HLPF REPORT AND PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2016

Short Report

“Inclusiveness means that all people can participate as partners, rights-holders and full citizens, not as subjects or mere beneficiaries. Relevant international instruments often exist, such as the Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities, but are not always respected.”

-HLPF Official Summary, H.E. Oh Joon, President of ECOSOC and HLPF

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| **HLPF in Numbers**  The HLPF 2016 was attended by 22 representatives of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities consisting of 12 persons with disabilities and 10 advocates.  An official position paper by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities titled “Ensuring that no one was left behind” was submitted to the HLPF and endorsed by over 370 organizations.  Two representatives from the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities were invited to be official presenters at the HLPF.  Representatives of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities gave 17 interventions during the official sessions of the HLPF.  Out of the 22 Voluntary National Reviews, 17 submissions[[1]](#footnote-1) and 8 oral presentations[[2]](#footnote-2) of Member States explicitly elaborated on the situation of persons with disabilities in their national context.  The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities co-organized and hosted six side events. Representatives from the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities presented at 10 HLPF side events. |

**Summary**

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development is the United Nations central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities[[3]](#footnote-3) took full advantage of the rights granted to them by Member States[[4]](#footnote-4) to participate and contribute in the HLPF 2016. Prior to the HLPF the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities submitted an official position paper on the annual theme “Ensuring that No One is Left Behind” supported by over 370 organizations globally. Persons with Disabilities were invited as official panelists at the opening, as well as the first session of the HLPF. Panelists were requested to address the vital role that persons with disabilities play as contributors in the implementation of the SDGs and to make recommendations to governments on how to ensure that all development processes are inclusive. In addition, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities made 17 interventions during thematic discussions, the voluntary national reviews and the General Debate. Moreover, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities co-organized and participated in several side events. In eight of these side events, persons with disabilities presented in a variety of topics such as, inclusive education, data disaggregation by disability, tackling inequalities, and ending violence against children. Further, the Stakeholders of Persons with Disabilities organized a side event during the ministerial week on how effective collaboration between organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) and governments can be realized in implementing the SDGs. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities that represented the regions of Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, shared their particular achievements and challenges from the national and grassroots levels.

The rights and participation of persons with disabilities were prominently recognized by UN Members States, UN agencies and other actors. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with disabilities contributed to discussions throughout the HLPF in a meaningful way resulting in the heightened visibility of persons with disabilities within the SDG implementation process. Out of the 22 Voluntary National Reviews, 16 submissions[[5]](#footnote-5) and 8 oral presentations[[6]](#footnote-6) of Member States explicitly elaborated on the situation of persons with disabilities in their national context.

IDA and IDDC developed surveys on the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the voluntary national reviews for the HLPF 2016. The findings indicated that the lack of inclusive participation in the consultations of the national reviews was the most commonly raised issue. Many respondents asked for increased dialogue and engagement opportunities between Governments and DPOs with the prerequisite for full participation with non-discrimination compliance and provision of reasonable accommodations. Quite concerning was that in some cases, DPO engagement was substituted by government agencies. The lack of information at the national level was raised as an important issue and DPOs’ knowledge of the SDGs and the value in its engagement varied considerably. The role and active engagement of UN agencies at the national level was highlighted as critical in some countries, but also criticized as UN agencies are inconsistent in capacity. Language barriers, lack of access to information, and the lack of provision of the SDGs in a comprehensible way to the grassroots level are of real concern. Finally, many respondents asked for an exchange on good practices on how DPOs in other countries engage in the SDG implementation process.

While participation took place, on the whole persons with disabilities were largely left out of the national-level consultations. DPOs are looking for opportunities to work with governments, and many are being turned away. Public consultations often exclude persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Even when wider civil society is invited to participate, meetings and documents are not accessible for many persons with disabilities, thus excluding them from democratic processes.

**Political Analysis**

The HLPF 2016 was a litmus test on whether the Forum will be able to provide a platform for meaningful discussions and accordingly further strengthen the implementation of the SDGs at the national level. While this was a pilot year, we must acknowledge that the HLPF has the potential to fulfill the role of a strong monitoring mechanism/body in which national reviews and thematic exchange are taking place. The Forum can provide the space in which grassroots organizations can meaningful participate and bring global attention to relevant good practices and challenges.

Governments took the Forum seriously, attended with well prepared, large and high-level delegations. The Forum was used to connect, share experiences and contribute to the discussions. Consequently, a number of partnerships were established. The majority of the volunteering countries prepared their national reports ahead of the meeting, providing proper time for participants to engage in the review process. Despite the intergovernmental nature of the Forum, it was conducted as a multi-stakeholder platform, that provided space for all kinds of actors to participate, intervene and deliver speeches.

Persons with disabilities took full advantage of all opportunities and not only contributed, but also acquired knowledge and demonstrated that they are a highly organized and professionally well prepared group. Prior to the HLPF, persons with disabilities mobilized, engaged at the national level in their country’s voluntary review process and report writing. As a significant result, 17 out of the 22 volunteering countries, included persons with disabilities in their written reports. In addition, despite the short oral presentation time, eight countries included persons with disabilities in their statements at the HLPF. The engagement of persons with disabilities was additionally reflected at the global level and during the Forum in a variety of events. Moreover, Member States, the UN and other actors recognized persons with disabilities several times at the Forum as one of the most organized and well prepared stakeholder groups.

