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**Report on the High-level Political Forum**

**2020**

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# SUMMARY

The first-ever fully virtual High-level Political Forum on sustainable development was held from 7 to 16 July, 2020. Member States, UN experts and stakeholders discussed the theme “accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” Forty-seven countries delivered their voluntary national reviews. At a time when the UN is faced with a profound global health and economic emergency, the HLPF attracted increased political attention. It was reflected upon if the HLPF can fulfil expectations, if Member States can respond to the crisis in solidarity and take pragmatic action, and ultimately if the United Nations can fulfil its purpose as an instrument of international action.

Many interventions emphasized that in our new COVID world, the most vulnerable and marginalized, including persons with disabilities are the most at risk and need the most support. To address this, recommendations included to collaborate, cooperate and have dialogue with all stakeholders; to strengthen health systems and deliver universal healthcare services for all; include youth perspectives; collect data on the most left behind; leverage political will to address evidence-based decision making; among others.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities at the HLPF has steadily increased since the 2016 HLPF (the first one following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda). This year, references to persons with disabilities were included more consistently throughout the Forum likely in part due to the COVID-19 dialogue, which highlighted those most affected, which includes persons with disabilities.

During the HLPF, the [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/) was released that highlights the importance of timely, quality, open, and disaggregated data and statistics, especially to combat the pandemic and to get countries back on track to achieve the SDGs. Positively, the report included data on persons with disabilities throughout. While this is an improvement, a lack of disability data to measure the SDGs remains. Thus, citizen-gathered data need to be used to complement official data to fill gaps.

Persons with disabilities were referenced in key opening sessions throughout the two weeks, including in presentations from António Guterres, UN Secretary-General; Mher Margaryan, ECOSOC Vice President; Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN; Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation; and Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland. Additionally, a number of UN entities highlighted persons with disabilities throughout the Forum, such as from UNESCWA, UNFPA, UNRISD, OHCHR, and Paul Mavima, Chair of the 6th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Also, quite importantly, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Special Envoy of the UNSG on Disability and Accessibility presented in the ECOSOC High-level Segment. She highlighted the key connections between accessibility, human rights and the SDGs, as well as that accessibility benefits all of society, including persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women, children, and others.

More than 30 countries highlighted persons with disabilities in various events, statements and in VNR presentations, such as consulting with persons with disabilities in the VNR process and examples of disability inclusion at the country level, including implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, there were excellent examples of meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in VNR presentations.

But overall, Member State commitments were not followed through and actions were not taken at the HLPF. The usual opportunities for informal discussions, networking and joining forces were not available due to the virtual nature. Moreover, the HLPF failed to adopt a Ministerial Declaration (although it will at a later stage). This document could have expressed hope and global solidarity. It could have contained a commitment by the international community to unite in the fight against the pandemic. It could have also contained a commitment to building a better, greener and more inclusive future for people and the planet. Unfortunately, instead multilateralism was questioned.

The overall message is that the world is not on track to deliver the 2030 Agenda. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic, the road ahead is even steeper and delivering the 2030 Agenda has become more urgent. Despite the positive trend of inclusion of persons with disabilities in high-level UN events, especially related to the pandemic, the reality is that at the field level, it has been challenging to include all groups into response and recovery COVID plans. This creates a risk that persons with disabilities will be overlooked, and consequently left even further behind. Thus, more than ever, it is time to turn high-level words into action.

# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM IN NUMBERS

The following is a snapshot of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF).

## 1. Official HLPF numbers

* 8 days
* 18 meetings
* 137 Heads and Deputy Heads of State and Government, Ministerial Level Officials
* 134 Presenters in Panels
* 1123 registered participants
* 17 VNR Labs
* 194 Side Events
* 9 Special Events
* 10 Exhibitions
* 125,000 views on UN WebTV
* 47 VNRs
  + 11 from Europe
  + 11 from Asia Pacific
  + 9 from Latin America and the Caribbean
  + 16 from Africa

## 2. Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) participation

Major Groups and other Stakeholders is the official civil society mechanism to engage with the HLPF. The [Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/personswithdisabilities) (SGPwD) is part of this mechanism.

Despite the technical challenges of hosting a virtual HLPF, there were 125,000 views on UN Web TV and MGoS engagement remained high, albeit much lower compared to previous years, with:

* 19 MGoS Lead Discussants/Resource Persons participated in thematic sessions;
* 30 MGoS Interventions took place during the thematic sessions;
* 109 MGoS Side Events were carried out; and
* 27 live questions were asked and answered during the VNR sessions with an additional 20 questions asked in writing.

## 3. SGPwD participation

Due to the online nature of the 2020 HLPF, it was difficult to ascertain the exact number of SGPwD representatives. Other than a few events, the virtual platforms were hosted by the UN and other partners, therefore it was not possible to accurately know how many persons with disabilities presented and how many connected virtually. The following section provides an overview of SGPwD participation from what could be gathered.

Unlike in previous years, registration to the official 2020 HLPF was not required with the exception of official presenters and potential interventionists. As a result, the SGPwD submitted and registered a list of 10 people to the UN secretariat, and ultimately, two people presented during the official HLPF session. SGPwD representatives participated and presented in many informal meetings, but were not registered as it was not required.

The official SGPwD side event was held via the Zoom platform and 230 people attended the event.

As for the VNRs, 18 SGPwD representatives engaged in the global review process. Additional details on the VNRs are below.

SGPwD participation:

* SGPwD representatives delivered two interventions during the thematic week;
* Eighteen SGPwD representatives engaged in VNR drafting;
* SGPwD representatives presented in an official capacity in two VNR Labs;
* The SGPwD organized a side event titled “Will the SDGs still be relevant for persons with disabilities after the pandemic?”;
* The SGPwD co-organized a side event with the Stakeholder Group on Ageing titled “Learning from COVID-19 to accelerate action for a more inclusive decade of SDG delivery” in which two SGPwD representatives presented and 340 people attended; and
* Three Ministerial Declaration negotiation sessions took place and the SGPwD participated with one representative at each. Additional meetings were cancelled due to the pandemic.

## 4. Inclusion and references to persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities were referenced in key opening sessions throughout the two weeks, including in presentations from António Guterres, UN Secretary-General; Mher Margaryan, ECOSOC Vice President; Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN; Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation; and Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland. Additionally, a number of UN entities highlighted persons with disabilities throughout the Forum, such as from UNESCWA, UNFPA, UNRISD, OHCHR, and Paul Mavima, Chair of the 6th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Also, quite importantly, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Special Envoy of the UNSG on Disability and Accessibility presented in the ECOSOC High-level Segment. She highlighted the key connections between accessibility, human rights and the SDGs, as well as that accessibility benefits all of society, including persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women, children, and others.

More than 30 countries highlighted persons with disabilities in various events, statements and in VNR presentations, such as consulting with persons with disabilities in the VNR process and examples of disability inclusion at the country level, including implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

There were excellent examples of meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in VNR presentations. For example, The Gambia included a [video of The Gambia Federation of the Disabled](http://webtv.un.org/search/2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-11th-meeting/6171639125001/?term=2020-07-14&sort=date) (3:23) and Seychellesincluded a [video of a young man with a disability](http://webtv.un.org/search/part-1-2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-13th-meeting/6171959181001/?term=2020-07-15&sort=date) from a family with three persons with disabilities who explained how the social protection system has provided accessibility measures, such as ramps in their home creating a more inclusive life. (3:13). Additionally, there were stellar examples of accessibility in VNR presentations. Panama included its own captions and sign language interpreter in [its pre-recorded video](http://webtv.un.org/search/2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-10th-meeting/6171372932001/?term=2020-07-13&sort=date) (4 minute mark); Slovenia included its own captions in [its pre-recorded video presentation](http://webtv.un.org/search/2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-8th-meeting/6170839111001/?term=2020-07-10&sort=date) (1:51); and Uganda included a sign language interpreter [in its VNR presentation](http://webtv.un.org/search/2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-9th-meeting/6171348411001/?term=2020-07-13&sort=date) (1:16).

# PREPARATORY PROCESSES

## 1. Overview – Virtual platform and stakeholder participation

In the beginning of March it became apparent that the global pandemic would impact the format and organization of the HLPF. First, the UN closed its Headquarters and slowly shifted to online sessions. This was unprecedented, and as a result a number of challenges emerged and everyone involved had to adapt to a new way of working. The steering group of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders immediately became concerned about how stakeholder participation would be carried out.

To ensure stakeholder participation, a conversation started with the relevant UN Secretariat division, several letters were formulated, an official request was submitted to the President of ECOSOC and a follow-up online consultation took place. Additional online meetings were held with the co-facilitators of the HLPF review process as well as with the co-facilitators of the HLPF Ministerial Declaration. Major Groups and other Stakeholder representatives participated in both processes online.

With short notice, prior to the HLPF, it was decided to have virtual modalities and participation for the 2020 HLPF. This put a significant burden on the preparatory process and particularly for the SGPwD since accessibility is a key factor for full participation. The HLPF being fully online was only confirmed in June, and to address this, the SGPwD prepared and widely disseminated two accessibility guides for virtual meetings: [Checklist for making virtual meetings accessible](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/checklist_for_un_on_online_platforms.docx)

and [Overview on Accessibility of Video Conferencing Apps and Services – periodically updated](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/accessibility_of_video_conferencing_apps_and_services.docx).

In mid-June, the Women’s Major Group composed a letter calling for wide stakeholder participation at the HLPF, which was endorsed by most MGoS members, including the SGPwD. The letter called on the UN system and Member States to implement a set of recommendations to ensure that virtual UN meetings included meaningful civil society participation.

Aligning with MGoS advocacy efforts, Member States supported stakeholders with a voluntary pledge to support stakeholder participation in the 2020 HLPF that was signed by 60 Member States. The document indicated that the extraordinary circumstances in which the HLPF was organized would lead to limitations for stakeholder participation, especially those from developing countries.

As a result of the aforementioned actions, the HLPF provided the space for stakeholder participation, but to a much lesser degree than in previous years. There were many factors contributing to the low participation rates, including delayed information from the organizers, two different online platforms that were both inaccessible, and the difficulty in signing up for an intervention. Only two people per constituency for each session received an internal link to join directly and all others were able to watch via UN WebTV. The latter format allowed people to watch the session, but not contribute.

## 2. HLPF challenges

Numerous issues emerged in the preparatory process. Preparations and organizational aspects of the meeting were less effective than they could have been. Compared to previous HLPFs, the first thematic week allocated shorter discussion times and fewer opportunities for interventions for both Member States and stakeholders. Many individuals could not participate due to different time zones and because of lack of interpretation in the official UN languages. Additionally, throughout the week there were several technical challenges.

During the second week in the “high-level segment,” 47 countries delivered their voluntary national reviews. Most presentations were shared in a pre-recorded video format. Time management was challenging and there were few opportunities for interactive dialogues. Consequently, many comments and questions were curtailed or eliminated. On a positive note, interpretation in the UN official languages was provided, but with many technical difficulties. The second week posed more technical challenges than the first week. Both weeks were packed with parallel events, including special events, VNR Labs, and numerous side events.

According to the UN, more people participated in the 2020 HLPF than before. However, it is important to look closely at the numbers. Indeed, many people watched the official sessions through the UN’s WebTV system. Parallel events and side events were also virtual and consequently allowed for a higher number of people to register and attend online compared to previous in-person events.

