



2018 INCHEON COMMUNIQUÉ

SUMMARY OF THE 2018 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TRANSITION FORUM
31 OCTOBER, 2018

1. The sixth annual Sustainable Development Transition Forum, hosted by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development of UNDESA, welcomed 130 representatives and experts of country governments, the United Nations system, policy think tanks, academic institutions and civil society from around the world in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 29 - 31 October 2018.
2. The Forum discussed how to enhance the role of the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) in accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Some of the key insights emerging from the 2018 SDTF were the following:
3. **Strengthening multilateralism:** Participants underlined that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an important instrument for strengthening multilateralism as the Agenda and SDGs can be achieved only through collaborative effort of all countries and stakeholders. 2019 is a critical year for multilateralism at the United Nations, with the HLPF wrapping up its first review cycle of the 17 SDGs in July and then meeting at the Head of State level in September to take stock of overall progress on the 2030 Agenda.
4. **HLPF is successful but there is still room for improvement:** HLPF has established itself as the global platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda reflecting implementation at all levels and of all actors. However, strengthening political guidance, outcomes, including a more action oriented ministerial declaration that reflects actual discussions at the HLPF and incorporating outcomes and policy guidance from events engaging different constituencies – business, parliamentarians, local governments, educational institutions – would be important. It would be important for HLPF to fulfill its existing mandates, in particular agenda setting and addressing emerging issues, and to strengthen guidance on leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest behind first. It was also emphasized that regional sustainable development forums could be better utilized both at the regional level as well as featuring their contribution at the HLPF.
5. **2019 HLPF under the auspice of the General Assembly:** HLPF meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government is a crucial moment in strengthening political will for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Having a strong political declaration that should be inspired by political leaders identifying accelerators and drivers of implementation would bring new impetus to the commitment of the 2030 Agenda.
6. **Thematic reviews at the HLPF:** The first-cycle of HLPF has covered the full set of 17 goals and it was important to see where countries are in their national implementation, but also where we all are globally. Many countries established national baselines, did the mapping of where they are, established legal, regulatory, and incentive changes. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. This could include looking more at policy coherence and better integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, deeper dives into each goal, with greater focus on intersections, nexuses across sectors and bringing panelists together from different sectors across a nexus, looking at trade-offs, and featuring successful examples of private sector, NGO innovators in specific thematic areas or cross-cutting areas as well as establishing an “early achievers alliance” to highlight how they have achieved accelerated progress on specific goals and targets. It would also be important to see input from other processes relevant for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs better inform discussions at the HLPF.
7. **Voluntary national reviews at the HLPF:** Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) have proven to be successful as a majority of HLPF member countries will have presented their VNRs by the end of the first cycle. At the national level the VNR process strengthened political will, national ownership



and focused attention to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and engaged governments and stakeholders around the Agenda. They established coordination and adapted or created new institutions to strengthen the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. However, HLPF needs to find ways to provide stronger policy guidance to countries including by allowing more time for discussions and comments when presenting a VNR; VNR Labs were emphasized as a good model in this regard. Additionally, countries preparing a VNR presentation also need to strengthen peer learning by providing more analysis of the impacts of policies and measures taken to advance the SDGs, and by addressing all SDGs. More thought also needs to be given to what kind of guidance and what kind of format should be defined for the presentation of VNRs for the second and subsequent times. Updating Secretary-General's guidance in this regard could be useful.

8. **Data, science and means of implementation:** Countries are actively engaged in data collection and use including through prioritization and harmonization of data collection, assessment of administrative sources of data, defining statistics development plans and establishing partnerships. However, many challenges persist including strengthening national statistical offices through capacity building, improving data quality and reliability, integrating data sources and sharing across sectors, and getting disaggregated data. Science is important to provide evidence-based information to assist in defining informed policies and a strengthened science-policy interface calls for providing findings to the policy-makers in a way that will be useful for them. In this regard, providing space for a scientific viewpoint across the range of policy discussions at HLPF would be a step in the right direction. Identifying what kind of means of implementation are needed to achieve goals, from financing to technology and capacity building, is an important step towards asking assistance where it is needed and for using domestic resources when it is possible, including strengthening tax systems and curbing illicit financial flows. Partnering for implementation to assist with capacity building especially in technology to close technology divide, and collecting revenue to increase public finance, have been underlined including building trust among different actors at all levels.
9. **Stakeholders, partnerships and outreach:** Stakeholders are an essential part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Institutionalizing engagement of stakeholders at all levels is essential. Stronger engagement of stakeholders at the national level will also result in a stronger engagement at the regional and global levels. In this regard, it is important to strengthen capacity of stakeholders including at local and community levels. Equally important would be to find ways to strengthen official engagement of all stakeholders at the HLPF. Forging meaningful partnerships to enhance implementation including through non-traditional partners such as foundations, philanthropies as well as the private sector will strengthen implementation of the Agenda. Showing the relevance of the 2030 Agenda to every person especially those who are at risk to be left behind needs a continued effort to reach all audiences and all groups.

United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, UNDESA
Incheon, Republic of Korea, 31 October 2018