

HLPF 2024 Highlights: Thursday, 11 July 2024

Accounts of war, and reports of human rights infringements and “alarming” levels of violence against children reverberated around the conference room on day four of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). In the morning, delegates focused on the 16th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 16), which aims for peace, justice, and strong institutions.

With governance identified as an essential lever of the systemic transformations needed to achieve all 17 SDGs, calls were made for critical reflection on the need for HLPF deliberations to step beyond the conference hall, for new investment in accountability mechanisms at all levels, and a restoration of trust and meaningful participation in public institutions. Delegates also considered the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP).

Two afternoon sessions addressed: building resilience and capacity for African countries, least developed countries (LDCs), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs); and overcoming barriers to achieving the SDGs in middle-income countries (MICs).

Introduction of the Report on the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

In the morning, Ivan Simonović, Vice President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Croatia) introduced consideration of the UN Secretary-General’s Progress report on the 10YFP ([E/2024/59](https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/press/2024/07/2024-07-11-10yfp-progress-report.html)). He explained that while SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is not under review at this HLPF session, it is an important enabler for other SDGs.

Annika Lindblom, Director, International and EU Affairs, Ministry of the Environment, Finland, and Co-Chair, 10YFP Board, explained that the universal Framework is designed to accelerate a shift at national, regional, and global levels, with strong links to SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. She noted that the 2024 [Global Resources Outlook](#) has indicated that it is possible to reduce resource use while achieving wellbeing and reducing environmental impacts. She called for more research on circularity, and further announced that the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will host the [One Planet Network Forum](#) in September 2024.

Chol Ajongo, Permanent Representative of South Sudan to UNEP and UN-Habitat, and Co-Chair, 10YFP Board, described links between SCP and climate action, and highlighted the development of a toolbox to support countries’ integration of circularity into their nationally determined contributions.

SDG 16 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Chair Simonović underscored that peace, justice, and strengthened institutions are foundational elements for achieving all SDGs. Daniel Eshetie, Statistics Division, UN Department of

Economic and Social Affairs, outlined key messages from the UN Secretary-General’s 2024 SDG Report, including that:

- the number of forcibly displaced people as of May 2024 has doubled since 2015, reaching an unprecedented 120 million;
- corruption continues to divert resources away from sustainable development, with one in five people who had contact with public officials being asked to pay or having paid a bribe over the last year; and
- in 2023, seven out of ten recorded civilian deaths in armed conflicts occurred in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel.

Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), highlighted the importance of digitalizing governance systems to enhance transparency, combat corruption, and improve service delivery and access to justice. Maurizio Massari, Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN, emphasized the need to strengthen the social contract between people and institutions. He called for multilateral and multisectoral cooperation to address root causes of violence and uphold the rule of law at all levels.

Jan Beagle, Director-General, International Development Law Organization (IDLO), moderated the ensuing panel discussion. She emphasized that violence must be prevented rather than managed, noting that SDG 16 can be a practical roadmap for the 2030 Agenda. Nambitha Dambuza, Judge, Supreme Court of Appeal, South Africa, and Chair, Africa Judicial Education Network on Environmental Law, stressed the centrality of the right to a healthy environment to other fundamental rights such as dignity, security, and access to justice. Najat Maalla M’jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, noted that spending on integrated services for children’s wellbeing must be seen as a high-return investment, and key for achieving the SDGs.

Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, called for course correction including through: states strengthening their human rights architecture and allocating more resources to human rights; holding companies that profit from conflict accountable; and reforming the UN Security Council, including the permanent representation and veto power. Swati Mehta, Pathfinders, called for transforming institutions by putting people at the center.

Lead discussant Taina Bien-Aimé, Executive Director, Coalition against Trafficking in Women, USA, stressed the need to strengthen synergies for inclusive societies. Lead discussant George Tarr, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Youth Representative, called for refugees to be directly included in peacebuilding efforts and dialogue processes. Lead discussant Vernor Munoz, Global Campaign for Education, Costa Rica, underlined that peace is unobtainable without justice and called for “peace education,” which advocates for the creation of an environment that resists violence, exploitation, and hatred.

In subsequent discussions, FINLAND and others emphasized that sustainable peace requires equality and participation, and advocated advancing the “youth, peace, and security” agenda. NEPAL outlined national efforts towards inclusive institutions. The SENDAI STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM underscored the importance of involving children and youth in disaster risk reduction programmes. TIMOR LESTE highlighted his country’s commitment to strengthening good and inclusive governance.

