



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
Monday, 10 July -Wednesday, 19 July 2023**

## **Secretariat Concept Note**

***“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”***

The United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) will take place from Monday, 10 July to Wednesday, 19 July 2023, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This includes the three-day ministerial segment of the Forum from Monday, 17 July to Wednesday, 19 July 2023 (as part of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC).

This note outlines key aspects of the programme of the 2023 HLPF and its preparations. The programme of the July 2023 HLPF and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC is available on <https://hlpf.un.org/2023/programme>.

### **A. Focus of the HLPF:**

The HLPF 2023 will address the theme “**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**”. The international situation has greatly changed since 2015 when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted and since 2020 when the theme of the HLPF was decided. Progress towards most of the Sustainable Development Goals is badly off track. The world is grappling with severe financial, energy, food and humanitarian crises triggered or amplified by the war in Ukraine. These compound the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-standing climate emergency, against the backdrop of a worsening macro-economic situation in many countries.

The Forum will assess comprehensively the impacts of these interlinked crises on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on all the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants will discuss policies and transformations needed to overcome the crises, make up the lost ground on the SDGs and shift the world on to a path to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The discussions will be guided by the continuing strong commitment to realizing the 2030 Agenda and reinforce international solidarity.

At the same time, the Forum will place particular emphasis on trends and policies related to

**SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation; SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy; SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** and their linkages to other Goals.

With 2023 marking the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the July 2023 HLPF and its preparations will make a key contribution to prepare for the SDG Summit to be held in September 2023 during the high-level week of the General Assembly. The Summit (which is the HLPF convened under the auspices of the General Assembly) will see Heads of State and Government gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to review the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda since 2015 and provide political guidance and recommendations.

The July 2023 HLPF will thus be a pre-Summit event aiming to convene the highest possible number of Ministers from all sectors related to the SDGs, including planning, finance, trade and the economy. This would allow to launch a global multisectoral effort to reverse negative trends and shift towards rapid SDG progress ahead of the Summit. Multiple stakeholders are also expected to participate in this all-out effort. The review of all SDGs and the Forum's discussions on ensuring that crises responses advance long-term sustainable development will also prepare the debates at the SDG Summit.

The HLPF will draw from the experience of the 39 countries conducting Voluntary National Reviews and the European Union's voluntary review. It will also hear from other countries and participants about the lessons they have learned on pursuing the 2030 Agenda in these difficult times.

The HLPF will be informed by the Secretary-General's progress report on all the SDGs which will be issued in the second half of April 2023 [<https://hlpf.un.org/2023/documentation>]. It will also discuss the transformative policy recommendations of the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) prepared by a Group of Independent Scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General. [<https://sdgs.un.org/gsdr/gsdr2023>].

## **B. Key features of the programme of the HLPF:**

The President of ECOSOC has been preparing the programme in consultation with the Bureau of the Council. The various sessions in the programme will focus on:

- **Overcoming the crises, driving transformation for the SDGs, and leaving no one behind:** This session will set the stage for the Forum by taking stock of the situation regarding all SDGs at the half-way point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (based on the Secretary-General's SDG progress report). It will address the responses to the ongoing crises, including the continuing impacts of COVID-19, the food crisis and other crises

and whether they include actions to reverse the negative trends on the SDGs and realize the transformations required to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Special attention will be given to the challenges of countries in special situations as well as to the situation of the furthest behind.

- **Reviewing the five SDGs in special focus in 2023:** dedicated thematic sessions will address:
  - o **SDG 6:** Clean water and sanitation
  - o **SDG 7:** Affordable and clean energy
  - o **SDG 9:** Industry, innovation and infrastructure
  - o **SDG 11:** Sustainable cities and communities
  - o **SDG 17:** Partnerships for the Goals

Each session will conduct an in-depth review of the situation on that SDG, including progress and challenges. It will discuss transformative policies and actions to achieve that SDG amidst multiple crises and how they can build on the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs with other SDGs to accelerate full implementation of the goals.