But, can we conclude, based on these numbers that participation was high? No, because there is a significant difference between observing a meeting and actively or meaningfully participating in it. Looking closer at the official HLPF sessions, there were two options. First, to connect via Webex the first week and Interprefy during the second week ,or second, to watch the whole session via UN WebTV. The high number of participants was from the latter platform, not the former. Meaningful participation was only possible with the first option, but, unfortunately Member States and stakeholders were each allotted a limited number of slots. In total, only 38 stakeholders were allowed to connect per session. At prior HLPFs, usually over 2000 stakeholders participated.

Looking at the parallel events, many were organized by different sections of the UN and as a result were heavily promoted. Events were brief with many speakers, barely allowing time for any interaction. Side events organized by stakeholders were announced last minute by the UN and did not receive the same attention and popularity as the UN events. All the events competed for participants and the more widely advertised events had more attendees. Positively, 60 Member States prior to the HLPF joined forces and advocated for meaningful stakeholder participation. Without their support it is unclear what the numbers would have reflected.

Of course, these are challenging and unprecedented times, and it is positive that the HLPF was able to be carried out online. But, we fell short, as we were hoping for an effective UN in which Member States were able to meaningfully reflect on how to make a real difference and solve today’s many challenges, which did not occur.

*Additional Information:* Information on [the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities and its involvement](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/hlpf2020) in HLPF 2020; a summary of the [SGPwD HLPF side event](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sdgs-still-relevant-after-pandemic-persons-elizabeth-lockwood-phd/?trackingId=8ACDTw5JSBWPqXaaKww%2Fkw%3D%3D)**;** the official [SGPwD HLPF 2020 Submission](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_submission_2020_final.docx); and related[blog: Sustainable development and persons with disabilities: HLPF 2020](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sustainable-development-persons-disabilities-hlpf-lockwood-phd/?published=t)

## 3. HLPF review

The HLPF review held preparatory processes with expert group meetings followed by negotiations in February 2020 that resulted in a [non-paper](https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/02/HLPF-ECOSOC-Review-Thematic-Meetings.pdf) synthesizing delegations’ views. Only a couple in-person negotiations took place with the remaining in-person meetings cancelled in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Member States initially wanted to continue negotiations online, however decided that since there were too many differences on the table, an online platform would not provide the space for proper deliberations. Accordingly, Member States agreed to adopt a procedural resolution that postpones the in-depth reviews of the HLPF and ECOSOC until the 75th UNGA session.

It was decided in the [agreed final text](https://www.un.org/pga/74/2020/07/28/review-process-of-the-economic-and-social-council-and-the-high-level-political-forum-3/), that the thematic focus of ECOSOC and HLPF in 2021 will be “sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.”

The 2021 HLPF will focus in-depth on 9 SDGs:

* Goal 1: No poverty
* Goal 2: Zero hunger
* Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing
* Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth
* Goal 10: Reduced inequalities
* Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production
* Goal 13: Climate action
* Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions
* Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals

Quite concerningly, the procedural resolution failed to recognize stakeholder participation. The initial draft prepared for adoption included a paragraphinviting the President of the General Assembly to provide a space for relevant stakeholders to present inputs into the intergovernmental negotiations. Member States broke silence procedure, blocked the adoption of the draft resolution because of four paragraphs, the stakeholder participation being one of them. In order to move forward and adopt the resolution, the stakeholder participation paragraph was entirely dropped in the agreed final text.

The understanding is that current modalities from resolution 67/290 will be used in light of future negotiations, which are expected to start in the beginning of 2021. Consequently, Major Groups and other Stakeholder (MGoS) representatives will continue to be invited to participate. However, not allowing any reference to stakeholders in a simple procedural resolution is an alarming indication for future stakeholder engagement.

This outcome may be in part due to an internal civil society struggle between emerging civil society networks and the official MGoS mechanism of which Member States are aware. New CSO networks do not recognize the MGoS mechanism and, in addition the MGoScoordination mechanism has shortcomings, including a lack of strong leadership in its decision-making body. This unfortunately could lead to civil society losing important space for all stakeholders.

## 4. Official Submission of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities

[HLPF 2020 Submission (Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities)](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_submission_2020_final.docx)

In the HLPF 2020 Submission, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities provided Member States and the UN system recommendations to achieve the SDGs for persons with disabilities in line with the Decade of Action to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Additionally, a section on the COVID-19 was included in light of the global pandemic and its unprecedented effects on persons with disabilities and their families. Also, a section on key messages from youth with disabilities and sustainable development was included, with details below.

## 5. Youth with Disabilities and Sustainable Development

The [Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/personswithdisabilities) carried out a survey asking youth with disabilities about societal barriers and inclusion in the SDGs for two weeks in February and March of 2020 in English, French, International Sign, and Spanish. The survey was shared via Twitter, the International Disability Alliance listserv, the International Disability and Development Consortium listserv, and via other networks. We received 133 responses from individuals with a variety of disabilities with an age range from 9 to 63. The responses had good regional balance.

*Main challenges*

Many recurrent themes emerged as main challenges and barriers in the lives of the youth with disabilities. Pervasive discrimination, inequality, indifference, marginalization, and stigma was the most common answer indicating that youth with disabilities overwhelmingly face attitudinal barriers throughout the world. Connected to this, many respondents indicated that they felt loneliness, isolation, had low self-esteem, and were not believed.

Barriers to accessing decent work, healthcare services, and education were very common responses, and are key areas in which to focus policies and programs. In addition, the lack of accessible built environment, transportation, communication, and information are also ubiquitous barriers. Additional challenges included lack of access to sign language interpreters, no recognition of national sign language, and the lack of independent living.

Intersecting factors also impact youth with disabilities, such as gender inequality, racism, and poverty, and environmental factors including lack of access to clean water and unsafe environments, and from this sexual and emotional abuse was indicated by some respondents.

*Additional Information*: [Youth with Disabilities and Sustainable Development](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/article_-_youth_with_disabilities_and_sustainable_development.docx)

## 6. The experience of persons with disabilities with COVID-19: a case study

[The experience of persons with disabilities with COVID-19](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/master_sgpwd_covid-19_report_-_repaired_via_365_june_22_2020finalfinal.docx) // [En Español](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/master_sgpwd_covid-19_report_spanish_final.docx)

This research study was used as the basis for SGPwD speeches and the official SGPwD side event at the HLPF. Details on the research are below.

The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities carried out research in May and June 2020 to attempt to complement existing COVID-19 efforts by gathering data from leaders from the disability movement. The data were gathered around thematic units related to the global pandemic and the Sustainable Development Goals. Twenty-eight people with disabilities were interviewed in six languages, including International Sign. In addition, 65 people with disabilities from 54 countries participated in the focus groups

Results of the data gathered indicate that from the pandemic myriad barriers exist for persons with disabilities, including additional and new ones. The most common barriers that emerged from the findings include: (1) lack of access to COVID-19-related information for all persons with disabilities, (2) barriers in receiving social protection measures and employment (formal and informal, losing employment first, and accessibility barriers in the virtual working environment) and (3) lack of disability inclusion in COVID-19 response efforts at all governmental levels creating significant disconnections between national and local actions.

The data gathered and related findings are important to identify new barriers for persons with disabilities in the global pandemic. Results from this study can be used in advocacy efforts to influence governments and bilateral and multilateral agencies to urgently measure the situation of persons with disabilities worldwide in the context of COVID-19. This can support the realization of disability-inclusive policies and programs to build back better, safer, resilient and more inclusive communities worldwide.

## 7. Communications

*Twitter campaign / SGPwD twitter use*

The SGPwD prolifically tweeted during the HLPF. Details on references to and inclusion of persons with disabilities through the HLPF are included in the [SGPwD](https://twitter.com/sgpwd?lang=en) and [Elizabeth Lockwood’s Twitter feeds](https://twitter.com/lockwoodem?lang=en) from 6 to 17 July, 2020.

In addition, the SGPwD supported the Major Group and other Stakeholders’ Twitter campaign for the 2020 HLPF Ministerial Declaration and the ECOSOC/HLPF Review. The SGPwD tweeted a few tweets in solidarity to advocate for transparency, human rights, stakeholder participation, climate action, gender equality, and to include the most marginalized groups. The campaign reached millions of people due to the effective, collaborative action.

Moreover, the International Disability Alliance and International Disability and Development Consortium COVID-19 communications working group supported the SGPwD with communications and social media during the HLPF by sharing key messages and tweets.

## 8. SGPwD Bulletins

The SGPwD shared a couple of bulletins leading up to the HLPF to share information and to provide guidance. The bulletins include [June 2020 Bulletin](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_bulletin.docx) and [June 2020: HLPF Guidance Note](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_guidance_note.docx). We also presented information and updates on the HLPF a number of times in the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) COVID-19 advocacy working group.

*Additional information***:** IDA and IDDC[Rebuilding an inclusive future for all campaign](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/rebuilding-inclusive-future-all-campaign)

## 9. Ministerial Declaration

The Permanent Representatives of Bulgaria and Lebanon were appointed to facilitate the HLPF Ministerial Declaration negotiations. The first informal meeting was conducted via Zoom on 4 May, 2020 and followed by further online negotiations on 8 and 24 June and 3 July, 2020. SGPwD representatives attended all the informal negotiations.

The SGPwD shared two submissions and met with the co-facilitators over zoom. The SGPwD further shared recommendations with Member States and the GLAD Network. They can be found here: Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities: Language recommendations to the Ministerial Declaration of the HLPF 2020: [#1](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/sgpwd_hlpf_2020_md1_0.docx) | [#2](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/md_negotiations_2_1_0.docx).

The Ministerial Declaration received particular attention since it was the first opportunity for Member States at a high level to address the pandemic, offer solidarity and collaboration under a multilateral umbrella, and to commit to build back better. Unfortunately Member States failed to achieve this. Negotiations were difficult to carry out via Zoom, which made it difficult to work on consensus, yet, because negotiations were conducted online only consensual resolutions could be agreed. By the time the HLPF concluded, Member States were unable to reach consensus and the facilitators gave back their mandate and handed over the text of the Ministerial Declaration to the ECOSOC President. Despite several attempts, it was not possible to reach a consensus (at the time of writing this report).

The Stakeholder Group of Person with Disabilities expressed extreme concern that amidst a global pandemic there was initially no recognition of persons with disabilities in the Ministerial Declaration, a critically important document. The COVID-19 crisis is thwarting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the overarching principles of the 2030 Agenda, as such, in the rebuilding phase and at the time of calling for the Decade of Action, we must urgently recognize, name and ensure the rights of the most marginalized groups. Currently, good language for persons with disabilities has been included, which is not under dispute. Please note that the Ministerial Declaration had not been adopted as of the writing of this report.

# REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUMS

At the beginning of 2020 five regional sustainable development forums were planned to have in-person meetings. Due to the pandemic, only the African Sustainable Development Forum was carried out in person. The Asia-Pacific and European regions both held shorter online forums, and the Latin America and Caribbean and Middle East and North Africa regional meetings were postponed. Continue reading for more details on the 2020 regional forums.

## 1. Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, 22-27 March, 2020 Online

UN ESCAP hosted a series of seven virtual consultations for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), to be held on 20 May, 2020. From 30 March to 8 April 2020, 290 participants attended the webinar series, including 101 ESCAP member States representatives and 189 representatives of other stakeholder groups.

The webinars helped to build understanding on progress on the SDGs and to agree on recommendations for accelerating transformations in the context of COVID-19. The opening webinar held on 30 March, 2020 set the scene for a series of stimulating and interactive events with rich and frank exchange of views*.* Webinars were also organized in partnership with 13 UN Agencies on the six transformative entry areas from the Global Sustainable Development report 2019: “The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development”, adapted to the Asia Pacific context.