INTERNATIONAL IDEA called for improved participation, representation, the rule of law, human rights, and investment. The UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME drew attention to the Global Progress Report on SDG 16 Indicators, which identifies governance challenges and threats to SDG 16. POLAND emphasized the need for independent media outlets, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

BRAZIL highlighted ongoing legislative reform to combat religious discrimination, intolerance, and violence. TOGETHER 2030 underscored the need for catalytic financing for civil society organizations to strengthen monitoring and accountability. Many delegates, including AZERBAIJAN, SOUTH AFRICA, the PHILIPPINES, ALBANIA, THAILAND, BOTSWANA, TANZANIA, GHANA, CHILE, GEORGIA, and PAPUA NEW GUINEA, highlighted efforts in, among other areas, judicial reform, accountability and the rule of law, combating corruption, and building strong and inclusive institutions.

The US, the UN OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME, MOROCCO, and INDONESIA described a range of initiatives addressing, among other areas, legal assistance for prisoners, reducing the criminalization of poverty, data collection, and combating violence against children. The NETHERLANDS highlighted investments in innovative justice solutions. SWITZERLAND called for increased use of technology to strengthen transparency and anticipate future risks and opportunities. The UAE pointed to artificial intelligence (AI) tools to enhance the monitoring of online child sexual exploitation. LESOTHO emphasized the need to leverage technology to digitalize legal aid, education, and service provision.

ALGERIA called for comprehensive approaches to peace, establishing an equitable global order with sufficient financial resources, and for reform of the UN Security Council. MALI reported his country is “progressively exiting” from severe insecurity through a focus on institutional and political reform. The VOLUNTEERS STAKEHOLDER GROUP expressed concern about the exponential rise of military spending globally, with GERMANY calling on all countries to build a world “where peace is the norm, not the exception.”

The STATE OF PALESTINE stressed that despite experiencing “the darkest chapter in our history,” Palestinians have demonstrated determination and resilience to combat injustice. IRELAND underscored her country’s solidarity with women in Gaza, noting the consequences of the ongoing conflict on sanitary conditions, food security, and forcible displacement of women and girls. YEMEN highlighted upcoming peace negotiations in the region. COLOMBIA called for making peace with nature.

MEXICO stressed the international community’s shared responsibility in addressing threats undermining security and wellbeing, including drug trafficking. UNEP decried attacks on environmental and human rights defenders.

SPAIN, FRANCE, and CZECHIA highlighted the role of localization of SDGs and subnational institutions in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.

On means of implementation, INDIA stressed this is key for the Global South to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and DENMARK urged for a fit-for-purpose international financial architecture. Noting the strong link between robust, inclusive institutions and building public trust, NORWAY called for the forthcoming Financing for

Development Conference to reinforce efforts to reduce illicit financial flows.

UGANDA underlined that countries have the same finishing line for meeting the SDGs, but have different starting points and terrains.

Closing the session, Moderator Beagle pointed to the Summit of the Future as an opportunity to carry these conversations forward.

African Countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries: Building Resilience and Capacity in Times of Crises and Transition

This segment considered African countries, LDCs, and LLDCs, which face unique challenges in their pursuit of sustainable development. Delegates addressed their particular vulnerabilities to external shocks, such as economic crises, climate change, and public health emergencies.

In her opening remarks, Chair Paula Narváez, ECOSOC President, invited speakers to focus on concrete recommendations and action points for accelerating SDG progress in these countries.

Introducing the panel, Moderator Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, said these groups of countries are disproportionately impacted by climate change and natural disasters, while also facing severe barriers to trade and other economic opportunities.

Rabab Fatima, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and Small Island Developing States, and Secretary-General, LLDC 3 Conference, welcomed the completion of the third LLDC Programme of Action, noting it contains a practical roadmap to strengthen food security, climate resilience, and freedom of transit.

Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, African Union Commission, urged significant investments in social protection and human capital, disaster preparedness, and operationalization of the Fund for addressing loss and damage. Ibrahim Elbadawi, Managing Director, Economic Research Forum for the Arab World, Iran and Türkiye, and former Minister of Finance, Sudan, said resolving the debt crisis, peacekeeping, and addressing high costs of transit in landlocked countries are key priorities.

Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary, ECA, urged focus on, among others: countries’ capacity to anticipate and withstand crises; innovation for long-term productivity; climate-proofing infrastructure; integrating humanitarian and development support; and investing in digitalization and access to clean energy.

