



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Leveraging interlinkages among the SDGs to realize the 2030 Agenda and build back better from COVID-19

A side event building on the thematic Expert Group Meetings held in preparation of the HLPF and taking stock of the 2022 review of the SDGs

Virtual, 11 July, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Concept Note

1. Introduction

The theme of the 2022 HLPF is “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The 2022 HLPF will have an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals including how these goals are linked to progress across the 2030.

The 2030 Agenda is universal, holistic and indivisible, with a special imperative to leave no one behind. As such, understanding the interlinkages between the various goals and targets, as well as the ways in which these interlinkages can be leveraged during implementation to accelerate progress across multiple objectives, is central to the overall success of the 2030 Agenda and also to recovery from COVID-19.

2. Rationale and key questions

In preparation for the 2022 HLPF, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA/DSDG), together with UNESCO, UN-Women, UNFPA, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the secretariat for the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), organized thematic Expert Group Meetings (EGM) on SDGs under review.

These meetings highlighted that in addition to taking stock of progress toward each of the SDGs, understanding interactions and interconnectedness among the Goals will be crucial to realizing the Goals on the ground. Discussions also underscored how leveraging interlinkages can help attain overarching objectives such as risk reduction, resilience, inclusion and sustainability as countries strive to build back better from COVID-19 working across siloes and in consultation with affected people.

For example, advancing progress on Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) is intimately linked to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4). Through this connection, as in other disasters, the COVID-19 crisis and associated school closures have placed new pressures on women and girls. There are also synergies between advancing gender equality and the protection of life on land



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(SDG 15) and life underwater (SDG 14); and when processes to advance protection and sustainable management of natural resources are inclusive of women these synergies can be harnessed to both empower women and reduce their vulnerabilities to environmental degradation and disaster risk. Likewise, access to quality education is critical for the transition needed to protect and restore life on the planet (SDG15 and 14) for the benefit of all. New awareness, knowledge and skills are needed to advance the nature positive, low carbon, resource effective and socially inclusive economy. It is furthermore key to also understand the critical interlinkages between achieving SDG 14 and 15, for example the drivers of change across them and other SDGs such as sustainable production and consumption patterns and the need for holistic planning/management handling cumulative impacts.

At the same time (and without seeking to be exhaustive), each of these four goals are linked to other parts of the 2030 Agenda including poverty, nutrition, health, economic growth, inequality and climate change. The nature of these interlinkages can vary by regional or socio-economic context, meaning that synergies and trade-offs can do so as well, with specific implications for policies and programmes, including those intended to ‘leave no one behind’, reduce risk, and secure resilience and sustainability.

These interlinkages were discussed during the preparatory Expert Group Meetings and will also be addressed during the HLPF official sessions on individual goals. This side event will take place after the thematic sessions on individual goals and will hence provide an opportunity to assess how well these interlinkages are currently understood and utilized in SDG implementation and in the discussions at the HLPF.

Side event participants will be challenged to reach beyond their respective areas of expertise to explore interactions across goals and targets in focus at the HLPF 2022 as well as with the rest of the 2030 Agenda. They will be invited to assess, what key interlinkages would benefit from additional focus, and also to produce recommendations on new and innovative ways in which diverse actors can work together towards these ends.

These discussions can also reflect on the integrated collaboration across the UN system and among stakeholders from different sectors that is linked to recent and upcoming high-level events including the Food Systems Summit, the High-level Dialogue on Energy, the Oceans Conference, the UN Environment Assembly, Conferences of the parties of the Rio Conventions, the Transforming Education Summit, and the Stockholm+50 Conference.

Key questions to be discussed include:

- What are the most significant interlinkages – based on recent scientific thinking and evidence – among SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 and the rest of the 2030 Agenda? What are some of the key interlinkages that would benefit from additional focus due to the opportunities provided to accelerate and scale up actions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?



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- How do these interlinkages lead to concrete recommendations for transformative action for building back better from COVID-19 in ways that advance sustainability, resilience and inclusivity?
- What are some practical ways in which policy makers and participants in multi-stakeholder partnerships can leverage these interlinkages for effective action at sub-national, national, regional and global levels?
- Based on the above, what would be the most fruitful areas in which data availability; science, technology and innovation; financing; and capacity development can be advanced for ensuring acceleration in a holistic way towards the SDGs?