These six entry points have the potential to leverage interlinkages and accelerate progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals globally and used the following Entry Point Profiles:

1. [Human well-being and capabilities](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Human%20Wellbeing%20and%20Capabilities.pdf)
2. [Sustainable and just economies](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Sustainable%20and%20Just%20Economies.pdf)
3. [Food systems and nutrition patterns](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Food%20Systems%20and%20nutrition%20patterns.pdf)
4. [Enhancing power grid connectivity to achieve affordable and clean energy for All](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Enhancing%20power%20grid%20connectivity%20to%20achieve%20affordable%20and%20clean%20energy%20for%20all.pdf)
5. [Urban and peri-urban development](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Urban%20and%20Peri-Urban%20Development.pdf)
6. [Global environmental commons](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/profiles/Global%20Environmental%20Commons_Layout%20050520.pdf)

The outcome of these virtual consultations include priority policy action for accelerating transformation in Asia and the Pacific and will support discussions at the 7th APFSD. They include a set of recommendations that were deemed particularly important in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The [APFSD Report](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_6E.pdf) contains references to persons with disabilities, which are:

Paragraph 6. Enhancing human well-being and capabilities requires political commitment and sustained investments in health care, social protection and education. It also requires access to basic services, such as water and sanitation. The ongoing crisis demonstrates that countries with functioning and universal health care and social protection systems are better positioned to address the pandemic, particularly in mitigating the impact on vulnerable individuals and households, including on migrants, **persons with disabilities** and older persons.

Paragraph 29. Data monitoring systems could be more rigorous with triangulation of national data with civil society and independent technical experts at the national level. Gender-, age- and **disability**-disaggregated data can improve the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as laws, programmes and gender-sensitive budgeting.

## 2. Latin American Sustainable Development Forum, 28-31 March, 2020, Cuba, Havana

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in coordination with the Government of the Republic of Cuba in its capacity as Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, decided not to proceed with the fourth meeting of the Forum, which was scheduled to be held online in the morning of 31 March, 2020.

This decision was made in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and the measures being taken by the countries of the region to deal with the pandemic and, essentially, the technical impossibility of ensuring the proper participation of all the national delegations, civil society and other stakeholders in the Forum in a remote meeting modality. The Commission will advise Forum participants of the new place and date for the fourth meeting once the current complex situation has abated.

## 3. Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, 7-9 April, 2020, Beirut, Lebanon

In view of the ongoing global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD-2020) has been postponed until further notice.

## 4. Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region, half-day virtual forum on 19 March, 2020

As a follow up to the [Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) 2020](https://edf-feph.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=865a5bbea1086c57a41cc876d&id=f5becc5151&e=50cd3b91ca), the final report of the UNECE specifically mentions that ''the democratic participation and active inclusion of all, especially of discriminated and marginalized groups, and fully accessible processes (e.g., in national sign languages and in other accessible formats) are essential.'' This is the reference that the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) advocated to be included in the civil society statement.

Another important reference that is found in the RFSD report is "the ongoing pandemic is exposing existing weaknesses in infrastructure as well as in the health and care systems, and the failure to reach certain marginalized groups such as older people living alone or people with disabilities." You can [read the full report here](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/sustainable-development/RFSD_2020/Report_virtual_RFSD_2020.pdf).

## 5. Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, 24-27 February, 2020, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

The African Stakeholders Group of Persons with Disabilities representatives comprised a large delegation representing and advocating for persons with disabilities at the Forum, including seven participants funded by the International Disability Alliance, representatives from CBM and Light for the World, and others.

The SGPwD provided support to the representatives, including key talking points and liaising with the UN staff on advice on accessibility. Prior to the Forum, the SGPwD in collaboration with CBM in Zimbabwe, provided accessibility advice and support to UNECA organizers for the meeting.

The Forum was a success with the final [Victoria Falls Declaration](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/ARFSD/2020/arfsd-6_final_key_messages_and_victoria_falls_declaration_e2000473_english.pdf) that contained six references to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, representatives of the African Stakeholders Group of Persons with Disabilities held a press conference that was attended by around 15 journalists and chaired by the vice chair of the African Disability Forum. Representatives read out a communique for the media and answered questions posed by the media. The media was quite interested in the disability movement’s issues.

The [Communique from the African Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/communique_from_the_african_stakeholder_group_of_persons_with_disabilities.docx) includes a call to:

* governments to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in VNR processes on the national and local level;
* the organizing bureau to add in future forums a speaker with a disability in the opening or in the closing panel, as is annually practiced at the UN in New York and other regional forums;
* all participants at the forum to take an intersectional approach to these discussions on discrimination; and
* all African countries to make this important step towards disability inclusion for Agenda 2063.

In addition, the [Stakeholders Group of Persons with Disabilities Communique to the Economic Commission for Africa](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/stakeholder_communique_to_eca.docx) was shared with UNECA covering most of the technical aspects for UNECA and AU to work on until next year.

# HLPF FIRST WEEK

## 1. The first, thematic week in details

The *UN Secretary-General António Guterres* opened the first week with some sobering facts about the pandemic. He indicated that 13 million people have been infected and 560,000 have died globally. This is the sharpest economic decline since 1870 and we can be set back years, even decades and that the pandemic negatively impacts the most vulnerable. He continued to state that we are in this situation partly because of what we have not done, including that we have not taken the SDGs seriously, have not heeded warnings that we are inflicting on natural environments, and have undervalued international cooperation and unity. We need the voices of young people and the actions of civil society. We need to make decisions on financing, we can safeguard recent gains, and protect the most vulnerable. We cannot go back to so-called normal and need to create concrete bold solutions inspired from the SDGs.

Additional presenters stated that the global community is facing the greatest health and human crisis since the creation of the United Nations 75 years ago. COVID-19 is upending billions of lives across regions and is likely to push the global economy down to the worst recession since the Great Depression in 1929; it has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities in both developing and developed countries, deepening poverty and exclusion and pushing the most vulnerable even further behind.

*COVID-19 must be seen as a historic opportunity to adopt a transformative pathway to end poverty* and, in addition, SDGs are becoming more relevant than ever. It is key to construct responses based on international cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism. Strength will come from joint efforts, especially in global recovery initiatives linking investment and debt relief through the implementation of the SDGs. Sustainable economic systems must be built to leave no one behind and the importance of data collection and statistics must not be forgotten.

The *focus on the first week of the HLPF* was on better recovery and a commitment to multilateral action to fight COVID-19 realizing the SDGs with a spotlight on the most vulnerable, acknowledging past policy failures. Discussions centred on how the 2030 Agenda can provide a transformative recovery and roadmap out of the crisis. There were calls for international cooperation, solidarity and multilateral collaboration. Before the pandemic, progress was uneven but gains were being made, but since progress has slowed with an unfortunate backtracking of commitments, which will have a long lasting impact. We learned that even the most advanced and developed countries are struggling to cope, but the poorest and most vulnerable countries are worse off. International solidarity and cooperation are needed more than ever, responding in silos is not an option. Global recovery initiative linking investment and debt relief and multilateral response must amount to at least 10% of GDP. Several participants called for global collaboration on a vaccine.

Participants shared that the pandemic has had many negative consequences, including increased child marriage, violence against women, impacted trade, social and economic inequalities that will increase in poverty levels, armed conflict and adverse changes of climate change.

The *ILO indicated* that there has been an estimated 14% loss of work in the second quarter which is a 400 million loss, which is unprecedented. The most affected by job loss, include women, youth, and migrants (the presentation did **not** include persons with disabilities), however, it is still not yet possible to measure the inequality of job loss from the pandemic. The following recommendations towards rebuilding the job market were shared:

* Social protection measures must be in place and extended and also must target more vulnerable groups and scale up informal economy and transition out;
* We must be job rich with recovery with strategic investment in people’s capabilities;
* Protect the most vulnerable, especially in the informal sector, adapt work arrangements, provide access to health and paid leave;
* Have social dialogue between governments and workers to create balanced policy responses, e.g. countries with solid systems are coming out of the pandemic better; and
* Have more international cooperation, such as trade, taxation, research and development and health issues, especially for middle and low income countries.

The *WHO emphasized* that the virus is here to stay and will not go away. The virus affects people and we need to understand how people are at risk and affected and what we can do to prevent infections, and also look after people who are higher at risk. It is important to investigate where people get the disease and where and how it spreads. In addition, there is a need for strong public services or we will not be able to combat the pandemic and an emphasis on shifting action to local levels.

Experts and governments reflected on food security, the situation of small-scale farmers, and the increase in *hunger and malnutrition*. Malnourishment was an issue prior to the pandemic but the pandemic has exacerbated the inequality of the food system and nutrition. This can be an opportunity to increase food production, shift focus on nutritional food and technology and innovation to transform our food system. The UN Secretary-General announced that in 2021 there will be a democratic dialogue on food security to address the source of hunger, to foster collaboration and to address issues around technology.

*Stakeholders were given a one-hour session to share their views regarding SDGs and the pandemic.* The SGPwD composed a presentation, which in summary stated that human rights and intergenerational injustices have worsened due to COVID-19, especially for those in vulnerable situations. Instruments such as the 2030 Agenda, Paris Climate Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risks Reduction, and Financing for Development Agenda serve as a compass to guide us towards an inclusive, sustainable, and green recovery. Capacity building of young people, and civil society more generally, is needed to raise awareness and localize actions. Nations can no longer put people, planet and peace on a backseat and give a front seat to profit. There is a need to rethink the economic frameworks that underpin the current form of globalization, halting the continued exploitation of labour and ecology. Rights-based participation of critical segments of society can no longer be seen as a choice, but rather a fundamental part of the solution for our collective prosperity. To galvanize efforts in the decade of action, we proposed the following recommendations:

* At the global level, the withdrawal from international agreements jeopardizes our collective well-being. Global economic and environmental governance needs to be democratised through reformed, renewed and newly created multilateral institutions.
* At the national level, around the world, democratic spaces are shrinking. Follow-up and review mechanisms must encourage active stakeholder participation and peer learning for example through parallel reports, as well as regional and local reviews.

*From the Small Island Developing States*, we learned that COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing challenges confronting resulting in a new array of challenges which could potentially inhibit the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway.

With their relatively weaker healthcare services and systems, SIDS require support in order to respond to this crisis. COVID-19 also can have cascading and scarring effects on economies and societal systems, and its economic impact is already hard felt in many countries. Policy responses need to be implemented with great urgency to address immediate challenges, with the ultimate objective to build back better so as to be resilient to future crises and to embark on accelerated progress towards sustainable development.

Significant financial and other support will be necessary to bolster SIDS’ efforts to respond to COVID-19 and boost economic and other resilience. New and innovative financial instruments that incentivize ex-ante resilience building are required. In this regard, the support of the international multilateral financial community and other multilateral and bilateral partners are necessary to realize the magnitude of resources required at this time.

In addition, there is emphasis on the need for immediate solutions and effective commitments for long-term debt relief for SIDS. Whilst there has been some support for the suspension of debt repayments for IDA eligible countries, most SIDS do not fall into this category. There is a need to address debt relief and restructuring in all SIDS, with greater flexibility in the assessment of developing countries' fiscal situations, and extended credit facilities.