The HLPF provided a global venue in which the disability community could connect, was an initial great learning opportunity on how to draw attention to national challenges in the global arena, and provided new options to strengthen UN CRPD implementation within the SDG framework and development policies and programmes. As stated in the official HLPF summary the President of the HLPF stated that “Inclusiveness means that all people can participate as partners, rights-holders and full citizens, not as subjects or mere beneficiaries. Relevant international instruments often exist, such as the Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities, but are not always respected.” The HLPF also ensured that a wide range of disability organizations collaborated and the participants represented the cross-disability sector. During the Forum, initial steps were taken to formalize the establishment of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities, which up to that point only existed on an ad-hoc level.

**Next Steps and Recommendations**

*HLPF 2017*

The meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will be held from Monday, 10 July to Wednesday, 19 July 2017; including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from Monday, 17 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2017. The HLPF 2017 will be presided by the ECOSOC President H.E. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

The theme will be “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.” The set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be the following, including Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year:

* **Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
* **Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
* **Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
* **Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
* **Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
* **Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

*Preparatory Process for HLPF 2017*

* Discuss with DPOs and allies on what to achieve on the HLPF 2017 theme
* Convene a working group that will draft and initiate broad consultation to carry out an official submission by persons with disabilities on the HLPF 2017 theme
* Develop of main messages to be communicated at the HLPF 2017
* Consider side events to be organized by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities
* Develop participation and funding strategies to ensure a gender-balanced, geographical-balanced, and diverse representation of persons with disabilities, particularly of grassroots DPOs
* Secure funding and resources, including translation fees, event organizing, and more
* Coordinate, participate and share information better in the regional multi-stakeholder platforms
* Develop a strategic approach toward the participation in the voluntary national reports with the emphasis to empower the involvement of national DPOs (strong participation in national multi-stakeholder consultations; reasonable accommodation for participants with disabilities; exchange of knowledge between national DPOs and global advocates; consultations to analyze the written national submissions; close collaboration with grassroots DPOs during the HLPF for urgent feedback; and so forth)
* Support for the submission of parallel reports
* Ensure that the new form of web-based interfaces is accessible and persons with disabilities are able to participate in an effective, broad and balanced participation by region and by type of organization
* Address the accessibility challenges of the HLPF 2016 to create a more inclusive and accessible HLPF 2017
* Participate meaningfully in events that directly feed into HLPF 2017, including:
  + The first annual Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue during the upcoming high level session of the General Assembly. The High-Level Breakfast Event will take place on 22 September, 2016 from 8am to 9:30am at the West Terrace on the fourth floor of the UN General Assembly Building.
  + The second annual multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) will be held from 15-16 May 2017 at the UN Headquarters in New York. For more information, please visit [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/TFM/STIForum](https://owa.cbm.org/owa/redir.aspx?C=33tmXVomRkaTT6zUWBWKyqyby6_C4NMI8qAuPdRzZZAanqkhnVXUN_qR6TsPlddKws9YM1zkMjs.&URL=https%3a%2f%2fsustainabledevelopment.un.org%2fTFM%2fSTIForum)
  + The Partnership Forum 2017

*HLPF 2018*

The theme for HLPF 2018 will be “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” and the set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be the following, including Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year:

* **Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
* **Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
* **Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
* **Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
* **Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

*HLPF 2019*

The theme for HLPF 2019 will be “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” and the set of goals to be reviewed in depth will be the following, including Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year:

* **Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
* **Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
* **Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries
* **Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
* **Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

*Reporting of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities at the HLPF*

The HLPF provides not only a platform for effective engagement, but also obliges stakeholders, explicitly naming persons with disabilities, to report on their contribution in the SDG implementation. This was requested by the 2030 Agenda (paragraph 89) that states that “the high-level political forum will support participation in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290. We call upon those actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda.” This is further reiterated in resolution A/70/L.60 that calls “to major groups and stakeholders to report on their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”

The opportunity to present on behalf of persons with disabilities should be well planned and carefully prepared. Some reporting guidelines are in place that were developed by the major groups and other stakeholders on how to report on the achievements in front of the HLPF. These need to be carefully reviewed and on this basis, a decision with a timeline for the next 14 years needs to be agreed upon by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities. Volunteering to report will be a similar process than that of Member States. As first step, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities needs to inform the President of ECOSOC (of the respective year) and consequently will be provided with a deadline by when to submit a short (three pages) and long report (open ended). Additionally, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities will be invited to make an oral presentation at the HLPF and all in attendance will have the opportunity to ask questions.

1. At the time of the report in September 12th 2016, 19 out of the 22 volunteering countries had submitted both short and long reports. Out of the 19 countries with full reports, the following 17 referenced persons with disabilities directly: Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Egypt, Finland, France, Madagascar, Morocco, Norway, Sierra Leone, and Samoa [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In 2012 during the Rio+20 Conference, persons with disabilities were recognized as other stakeholders meaning that they received the same rights as major groups and can contribute to all sustainable development processes at the UN. Regarding the HLPF, the major groups and other stakeholders created a coordination mechanism to regulate their participation and contribution to the HLPF. Within this mechanism, persons with disabilities are officially referred to as the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A/RES/67/290 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. At the time of the report in September 12th 2016, 19 out of the 22 volunteering countries had submitted both short and long reports. Out of the 19 countries with full reports, the following 17 referenced persons with disabilities directly. Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Egypt, Finland, France, Madagascar, Morocco, Norway, Sierra Leone, and Samoa [↑](#footnote-ref-6)