

Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018

Expert group meeting in preparation for HLPF 2018: Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

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SDG 12: Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns Session 8

Key messages

There is consensus that interlinkages are among the most important challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a dizzying exercise only to begin to map the linkages between the SDGs under special consideration by the HLPF 2018 and the other SDGs; let alone understand the causal factors underpinning them. The HLPF is therefore probably best placed to contribute to agenda setting by highlighting some linkages that showcase the transformative nature of a truly universal 2030 Agenda (e.g., by addressing reasons of underdevelopment that have their roots in “developed countries” actions or by bringing the principle of leaving no one behind to live during the HLPF sessions). This requires piloting methodologies to strengthen the dialogue amongst participants and to empower actors who find it difficult to make their voices being heard in policy making processes.

Two introductory examples:

- **Land degradation neutrality must not be achieved by outsourcing land degradation.** In their endeavors to achieve land degradation neutrality (Target 15.3) countries might face the incentive to outsource degrading practices to other countries instead of changing production patterns at home. Sustainable development policies must therefore pay special attention to the linkages between SDGs 12 and 15.
- To achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production in the food system, several steps have to be undertaken, e.g. **dramatically reduce land and water footprints and create better linkages between cities and their hinterlands.** The 2030 Agenda will only be achieved if developed countries change their consumption and production patterns. Looking at the SDGs under special consideration by the HLPF 2018 from the

point of view of agriculture (SDG 2), the linkages between SDG 12 and SDGs 6 and 15 stand out (virtual land and water imports by “developed” countries). Virtual land imports are often linked to land use change and, more often than not, to questions of food security (SDG 2) and human rights violations because of ensuing land conflicts (SDGs 1, 5, 16). Further, nutrient imports lead to nutrient excess and the pollution of water bodies (SDG 6). In “developed” countries, cities are often disconnected from their hinterlands in terms of food security and nutrition. In effect, regional development opportunities are foregone (SDG 1).

Thoughts on a way forward:

- **Many linkages are well known, the HLPF has to develop new ways to support policies that address them!** Sustainable development policies have to consider political processes, social and cultural impacts, and power imbalances. Sustainable development is not only a technical issue! Hence, follow up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda need to empower those who advocate for change and need to create incentives for Governments to become more ambitious in implementing the SDGs. Capacity building measures and generating new knowledge can and should be deployed to that end.
- **Methodologies that support creating new alliances for change provide valuable inputs to the HLPF.** For example, true cost accounting within the food system (target 15.9) is an important tool to understand linkages between the SDGs and to help create alliances for change. UNEP’s TEEBAgriFood is an important initiative in this regard. By linking concerns regarding the preservation of biodiversity and public health concerns, TEEBAgriFood contributes to new alliances for change in the food system.
- **No SDG 12 without SDG 16: Responsible governance for sustainable consumption and production.** Citizens can only hold their Governments accountable and make informed choices, if they have access to the relevant environmental information. Access to information and access to justice in case rights are being violated are therefore essential to transform consumption and production patterns.
- **Keeping the inclusive nature of the Agenda 2030 process alive! Shadow reporting, more opportunities for dialogue, and further intensified and decentralized preparatory processes for the HLPF are important elements of effective follow up and review and should progressively be strengthened.** Given the manifold linkages between the SDGs, the HLPF would benefit from drawing on the expertise of relevant global processes (formal and informal) that could support in “digesting” the wealth of information and preparing targeted reports for the HLPF. Ideally, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) would attain this. However, the current four

year cycle does not support the GSDR in assuming this role. The first week of the HLPF offers the opportunity to further strengthen innovative formats that would allow for actual dialogue and exchange. These opportunities should be explored, as addressing linkages depends very much on discussions that overcome established silo thinking. Regarding the inclusion of additional voices in the HLPF, the Universal Periodic Review under the UN Human Rights Council offers important lessons on civil society shadow reports.