

HLPF 2022 Highlights: Monday, 11 July 2022

HLPF concluded its focus on five SDGs with a morning discussion of progress on SDG 15 (life on land). Speakers highlighted the need to value ecosystem services and forests to increase protection of nature. During the afternoon, speakers considered how to build back better in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Forty-four countries will conduct VNRs at the 2022 HLPF, of which 11 countries will be presenting for the first time, 28 for the second time, three for the third time, and two for the fourth time. On Monday, Togo and Uruguay presented the first two VNRs at HLPF 2022.

Introduction of the Report on the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP)

Noting that global levels of material use continue to increase, Irfan Tariq, 10YFP/One Planet Network Chair, presented on the progress report on 10YFP. He said sustainable consumption and production (SCP) can be an enabler of global efforts to build back better, but noted continuing challenges including lack of data, capacity, technology, and financial support to developing countries.

SDGs in Focus: SDG 15 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Life on Land

Yuxi Zhang, UNDESA Statistics Division, shared findings from the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* with regard to implementation of SDG 15. He noted that world forest cover continues to shrink globally, with high losses in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, and with approximately 40,000 documented species at risk of extinction. He said agricultural expansion is driving almost 90% of global deforestation and emphasized the need to reduce net habitat loss and transition to sustainable agriculture.

Nigel Sizer, Executive Director, Preventing Pandemics at the Source initiative, moderated the session and emphasized that re-discovering our place and responsibility in nature is fundamental to SDG achievement.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), stressed we are not investing enough in nature because we undervalue it. He called on the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15) to deliver accountability, monitoring, and means of implementation, and to re-direct public financing to support, rather than harm, nature.

Uyunkar Domingo Peas, Ecuador's Achuar people and representative of the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of the Ecuadorian Amazon for the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative, highlighted the Initiative's efforts to protect parts of the Amazon rainforest. He called for addressing bureaucracy so

funds can reach developing countries more quickly and for ending persecution of environmental defenders.

Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, UNECE, and Coordinator of the Regional Commissions, called for a transformative push to ensure public spending is aligned with the SDGs, including by: shifting to nature-based solutions, green and blue bonds, as well as carbon credits; removing subsidies for activities that contribute to biodiversity loss; fostering an understanding of the nature-health nexus; and encouraging stakeholder engagement.

Ralph Chami, Head of Regional Surveillance for Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, IMF, called for a paradigm shift from an extractive to a regenerative economy that places value on ecosystem services to ensure their protection by markets in a way that benefits stewards.

Highlighting the critical role of forests in achieving SDG 15, Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the UN, Chair of the 18th session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF 18), called for moving from a siloed to an integrated approach to ensure implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 and the 2030 Agenda.

Delegates considered the need to: take a systematic approach, aligned with the CBD and other instruments; achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on the designation of protected areas; implement a whole-of-society approach to nature-based solutions; criminalize ecocide; agree on a new, ambitious global biodiversity framework at CBD COP 15, including finances to support it; and implement the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement).

They also considered measures to address: biodiversity loss due to climate change and land-use and land-use change; the links between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the SDGs; women's effective participation in the 2030 Agenda; and SCP to address the triple planetary threats. Some also welcomed the establishment of a global dialogue on SCP.

Ajanta Dey, Joint Secretary and Programme Director, Nature Environment and Wildlife Society, emphasized the need for "de-globalization" by strengthening local circular economies and investing in communities, and highlighted the value of consulting older community members for good land management.

Julie Nash, Senior Program Director, Food and Forests, Ceres, noted that investor interest in protecting and restoring forests is growing, in part due to a better understanding of risks associated with business-as-usual approach, and encouraged countries to build the business case for nature-positive investments.

Paul Divakar Namala, Convenor, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, highlighted that over 260 million people are discriminated in work on the basis of their descent and ancestral status. He called for providing such communities with the right of access to land and societal support, and for their consideration in VNRs.

Daniel Samuelsson, Swedish Youth Representative to HLPF 2022, highlighted messages from the Stockholm+50 Scientific

and Youth Report, including on the need to: formally represent young people in policy processes; recognize ecocide as a crime; and strengthen climate justice, including through stronger implementation of the polluter-pays principle.

In their interventions, delegates emphasized the need for predictable and accessible financing and an inclusive and equitable pro-poor approach in the pursuit of SDG 15. Belarus highlighted territorial differences with Poland.

Mosimanegape Nthaka, Principal Natural Resource Officer, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Botswana, noted the danger invasive alien species, land degradation, and mismanagement of waste pose for forests.

Delegates then presented achievements and ongoing activities in reforestation. They stressed the importance of, *inter alia*: political commitments, law enforcement, and financing; inclusive growth for all; creating jobs while reversing the trend towards growing informality in the labor sector; and preventing exploitation of natural resources by markets. They also emphasized the need to: consider the interconnectedness of all SDGs; recognize Indigenous Peoples' rights to land; and increase climate investments in local communities. They noted environmental losses and adverse health effects resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine.