- **SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals:** SDG 17 will be addressed throughout the programme and through two dedicated sessions:
  - o One session will focus on mobilizing financial resources to respond to the crises and invest in the SDGs. It will follow up on the recommendations of April 2023 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development. The session will contribute to the preparations of the SDG Summit and the subsequent General Assembly high-level dialogue on financing for development in September 2023.
  - o The other session will be on science, technology and innovation (STI): triggering transformation and sustaining a science-based recovery. It will learn from the discussions at the May 2023 STI forum and discuss ways to achieve a science-driven recovery and gear science, technology and innovation towards the SDGs.
- **Countries in special situations:** The HLPF will dedicate two sessions to addressing the challenges faced by those countries: one on African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) (“Turning the tide, regaining lost ground and embarking on the road to the SDGs”) and the other on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (“From recovery to resilience in the face of multiple shocks”). The sessions will focus on reversing the negative trends on many SDGs and national and international efforts to support accelerated recovery and SDG progress in those countries, taking into account international conferences on these countries in 2022-2024. A session on overcoming special challenges faced by middle-income countries will also be organized. It will address the barriers MICs face in implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and actions for next steps.

- **Regional realities:** This session will hear key messages from the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development organized by the UN regional commissions. It will highlight the key trends and policies impacting on the SDGs in the various regions. It will mobilize regional action and leverage regional frameworks to support countries in overcoming crises and moving on to recovery.
- **Acting at local level:** The session will focus on efforts to implement and review the SDGs at local level and transformation “from the ground up”. It will discuss the support needed by cities and local communities for the implementation of the SDGs.
- **Perspectives from major groups and other stakeholders at the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.** As in the past, the major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) will organize a session on the theme of the HLPF, as well as on their vision on the situation regarding SDGs and their priority actions for inclusive transformations.

The Annotated Programme to include background, format, key questions, and speakers for each session will be prepared. An online interactive programme with more information will be available at the HLPF website: <https://hlpf.un.org/2023/programme>.

### C. Voluntary National Reviews:

Thirty-nine countries will carry out Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The European Union will also conduct a voluntary review. One country and the European Union will be presenting for the first time; 38 countries will be presenting for the second time, and one for the third time. The first timers will have 15 minutes for presentation and 20 minutes for Q&A. The second and third timers will have 10 minutes for presentation and 15 minutes for Q&A. The VNRs will be presented from 14-19 July. More information on VNRs is available at <https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs>.

### D. General debate:

The general debate will be held in person during the ministerial days of the HLPF and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC from 17 to 20 July for preparing the SDG Summit. The general debate will focus on the theme “**Building momentum towards the 2023 SDG Summit: Transformation for accelerating implementation of the SDGs**”. It will allow Ministers and high-level representatives of the UN system, IGOs and major groups and other stakeholders to exchange experiences, lessons learned, policy guidance, transformative actions and initiatives for the SDG Summit. Delegations will inscribe to the list of speakers for the general debate.

### E. Preparations for the HLPF:

Several meetings and events are being convened in 2023 by the UN system and other international

and regional organizations to prepare for the HLPF thematic reviews of the SDGs and the SDG Summit. Those include the regional forums on sustainable development convened by the UN regional economic commissions. Several expert group meetings are supported by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UN system entities bringing together governments, the UN system, various experts and stakeholders to discuss the five SDGs under review and their interrelations. More information is available at <https://hlpf.un.org/2023/preparation>.

Global and regional workshops are also being organized by UN DESA and the UN regional commissions to support countries preparing their VNRs. More information is available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs>.

The Group of Friends of VNRs, co-chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines, will assist countries conducting VNRs in pairing with other countries to prepare the interaction on their VNR at the HLPF.

