

Remarks by the President of ECOSOC, Her Excellency Inga Rhonda King, at the briefing on the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) convened under the auspices of the Council (9 July 2019-18 July 2019), the high-level segment (16 July 2019-19 July 2019) and the Integration Segment (8 July 2019)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you very much for coming to this briefing. I am going to talk about the entire two-week period from 8 to 19 July. The GA, in its resolution on strengthening ECOSOC (72/305), decided that ECOSOC would hold three meetings in the following order: the Integration segment, this year on 8 July, the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) under the auspices of the Council from 9 to 18 July and the High-level segment of ECOSOC from 16 to 19 July.

Integration segment

This will be the first Integration Segment since the GA decided to change the duration, mandate and scope of work of this segment in resolution 72/305. The segment will be held for one day immediately before the HLPF.

You may recall that the theme of the segment is now the same as the main theme of HLPF and ECOSOC.

An important moment of the segment will be the introduction of the report of the Chief Executive Board (CEB) by the Secretary-General. This responds to a long-standing request of Member States. I am pleased to announce that the Secretary-General has confirmed his participation and will present the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Senior representatives of United Nations system entities and Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the Council and the Regional Coordinator of Regional Commissions will also be present. I hope that all PRs will attend this presentation and engage with the Secretary-General.

In order to fulfill the mandate that the 2019 Integration segment will improve its role, functioning and impact, a program has been prepared that I believe will be an important and substantive contribution to HLPF.

Working with the Vice President, His Excellency Valentin Rybakov, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the UN, we have decided that the segment will focus on the interlinkages among the SDGs that will be reviewed at the HLPF namely SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 8 on inclusive growth and decent work; SDG10 on inequalities; SDG 13 on climate action; SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and robust institutions and SDG 17 on global partnership. It will examine the interlinkages among the SDGs through the lens of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

The segment will also discuss and consolidate all the inputs to ECOSOC and the HLPF notably those from the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations system. It is an important development that the Integration Segment prepares the ground for the thematic reviews.

As the Vice-President responsible for the Segment, Ambassador Rybakov will be sharing the key messages and action-oriented recommendations from the Integration Segment at the opening of the HLPF on 9 July.

The segment is also mandated to coordinate the work of the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC and United Nations system entities. We should bear it in mind as we interact with the Heads of specialized agencies and the Chairs of subsidiary bodies through the various panels.

High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

This year the theme of the High-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council is “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. This is an important theme for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs under review are education (SDG 4), inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8), inequalities (SDG 10), climate change (SDG 13), peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) as well as SDG 17 on global partnership and MOIs as every year.

Methods of work

As many of you know, I have reiterated throughout the year that I want this to be the best HLPF ever. It is a milestone HLPF as it finishes the first four-year cycle since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The 2019 HLPF should again play its central role for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. This year's HLPF will also be an important contribution to the HLPF held under the auspices of the General Assembly: the SDG Summit in September. It will also contribute to the ensuing discussions on the review of the format and organizational aspects of the HLPF during the next session of the General Assembly.

But in order to make HLPF the best ever, I need the cooperation from all of you, governments, intergovernmental organizations and the UN system as well as major groups and other stakeholders as you are the HLPF. Whether you come prepared for the discussions and formulating important messages through our deliberations, will define the success of HLPF. I would like the HLPF to conduct its work in an interactive way and strengthen its deliberative function. This means we are not going to have panelists speak for 15 minutes as is often the case as this reduces the time for discussions. We will usually have resource persons who kickstart conversations. With the assistance of able moderators, the conversation will go back and forth between resource persons, lead discussants and all participants who will take the floor. This means that each intervention should not last more than 2-3 minutes. But it also means that many more participants will be able to speak possibly several times. Thus, this will create a conversation. We will also have other formats such as townhall meetings.

However, for this format to be successful, you need to prepare your delegations on what to expect and to let them know that I very strongly discourage any prepared statements and would like to have a dialogue instead. We will have a general debate, about which I am going to speak later, where all prepared statements could be read and submitted for the record of your national positions. I count on the cooperation all of you. The HLPF is a dynamic platform where we need to exchange views, find solutions and learn from each other's experience to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Documentation

In order to best prepare your delegation for the HLPF, I would also like to draw your attention to the wealth of documentation that is available to you. You have the reports from regional forums on sustainable development, a synthesis of written contributions from intergovernmental bodies and other intergovernmental platforms, a document from major groups and other stakeholders on the theme of the HLPF. You have extensive background notes with executive summaries for all SDGs under the discussion. These background notes are the result of robust substantive preparatory process on the review of the SDGs. They include leading questions that we will use in our discussions. There are also two Secretary-General reports for the high-level segment presented on the day of that segment, and the report of the Committee on Development Policy. The GSDR is also a key reference for our work and will be introduced. Last, but not least, I encourage you to read the report of key messages from the 47 VNRs countries will be presenting this year as they are a treasure trove of various actions used for national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. I would also like to reiterate my call here to consider being a friend to one or two VNR countries to support them in their VNR presentation at the HLPF. As you know the DPR of Mexico is chairing this Group of friends of VNRs, follow-up and review of HLPF so do get in touch with him.