Voluntary National Reviews

Simféitchéou Pré, Minister and Advisor to the President, TOGO, introduced a video summarizing the country's VNR. In a video address, Victoire Tomegah Dogbé, Prime Minister, Togo, highlighted key areas Togo has invested in, including: strengthening the digital economy; improving access to education; gender equality, including through the African Women Programme of Excellence; cash transfers to the most vulnerable during COVID-19; public-private partnerships; the blue economy; and a national reforestation programme. She noted terrorism as a challenge to the country's sustainable development.

Isaac Alfie, Director of the Office of Planning and Budget, URUGUAY, highlighted, *inter alia*, a vaccination rate of 80% in his country; investments in educational platforms and women's employment and professional development; the integration of climate change considerations in economic policies and public financing planning; efforts to electrify public transport; the establishment of a local network to promote alignment of businesses with the SDGs; and two major programmes to increase financing for ecosystem protection.

Responding to comments, Pré noted Togo is working on an institutionalized way to engage stakeholders and is supporting the implementation of the country's national development plan through public-private partnerships and through its diaspora. He also reported on a World Bank project that will improve coastal resilience; an integrated institutional response to COVID-19; support measures for the population including free water and electricity, free schooling, and monetary transfers; and efforts to build resilience and recovery in response to terrorism.

Responding to comments, Alfie reported on efforts to sustain learning during the pandemic through partial in-person learning in the early days of the pandemic, the development of an integrated roadmap for further decarbonization, and prioritizing education in the next year budget in the face of high levels of fiscal deficit.

Small Island Developing States: Building back better in vulnerable situations

In his keynote address, Co-Chair of the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) Panel Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Antigua and Barbuda, pointed to the UN Secretary-General's guiding principles for the proposed MVI, including that the indicators should represent multidimensionality, universality, exogeneity, availability, and readability.

Underlining that there is no sustainable development without resilience, Hyginus Leon, President, Caribbean Development Bank, proposed an internal resilience capacity indicator to

underpin concessional financing decision-making, in order to incorporate the vulnerability of SIDS to issues such as climate change, fallout from wars, and global pandemics.

Moderating the session, Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Acting High Representative, UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), noted the sustainable development reversals in SIDS over the pandemic period, and said an MVI will reflect the realities on the ground.

MVI Panel Member Natalie Cohen, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, stressed that external shocks are not reflected in income-weighted indices such as gross national income (GNI), noting that an MVI will provide certainty and predictability in states' graduation to higher economic levels.

MVI Panel Member José Luís Rocha, Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cabo Verde, noted that the MVI would be applied universally to all developing countries, calling for concessional financing for SIDS to promote recovery from external shocks.

Stressing the importance of taking an evidence-based approach, MVI Panel Member Louise Fox, Brookings Institute, highlighted the challenge of data availability for MVI, which can form a particular challenge in countries such as SIDS that may not have well-staffed statistical agencies.

Amanda Milling, Minister for Asia and the Middle East, UK, recognized the need to put "vulnerability at the heart of finance," stressed the importance of addressing challenges of debt eligibility and bureaucracy, and highlighted several initiatives to support SIDS in becoming more resilient to shocks.

Tamisha Lee, Jamaica Network of Rural Women Producers, emphasized the importance of farmers and rural economies in addressing poverty, fighting climate change, and ensuring food security and nutrition, and called for: farmer-driven public policies and investments, and support for climate-smart practices and organic agriculture.

Delegates highlighted MVI as a potentially life-saving tool to help SIDS gain access to concessional financing, highlighted impacts of the ongoing socio-economic crisis for the Caribbean region and called for it to be captured in any MVI. They also noted the need to strengthen SIDS' resilience and promote peer-to-peer learning, and include Indigenous Peoples in developing the indicators.

Speakers also considered: the need for a speedy conclusion to MVI discussions; the long journey to get to the MVI process under the UN; the need for a clear MVI with quantifiable indicators; the need for international financial institutions to be part of the MVI discussion; and the "band aid nature" of international support to SIDS that does not address vulnerability. They also discussed the need to prioritize women and youth in economic and financial decision making; the importance of international cooperation to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS, including through the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund; the need to reform the international system to address unilateral economic sanctions; and the resilience of SIDS in the face of exogenous threats over the decades.

In closing, Moderator Schroderus-Fox, UN-OHRLLS, announced the launch of a new report on SIDS' challenges and opportunities in accessing climate financing.

In the Corridors

As the HLPF completed its final "deep dive" into this year's spotlighted SDGs, some questioned whether the session has risen to the challenge of providing the momentum to get the SDGs back on track in the midst of a world in crisis. Several delegates wondered how the annual eight-day session could better review gaps in assessments, provide political guidance, and examine emerging trends, contemplating the need to heed calls for a more "disruptive" process at the 2023 SDG Summit heard the previous week.

Meanwhile, a growing number of positive COVID-19 tests among delegates hampered some from participating, with this serving as a reminder of the pandemic's continued disruptive potential both within and outside the UN halls.