existing commitments needs to be accelerated and ambition levels raised substantially to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
- j. Peace, justice, and transparent, effective, inclusive and accountable institutions, as well as safe civic space, are critical to advance all SDGs. This demands responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Efforts are also needed to improve data in this area.
- k. Substantial financing gaps remain for financing the SDGs. Domestic resource mobilization needs to be further addressed, including through an enabling environment for private investment, strengthening tax administrations and addressing illicit financial flows. Integrated National Financing Frameworks can support countries to address financing challenges. Significant resources can also be mobilized at the regional level.

In September 2019, there is an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to take these messages to the [SDG Summit](#) and the other events convened during the General Assembly's high-level week in September 2019 – the [SG's Climate Action Summit](#) and the [high-level meetings on universal health coverage, financing for development](#) and the [SAMOA Pathway](#). These events will also be an opportunity to further augment the Forum's messages and move forward with conviction and ambition, embarking upon a decade of action and delivery for people and planet.

Major special and side events organized on the sidelines of the 2019 HLPF included, among others, the [SDG Media Zone](#) (9 to 10 July), the launches of [the Sustainable Development Report 2019](#) (9 July), the [State of Food Security and Nutrition Report](#) (15 July), the [Higher Education Sustainability Initiative](#) (10 July), the [SDGs in Action Film Festival](#) (11 July), the [Philanthropy and the SDGs](#) event (16 July), the [Lead, Transform, Succeed: Chief Sustainability Officers for the SDGs](#) forum (17 July), the [Local 2030: Local Action for Global Commitments](#) event (16-17 July), and the [SDGs Learning, Training and Practice workshops](#) (9-15 July).



The [High-level Segment of ECOSOC \(19 July\)](#) covered the same theme as the HLPF from the perspective of the long-term impact of current trends, such as the contribution of new technologies, in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs.

ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King [stressed](#) that the discussions at the High-level Segment focused on the need for an integrated approach to achieve the SDGs and “to reduce inequality, end deprivations, and leave no one behind.”

“We have seen that reaching to the local level, empowering people, giving them voice and including them in decision-making leads to better outcomes, with stronger support to implementation”, underscored the ECOSOC President. “And we have heard that we must commit to, and undertake, deliberate, decisive, transformative actions to accelerate implementation and achieve the SDGs by 2030”.

The ECOSOC President also called on governments to reinvent themselves and be more agile. “We need a government that can react swiftly to urgent trends while keeping the compass on the long term. We need a government that engages and listens to people. Participation is facilitated by new technologies and other developments.” She also stressed the “need to find ways to engage the poorest and most vulnerable in the decisions that impacts on their lives.”

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS OF THE ECOSOC PRESIDENT



Universal Rights Group and other partners held a **HLPF side event on “Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda: Leaving no one behind while accelerating SDG implementation” (12 July)**. The discussion focused on the outcomes of the UN Human Rights Council Intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda, which took place in January 2019 in Geneva. The side event was also a platform to share experiences on practical ways in which human rights and SDGs are mutually reinforcing. The ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King, in her keynote address, [said](#) that the theme of the 2019 HLPF is on human rights. She stressed that empowering people to claim their rights, ensuring their full inclusion and participation and treating everyone as equal is at the heart of human rights.



The Third Global Voluntary National Review (VNR) Workshop (14 July) organized by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations brought together Member States, a few days prior to the opening of the HLPF on 16 July. The ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King [stressed](#) that it is important “to think of the VNRs as a treasure trove: taken together the VNR reports over the past four years showcase the state of implementation of the 2030 Agenda across the globe”. “There are many lessons on SDG implementation that we can draw from these reports - let’s use this opportunity,” she said. Ambassador King also announced that her own country, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will conduct its own VNR in 2020.



A [Panel Discussion with the President's Group on Gender Equality Leaders organized by the President of the General Assembly \(15 July\)](#) addressed the issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women. ECOSOC Vice-President Mona Juul, speaking on behalf of the President of the Council, [stated](#) that “There is simply no way that we can achieve the 17 SDGs without achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls”. “Achieving gender equality is not women’s responsibility – it is a societal responsibility – a responsibility of all of us,” she said. Ambassador King also mentioned that for a sustainable world, “women’s and girls’ voice, agency, leadership and participation are indispensable”.



The Special Event to launch “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019” (SOFI) [report](#) (15 July) brought together Member States, UN System Representatives, to discuss the issues of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. The ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King, who briefed on the report, [stressed](#) that the situation regarding hunger worldwide is particularly worrisome. She also warned us about the “fragile current state and the future prospects of the world economy and how these can worsen food security and nutrition trends going forward”.



The HLPF Side Event on “Accelerating progress on the SDGs through the implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Islands Developing States (SIDS)” (15 July) focused on how to use food security, nutrition and sustainable food system development as a driving force for sustainable development in SIDS. The ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King [said](#) that the issues of food security and nutrition in the context of climate change will be key to achieving the SDGs in SIDS.



The HLPF Side Event on “Seizing Momentum for a Resilient Future: A Systematic Approach to Addressing the Disaster Risk Reduction-Adaptation-Mitigation Nexus for Empowerment, Inclusiveness and equality” (16 July) stressed the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction in the implementation of the SDGs. The ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King [called](#) on all governments and stakeholders to integrate disaster risk reduction in the implementation of the SDGs. “Sustainable development strategies should be aligned with disaster risk reduction strategies,” she said.



A Special Event at the HLPF on "Partnerships for Transformation: Philanthropy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" (16 July) brought together Member States and the philanthropic community to discuss current models of philanthropic engagement to implement the 2030 Agenda. ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King [indicated](#) that the philanthropic sector is key in reaching those people most at risk of being left behind, through investment in new innovation and technologies.



The ECOSOC e-newsletter is produced by the [Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development](#) in the [Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations](#).