



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Regional Consultation Event SD2015
Setting the stage for the HLPF – NGO recommendations
Wednesday 15 April 2015
UNECE-Geneva

Agenda:

8.30: Leida Rijnhout, Director Global Policies and Sustainability at EEB, NGO Major Group: Introduction and welcome

8.40: Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary of the UNECE: Expectations and regional ambitions, overview of civil society engagement.

9.00: Leida Rijnhout: The HLPF – short background and how can we make it work? Structure and role of HLPF – plus modalities for civil society participation.

9.20: Reflections from civil society on the HLPF from representatives of the UN Major Groups and other stakeholders: Including input by Renate Bloem (Civicus) and Victoria Elias (WWF-Russia)

This side event is part of a broader and inclusive consultation, online via the SD2015 website, to promote further awareness of the HLPF and to collect the views of civil society and other non-government actors on what measures, architecture and engagement mechanisms would enable an ambitious, effective and inclusive HLPF in 2015 and beyond.

Meeting Notes

Leida Rijnhout welcomed the participants and the **Executive Secretary of the UNECE, Mr Christian Friis Bach** especially. It was noted that his time is really appreciated during the busy days of the UNECE-66th session days. She also explained in summary the importance of the HLPF, and what it means for civil society engagement.

If we aim for successful implementation of the SDGs, we should emphasise our focus on the HLPF, as this will be the main body to oversee the implementation and reviews. Most of the engagement should be done at the regional, national and local levels.

Major Groups and Other Stakeholders have been asked to give ideas on the HLPF agenda and are therefore preparing position papers. SD2015 launched an online consultation for broader participation online. The website:

<http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/index.php/engagement-tools/consultations>





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Presentation slides included:



What is the HLPF?

- The High Level Political Forum is a hybrid body that functions under the UN GA and ECOSOC
- It will support member states to provide oversight and strategic guidance for implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Functions include:
 - Agenda-setting
 - Integration of objectives
 - Implementation of goals
 - Monitoring and review, including the annual Global Sustainable Development Report
 - Identifying emerging issues
 - Strengthening the science-policy interface
 - Promoting evidence based decisions

www.SD2015.org



Why does it matter to you?

- According to Resolution 67/290 there is a clear right for civil society partners to engage with the HLPF:

"Stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development will autonomously establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum."

- The HLPF will provide an annual review mechanism
- The process will include national and regional monitoring and review
- This should enable wider engagement for civil society in the monitoring and review of the sustainable development agenda
- Stakeholder inputs into the annual 'Global Sustainable Development Report'

www.SD2015.org

First question to Mr. Friis Bach: what are the ambitions of the UNECE for implementation of the SDGs on a regional level, and which kind of review and follow up mechanisms can be used?

Mr Christian Friis Bach (Executive Secretary UNECE):

He shared his gratitude to the organisers for hosting this UNECE-Civil Society dialogue, and stated that the UNECE wants to strengthen its engagement with CSOs. He stressed that he is keen to see this meeting as a starting point. He has been very involved in the SDG process since its inception.

So, yes, he stated that it is important for the UNECE to ensure implementation of the new goals. On review: they are familiar with the UPR mechanism for the Human Rights Council. In their view the Aarhus Convention also has interesting accountability mechanisms; one of the tasks of UNECE is to globalise this convention.

In his view the UN (NY) is giving more attention to the regional level, to design the monitoring mechanisms, like regional performance reviews. At the regional level there is also more trust and more similarities among the countries, thus it is more acceptable for member states to conduct such reviews in the region than at the global level. One remaining problem is how to add up the regional results to provide a global level review. Perhaps the EPR is a model that can be used; it is also mentioned in the SG report.

UNECE will contribute to the implementation of the SDGs by translating the global goals and targets into norms, standards and regulations at the regional level. And will assist with capacity building. See also the high-level statement endorsed at the Commission Session http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/2015/E_ECE_1475_en.pdf

The UNECE will definitely seek input from civil society.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

The MDG experiences and studies show that when the goals are nationalised, it is indeed difficult to obtain comparable data at the regional level. The European Conference of Statisticians will also help to improve capacities for data collection and the comparability of data.