In other sessions it was stressed that *COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities* and has burdened vulnerable and marginalized communities. The digital gap is a major issue and therefore, the general recommendation is ensuring universal access to information and technologies. The importance of public participation and local governance is essential, as well as the involvement of civil society and community leaders which have a key role in collecting data, and sharing stories and, raising awareness. Bottom-up innovation to ensure social inclusion was encouraged. Gender inequality was mentioned multiple times, as well as the increased gender based violence and violation of the rights of women and girls. A systematic gender-sensitive approach is encouraged. The rights of indigenous peoples was also mentioned.

During the *session of the African countries*, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries it was emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying global economic recession will cause a rise in poverty, global economic inequality and inequitable distribution of development gains within and among countries. The least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and African countries will bear the heaviest burden of these impacts. These countries are already vulnerable due to the fragility of their health systems, limited coverage of their social protection systems, limited financial and other resources, vulnerability to external shocks, and significant dependence on international trade and financing.

In many of these countries the effects of the pandemic are amplified by the ongoing conflicts, instability and climate crisis. The poorest and most vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees and informal sector workers.

Preparations for the fifth UN conference on LDCs in Doha, Qatar (21-25 March 2021) have slowed down due to COVID-19, but are picking up again. The Conference will provide an opportunity to shape a new action plan for LDCs to build back better, smarter and resilient in the next decade. The mid-term reviews of the Vienna programme of actions led to further commitments to improve the situation of LLDCs.

In *sessions focused on financing*, it was emphasized that economies are slowly reopening following a sudden halt of activity, and countries have the opportunity to build back better by creating more sustainable, resilient and inclusive economies and societies. There is significant momentum in an increased number of countries around the notion of going back to the pre-COVID economy, which fuelled environmental degradation, climate change and increased inequalities, is not desirable. Many recognize the recovery from the economic fallout of the pandemic as a vital opportunity to shape a post-COVID economy that is greener, healthier, more inclusive and more resilient.

Yet, the context for financing in the recovery phase is challenging. Governments have seen the fiscal space for investment in a sustainable recovery significantly limited in the context of the global economic crisis. Countries are faced with a dual challenge of declining revenues due to the crisis and increased spending demands. An increasing number of countries is also facing acute debt distress. Efforts are being made to provide debt relief for all countries requesting debt alleviation. But a comprehensive solution that engages multilateral, public and private creditors is yet to be achieved. At the same time, the private sector also faces limited space to invest, as businesses have also been hit hard.

ECOSOC has taken several steps to help countries finance their response to COVID-19 and embark on a path towards a sustainable recovery. The 2020 ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum (FfD Forum) adopted an [outcome](https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.financing/files/2020-05/20%20FfDF%20Outcome%20Document.pdf) containing policies to support health measures, address socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and ensure building back better. The outcome represents the first universally agreed UN set of policies on COVID-19. In addition, the Council convened [two meetings](https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.financing/files/2020-06/20-07663_Summary%202020%20FFD%20Forum.pdf) of the FfD Forum, on 23 April and 2 June respectively, to advocate for a comprehensive response; highlight the needs on the ground and help countries access [resources available](https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.financing/files/2020-05/Mapping%20of%20COVID-19%20Response.pdf) for COVID-19 response.

These discussions advocated that resources that are being made available must be aligned with the SDGs, including stimulus packages and bailouts, as well as international development cooperation in all its forms. There is also a need for scaling up the availability of concessional financing for developing countries struggling to rebuild, especially the least developed and other countries in special situations. Moreover, there is the need to strengthen national and subnational capacities to manage and reduce risks and multidimensional vulnerability and advance multi-stakeholder partnerships in the efforts to build SDG-conducive economies and societies. The recovery will only be sustainable if the systemic and structural vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic are adequately addressed, e.g. evolving durable solutions to debt sustainability.

*Science, technology and innovation*

One of the key functions entrusted to the HLPF by Rio+20 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to strengthen the science-policy interface, including through the Global Sustainable Development Report and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. Progress in science, technology and innovation (STI) continues to accelerate, promising significant benefits but also risks to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Science, technology and innovation will continue to have broad impacts on the economy, society and environment. Rapid technological advances have rarely been neutral and can present extraordinary policy and societal challenges. It is important to ensure that they are to the benefit of all, in line with the ambitions of the SDGs.

The Decade of Action explicitly recognizes that STI is essential as part of any feasible transformative pathway towards the SDGs. This is underscored by their role in understanding, responding to, and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Timely research, analysis and information are essential to allow identification, dissemination and adaptation of critical technology solutions. At the same time, a greater engagement with stakeholders across society is needed to ensure that these make a real and lasting difference, and that potential trade-offs across goals and targets can be resolved.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed new innovations and forms of collaboration. The crisis has been a wake-up call for a better science-policy-society interface, for more effective international technology cooperation, and for building public trust in science related to all areas of sustainable development. Rapid improvements in these areas – improvements that are commensurate with the far-reaching rapid technological progress – are essential to realize the full promise of STI and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The *UN Environment Assembly* presented the following main messages.

We are not on track and upon entering a decade of action and recovery and we must match political will with science to deliver solutions. The calls to action included that:

· Nature is a necessary requirement for sustainable development;

· COVID-19 offers an opportunity to rebuild the world better;

· There needs to be regional-level coordination and cross sector and cross SDG collaboration;

· Rule of law and good governance must be implemented;

· There needs to be sustainable infrastructure and actualization of sustainable finance;

· There needs to be access to information and engagement of all relevant stakeholders; and

· Other UN entities need to support UNEP.

The fifth UN Environment Assembly will take place in February 2021 in Nairobi on strengthening actions in nature to achieve the SDGs

During the *ECOSOC High-level Segment (17 July)*María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, stated that universal accessibility is relevant to persons with disabilities, and also to older persons, women, pregnant women, children, among others. Accessibility is the bridge to exercise human rights and to fulfil SDGs, such as peaceful societies. Many persons with disabilities live in poverty and this has increased as a consequence of the pandemic, thus COVID-19 has highlighted the gaps in public policies, legislation, and services in relation to accessibility. In terms of healthcare there are many barriers for persons with disabilities. To implement full accessibility means to move broadly to eradicate poverty and build partnerships in sustainable development. The creation of big data in the creation of accessibility will be a great legacy to address other humanitarian crises in the future. There is a key connection between accessibility, human rights and the SDGs. In conclusion, governments and civil society need to make strong progress in the implementation of accessibility.

## 2. Highlights and key references to persons with disabilities during the first week of HLPF

The following section includes some highlights and key references to persons with disabilities from high-level presentations. Please note that there were more references that were not captured in this report.

On 6 July, 2020 during the segment on “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” through the lens of overcoming the human crisis and recovering better from the COVID-19 pandemic: the *UN Secretary-General* in his opening speech said: “Those worst affected are the most – those living in poverty, persons with disabilities, refugees, and women and children” adding that People centred recovery shaped on human rights.”

During the session on launching the decade of action at a time of crisis: Keeping the focus on the SDGs while combatting COVID-19*, Mr. Mher Margaryan of Armenia Vice President of Economic and Social Council* emphasized including the most affected by the pandemic, including women and girls, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, persons in situation of conflict, informal sector workers and other groups

*Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations,* in his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards SDGs also mentioned persons with disabilities.

*H.E. Ms. Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation* stated that we need to pay attention to women, girls and persons with disabilitiesand human rights.

*Mr. Mohamed Boudra, Mayor of City of Al Hoceima, Morocco* (Local Authorities Major Group) included persons with disabilities in his statement and the fact that such vulnerable groups are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

*H.E. Samuelu Laloniu from the Tuvalu Permanent Mission to the United Nation*s and on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum included that persons with disabilities *have fewer economic opportunities* and that women with disabilities are even more likely to experience violence in the pandemic.

*Mr. Githinji Gitahi, Global CEO and Director General,* AMREF Health Africa Group stated barriers for people with disabilities in the pandemic and that we need to think about deaf people and the communication barriers that they encounter from people wearing masks. We need to think through how to address this.

*Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the New York Office OHCHR*, included persons with disabilities in her intervention in the session on protecting and advancing human wellbeing and ending poverty at HLPF 2020.

[*David Nabarro*](https://www.c-span.org/person/?davidnabarro)*, World Health Organization COVID-19 Special Envoy* emphasized that the pandemic increased poverty levels and pushed persons with disabilities into extreme poverty, discrimination and marginalization. He continued by saying that we need to pay attention to discriminated groups. We need to ensure the minimum enjoyment of human rights and transform society to equal and equitable by increasing all forms of human wellbeing.

*Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of ESCWA* mentioned persons with disabilities in her presentation.

*Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA* included persons with disabilities in her excellent presentation.

*Mr. Paul Ladd, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development* (UNRISD) also included persons with disabilities in his presentation.

*Fekitamoeloa ʻUtoikamanu, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States*, stated that persons with disabilities are among those most affected in the COVID pandemic and in LDC, LLDC and SIDS.

*Jukka Salovaara, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations* called to renew the commitment to leave no one behind in the digital era, such as for the poor, women and girls, migrants and refugees, IDPs, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and local communities in the science, technology and innovation session.

*Ms. Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finlan*d highlighted that those in vulnerable situations are the most affected in the crisis, the leave no one behind principle must be implemented and this includes persons with disabilities (she included persons with disabilities as the first example).

*Tina Hocevar, Vice President of the European Youth Forum* included youth with disabilities in her statement.

*H.E. Mr. Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe*, and Chair of the 6th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development called to pay attention to climate change, gender and persons with disabilities with leave no one behind as our guide.

# SPEECHES AND INTERVENTIONS DELIVERED BY SGPwD

The HLPF and COVID teams identified themes in which the SGPwD expressed an interest to present and drafted statements with key messages to convey at the HLPF. We shared the draft speeches for input from IDA and IDDC members.

## 1. General debate

The general debate of the 2020 High-level Political Forum / High-level Segment of ECOSOC was conducted through written statements from Ministers and other representatives of Member States, UN system organizations, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and other international and regional organizations, as well as the Major Groups and other Stakeholders. Consequently, the SGPwD submitted the following written statement for the general debate.

Since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities followed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, we have witnessed a positive development and change in the lives of persons with disabilities. Slowly societies have begun to transition from the traditional charity and medical model approaches to inclusion into a social and human rights approach granting persons with disabilities more rights than ever before.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it removed the curtain and in many ways the lives of persons with disabilities spiraled backward to the time before the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals. Historical inequalities have resurfaced, stronger than ever, discrimination has significantly increased and the fight for inclusion has become increasingly more challenging.

Persons with disabilities around the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic in one way or another with additional or new barriers, including new barriers in the re-opening phase. The most common barriers that emerged include: (1) lack of access to COVID-19-related information for all persons with disabilities, (2) barriers in receiving social protection measures and employment (formal and informal, losing employment first, and accessibility barriers in the virtual working environment) and (3) lack of disability inclusion in COVID-19 response efforts at all governmental levels creating significant disconnections between national and local actions.

Today governments are deliberating on how to restart the economy, open up society and are looking to their neighbors to build on lessons learned. But we do not need to do that. The answers lie with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals and targets are built on grassroots stories that were shared at the global level during the post-2015 negotiations. Governments translated real-life challenges into policies. We do not need to reinvent the wheel, but we do need to attach meaning and more important concrete actions to these policies, in light of our new reality.

We can build back better and create a new inclusive world if we take proper action. As countries continue the management of COVID-19 as a public health issue, while also transitioning to open up economies and societies, removal of existing barriers and building back better are critical for future implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Let’s use the Sustainable Development Goals to build back more resilient, sustainable, greener and kinder societies than existed in pre-COVID times.