Participation

Invitation letters to Member States have been sent to all Permanent Missions. The registration of Member States, Intergovernmental Organizations and NGOs are going smoothly. We already have over 75 Ministers and Vice Ministers even if we are still at a fairly early stage. In addition to Ministers and governmental representatives and UN system and other organizations, more than 1,500 representatives of major groups and stakeholders have registered for the HLPF. The Secretariat has prepared an extensive information note that you can access at the [2019 HLPF website](#). As you know the meetings of HLPF will be held in conference room 4 except for the opening of the ministerial segment, about which I am going to speak a bit later, as well as from 3-4 p.m. on the afternoon of 16 July and the conclusion of the forum from 5:30 to 6 pm. on 18 July when the meetings will be held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

Programme

Proceeding to the programme, I, with the advice from the Bureau and help from the Secretariat, have conceived an interactive and substantive HLPF programme. You have both the annotated and short programme at the [2019 HLPF website](#) so you can see what each sessions aims to discuss and who are resource persons and lead discussants in each session. It is an interactive programme so you can get deeper into different aspects of the programme if you wish. We have over 110 invited resource persons and lead discussants including those from major groups and other stakeholders. We have also invited a number of keynote speakers and eminent persons in their fields.

Apart from discussions on the theme and the goals under review, we are going to have a session on the progress on SDGs at all levels and in countries in various situations. It will be kick-started by the Under-Secretary-General of DESA who will present the special edition of the Secretary-General SDG Progress report. We will also have sessions on SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs, the science-policy interface, the outcome of STI forum, and sustainable development financing. There will be a multi-stakeholder session organized by major groups and other stakeholders. We will also examine the implementation of SDGs through the lens of voluntary national reviews and we will discuss lessons learned from the four years of HLPF. In this regard, you will soon get a request to fill in a survey in order to collect all of your views on how the HLPF has worked and how to improve it. The results may be presented by the Under-Secretary-General of DESA on the last day of the Forum as basis for discussion on experiences and lessons learned from the first cycle of HLPF. I kindly ask you to fill it in so that we get a good response rate. The survey will start before the beginning of the HLPF and will continue through Friday, 12 July. It will be administered by DESA.

I also would like to inform you that some sessions will have instant polling and a moderator will ask a question and participants will need to choose an answer. Results will be used to boost the discussions. Technical details will be explained at these sessions.

The Secretary-General and President of the General Assembly speak at the opening of the ministerial segment of the HLPF on 16 July. We have prepared a full programme that will be starting at 8:30 am in the General Assembly Hall. I will send you a letter with a detailed programme and am asking you to make sure that your delegation is seated by 8:30 in order to be able to start on time with the voluntary national reviews that will follow the opening of the ministerial segment.

The ministerial segment will hear 47 VNR presentations, of which 40 are coming for the first time and 7 for the second. Once they present their VNRs this year, we will have 142 countries that have presented their VNRs so far.

I would also like to draw your attention to the last session of HLPF before closing. We will hear the main messages from the eight days. They will be collected and presented by the ministers from Colombia and Liechtenstein and I thank both governments for taking on this task. We will also have a townhall meeting on the lessons we have learned on how the HLPF has worked over the last four years and ideas for improving it.

Also, as you are all aware, HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC will not have a negotiated outcome this year as per GA resolution 70/299. There will be a political declaration at the SDG Summit. I use this opportunity to commend my colleagues from the Bahamas and Sweden for expertly conducting the negotiations on a consensual document to be adopted at the Summit which is under silence procedure expiring a few hours from now. I am in the process of appointing 5 countries as rapporteurs who will assist me in preparing a robust President's summary. It will detail the discussions and contain recommendations.

As each year, there will be a general debate starting in the afternoon of the first day of the ministerial segment of the HLPF/HLS on 16 July and finishing on 19 July in the morning. Before the general debate starts on the first day, we will hear about the outcomes from the five regional sustainable development forums presented by their respective chairs. This will be followed by main messages to the HLPF where the President of the UN Environment Assembly and the High Commissioner for Human Rights will speak among others. As in previous years, the general debate will start by the presentation of the two Secretary-General reports on future trends in general and scenarios related to the theme presented by the Under-Secretary-General of DESA. This will be followed by the presentation of the report of the Committee for Development Policy by its chair Professor Jose Antonio Ocampo.