#### **F. Documentation and inputs:**

A range of reports and inputs will support the reviews and debates of the 2023 HLPF. The follow-up and review of progress on the SDGs at the mid-point will be informed by the special edition of the SG SDG Progress Report. A fireside chat featuring scientists of 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) will be organized in the ministerial segment of the Forum, to hear key recommendations from GSDR on accelerating implementations of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The Forum is also informed by the synthesis of submissions by ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, as well as the discussion papers on the theme of the HLPF, submitted by the major groups and other stakeholders.

The Forum will benefit from the report of the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up; the Co-chairs' summary of ECOSOC Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals; the reports of the regional forums on sustainable development; and the Progress Report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.

Background notes will be prepared for each thematic session, with longer briefs provided on the SDGs under review in particular. More information is available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2023/documentation>.

#### **G. Outcomes:**

The President of ECOSOC will prepare a **summary** to capture the key messages of the discussions of the 2023 HLPF.

The HLPF will not adopt a ministerial declaration in July this year, as a **political declaration** will be adopted by the SDG Summit in September (the SDG Summit is the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly<sup>1</sup>). Information on the negotiation of the Political Declaration under the General Assembly is available at <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023/outcomes>.

The July HLPF is also an opportunity to share information about **new and ambitious initiatives, actions or commitments to achieve the SDGs** launched by participating States, including the VNR countries, the UN system and other stakeholders on the occasion of the SDG Summit.

#### H. Format:

All official meetings of the 2023 HLPF and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC will be in-person. Participants will be informed in case a change is needed due to the circumstances. Advice will be provided regarding measures to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first week will include a townhall meeting and moderated thematic panel discussions.

The meetings on the VNRs will include comments and questions by any country wishing to take the floor, including but not limited to countries who volunteered to serve as “friends” of VNR countries. There will be coordinated interventions by the major groups and other stakeholders as in the past.

The general debate focusing on preparing for the SDG Summit will be organized in-person during the ministerial days of the HLPF and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC in parallel with the VNR sessions and other meetings.

Participating States are invited to include Ministers from various sectors on sustainable development in their delegations, including during the first five days of the HLPF. In previous years, ministerial participation has been ensured throughout the HLPF. Countries are expected to present their VNRs at the ministerial level, as done in the past.

Representatives of the major groups and other stakeholders will also participate and are encouraged to engage speakers from all sectors, background and walks of life, from the local to the global level.

Due to time limitations, not all speakers asking for the floor are always able to intervene, and some speakers may be interrupted if their intervention exceeds time limits. All efforts will be made to allow all participating States and other stakeholders to intervene.

Logistical information will be available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2023/registration-participation/>.

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<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly in its resolution [70/299](#) decided that the HLPF shall have only one negotiated Political Declaration when it meets twice in one year, as will be the case in 2023, when the forum will meet in July under the auspices of the ECOSOC and also in September, under the auspices of the General Assembly (SDG Summit).

## **I. Last day of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment**

7

The last day of the ECOSOC High-level Segment will be on Thursday, 20 July 2023, following the conclusion of the HLPF. It will include two sessions:

- Session one will focus on strengthening UN system institutions for resilient sustainable development
- Session two will focus on future trends and scenarios on the crises' responses and recovery and long-term impacts on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals

The discussions of the ECOSOC High-level Segment will be supported by the Secretary-General's reports on (i) the theme of 2023 HLPF and ECOSOC; and (ii) long-term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the sustainable development goals. The report of the Committee on Development Policy will also support the discussions.

## **J. Special events, side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions**

As in previous years, UN DESA is planning to organize a number of high-profile Special Events in collaboration with UN system partners and other actors, to galvanize the engagement of key sectors of society around the implementation of the SDGs and the preparations for the SDG Summit.

DESA will also coordinate a programme of side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions. The deadline for submission of proposals for side events and exhibitions will be 31 May 2023. More information, guidelines and registration links will be available on the HLPF 2023 website: <https://hlpf.un.org/2023>.

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