Our key message is that life is more challenging and there are more barriers for persons with disabilities. Therefore in order to realize the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, governments at all levels must create inclusive policies by following a twin-track approach. This means going beyond mainstream policies by implementing specific policies that protect the lives of persons with disabilities and at the same time guarantee their rightful inclusion in society.

## 2. Lead discussant – joint speaker representing the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities and the Stakeholder Group on Ageing

On 7 July, an official lead discussant addressed the HLPF as a key expert on behalf of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing and SGPwD and delivered the following speech on the topic protecting and advancing human wellbeing and ending poverty.

The moment the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the principles of “leave no one behind” and “reach the furthest behind first” evaporated into thin air. Overwhelmingly, persons with disabilities and older persons became the most affected with the vast majority of deaths among those above the age of 60. The pandemic has exacerbated an already tenuous situation for those most vulnerable.

The focus of the immediate response was on keeping healthcare systems operational and the indirect impacts were ignored. Physical distancing, isolation and a weakened economy have all led to devastating effects, increasing poverty for many older persons and persons with disabilities.

These challenges have been compounded by lack of access to information, disruption of education, loss of income and/or social benefits, suspension of accessible transportation, isolation and increased difficulties to access regular healthcare treatments, medications, and assistive devices. Family dynamics have changed with home-schooling, putting an enormous burden on families ill-equipped to handle specific challenges of persons with disabilities and older persons who are often also care-givers.

Efforts to enhance human well-being in the context of the SDGs have been severely curtailed. Life has become a daily fight for survival.

As countries re-open, life for persons with disabilities and older persons is full of insecurity. Care, kindness and comfort have been replaced by fear, anxiety, discrimination, increased cases of neglect and abuse. One key message needs attention: inclusion.

They must be included, as active participants in all levels and stages of decision-making processes as key agents of change in the response and beyond, guided by human rights and the SDGs. Policies going forward are truly about whether older persons and persons with disabilities live, die or are forgotten.

There is no doubt now that for them, immediate implementation of universal social protection floors, strengthened universal health and care services are essential to end multidimensional poverty and overlapping deprivations that accumulate throughout life.

Protecting and advancing human well-being and ending poverty require stronger and more targeted efforts to ensure we do not fall short of the SDGs. It also requires inclusion of those most vulnerable among us, to ensure that they are not left behind. Persons with disabilities and older persons are not disposable.

## 3. Interventions

In addition to the above presentation, the SGPwD made two other important interventions on the themes of leave no one behind and financing. Continue reading below for the full statements.

### 3.1. Are we leaving no one behind in eradicating poverty and working towards the 2030 Agenda (including what COVID-19 is telling us about inequalities and the weaknesses in our social systems) - 9th July 11:30am - 1pm

The disability movement is in survival mode, more than ever in recent times. What has been achieved since the adoption of the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda is at risk.

Inclusion has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and we are at risk of going backward. The pandemic has taken away the curtain, historical inequalities are deepening, and discrimination is on the rise, but we are here today to appeal for inclusion more than ever.

Let me give you a little example of what physical distancing and wearing masks for persons with disabilities means: kindness is being replaced by discomfort. Blind people fear people will guide them less, wheelchair users may not get a needed push up a street, fewer people will give hugs that some people need for a more balanced life. Deafblind people need to touch to communicate, both blind and deafblind people need to touch items to maneuver more easily, deaf people need to see facial expressions for communication and hard of hearing people need to see lips to lip read. Persons with multiple disabilities and those who need daily support may lose their personal assistants and consequently this could affect eating, taking medication, getting in and out of bed, dressing, hygiene, and many other daily basic needs.

Despite all of this, we are here with you to partner and collaborate so that the building back of inclusive societies is guided by the SDGs and principles of leave no one behind, not even the most marginalized and vulnerable.

### 3.2. Means of implementation to match the scope of the crisis and the breadth of our ambition for 2030 Mobilizing well directed financing - 10th July

With the 2030 Agenda’s clear commitments to leave no one behind, it has been consistently recognized that increased funding alone does not always appropriately finance or advance the issue, as mainstream economic policies and practices can conflict with human rights-based approaches and constrain the successful implementation of commitments on and investment in human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities, especially in the current global pandemic.

Preliminary findings from the International Disability Alliance’s Global Survey on DPO participation in development programs and policies[[1]](#footnote-1) suggest that the majority of DPO respondents remains dissatisfied with the level of engagement with their government, and that support to enable DPOs to participate is largely insufficient. Furthermore, DPOs are still lacking capacities to engage in disability-inclusive development and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The global community therefore needs to come together to discuss how to establish a space for strategic coordination and consultation and ensure that rising demands for DPO contributions are matched with relevant investment in developing their capacities to be recognized as trusted development partners.

Our recommendations are to:

* Call on the global community to come together and ensure that rising demands for DPO contributions are matched with relevant investment in developing their capacities and as such become recognized and trusted development partners;
* Accelerate investments by UN entities and its financiers toward implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy recognizing it is a prerequisite for full and effective engagement of persons with disabilities in development policies, programs, practices at global, regional and local levels;
* Ensure that accountability and funding mechanisms including eligibility criteria for grants supporting sustainable development programs and that practices meet accessibility and inclusion standards in line with the CRPD;
* Ensure that equality, human rights, sustainability, participation, inclusion and accessibilityare core principles in policies;
* Consider a flexible combination of income security and disability-related support by States in order to support labor market participation of persons with disabilities; and
* Ensure disability-inclusive mainstream entrepreneurship development training and microfinance systems.

# VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

## 1. Stakeholders (MGoS) participation in numbers during the VNRs

All together 47 countries presented their voluntary national reviews. Presentations varied significantly: there were a few live presentations but mostly pre-recorded videos were shown. Some countries opted after a video presentation for live Q&A sessions, some skipped it, some pre-recorded answers to questions received and others just informed that they will respond to question in writing.

Stakeholders had significantly fewer opportunities to take the floor and deliver joint statements and questions. All together the MGoS delivered:

* 27 statements;
* 5 times a request for the floor was denied during the Live Q&A;
* 3 times presenters were not able to connect due to technical reasons (but were given the floor); and
* 1 time there was no stakeholder intervention prepared.

## 2. SGPwD participation in the VNRs

Eighteen SGPwD representatives engaged in the drafting of civil society VNR statements. SGPwD representatives were not able to intervene during the live questions and answers. We did not encourage representatives from the SGPwD to deliver statements during VNR presentations because the UN used the platform Interprefy for security reasons, but this platform was inaccessible for persons with disabilities, and thus, a significant barrier to inclusion.

In the oral presentations of VNRs when persons with disabilities were referenced, they were included as either being the most vulnerable to COVID-19 or in relation to social protection, but some countries explicitly mentioned an advancement in CRPD implementation (e.g., Comoros, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan) and/or that they consulted persons with disabilities in the process.

## 3. Best example on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the VNRs

There were excellent examples of meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in VNR presentations, such as Samoa and The Gambia, which are highlighted below.

### 3.1. Samoa

The Deputy Prime Minister stated that inclusive and effective stakeholder engagement was improved by using more platforms and that 150 stakeholders engaged, and there was collaboration with the UN Country Team. It was stated that more children with disabilities are enrolled in schools and more attention is taking place to address the needs of persons with disabilities, however more work needs to be done.

Ms. Mataafa Faatimo Utumapu made a presentation during the official oral VNR session. She said: “The Government of Samoa continues to realize the rights of persons with disabilities in all of its efforts. The ratification of the CRPD is evidence of its commitments. One of the challenges is of course is to make sure that the inclusion is well understood and not just a ticking of a box, but it is an inclusion on paper and in action and making sure that the concept of inclusion is not just having the conversation of development. It is having the conversation and making sure that persons with disabilities remain in the center of all development from design implementation monitoring and evaluation.“

Financial inclusion and economic empowerment was also emphasized for women, youth and persons with disabilities. Lulai Gale, a wheelchair user, also made a statement in the official pre-recorded video about using mobile apps and government financial transfers as a small business owner.

Regarding COVID-19, as part of their stimulus packages, Samoa had cash transfer benefits for vulnerable groups such as older persons and organizations managing programs for persons with disabilities and mental health illnesses.

Additionally, in an intervention by Indigenous Peoples more than 10 percent of persons with disabilities have not attended school.

### 3.2. The Gambia

The Gambia included a [video of The Gambia Federation of the Disabled](http://webtv.un.org/search/2020-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2020-11th-meeting/6171639125001/?term=2020-07-14&sort=date) (3:23) in the VNR that was an entire five-minute video of a presentation by Modou A.F. Bahoum, Executive Director of The Gambia Federation of the Disabled.

In the video, he said “persons with disabilities are most vulnerable in terms of crisis, in terms of anything. Having an inclusive approach to persons with disabilities would be very timely and would definitely be welcome and ensure that actually there is a way. The federation is more than willing, our doors are open, we would want to work hand in glove day in and day out just to ensure that rights of persons with disabilities are revised from being an object of pity to a dignified citizen. That could only be achieved through meaningful development. Meaningful development could also be arrived at if the marginalized group, if persons with disabilities have not been left behind. Even one person with disabilities being sidelined means thousands of people are being sidelined. And today there is an increase in the number of persons with disabilities. At least at this moment there are 300,000 persons with disabilities in Gambia and 120,000 are seriously affected. This chunk of people that are within the nation of ours, if they are left behind, they are not included in any of the official activities that are undertaken, which means a portion of the Gambia population has been left behind. And the trend that we’re trying to advocate is to ensure that we’re trying to advocate is to ensure that there are a ground-level platform for all members of the society, which include persons with disabilities. This would definitely make Gambians and non-Gambians alike feel included. Indeed, it’s a human right that persons with disabilities should enjoy, what all of us enjoy, be it education, health, etc. That could only be obtained if policy makers really take into account that these people need to be catered for. Catering for them means calling them into their plan and process, which its Minister of Finance, the Policy Analyst Unit and all other stakeholders are doing as of now. This VNR has come at a great moment, and it will be a continuous process of ensuring that persons with disabilities are included in all planning processes.”

## 4. Countries that referenced persons with disabilities during their presentations

Below are references to persons with disabilities in panels, the ECOSOC segment, and VNR presentations.

Many countries highlighted persons with disabilities in various events, statements and in VNR presentations, such as consulting with persons with disabilities in the VNR process and examples of disability inclusion at the country level, including implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Some countries that mentioned persons with disabilities include: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Comoros, DRC, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic*,* Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Republic of Moldova,Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Thailand, The Gambia, Timor-Leste, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago**,** Tuvalu on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, the United Kingdom, Uganda, and Uzbekistan

## 5. Feedback from the participation of persons with disabilities in the VNRs

Prior to the HLPF, 18 people expressed interest in engaging in the VNR process via the SGPwD from the following countries: Argentina, Bangladesh, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Peru, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All of those who expressed interest were connected to the co-chairs of the respective VNR task group and individual country. Each VNR task group was composed of mainstream stakeholders who worked together to define country statements. No official statement on behalf of the SGPwD was delivered. The VNR platform was inaccessible for presenters with disabilities and no International Sign interpretation was provided other than the pre-recorded VNR videos from Panama and Uganda that used their own sign language interpreters.

After the HLPF, the SGPwD assessed the experience of organizations of persons with disabilities and participation in the global process.

The questions asked include:

* Were you invited to work collaboratively on the statement of your interest?
* Were the provided instructions useful and clear?
* What was your experience working with colleagues from mainstream civil society (outside of the disability sector)?
* Were your recommendations taken on board and included in the final statement?
* Any suggestions for the future?