Leida Rijnhout gave a short explanation of the recent updated NGO position paper with reference to the HLPF, she highlighted that for the NGO Major Group it is very important to ensure the relevance of the HLPF as a key body within the UN-system. She referred back to the earlier upgrade of the Commission for Sustainable Development, which had the intention to put Sustainable Development much higher on the agenda, and make it the overall framework for all UN-activities in this area.

She also suggested that another important issue is the paradigm shift surrounding the core concept of development; related to that the decrease of the Aid and Trade Agenda; to be replaced with a Human Rights based and equality agenda, within the limits of the planet. She detected some weak points of the HLPF, but with political will this can be solved. See annex for the whole powerpoint.

Renate Bloem (Civicus): Thanked the Executive Secretary, M. Bach, and Leida for the comprehensive introductions.

She set out that CIVICUS works on input to the post 2015 agenda on many fronts, at national and international levels, and is glad to see the momentum for the development of a strong regional platform provided by the UNECE. She was encouraged by the opening yesterday morning –that without having yet an institutional voice – civil society participants could just speak and generate some discussion on the role of Civil Society. She also thanked the UNECE for its determination to increase the visibility of civil society, this has so far mainly occurred through the Aarhus Convention and the very participatory 'Beijing plus' regional Platforms, every 5 years, otherwise the UNECE has not yet attracted wider civil society participation. This morning's discussion is about civil society recommendations for the HLPF and what it entails, and about monitoring, follow up, review, reporting or accountability –robust mechanisms to make the SDGs real.

She stated that CIVICUS is a lead body on this Online Survey on the High-level Political Forum and Post – 2015 Sustainable Development governance to which Leida made reference and which also contains the recommendations, visions and priorities of Major Groups, including the NGO vision we have just heard. So we are totally in agreement with the expressed positions.

But when talking about creating strong mechanisms for review and implementation, she reminded participants what already exists and originated here in Geneva, –in particular the universally recognized UPR, Universal Periodic Review, which looks at all UN Member States' human rights record.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

She set out that CIVICUS believes it is central to the development of any effective monitoring and evaluation that prevailing UN human rights processes should be integrated. To this end, it is critical that we develop greater cohesion between existing monitoring mechanisms at the UN Human Rights Council and ongoing efforts to develop a post-2015 monitoring framework in New York.

She remembered former President of Switzerland, Micheline Calmy Rey, requesting at the High-level Opening of the Human Rights Council to create a UPR mechanism for the SDGs.

Finally, she set out a few words on civil society participation at the HLPF. The HLPF was created with resolution 67/290 and will meet on a yearly basis during the ECOSOC HLS and every 4 years at UNGA Level. Civil society has institutionalized (Charter based) arrangements with ECOSOC but not with UNGA. While so far civil society has been treated in a satisfactory way during the OWGs and also now during the Governmental negotiation processes, thanks to the goodwill of the Co-Conveners of these processes, we do not yet have guarantees for the HLPF, particularly as we do not know what will become out of this hybrid body.

She stressed once more the example of the Human Rights Council, highlighting that it was upgraded from an ECOSOC Commission to an UNGA body. We achieved, however, in the **instituting resolution** to put down Civil Society participation as full stakeholders according to ECOSOC existing rules plus good practices arrangements, not depending on the moods of Chairpersons or co-conveners. This could also be remembered for the HLPF, where we advocate strongly maintaining the agreed language of the Rio+20 outcome document, in which Major Groups and Other Stakeholders are fully recognized.

Monika Linn (UNECE): Stated that this dialogue is good and helps to sharpen the vision of UNECE about what can be done concretely at the regional level. The High-level Political Forum is mandated to be the main intergovernmental body at the global level to monitor and review the implementation of the SDGs. Implementation and monitoring & accountability will have to happen mostly at the national level, but regional commissions can play a bridging function between the national and global levels.

