

**Expert Group Meeting on
Sustainable Development Goal 15: Progress and Prospects**

**Talking Points for Ms. Marion Barthélemy
Director, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for
Sustainable Development, DESA**

Introduction:

- I want to thank the Division for Sustainable Development Goals for inviting me here to provide the closing statement for this very important expert group meeting.
- Thank you to all colleagues who organized this EGM. This is a good example of successful interdepartmental – and UN system-wide – collaboration in support of the work of the HLPF and overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- I would like to briefly talk to you about the HLPF -- which is the overarching platform for the review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I. The follow-up and review system for the 2030 Agenda

- The 2030 Agenda is an unprecedented endeavor in many respects. This is because of its level of ambition, its universal reach and the level of details in its commitments.
- This is also because the follow-up and review architecture is enshrined in the Agenda – it is critical for the implementation of the SDGs and unique compared to the MDGs.
- In the 2030 Agenda, all countries stated “To support accountability to our citizens, we will provide for systematic follow-up and review at the various levels”¹.
- The 2030 Agenda put in place a three-tier system:
 - The HLPF as the overarching platform at the global level;
 - Regional forums are the platform to further the exchange of best practices and reinforce mutual learning; and
 - The national level as the lynchpin for review.

II. The HLPF as the overarching platform for global follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda

¹ A/RES/70/1, para 47

- The HLPF is at the apex of the system for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It oversees a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level.
- It is meant to be an inclusive platform. It gives major groups important rights to engage in its work.
- The HLPF conducts various kinds of reviews:
 - a. Every year, HLPF reviews a theme and specific SDGs.
 - b. The HLPF also conducts VNRs. 65 countries already conducted VNRs.
 - c. It also reviews the annual SDG progress report, as well as quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR).
- Reviews are to be inclusive, be focused on human rights and LNOB. They have to be grounded on disaggregated and comparable data. You also discussed these issues, including examples on deforestation and wetlands.

- The HLPF builds on the reviews conducted throughout the UN system. UN Environment Assembly, for example, provided a contribution to this year’s HLPF.

III. What will this year’s HLPF look like

- The HLPF will meet from 9 to 18 July 2018 in NY.
- Its theme is “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”.
- The set of goals to be reviewed are those on water, energy, cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, and the goal you have been discussing here for the past two days, terrestrial ecosystems. SDG17, partnerships and means of implementation for the SDGs, is also under review as every year.
- Each of the SDGs under review will have a dedicated 3-hour session during the first week of the HLPF. This is not long, but it will give time to address interlinkages of SDG15 with other SDGs, notably gender, water, food and climate change.

- Thematic session on SDG15 will take place on Friday, 13 July in the morning. The outcomes of the meeting of the past two days will set the foundation of this thematic review of SDG 15, and influence the proceeding of the session. The many useful presentations you have shared here will be made available through our webpage dedicated to HLPF preparations. The summary and key messages will be uploaded there soon as well.
- The programme will also include thematic sessions on:
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, including a dedicated session on perspectives from major groups and other stakeholders; integration; LNOB; STI; regional perspectives; perspectives of SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs and MICs.
- Three ministerial days on 16-18 July will host the VNRs.
- 47 countries will present their VNRs, which are invaluable to gain insight of follow-up and review at the national level.
- Some VNRs usually focus at least in part on the SDGs being reviewed that year – we will see whether this is the case this year. If so, it would provide invaluable information on how countries

have followed up on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs with regard to SDG 15. We also encourage countries to address their VNRs – This is because all countries committed to all SDGs. It also makes the VNRs comparable.

IV. What will happen in 2019

- HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC: theme will be “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.
- SDGs under review: 4 (Education), 8 (Growth), 10 (Inequalities), 13 (Climate), 16 (Peace) and 17 (Partnerships).
- Review of next batch of SDGs should include consideration of links with SDG 15, as you discussed. This will apply to SDG 16 for example, which is also critical for SDG 15 and on SDG 17, but also for other SDGs, eg climate change.
- In 2016, we had a meeting on integrated approaches to the SDGs. It showed that institutions had an impact on efforts to achieve SDG12 on oceans. On the one hand, institutions involved with oceans are quite scattered which hindered efforts. On another hand, some countries are gaining experience in using

interinstitutional or multi stakeholder mechanisms to support policies related to oceans. Similarly, as pointed out in your discussions, institutions are key for the implementation of SDG15. While National Ministries of Environment and Biodiversity may be considered small ministries, they need to be included in integrated sustainable development strategies to support the implementation of specific or cross-cutting policies.

- All review should keep a focus on the interlinkages between the Goals. We will work with the ECOSOC President to bring a mix of experts on every Goal together, to promote this aspect further.
- Voluntary national reviews for 2019: already 16.
- In September 2019, there will be the first major overall review of progress in the 2030 Agenda, when the HLPF meets at HOS/HOG level under the auspices of the GA.
- Opportunity to review the level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda, and “provide high-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation, identify progress and emerging challenges and mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation.”

- This is thus opportunity to raise the level of ambition of the targets.
- The HLPF under the auspices of the GA will also be aiming at informing the guidance that the GA will give to the UN system through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of UN system operational activities for development.
- The UNDS has been undergoing a major review. The GA will shortly adopt a series of measures that will allow the UN development system to better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Following the overall review of the SDGs in 2019 or 2020, GA resolution 67/290, on the format and organizational aspects of the HLPF, will also be under review. All these processes need to be coherent in order to assure maximum support for and best delivery on actions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

V. How your meeting fits in

- The SDGs require a change of mindsets. This applies to SDG 15. It requires everyone to change the way s/he thinks about nature, the environment or consumption. While the daily life many times

has us very connected with our comfortable patterns of consumption, people do have emotional attachments to nature, including forests and wildlife, which should be capitalized on when raising awareness to SDG15.

- The HLPF and the policies it discusses should push in that direction. This is why we need to engage all actors and all disciplines in reflecting on the implementation of the SDGs.
- That is also the reason why EGM like yours are important contributions for this process.

- The insights and recommendations from this meeting will be transmitted to Member States, as well as to relevant partners in the UN system and other stakeholders on the ground, all of which are integral to our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- They will also help prepare the ministerial declaration that the HLPF will adopt as a result of this year’s deliberations.
- The Chair of the UNEA will also address the HLPF and draw attention to SDG 15.

VI. Conclusion:

- In the past two days, you had very constructive and informative discussions. I hope that this fruitful exchange will continue to inspire you to move forward with the good work and carry the momentum forward to new pathways and new partnerships.

Thank you.