

Co-chairs

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the OWG.

No resolution adopted by the UN GA has ever encompassed so much for sustainable development as the one establishing the High Level Political Forum. No resolution adopted by the UNGA has ever accorded non-governmental organizations and major groups so wide reaching privileges.

An often stated truism is: unless governments own intergovernmental processes, policies will never be taken seriously. Another could be: unless people feel ownership of development, little will be implemented. The SDG process through the HLPF, offers a unique opportunity to combine these two political realities, not the least because the SDGs will decide major programme and process work of the UN well into the next two decades.

Non-Governmental Organisations have played crucial roles in implementing UN programme decisions. NGOs have carried out up to 70% of UN programmes decided by various UN bodies. As the NGO community was crucial in carrying out the MDGs, so it will be crucial in carrying out the SDGs on all issues and at all levels.

UNGA resolution 67/1 on the Rule of Law stresses the role of non-governmental organizations and the need for creating a just, sustainable future based on human rights and good governance. The HLPF embodies these principles.

To fulfill the promises embedded in the Rio outcome document, we need a competent, autonomous institution. The HLPF is not yet such an institution. We therefore need to strengthen it.

The ingenuity of the HLPF is that it was created as a hybrid. But that may not address every aspect of its challenges.

HLPF is lacking in organizational strength and consistency. As a hybrid it exists in the undefined landscape between the UNGA and ECOSOC, two of the most important and politically powerful Charter Body institutions. As a hybrid, the HLPF's legal framework is being subjected to selective interpretation.

Some want to integrate the HLPF into ECOSOC. With its broad mandate ECOSOC's purview extends to over 70 per cent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system. It covers a multitude of issues, and sustainable development is only one among many.

Due to the rigidity of ECOSOC's rules of procedure, the NGO and major groups community do not have access to ECOSOC meetings. Should HLPF be integrated into ECOSOC, we will not be able to participate and the HLPF will not be able to perform the roles envisaged by the GA's resolution.

An institution entrusted with creating a sustainable future cannot afford to have a weak governance structure. It needs to be provided with a bureau and it needs a strong secretariat.

Unlike its predecessor the CSD, the HLPF currently does not have a bureau and the GA resolution makes only a cursory reference to secretarial support.

The HLPF needs an autonomous position within the UN hierarchy.

Member States can rectify the weaknesses and still be consistent with the present resolution. Paragraph 29 of the HLPF resolution states that the UNGA: (I quote) “*Decides* to review the format and the organizational aspects of the forum at its seventy-third session, unless otherwise decided.”

Referencing paragraph 29, Member States can immediately establish a bureau or at a minimum an advisory board to strengthen the governance structure of HLPF. Likewise they can strengthen the secretariat.

The world needs an institution solely dedicated to sustainable development and the SDGs. That institution is within our grasp if we have the political will to create it.