

2025 HLPF Thematic Review
**Briefing on the outcomes of Expert Group Meetings on in-focus SDGs in
preparation for the 2025 High-level Political Forum**

Astra Bonini

Thursday, 27 February 2025

Conference Room 12

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to again thank our UN partners for their insightful presentations and also for their constructive collaboration in organizing the Expert Group Meetings that can serve as a source of evidence and solutions as preparations advance for the HLPF.

Before we open the floor for discussion, I would like to build from these excellent overviews of each EGM to also emphasize the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda, and the HLPF's focus on reviewing not only progress on the in-focus SDGs, but also their interlinkages with other SDGs and our progress on managing trade-offs and leveraging synergies between various Goals.

This was a key focus in each of the EGMs as well, and there are some cross-cutting messages that have emerged that can help to support the

integrated approach to SDG implementation that we need to be pursuing to make real progress.

Many of you are familiar with the Global Sustainable Development Report, which brings together the latest science from across regions and disciplines to support SDG policy-making with evidence.

A central message of the first two GSDRs in 2019 and 2023, is that sectoral approaches focusing on one or a small subset of goals will be insufficient for achieving the SDGs. The most efficient – or even the only – way to make progress on a given target is to take advantage of positive synergies with other targets, while resolving tradeoffs.

During each of the EGMs, such an integrated approach featured prominently in the discussions. For example:

During the EGM on SDG 3, experts stressed that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the broader environment are closely linked and interdependent. It was noted that in many cases the health impacts of new and emerging pollutants in soil, air and water are not currently even known.

For better health outcomes, participants urged that health experts should reach out more across sectors while the health community could also more consistently welcome specialists from areas such as urban

planning, agriculture, land use and soil protection, ecosystem restoration and so on.

Building such networks of experts could help in tackling complex health challenges, including the emergence of infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and environmental degradation, noting that healthier environments could prevent almost one quarter of the global burden of disease.

Discussions in the EGM on SDG 5 underscored numerous links across the 2030 Agenda with gender equality serving as a key enabler and outcome of progress across the Goals. For example, policies that enable women to take up adaptive farming practices and technologies can have catalyze progress in multiple areas like climate action, economic growth, and women's empowerment.

Experts gave examples of how promoting participatory extension methodologies, such as farmer field schools, allow women to experiment with climate-adaptive practices in a low-risk setting. Likewise, increasing the number of female extension agents has been shown to improve women's comfort in seeking advice and adopting sustainable practices, and then make meaningful improvements in their agricultural systems.

Expanding access to STEM education for women and girls and improving digital literacy for women of all ages was also discussed as a

means for accelerating action across Goals. Access to digital devices and internet connectivity, and technology will boost women's opportunities to operate in the economic spaces.

Promoting digital entrepreneurship programmes and establishing innovation hubs targeting women can support them to grow their own businesses in the digital economy. And engaging more women and girls in science boosts human ingenuity to tackle a multitude of current and emerging challenges to sustainability.

In the discussions on SDG 8, there were again many cross-cutting discussions focusing on building synergies with other Goals as well as finding ways to address perceived and real trade-offs.

Transitions to the digital and green economy can be disruptive for workers in carbon-intensive industries or those that are easily automated. Experts acknowledged these challenges focusing on solutions that account for all workers. For example, promoting circular economy models that create jobs in waste management, recycling and renewable energy, or integrating AI governance with reskilling programmes for displaced workers.

On the side of synergies, experts flagged the strong potential of SDG 8 for post-conflict recovery, economic stability and social cohesion. For example, focusing on employment-intensive public investment

programmes that combine infrastructure investment and livelihood restoration.

It was noted that SDG 8 also depends on progress in other areas with calls for employment strategies to be integrated with policies for education, social protection, digital transformation and climate action as well as industrial planning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Across all of the EGMs, there was agreement that radically changing course over the five years ahead to 2030 will require strong political leadership, and interventions that align with systemic change rather than incremental and siloed approaches. This will be particularly important in the context of global climate and environmental crises, debt distress in many countries, heightened levels of conflict globally and digital transitions that bring immense opportunities, but also new risks and challenges.

The HLPF this July provides a unique opportunity to advance science-based, informed decision-making at a time of unprecedented challenges. It is also an opportunity to forge global solidarity and multilateral cooperation around the SDGs also following the Summit of the Future last September. We very much hope that this briefing, as well

as the summaries of the EGMs that we will circulate subsequently, can help to inform these discussions and provide much needed solutions.

We look forward to working together to find synergies and use them to overcome the challenging realities we face for accelerating SDG implementation.

Thank you.