Lead discussant Saoudata Aboubacrine, Head, Tin Hinan Sahel, Burkina Faso, called on the international community to end its “timorous and inadequate” solidarity and honor commitments to implement the SDGs. Yasmin Kumi, CEO and Founder, Africa Foresight Group, emphasized that business-as-usual has not yielded results, and called for development solutions that integrate people.

Ensuing discussions were opened by two ministerial respondents. Stressing that LDCs bear the brunt of climate impacts, Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN, and Chair, LDC Group, welcomed the call for a new, ambitious goal for climate finance. Gladys Mkhawa, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN, and Chair, LLDC Group, urged more robust disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies.

QATAR reiterated her country’s commitment to tackling multidimensional vulnerabilities, including through a USD 60 million pledge to build resilience in LDCs and support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action. MADAGASCAR called for enhanced international support for the Doha Programme of Action.

On building resilience, the US emphasized that democratic governance is a tool for sustainable development. The

EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA STAKEHOLDER GROUP, with the HOLY SEE, stressed the importance of education for resilience. TANZANIA called on international partners to contribute by enhancing infrastructure and connectivity.

Noting lasting impacts of COVID-19, LAO PDR stressed that while his country is on track to graduate from the LDC category by 2026, continued international support is still needed.

SOUTH AFRICA urged greater international support through debt restructuring, supportive trade policies, skills development and technology transfer, and fulfilment of all official development assistance (ODA) commitments. ZAMBIA urged “genuine” measures to address the nexus between the climate and debt crises.

Sharing several specific initiatives, ARMENIA highlighted regional agricultural research centers, and LESOTHO underlined digital transformation and support for implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Several partnership initiatives were showcased, including INDIA’s India-UN Development Partnership Fund working in 56 countries, with half being LDCs and LLDCs; ITALY’s G7 Presidency Energy for Growth in Africa initiative and AI Hub for Sustainable Development; the UK’s development partnerships with Uganda on access to climate finance, and with Ethiopia on healthcare; and FINLAND’s LDC Future Forum series, which assembles stakeholders to share evidence-based ideas. The INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY and IDLO also highlighted programmes supporting LDCs and LLDCs.

PORTUGAL reported 60% of his country’s ODA is allocated to LDCs and highlighted initiatives such as the Portugal Digital Fellowship. PARAGUAY noted progress on SDGs 1 and 2 (no poverty and zero hunger) despite being a LLDC.

Other delegates, including ANGOLA, TOGETHER 2030, SAMOA, and UGANDA, highlighted the impact of unfair global trade terms, declining fiscal space, geopolitical dynamics, and other challenges that undermine SDG progress. BURKINA FASO spoke on the link between multiple cascading crises and mass displacement, calling for a paradigm shift in international cooperation. SAUDI ARABIA and CHINA highlighted their commitment to South-South and triangular cooperation.

Middle-income Countries: Overcoming Barriers in Achieving the SDGs

This segment addressed the MICs category – currently 108 in number – that, together, account for around 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP), 75% of the world’s population, and nearly two-thirds of people experiencing acute multidimensional poverty.

Chair Narváez introduced this session, noting the heavy burden placed on MICs by the confluence of growing sovereign debt burdens and limited fiscal space. Panel moderator Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN, and Chair, Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of MICs, underlined that GDP-based classifications result in obstacles to countries’ qualification and access to international cooperation, finance, and technical assistance.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, noted broad acknowledgement of the need for reforms to overcome the “middle-income trap,” calling for transformative action to restructure the international financial architecture. Nurgul Dzhanayeva, President, Forum of Women’s NGOs, Kyrgyzstan, outlined several strategies to overcome MIC-specific barriers, including enhanced policy coherence and human-rights based approaches. Somik Lall, Senior Adviser to the Chief Economist, World Bank, highlighted multi-step pathways towards accelerating investment and infusing global technologies domestically, and fostering innovation. He called on advanced economies to scale back protectionism to facilitate technology sharing.

Lead discussant Sude Balaban, Global Co Lab Network, Türkiye, underlined the multidimensional chains holding youth

back, calling for international support to enable her generation to scale up immediate actions for sustainable development.

Two ministerial respondents opened general discussions. Hugo Allan García, Vice Minister for Strategic Analysis for Development, National Planning Ministry, Guatemala, underscored the need for greater funding opportunities that consider the diverse nature of MICs. Eduardo Punay, Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Philippines, urged a system-wide response that considers metrics beyond GDP.