As you know, the Journal contains relevant organizational information including the details for the inscription to the general debate, which opened on 12 June and will remain open until 5 pm on 15 July. Also, kindly note that the allotted time for statements is 4 minutes for individual speakers and 6 minutes if speaking on behalf of a group. In order to assist speakers in managing their time, a digital clock will be used, and the microphone will be automatically switched off at the end of the time limit. You may wish to sensitize your principal of these time-keeping measures ahead of the general debate. I am sure that all delegations understand that

need to abide by the time limits in order to allow all inscribed speakers to deliver their statements in the limited time available for the general debate.. Let me reiterate once again that this is the place where prepared statements should be delivered and not during interactive dialogues at the HLPF.

High-level segment of ECOSOC

As you know GA resolution 72/305 on strengthening ECOSOC stipulates that the high-level segment of the Council will focus on future trends and scenarios related to the theme and will discuss 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. This will be done based on the work of the United Nations and other regional and international organizations and bodies as well as other stakeholders. You will see that the invited speakers are experts in the area of future trends and scenarios. It will be an interesting day and I hope that your ministers and other members of the delegation will stay for these discussions as looking at long term projections can inform our actions now, including for those countries who have a long term plan or vision document on their development.

Special meetings, side events, VNR Labs and exhibitions

Special meetings

As you all know, the HLPF is accompanied by a series of unofficial events that enrich the meeting and deepen our knowledge of the many issues around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This year we have six special meetings organized by DESA and various UN system and other partners. They are on the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative on integrating 2030 Agenda into higher-education institutions' curricula; an SDGs in Action Festival that will feature the six winning short films from a global contest on implementing the SDGs; Philanthropy and the SDGs which will assess philanthropic contribution to SDGs; SDG Learning, which includes Training and Practice capacity building workshops running the whole of the first week on topics related to SDG implementation. There will also be a Chief Sustainability Officers meeting to explore the challenges that companies are facing with regard to integrating and advancing the SDG agenda; and a forum on Local Actions for Global Commitments. The latter is a two-day event facilitated by the UN-wide Local 2030 network focusing on local level financing of the SDGs and local implementation of the SDGs under review at the 2019 HLPF. The list with more information can be accessed at "Other events tab" on [2019 HLPF website](#). DESA colleagues have also distributed a leaflet.

Side events

There will be 146 side events at the UN. The list can be accessed at the “Other events tab” on [2019 HLPF website](#) and they range from discussing various SDGs under review to many initiatives undertaken by various actors to implement SDGs.

VNR Labs

The VNR Lab will run throughout HLPF. Their schedule is available on the HLPF website together with contacts in case you would want to get in touch with organizers from DESA who prepare the Labs in partnership with various UN system and other organizations. I particularly encourage VNR countries to participate in these Labs to exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices on a number of VNR-related topics, including data and leaving no one behind.

Exhibitions

There will also be 36 exhibitions in the neck area in front of the Vienna café. They will be connected to the SDGs discussed at the HLPF this year and I encourage you to visit them.

Outreach

The Secretariat is also working on the media and outreach strategy via all websites and social media channels. This includes using video clips and geo-spatial information and pictures to promote the HLPF and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. As in previous years there will be a Media zone, so if you have as part of your delegations those that might want to share their experience with the media, please kindly get in touch with DESA.

Conclusion

I know I have spoken for quite a long time. But I have run you through 14 days of meetings, which is not an easy task. I will circulate this statement through ECOSOC Place as it contains some useful links so if you have missed something, you can go back to it and also share with your colleagues in capitals.

I thank you very much and open the floor for any comments and/or questions.

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Before closing I would like to take the opportunity to announce that I will cohost with the five United Nations Regional Commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA and UNECE) a Ministerial Luncheon “Translating the 2030 Agenda into national sustainable development realities: regional perspectives”, which will be held on 17 July 2019 at 1:15 – 2:45 pm in the Delegates Dining Room at United Nations Headquarters in New York. I look forward to your greeting your Ministers and or heads of delegations on July 17.

I would like to bring to let you know that copies of the programme can be found on the side, please remember to take a copy. It can also be found on the website. Additionally an annotated programme with a list of speakers and resources will be posted on ECOSOC and the HLPF website by the end of this week.

The briefing is concluded.