The summary of findings are below.

Overall, participants indicated that they were invited to work collaboratively on the statement. Positive aspects included organized meetings run in an inclusion manner with equal opportunities for each member of the group to participate. There were some challenges, which included short deadlines; lack of internet access; lack of accessibility, e.g. using Google Docs; lack of sign language interpreters and lack of sensitivity around accessibility requirements.

In all cases, but one, the instructions were clear and useful for the participants.

There was a mixture of responses. Some indicated mainstream civil society colleagues were respectful and sensitive and wanted to provide an inclusive process. There were challenges, including late inputs from mainstream civil society colleagues, which made the statement too long. Others indicated that meaningful engagement and participation of persons with disabilities in the mainstreaming VNR process can be very limited and not participatory at all, and in most cases, persons and women with disabilities remained excluded.

Most indicated that their recommendations were either fully or partially included, but a few indicated that their recommendations were not included at all.

The following statements are paraphrased from respondents, but is a summary of their recommendations:

* It would be great, if the process was led locally, i.e. that the coordinator is from the countries under review. but the whole idea of Global North experts explaining Global South experts on how to draft a statement on their own country felt a bit off. Additionally, when considering the tight timeline for the Civil Society statement, local knowledge is just so important to integrate from the start.
* Everybody who has the opportunity to be part of the drafting committee for any statement must realize the importance of this opportunity and make full use of the allowed word count and work collaboratively and constructively with CSO colleagues and be assertive about including the crucial points for disability inclusion.
* Perhaps a good idea would be to draft examples of sentences in advance of the procedure, that are clearly disability inclusive while encompassing the requirements of other CSO groups.
* Everybody involved in the process must realize that all of their work can be lost at any second if they do not stay alert right until the very end (i.e. the end of the VNR session). This means good and clear collaboration/communication with whoever is making the decisions about who gets to speak and for how long, on the day.
* Last minutes additions can be avoided in future by planning and executing the statement early.
* Communication between the presenter and HLPF Team should be tested early enough to ensure effectiveness. In our case, the communication came a few seconds before the presentation.
* There needs to be some capacity building on the whole delivery process including how to mutually share the space with the government for a smooth presentation.
* There should be an opportunity to send in a statement of approximately 500 words as well as ask questions separately.
* CSOs space is shrinking, so we need meaningful and strong engagement and participation of persons with disabilities and mandatory and required space to present the views and challenges of the disability movement.
* For the future, I would recommend that the coordinating MGoS for the statement reaches out at the very least one day before the HLPF starts, so that enough time can be allocated for a proper consultation, drafting and editing process. Ideally, the first contact would be established even prior, so that contributing organizations can collect their input beforehand. This is particularly relevant for countries where there is no strong CSO network that can provide guidance on the VNR process before the HLPF.

# SIDE EVENTS

## 1. Official SGPwD Side Event

On 8 July, 2020 the [Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/personswithdisabilities) held its official HLPF side event. The side event revolved around the question: Will the SDGs still be relevant for persons with disabilities after the pandemic?, drawing from the [article from the IISD SDG Knowledge Hub](http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/will-the-sdgs-still-be-relevant-after-the-pandemic/) written by co-facilitators of the SGPwD.

The event had a stellar group of panelists including representatives from underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities from around the world, global leaders of representative organizations of persons with disabilities, government representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Jamaica and the United Kingdom, and civil society partners.

Background

Since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), followed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, there has been positive development in the lives of persons with disabilities. Slowly societies have begun to transition from the traditional charity and medical model approaches to inclusion to a social and human rights approach granting persons with disabilities more rights than ever before.

The COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmingly has negatively impacted persons with disabilities in various ways. Historical inequalities have resurfaced, discrimination has increased and the push for inclusion has become more challenging. Dialogues on leaving no one behind, reaching the furthest behind first and inclusion in the pandemic world are largely being neglected or not a priority. This poses the fundamental question for persons with disabilities: is it still important to advocate to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals? Moreover, will the Goals and targets be instrumental to build a better, more inclusive and equal world for all?

Presentations focused on the following three main themes:

* The role of multilateralism and action-oriented political leadership to ensure that the response to the pandemic and the rebuilding of societies follow a rights-based approach and ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities;
* Reducing inequalities, addressing discrimination and eliminating barriers through consultation and partnership in an intersectional approach including underrepresented groups; and
* The vital role and critical contribution of representative organizations of persons with disabilities in the pandemic response, highlighting that persons with disabilities must be active leaders and participants in all decision-making processes to build back a better for a more inclusive future for all.

The following highlights some *compelling quotes* from presenters on the situation of persons with disabilities in the pandemic:

* Women with disabilities are two-to-three times more likely to experience violence than their peers without disabilities, Ally Tang, UK Mission to the United Nations
* Considering youth with disabilities make up about 12% of 1.8 billion young people in world, I have witnessed firsthand my friends with disabilities who lose their jobs and get caught up in domestic violence due to COVID-19, Yohana Kibe Mungai, Kenya
* As a woman with a psychosocial disability, the pandemic has affected me disproportionately more than a man with a disability, Dorothy Nakato Mubezi, Uganda
* Organizations of persons with disabilities quickly stepped in during the pandemic to address gaps in government services and became sources of information, raised awareness, provided accessible materials and distributed food and medicine to members, Dr. Vladimir Cuk, the International Disability Alliance

Recommendations from panellists on the way forward are below:

* Concrete actions need to be taken by governments to realize the SDGs, Juan Ángel de Gouveia, RIADIS
* People who don't communicate in traditional ways often have the most to say, so if we want to achieve the SDGs, we must ensure their voices are heard, Fernanda Santana, Brazilian Association for Action in Rights of Autistic Peoples
* We need a rights-based approach, universal design and investment in persons with disabilities and their capacity to achieve the SDGs and build a better world, Dr. Mary Keogh, CBM Global
* The SDGs are and will remain a critical framework in achieving the rights of persons with disabilities, but also require ongoing and greater concrete actions by governments and increased participation of organizations of persons with disabilities so the dream becomes a reality, Dominic Haslam, International Disability and Development Consortium

In case you missed the event, you can click [here for the recording of the event](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLBxon_bN6Y&feature=youtu.be) and [here for additional information](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/hlpf2020-side-event).

## 2. Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA) and SGPwD side event

The SGA and SGPwD organized a side event titled “Learning from COVID-19 to accelerate action for a more inclusive decade of SDG delivery” on 7 July, 2020 with 351 people in attendance. Presenters discussed how different responses to the pandemic have impacted the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities and how the crisis has disproportionately affected them.

During the events the [Family homelessness report](https://unanima-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Family-Homelessness-and-COVID-19.pdf) and SGPwD [Experience of persons with disabilities with COVID-19](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/master_sgpwd_covid-19_report_-_repaired_via_365_june_22_2020finalfinal.docx) were both shared.

*Key points from presentations:*

* We must shift away from silo group mentality into collaboration and partnership, Amal Abou Rafeh, UN DESA.
* The issues of older persons and persons with disabilities need to come together and look at different dimensions such as gender, racism, and need to build on all these dimensions, Antonio Cisneros De Alencar, Senior Human Rights and Normative Advisor, United Nations Development Coordination Office.
* The pandemic clearly showed us that many groups are not part of a holistic approach for inclusion, Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.
* Female leadership has been a critical factor in success in many countries, Alex Kalache, President of the [International Longevity Centre-Brazi](http://www.ilcbrazil.org/)l (former Director of global ageing programme at WHO.
* Many OPDs have provided access to information and services where there are gaps from the government, Rosario Galarza, RIADIS and International Disability Alliance
* We need to think about inclusion and participation and how can we ensure we take an approach that respects dignity, Anna Cunniffe, First Secretary at Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Ireland and Irish Aid disability lead.

## 3. Other Side Events in which SGPwD participated

Side Event: Discussion Forum*: Using the principle of universal design as a tool for leaving no one behind*organized by Swedish Agency on Participation and UNDESA

This side event discussed examples and exchanged experiences on the importance of universal design within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities as a tool in implementing the 2030 Agenda. A recording of the event [can be found here.](https://www.mfd.se/inspiration/evenemang/skapa-losningar-som-blir-ratt-fran-borjan-med-universell-utformning/)

Side Event: Timely Data for the SDGs*, Featuring the launch of the SDSN Data Platform for the SDGs*with SDSN, Finland, Colombia

The event discussed data and the SDGs in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals in the remaining decade. The myriad of data and tools available cannot, however, address the challenges of implementing the SDGs while information is produced and used in silos. Key stakeholders, including policy makers, government officials, journalists, academics, students, and members of civil society need a virtual space where they can come together to access timely data relevant to the SDGs and learn to use the data effectively to push Agenda 2030 forward. The event launched [the SDG Index](https://www.sdgindex.org/).

Side Event: Innovation to Inclusion side event: disability data in crisis response

The Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) consortium includes: Leonard Cheshire, Action Network for the Disabled Kenya (ANDY), Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), CBM, European Disability Forum (EDF), Global Disability Innovation Hub, International Labour Organization (ILO), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Plan International and The World Bank.

This side event provided data collected to understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities. I2i worked with government institutions and ODPs in Bangladesh and Kenya to collect data. The session discussed how data are being used to inform responses and recovery measures on employment and social protection. Speakers highlighted the importance of a cross-sector response to reduce the disproportionate impact on marginalized groups.

Key points:

* UK Statistics called to disaggregate data by sex, age, and disability to understand the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.
* DFID continues to advocate for and the use of Washington Group sets, especially with national surveys, systems and administrative systems.
* In Kenya, persons with disabilities have access to government procurement activities.
* There has been a call for more disaggregated data for policymakers and program implementers also in Kenya.
* Kenya is an excellent example of political commitment, political will and achievement: Stemming from a commitment from 2018 at the Global Disability Summit, the Kenyan government now collects disability data in national censuses to include persons with disabilities.
* ILO: Only 10% of the UN assessments on response and recovery plans have included persons with disabilities. Although there is high-level inclusion of persons with disabilities at the UN, people in the field are overloaded trying to include all groups and thus there is a risk that persons with disabilities are being overlooked.
* ILO is designing checklists to ensure response and recovery are inclusive of persons with disabilities, and disability data is key in this process. The data are integral to include persons with disabilities, because if we do not have data, we cannot ensure that persons with disabilities are part of the solution and not left behind.

Side event: Delivering on SDG 17: Going Further, Together

The event had more than 80 participants comprising representatives from government, civil society, and academia. The side event focused on the crucial role civil society organizations must play in the implementation of SDG 17 (multi-stakeholder partnerships), and all SDGs. The event [press statement](https://taskteamcso.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Press-Statement-HLPF2020.pdf) highlights the key outcomes of the session as well as opportunities for partnering to advance this issue. Please find the full meeting report [here](https://taskteamcso.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Report-HLPF-TT-Side-event-FINAL.pdf) and for the full recording of the session, please visit [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvg5HylUoPt85BqXUZzh_HA/videos).

Some key points from presenters include:

* CSOs should be seen as strategic partners in the response to the COVID pandemic.
* Grassroots local organizations also contributed to bottom up monitoring of SDGs.
* The resourcing of CSOs is becoming more privatized going beyond aid, with more private philanthropies, high-net individuals, including diaspora financing.
* Involve a NSOs in task teams to provide the statistical expertise in moving forward.