It was clear that Member States supported this view during the 66th session of our Commission. There is also a lot of support for regional commissions to conduct peer reviews at the regional level, the results of which would then be presented at the global level at the HLPF. UNECE has experience with peer reviews in several areas of its work, in particular Environmental Performance Reviews. However, these reviews are very resource intensive. We need to discuss how this methodology or certain elements can be used for conducting regional SDG peer reviews. Such reviews could be held in the framework of the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Mark Halle (IISD)

Mark made a clear point that he hopes that the HLPF will not be a repetition of the CSD, as he feels that it did not deliver; it had no accountability mechanism, and the position of the CSD under ECOSOC was not high; this we have to avoid. We call the HLPF "high level", but how high is this? There is a disturbing lack of clarity, and the UN is not really supporting the secretariat. The UN synthesis report of the SG is quite strong on accountability. But many member states do not want this, and the discussion until now in New York also does not focus on this either.

Review is very expensive, OECD spends 0,5 million dollars per country per review. If ECOSOC wants to ensure regular review, there should be a bottom up model; gathering data from other UN bodies, governments representatives and civil society as a critical way to widen the results. He stated that in his view the UNECE region is not the problem. But what does "universality" mean for us? Are we ready to be judged by others? The accountability is mutual and universal.

On Finance for Development: in his view the approach will be ODA *plus* innovative funding. Civil Society needs to focus on the review of the whole UN system, this is possible through the HLPF. And the "whole system" includes the national and regional levels.

Victoria Elias (WWF- Russia)

In general she observed that there is currently not a lot happening from the NGO side in Eastern Europe and Central Asia on the SDG discussions. Their work is more related to direct hot spots, and not very focused on the international processes. They don't always have the possibilities or priority to go to New York for negotiations meetings. For them the UNECE level is much more appropriate, like their engagement in the Aarhus convention. A regional HLPF dialogue would be very welcome from the side of regional NGOs (like the Regional consultation that was included in the official CSD-process). They are also keen to support the globalisation of the Aarhus Convention.

On reviews: she felt that a good model could be the EPR, and in her view it is not a problem that this has an environmental focus.

Daniel Wermus (BioVision/Millennium Institute)

He explained that his organisation works in 3 African countries with multi stakeholder assessments. Those are pilot projects. In this model they work with ministries, environmental organisations, development organisations, farmers, private sector, cooperatives and universities. This model is very promising. It creates an interesting database gathering. For more info please have a look here:

http://www.biovision.ch/fileadmin/pdf/e/services/downloads/changing_course_download/ShortBrief_Multi-StakeholderAssessmentsPost-2015.pdf





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Irena Zubcevic (UNDESA)

UNDESA does not use the word “monitoring”, only review and follow up. The role of the regional commissions is absolutely crucial. On reviews, the UPR and the Aarhus mechanisms are good examples. Aarhus is related to a convention, thus it is obligatory, this is not the case with the SDGs. But in her view the UPR model could be promoted. The SG synthesis report is bold in stating that accountability mechanisms are crucial and is counting on the national levels.

She stated that UNDESA and NGLS are doing well in facilitating CSO engagement; Member States are very happy. It is important to keep on talking about the HLPF, as it will be an important meeting. Member States should know that too.

The outcome of this ECE meeting will be an official document that will contribute to the HLPF negotiations. The same will occur for the individual Major Group positions.

To take part in the consultation you can access the questions online here:

<http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/index.php/engagement-tools/consultations>





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2015

Helping stakeholders shape new global goals for humanity's future

Abbreviations:

SG: Secretary General
UNGA: UN General Assembly
HLPF: High Level Political Forum
CSD: Commission of Sustainable Development
UPR: Universal Periodic Review
EPR: Environmental Performance Review
ODA: Official Development Assistance
CSO: Civil Society Organisations

List of Participants:

Name	Organisation
Christian Friis Bach	Executive Secretary UNECE
Leida Rijnhout	EEB (European Environmental Bureau)
Renate Bloem	CIVICUS
Mark Halle	IISD
Daniel Wermus	BioVision / Millennium Institute
Dao Nguyen	WWF International
Irena Zubcevic	UNDESA
Valeria Bicheluvia	MMM – NGO CSW
Hyun Seung Lee	CIVICUS
Sinmyung Park	CONGO
Luke Pye	Unitar
Katherina Rok	ICC
Victoria Elias	WWF Russia
Natasha Zuinen	Walloon Region - Belgium
Andrew Allimadi	Regional Commissions
Michael Kunz	UNECE
Monika Linn	UNECE