



# 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

July 2023, UNHQ New York

## Summary

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### I. Background & context

- The [HLPF](#) is the UN **main forum to address the global sustainable development issues** and to follow up and review of the SDGs implementation. The HLPF meets under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) every year, and under the auspices of the UNGA every four years. This year, the HLPF is convening twice, both under ECOSOC in July and under UNGA in September, with the name of **2023 SDG Summit**.
- The **theme** of [this year's HLPF](#), convened from 10 to 19 July, was “**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**”. This was quite an important forum both because this year marks the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda since its adoption in 2015, and because it was the first of two sessions this year.
- The **objectives** of the meeting were to **assess the impacts of the pandemic** and related crises on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to **feature progress of countries on 5 SDGs** – SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 27 – through dedicated panel sessions as well as presentations of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). It was also a critical event to **build momentum**, identify priorities and mobilise SHs in the preparation for the SDG Summit to be held during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly.

- The **outcome** of the two sessions of the HLPF this year will be a negotiated **political declaration** covering the different and complementary functions of both sessions of the forum, which will be adopted in September.

## II. Key takeaways from HLPF

### A. Challenges

- **Progress towards most of the SDGs is off track. Efforts must be intensified.** 2030 Agenda is the right framework but we need to do much more to achieve the goals.
  - o [Report](#) of the UN Secretary-General (special edition), published in May 2023, provides an update on the progress made since 2015 against the global SDG indicator framework and outlines that many of the Goals are **moderately to severely off track** and puts forward **five major recommendations** to MS to rescue the Goals and accelerate implementation between now and 2030.
- Many **developing countries are affected by cascading impacts of unprecedented overlapping crises** (education loss, soaring inflation, escalation of poverty and hunger, liquidity problems, worsened access to global capital markets, growing indebtedness etc.). **These represent a challenge** in reaching the SDGs, even the most fundamental ones.

### B. What is needed

- In the opening of the HL Segment, UNSG urged governments to come to the **SDG Summit** with **clear plans and pledges** and mentioned that we need the Summit to send a **clear message from world leaders of a strong political declaration**.
- Emphasis on **innovation, technology and partnerships** through the different discussions.
- **Collaboration** between governments, civil society, private sector and academia will play a crucial role in driving meaningful change, as well as **building trust** among different stakeholders.
- **Finance is key:** the “**fuel that will drive SDG progress**”. Several mentions of the **finance for development gap** in developing countries to achieve the SDGs, as well as of the much-needed reform of the international finance architecture. Climate finance also highly mentioned, including the need to operationalise Loss and Damage fund at COP28.
- **Accelerated climate action and investments in climate will facilitate achievement of all SDGs, as climate is a “treat multiplier”.**
  - o To achieve this, UNSG has proposed earlier this year the Climate Solidarity Pact to the G20 and has put forward an Acceleration Agenda to supplement these efforts.
  - o Just energy transition was mentioned quite a lot too, coupled with lack of resources and need for investments and capacity building in developing countries (as there is high potential for energy transition in some developing countries).
- **Digital transformation and the close of digital divide** seen as fundamental elements to reach all the SDGs.
- A few developing countries also mentioned the need for **social tools** to be used for **international trade** and the rejection of the growing trend from developed countries to **impose unilateral measures on international trade**, such as taxes or adjustment of borders with negative impacts.

## C. Importance of private sector in helping to achieve the SDGs

- **UNSG mentioned that private sector leadership is essential.** Leaders must commit to the SDG summit in September and deliver for people and climate.
- **Fostering public/private partnerships is absolutely critical.**
- We are not on track on SDGs and **unless we change something we will not hit our goals.**
- We **need to bring more people and money to the table.**
  - o Role of **private sector investment is key**, as no government in the world has all the money to finance development. Private sector has to align its investments with SDGs.
  - o Companies of course want return on investment, but here is a **growing demand for outcome-based investing.**
  - o **Governments should understand how to bring companies onboard** and recognise their role. They should also understand that private financing for development is not a charity, that it must be a win-win situation, and that **development financing should be treated as an investment and not as a cost.**
  - o **Governments can provide incentives and an enabling environment** to scale up private finance for the SDGs.
- Private sector should also be an ally in the development of monitoring progress on SDGs and developing the VNR process. Data key element in tracking the progress on SDGs.

## III. Main meetings attended

### A. Official meetings

Attendance to part of the **official meetings** during the Ministerial segment of the HLPF (17-19 July), which was convened as part of the High-level segment of ECOSOC (17-20 July).

- Presentation of the **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** from member States, aimed at facilitating the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
  - o **38 UN member States and the European Union**, as the first-ever supranational presenter, carried out VNRs.
- **General Debate** (17-10 July), on the theme “**Building momentum towards the 2023 SDG Summit: Transformation for accelerating implementation of the SDGs**”, which allowed countries Ministers and high-level representatives, IGOs, UN agencies, and major groups and stakeholders to exchange experiences, lessons learned, policy guidance, transformative actions and initiatives for the SDG Summit.

### B. Official side events

- **Mobilizing the Private Sector for the SDGs and the VNRs**, convened by UN Global Compact
  - o Explored how UNGC local chapters are supporting their countries/governments on SDGs and VNR process. Case studies from Chile, Saudi Arabia a Tanzania. (More information [here](#)).
- **SDG Business Forum**, co-organised by UN Global Compact, UN DESA, IOE and WBCSD
  - o Brought together several panels with broad stakeholder representation to debate on the role of the private sector in the change needed to get back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda. (More information [here](#)).
- **Universal and meaningful digital connectivity: the new policy imperative**, organised by the International Telecommunication Union

- Proposed a multi stakeholder perspective on the challenges around achieving universal and meaningful connectivity and the critical importance of public private partnership in this space
- **Achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs through the successful implementation of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at all levels**, organised by the CBD Secretariat. (More information [here](#)).
  - Contextualised the KMGBF and explored how its implementation at all levels will contribute to successfully achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

### C. External events/receptions

- **Deloitte/IOE reception**
  - Provided a platform to foster public-private dialogues and conveyed the message that the private sector is a key actor towards the achievement of the SDGs.
- **USCIB [Mooving the Needle](#) Reception**
  - Featured representatives of government missions, leading companies, and the UN community to celebrate private sector commitment to work with governments and other stakeholders through collaboration, the deployment of innovative technologies and tools, and infrastructure development.