# VNR LABS AND SGPwD

VNR Labs are convened on the margins of the HLPF. The VNR Labs provide an informal platform for experience sharing and reflection on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. The Labs are held under the Chatham House rule and are open to Member States, the UN system and representatives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders. Click here for [details on VNR Labs for 2020](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020#labs).

There were 17 VNR Labs organized by different sections of the UN during the 2020 HLPF. The SGPwD was invited to participate in two VNR Labs as official panelists and participated in another three VNR Labs. One of the VNR Labs presented lessons learned of successful participation of persons with disabilities in the VNRs. The UN analyzed the participation of different groups in the VNRs and found that other than women’s groups, persons with disabilities have been the most successful in engaging in the VNRs. As a result, the UN asked the SGPwD to share our experiences leading to the participation. This reflects the significant recognition of the SGPwD’s activity and advocacy over the past years and an increase of participation from other stakeholders.

Details of the events are below.

## 1. On 7 July, 2020 SGPwD representatives participated in VNR Lab: Data-driven programming and the VNRs organized by the UNSDG Development Coordination Office (DCO).

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) is informed by Government prioritization, planning, implementation and reporting vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda, including the preparation of evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews based on SDG indicators. The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) builds on processes such as the Voluntary National Reviews, and the country-specific findings and recommendations of UN principal organs. As per the proposal of the Secretary-General in his 2020 report on QCPR implementation, UNCTs should work to strengthen their support to countries conducting these VNRs and ensure the reviews’ key findings inform the CCA and the Cooperation Framework.

This VNR lab invited Resident Coordinators and other stakeholders to reflect on their experience in connecting the Voluntary National Review to the CCA and Cooperation Framework, as well as to solicit ideas on how this can be strengthened in the next QCPR cycle, how RCs and UNCTs can better support Governments with the socio-economic response to COVID-19, and how to best implement decisions taken in the 74th session of the General Assembly related to the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*Some key points from the lab:*

* Timor Leste highlighted that persons with disabilities were active in the VNR process, and, as well, all the data collected for the VNR assisted in developing their new cooperation framework.
* Uzbekistan was showcased as a good example of a country that promotes evidence-based VNRs using data.
* The EU discussed issues with financing and that international investors are not looking at developing countries in many cases and if investment is not a priority at the domestic level, it will not be done internationally. As a solution, investments need to be linked to the SDGs and climate because investors are looking at what is SDG or green proof and are looking for these kinds of investments.

## 2. On 8 July, 2020: Multi-level governance and subnational reporting on VNRs and VLRs

The importance of establishing a link between VNR and VLRs and strengthening mutual cooperation and peer learning was emphasized. The 2030 agenda should not be perceived as a burden for countries, but rather, as a chance to strengthen dialogue between different levels of governance and stakeholders. The 2030 agenda offers a ground to provide concrete examples and to reinforce stakeholder engagement.

Finland mentioned that they have created a platform to engage with different actors in society, including organizations of persons with disabilities, focusing on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. DESA emphasized the importance of including civil society to provide better recommendations to governments and encourages broader inclusion by hiring persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups to ensure not only their involvement in consultation processes, but also in policy making. Key messages included the importance of partnerships and engaging with local communities to boost their contribution and long-term commitment.

## 3. On 8 July, 2020: Engaging social groups in the VNR process and reaching the furthest behind - a case study of persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples

UN DESA Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) organized a VNR lab that explored experiences in engaging persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in the VNR reporting processes, identify obstacles, best practices and what lessons can be learned to reach those furthest behind in which 138 people attended.

The event was based on an analysis of the 2017 VNR reports by the Committee for Development Planning that stated “among the groups that receive special focus so that they are not left behind, women receive the most attention (addressed by 41 out of the 43 countries reviewed), followed by persons with disabilities (40 countries)” and that indigenous peoples were severely underrepresented.

Jose Viera, Permanent Representative of the SGPwD was a panelist and Dovilė Juodkaitė, President of Lithuanian Disability Forum, Board member of European Disability Forum also was an official presenter. In addition, Ms. Pratima Gurung, National Indigenous Disabled Women Association, Nepal and Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Secretary-General’s Envoy on Disability and Accessibility took the floor.

Jose Viera’s official presentation:

I will discuss some key reasons for the success of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Voluntary National Reviews.

Overwhelmingly, the disability movement has had a coordinated and broad response with shared messages, including the mobilization of the disability movement, capacity building, and collaboration with mainstream civil society stakeholders at all levels.

The disability movement and allies had started building the foundation for some of this momentum, with the consistent mobilization and advocacy during the post-2015 negotiations. There was an understanding and most importantly a desire for persons with disabilities to be included in the next development agenda, thus participating in the HLPF, particularly the VNRs was just a natural next phase.

The disability movement carried out awareness raising within the movement to promote inclusive development for all, and that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be used as mutually reinforcing tools.

In 2016, IDA received a DFID grant called the “catalyst report on SDG implementation.” The objective of this grant was to raise awareness on SDG implementation within the disability movement at the national level. Grants were given to countries undergoing a VNR that given year. DPOs wrote reports on their findings, and consequently, these reports helped DPOs to understand the VNR process and how to engage with their governments. At the same time the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium rolled out the CRPD-SDG Bridge training with the objective to train the next DPO leaders and advocates.

In 2016, we worked directly with DPOs in 16 out of 22 VNR countries to engage them in the VNRs. This entailed constant outreach and communication between global and national disability advocates. As a result, in the 2016 HLPF, out of the 19 countries with full reports, 17 explicitly referenced persons with disabilities.

In 2017, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities and the International Disability Alliance launched a study with DPOs in a few countries reporting national reviews. The findings stemmed from DPOs in Argentina, Bangladesh, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Sweden and Togo. This culminated in the Global VNR report on the Engagement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Voluntary National Reviews*.*

From this research, we learned that we had to have a more structured approach to be effective. As a result, in 2018 the International Disability Alliance and CBM developed a VNR Toolkit for DPOs and launched a series of webinars.

As a final point, it has been very helpful to be engaged in the VNR Task Group of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders.

Dovilė Juodkaitė’s presentation: Lessons learned in the engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations with the Lithuanian government during the VNR reporting processes

The Lithuanian disability forum is an umbrella organization composed of 14 national disability organizations with the goal to mainstream and represent the rights of persons with disabilities in national policies and to monitor the implementation of international human rights standards in Lithuania.

In 2018 Lithuania presented a voluntary national report at the HLPF. The preparation of the report was organized by the Ministry of Environment that set up a formal inter-institutional working group for the report. Different ministries and state authorities drafted the report.

Civil society organizations had limited involvement in drafting the report due to the government only reaching out at the last minute and with little possibility for consultations at the end of the process. As a consequence, the VNR only includes statistical data on vulnerable civil society groups in a fragmented way.

The first draft barely included persons with disabilities, and as a response, the LNF provided comments and requested that persons with disabilities were included in the report. Subsequently, the final report included explicit references to persons with disabilities in a few areas.

* Persons with disabilities and older persons are at the highest risk of poverty in Lithuania.
* Ongoing institutional care reform was included in the report which will replace the long-standing Soviet system and create a system that is completely new for Lithuania. The institutional care reform will help establish a system of integrated services that will make individual services available. Yet there are around 6500 persons with disabilities still living in big residential facilities.
* In developing inclusive education, more efficient assistance will be provided for the individual progress of persons with disabilities. Lithuania seeks to make general schools more attractive and ready to accept children with disabilities and provide specific teaching methods to students who are educated at schools for students with disabilities.

At the same time, LNF prepared a shadow report, specifically reporting on persons with disabilities in the context of different Goals and indicators. This was important because in 2016 Lithuania received the CRPD Committee concluding recommendations on the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and with specific SDGs targets. Despite this, no concrete measures have been developed and implemented by the Government to carry out these specific recommendations targeting the SDGs.

*Continuing the momentum and impact for persons with disabilities after the VNR reporting*

After the process of inputting into the VNR, various NGOs and experts working on the SDGs formed an informal coalition. The main goal of the group is to follow and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and assess the correlation of the SDGs with national policies. This coalition was active in 2019 by trying to influence the national progress program to ensure that the SDG indicators were reflected and that all vulnerable groups included, including persons with disabilities.

It is likely that Lithuania will prepare another voluntary report on the implementation of the SDGs in 2021 or 2022 so it is important to keep up the momentum for persons with disabilities to be engaged.

## 4. On 9 July, 2020: Reflecting population data and migration trends in the VNRs

Some key points include:

* that likely the disability survey will be included in Japan’s survey next year, probably using the Washington Group questions
* In Moldova, there is a push for children with disabilities to enter into general education schools, but this has not happened yet and the government is trying to get data into this.
* South Africa discussed the issue of lack of local-level data with solutions such as universities carrying out population data collection in rural areas and the implementation of migration training in municipalities will take place for data collection.

## 5. On 13 July, 2020: Aligning reporting processes, VNRs and international human rights mechanisms

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized this VNR Lab that discussed the benefits of linking up Voluntary National Reviews with the national reporting to and engagement with international human rights mechanisms ([Treaty Bodies](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/TreatyBodies.aspx), [Universal Periodic Review](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx), [Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx)). The VNR Lab provided an opportunity for participating countries and other stakeholders to exchange relevant experiences and learn about useful tools that can support linking up the VNRs with human rights reporting.

*Ekaete Judith Umoh* presented in the VNR Lab on behalf of the SGPwD. She stated that in the last four years DPO engagement in the VNRs has been successful with approximately 75-85 percent of volunteering governments reflecting on the situation of persons with disabilities either in written reports or in oral presentations. DPO engagement varied significantly. In some countries the entire disability community came together to formulate their request to the government, in other countries, one or two leaders led the advocacy role to influence the national consultations. This was achieved by constant awareness raising, capacity building and through partnerships with mainstream civil society organizations. Yet, the VNRs have not fully reflected the human rights perspective of disability.

# ACCESSIBILITY

The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities was pleased with the positive accessibility features at the 2019 High-level Political Forums under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly (SDG Summit). The SGPwD sent an official letter to the UN organizers well in advance of the 2020 HLPF requesting accessibility services for participants with disabilities. This was adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtual nature of the 2020 HLPF.

The requests included to:

* Ensure that the platform used for the online 2020 HLPF is accessible for participants with disabilities, sign language interpreters, and real-time captioners;
* Provide real-time captioning services, such as CART, for plenary sessions online as well as on live and recorded webcast videos for all eight days of the HLPF;
* Provide International Sign interpretation for plenary sessions online as well as on live and recorded webcast videos for all eight days of the HLPF;
* Ensure that the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform is fully accessible;
* Ensure that participants with disabilities and their personal assistants/sign language interpreters/captioners are able to register and that these assistants are not counted as participants (when there is a maximum number permitted);
* Allow more time for presenters with disabilities, at least one minute more than for presenters without disabilities, especially for blind and partially sighted participants reading Braille, deaf and hard of hearing participations using sign language interpreters, and participants with speech disabilities;
* Ensure all shared materials are accessible for persons using screen reader software;
* Share HLPF documents and presentations prior to events for captioners and sign language interpreters, as much as possible;
* Convert the HLPF agenda into easy-read format; and
* Ensure that if any official session goes beyond working hours, that sign language interpreters and captioners are able to work these extra hours to ensure continued access to information for all participants.