Many delegates underscored the insufficiency of GDP as a measure of countries’ development, with JAMAICA, SPAIN and CHILE calling for multidimensional indicators. NAMIBIA emphasized that GDP does not consider inequality, poverty, or vulnerability. INDIA and VIETNAM lamented the middle-income trap that restricts MICs’ access to concessional funding. CHILE cautioned that the MICs classification should not amount to a “punishment,” and, with ARMENIA and COLOMBIA, called for exploring new avenues to accessing concessional loans and global markets.

The CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP urged a focus on human capital, strengthening transparency by both recipient countries and their partners, and debt cancellation. JAMAICA underlined social protection measures to empower the most vulnerable. INDONESIA identified the importance of policies focusing on social protection, equitable access to education and health, and women’s empowerment. LEBANON decried Israel’s military attacks on his country, which have led to displacement and environmental contamination from white phosphorous. While noting the importance of ODA, the US also stressed the need for domestic resource mobilization and private sector investment.

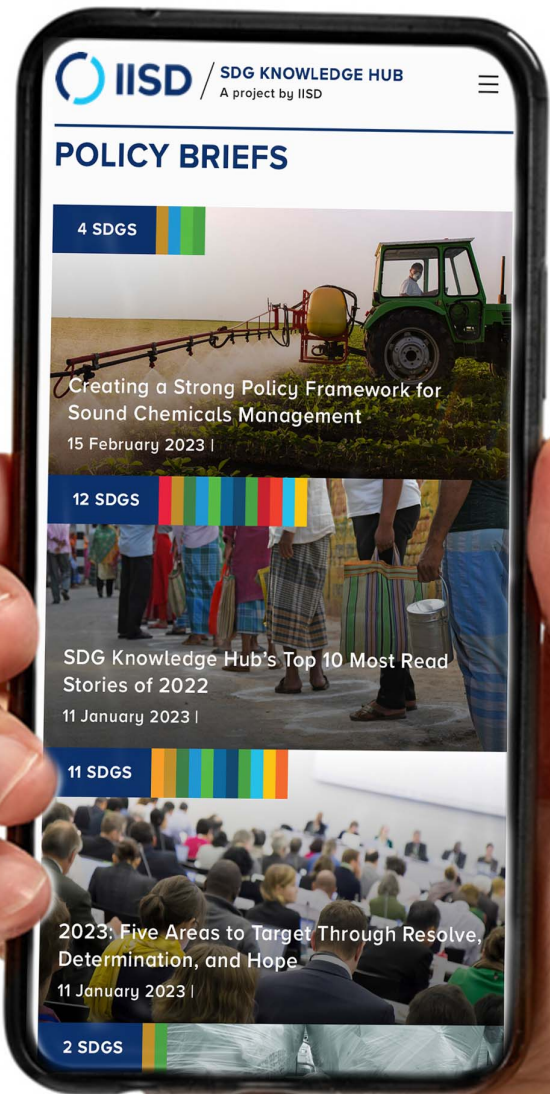
The STAKEHOLDER GROUP FOR COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT called for financial reforms that enable the inclusion of discriminated communities in the design and decision-making for budgeting. The WOMEN’S MAJOR GROUP underlined the need to dismantle colonial structures and promote universal, high-quality human resources and public services.

Summarizing the session, Salazar-Xirinachs acknowledged that although GDP is not a perfect measure it remains a good indicator, and called for productive development policies guided by public policy. Dzhanayeva stressed the need to strengthen MICs through enhancing public participation, democratic ownership, and mutual accountability. Lall underscored the need for competition and for MICs to join green value chains. Moderator Hilale urged a paradigm shift through reforms and inclusive low-cost external resource mobilization options.

In The Corridors

Talking about peace and stability requires mention of violence and conflict. The halls of UNHQ in New York are being walked by delegates from countries and regions undergoing conflicts — and with SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions the subject of Thursday’s review, they reminded their colleagues of conflicts’ on-the-ground devastating impacts that “undermine achieving all SDGs.” One delegate drew attention to a striking third-floor exhibit on disarmament and arms spending, and pointed out the deep contradictions that frame deliberations on the SDGs. Amongst the featured quotes in the exhibit is former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon’s comment that “the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded,” sitting alongside an electronic display of the world’s rapidly rising daily expenditure on armaments. It remains an open question whether the forthcoming Summit of the Future will pick up on one of the SDG “blind spots” about the world’s spending priorities that remain locked in a crude GDP metric that continues to register arms sales as a boon to economic development.

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