We collaborated with the UN organizers prior to the HLPF, continued to discuss and give feedback. Unfortunately, we were unable to carry out a walk through like previous years due to the pandemic and the UN closing. The SGPwD composed two guidance notes on accessibility of online platforms that we shared with the UN for guidance:

* [Checklist for making virtual meetings accessible](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/checklist_for_un_on_online_platforms.docx)
* [Overview on Accessibility of Video Conferencing Apps and Services](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/accessibility_of_video_conferencing_apps_and_services.docx)

Positively, the UN provided some good accessibility features at the HLPF, including real-time captioning throughout the entire HLPF, extra time for presenters with disabilities, quickly responding to SGPwD requests and questions. We are very grateful for this and the collaboration.

There were also challenges and gaps. The UN struggled to find a platform that could host so many people at the HLPF and consequently the SGPwD and other stakeholders were unaware of the platform until quite late. Because of the challenges of a wide scale event online and security issues, the platform chosen was not ideal in terms of accessibility. Consequently, for the first week of the HLPF no interpretation (of the six official UN languages) was provided, including International Sign interpretation. The second week used a different online platform and that was able to include spoken interpretation in the UN languages, but with many glitches. Unfortunately International Sign interpretation was not included, which is a step backward from previous HLPFs and a significant gap for deaf persons.

Additionally, some representatives of the SGPwD encountered barriers during the 2020 HLPF that included:

* The Webex platform used was not accessible for blind users. For example, blind presenters were unable to find the microphone button with their VoiceOver system.
* Blind people who were presenters and had to be on camera had difficulty positioning the camera.
* Messages in the chat box during meetings created a barrier for blind users. This is because the VoiceOver system reads the messages during the session and interrupts the blind person’s ability to listen and follow what is happening.
* There was no International Sign interpretation during the HLPF, which is a step backward from previous HLPFs and a significant gap for deaf persons.

After the HLPF, the SGPwD sent a letter to the UN organizers with feedback on the accessibility at the 2020 HLPF and provided suggestions on how to address these barriers. The summary of the letter is below.

* Accessibility challenges during the 2020 HLPF include:
* The technical person assigned to respective sessions should assist blind people on how to face the camera in the right direction for their presentation.
* Adequate time should be allocated to assist persons with disabilities who are presenting prior to the session, e.g. how to turn on the microphone, how to position the camera.
* Include International Sign interpretation throughout the HLPF.
* Encourage countries to include captions and sign language interpreters in their own VNR presentations. Great examples from the 2020 HLPF were Panama and Uganda that included sign language interpreters and Panama and Slovenia that included captions in their pre-recorded VNR videos.
* Use Zoom as an online platform during events since it is by far the most accessible platform for persons with disabilities.
* In addition, request that Webex developers make the Webex platform accessible.
* Commit to including marginalized groups of persons with disabilities at the HLPF, e.g. persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with deafblindess.

The SGPwD composed guidance notes on accessibility of online platforms that may be useful (refer to links above). We recommend that these barriers are addressed going forward, especially since virtual platforms may continue to be used for some time.

After we sent the letter, we received a positive response from the organizers that this information is very useful and that the organizers will definitely do what they can on their side.

Relevant accessibility documents:

* [2020 HLPF Accessibility Recommendation](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/2020_hlpf_accessibility_recommendations.docx)
* [2020 HLPF Accessibility Feedback](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/2020_hlpf_sgpwd_accessibility_feedback.docx)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTS

## 1. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020

The [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf) included persons with disabilities throughout: in the opening sections, in leave no one behind, education (SDG 4), employment (SDG 8), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), and combating discrimination against women with disabilities (SDG 10). Details are below.

Foreword by UN Secretary-General Guterres (p. 2):

Although the novel coronavirus affects every person and community, it does not do so equally. Instead, it has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities and injustices. In advanced economies, fatality rates have been highest among marginalized groups. In developing countries, the most vulnerable – including those employed in the informal economy, older people, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, migrants and refugees – risk being hit even harder.

Foreword by Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (p. 3):

Finding transformative pathways in turbulent times: Older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees are more likely to experience severe effects from COVID-19 due to their specific health and socioeconomic circumstances.

SDG 10 Infographic (p. 15)

LNOB infographic – 3 out 10 persons with disabilities have experienced discrimination (2014-2019), (p. 23)

SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (p. 32) Without remedial action, the effects of COVID-19 will only add to the obstacles faced by poor children in completing their education:Months of absence from school owing to COVID-19 are likely to impact education outcomes. In the longer term, prolonged absence from school is associated with lower retention and graduation rates and worse learning outcomes, in particular among segments of the population that are already disadvantaged, including members of poor households and students with disabilities.

SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (p. 41) Global unemployment may reach an historic high in 2020, depending on the policies adopted: In 2019, the global unemployment rate stood at 5 per cent. Joblessness that year was particularly pervasive in Northern Africa and Western Asia, where 11 per cent of the labour force were unemployed, and the female unemployment rate was 9 percentage points higher than that of males. The unemployment rate was also considerably higher among young workers than among adults in all regions in 2019. Furthermore, in 40 out of the 59 countries with recent and comparable data, the unemployment rate was higher for persons with disabilities.

SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries (p. 44) Women with disabilities face multiple – and intersecting – forms of discrimination: Almost two in ten people reported having personally experienced discrimination on at least one of the grounds established by international human rights law, according to data from 31 countries over the period 2014 to 2019. Moreover, women are more likely to be victims of discrimination than men. Among those with disabilities, 3 in 10 personally experienced discrimination, with higher levels still among women with disabilities. The main grounds of discrimination mentioned by these women was not the disability itself, but religion, ethnicity and sex, pointing to the urgent need for measures to tackle multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The COVID-19 pandemic may further entrench existing patterns of discrimination and stigma, with reports emerging from many countries of discrimination against different groups.

Persons with disabilities were included more in this year’s report than in previous years. Gaps remain, but this is progress and encouraging that the situation of persons with disabilities are being recognized and this is supported with evidence.

## 2. Global Sustainable Development Report

The Global Sustainable Development Report recognizes that “13 years after the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, progress in its practical implementation remains quite limited.” The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities welcomed the report and appreciates that persons with disabilities were included throughout. Nevertheless, the information included on persons with disabilities is more of a reflection and repetition of previous advocacy documents and fails to provide concrete actions to ensure the realization of the SDGs for persons with disabilities. Positively, the report recognizes that there is an imbalance across the three dimensions of sustainable development, resulting from lack of addressing the interlinkages. It is only when these interlinkages are taken into account that the desired transformative change will take place.

The report identifies critical areas for the call to action in the next decade. These six entry points include: strengthening human well-being and capabilities; shifting towards sustainable and just economies; building sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition patterns; achieving energy decarbonization with universal access to energy; promoting sustainable urban and peri-urban development; and securing the global environmental commons.

The aforementioned entry points provide an analysis of the underlying systems and are not new clusters of Goals and targets. Yet, the SGPwD is concerned that the report’s scientific approach is limited for the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, the logic of the new approach is complex, making it difficult to communicate beyond the global level. The report also fails to embrace the 2030 Agenda’s key principle of leave no one behind, the overarching inclusion of the gender lens and important Goals and themes are left out (e.g., employment). Finally, the action points tend to be general and selective, thus limiting the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety.

Persons with disabilities have been included in the entry points in the following way. With respect to human well-being and capabilities, persons with disabilities are acknowledged as a population group exposed to extreme poverty, overlapping and concentrated deprivation, social, economic and political barriers, and impacts of climate change. In terms of urban development, inclusive, sustainable and people-centered cities with pro-poor development must be built for the full and equal participation of 1 billion persons with disabilities globally. Science and technology are introduced as means to enable increased access of persons with disabilities to education, employment, community activities and other services in order to leave no one behind. However, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making processes are neglected. Persons with disabilities are not considered political agents to be empowered, but rather as a marginalized group facing inequalities. The climate change section lacks a human-rights approach with marginalized groups included as “potential agents” in generating solutions only because of their exposure to climate change effects.

As a result, as part of the 2020 SGPwD HLPF submission, the SGPwD provided concrete reflections and recommendations on how each entry point around a call to action - as identified in the report - should further consider and address the situation of persons with disabilities. Read the HLPF Submission for details.

## 3. Data-related publications launched during HLPF

### 3.1 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Data

The [SDG Goals Progress Chart 2020](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26727SDG_Chart_2020.pdf) was developed by UNDESA and based on data from national statistical systems. This chart looks at global and regional progress on the SDGs. Most of the data collection was done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

IISD SDG Knowledge Hub Article: [Tracking the Trackers: SDG Data Sources at Year Five](http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/tracking-the-trackers-sdg-data-sources-at-year-five/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SDG%20Update%20-%2024%20July%202020&utm_content=SDG%20Update%20-%2024%20July%202020%20CID_18893a32800bc0f0b5806a15f97a9fdd&utm_source=cm&utm_term=Read)

#### 3.1.1 From Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN):

* SDSN and [ESRI](https://www.esri.com/en-us/home) recently launched the [SDGs Today website](https://www.unsdsn.org/sdgs-today) allowing users to explore real-time data related to the SDGs. It's designed to provide timely, relevant, and peer-reviewed visual geospatial information linked to primary data sources.
* [Sustainable Development Report 2020: SDGs and COVID 19](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf) complements the official SDG indicators and voluntary country-led review processes. The report is not an official monitoring tool. It uses publicly available data published by official data providers (e.g., World Bank, WHO and ILO) and other organizations including research centers and NGOs.

#### 3.1.2 GIZ Resources

* With the TAP Network: [SDG16 in VNRs and Spotlight Reports](https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GIZ_TAP_2020_SDG-16-in-VNRs-and-Spotlight-Reports_Final-Version.pdf)
* With the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data: [The 2030 Agenda's Data Challenge](http://www.data4sdgs.org/resources/2030-agendas-data-challenge)

### 3.2 General Data Sources

#### 3.2.1 The Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys work [is available here.](https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/) The goal of the Working Group is to foster improvement in the scope and quality of social and economic statistics as delivered through national, regional and international household survey programs, including through increased coordination and cooperation across at all levels.

#### 3.2.2 Canada Stats shared a [Data Quality Toolkit](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/data-quality-toolkit). The objective of this toolkit is to raise awareness about data quality assurance practices.

### 3.3 Citizen-generated Data:

#### 3.3.1 Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

* [Choosing and Engaging with Citizen Generated Data](http://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/services_files/Choosing%20and%20Engaging%20with%20CGD_The%20Guide_0.pdf)
* [Advancing sustainability together? Citizen-generated data and the Sustainable Development Goals](http://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/services_files/Advancing%20Sustainability%20Together%20CGD%20Report_1.pdf)

#### 3.3.2 World Vision: [The Case for Citizen Generated Data for SDG Accountability](https://www.wvi.org/publications/case-study/social-accountability/case-citizen-generated-data-sdg-accountability)

##### 3.3.3 A framework and a set of tools to monitor indigenous peoples’ human rights: Current platforms [are available here](https://navigator.humanrights.dk/) and [also here](http://nav.indigenousnavigator.com/index.php/en/). The new platform will go online in September. The platform is available [in French](http://nav.indigenousnavigator.com/index.php/fr/) and [in Spanish](http://nav.indigenousnavigator.com/index.php/es/) too.

##### 3.3.4 GNDR has a data platform called [Views from the Frontline](https://vfl.world/#scrollto-section-1) in English, French and Spanish that allows anyone to analyze collected data about the risks faced in communities around the world.

# ANNEX

## VNR data - forthcoming

1. International Disability Alliance. (2019). Global Survey on DPO participation in development programs and policies. Retrieved from<http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/global-survey> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)