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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Summary of the intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

In its resolution 37/24, the Human Rights Council decided to organize two one-day intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This is the summary report on the first meeting, held on 16 January 2019.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline as the meeting was held on 16 January 2019.

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 37/24, the Human Rights Council held on 16 January 2019 the first of two intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The theme of the meeting was “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”,¹ which is to be the theme in 2019 of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which will review global progress in achieving the following Sustainable Development Goals: 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnership for the Goals). The programme of the meeting consisted of five sessions.²

2. Morten Jespersen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, chaired the meeting. The President of the Human Rights Council, Coly Seck, and the Rapporteur, Michael O’Flaherty, Director of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, made brief remarks. Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, gave her assessment of the promise and challenges of the 2030 Agenda.

3. At the second session, on the topic “Reflections and a conversation on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals”, Mary Robinson, Chair of the Elders and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, delivered a keynote address. Thereafter, Ms. Robinson joined Asako Okai, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Crisis Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Jeffrey Sachs, Sustainable Development Goals Advocate and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at Colombia University and of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and Catalina Devandas Aguilar, Member of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures and Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, on a panel to discuss how promoting and protecting human rights and progress towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals were interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Imogen Foulkes, United Nations BBC Correspondent in Geneva, moderated this panel.

4. At the third session, the topic “Building synergies between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation at the national level” was examined. Jean de Dieu Yakouma Bambara, Director-General of Defence of Human Rights at the Ministry of Justice of Burkina Faso, Noelia López, Director of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, and Kanchana Patarachoke, Director-General of the Department of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, described how each of their respective countries were building on the relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. Eva Grambye, Deputy Executive Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, described what the Institute had learned from examining the complementarity of the work of United Nations human rights mechanisms and the Sustainable Development Goals and presented tools that make their findings available to all. Gianni Magazzeni, Chief of the Universal Periodic Review Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), moderated the panel discussion.

5. During the lunch break, organizations working on the relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals presented their work at a knowledge fair.

6. At the fourth session, Nicole Ameline, Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Kitrhona Cerri, Director of Social Impact of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Francesco d’Ovidio, Head of the Solutions and Innovation Unit of the International Labour Organization, Paul Ladd, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Alaa Murabit, Sustainable

¹ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/ConceptNote.pdf.

² See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/Programme.pdf.

Development Goals Advocate and Founder of the Voice of Libyan Women, and Mandeep Tiwana, Chief Programme Officer of the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS), discussed global partnerships to support the synergies between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Nadia Isler, Director of the SDG Lab, moderated the discussion.

7. At the closing session, on bringing the human rights narrative to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, Marion Barthelemy, Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, and Peggy Hicks, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division of OHCHR, shared their key conclusions from the meeting. The Rapporteur provided a synthesis of the meeting.

II. Summary of proceedings

A. Opening session

8. The Chair opened the discussion by outlining the objectives of the meeting, the modalities and the format. He noted that written submissions received after the meeting would be posted on the website of the meeting.³

9. The Chair stated that, by focusing on the exchange of practical experiences as well as on tools and methodologies, the aim of the meeting was to deepen the existing understanding of the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Strengthening synergies between human rights and the 2030 Agenda could strengthen the multilateral system by ensuring better coherence between political commitments and legal obligations.

10. The President of the Human Rights Council acknowledged the extensive expertise present in the room, which would ensure a rich discussion and a deeper understanding of the synergies. He underscored that the discussions should facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at both the global and the national levels, from large cities to rural areas, in keeping with the further advancement and realization of human rights for all, without discrimination.

11. In her opening statement,⁴ the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described the 2030 Agenda as an ambitious and objective model of equitable and sustainable development that put people at the centre and was explicitly grounded in human rights, including the right to development. She emphasized that the overarching commitment of Member States to “leave no one behind” demanded that inequalities be addressed and that all forms of discrimination be clearly identified and eliminated. She added that this included structural inequalities between social groups.

12. The High Commissioner stated that although there were some examples of the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, much more needed to be done and the 2030 Agenda was not on track. She noted that many countries were still far from achieving the goal of gender equality, which was also a driver for other Sustainable Development Goals, as women’s inequality remained powerfully entrenched as an obstacle to political empowerment, economic opportunity, physical safety, equal pay and individual freedom of choice.

13. The High Commissioner stressed that there was a need for greater urgency about achieving the 2030 Agenda, as only 12 years remained. The meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in 2019 represented an important milestone that required immediate, accelerated action, including stronger partnerships

³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

⁴ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24072&LangID=E.

between stakeholders at all levels, to drive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The High Commissioner noted that the human rights-based approach led to development that was more powerful, more sustainable and more effective because it promoted empowerment, inclusiveness and equal opportunities for all. The High Commissioner concluded by emphasizing the important contribution that United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council, special procedures and human rights treaty bodies could make to achieving the overall aim of leaving no one behind. The meeting would serve to bridge the work carried out in Geneva and New York, as the report on it would feed into the discussion at the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July 2019 and at the high-level political forum to be held under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019.

15. The opening session concluded with introductory remarks by the Rapporteur. He noted that his role was to capture the debate and draw broad elements together to ensure a strong input from the meeting to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. He spoke about the importance of hard-wiring human rights considerations into the Sustainable Development Goals. In concluding, he noted that the Sustainable Development Goals were a global project that could also further promote and protect human rights in Europe.

B. Reflections and conversation on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals

16. The second session started with a keynote address⁵ from Ms. Robinson, which was followed by a conversation among Ms. Robinson, Ms. Okai, Mr. Sachs and Ms. Devandas Aguilar, moderated by Ms. Foulkes.

17. Ms. Robinson encouraged the human rights community to speak out forcefully on the urgency of linking the recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on global warming of 1.5°C and the Sustainable Development Goals, as it defined the boundaries of sustainability within which the Goals must be implemented.

18. Ms. Robinson noted that the Human Rights Council had adopted several resolutions highlighting the connections between economic, social and cultural rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The subsidiary bodies of the Council and the special procedures had drawn attention to the Sustainable Development Goals in several thematic and country visit reports, and she noted that this had yielded many recommendations to guide Sustainable Development Goal strategies with a human rights-based approach. She emphasized that Sustainable Development Goal implementation strategies must be consistent with States' obligations in international human rights law.

19. Ms. Robinson highlighted that one of the main weaknesses of the 2030 Agenda lay in its accountability framework based on voluntary national reviews and peer-reviewed guidance. She called for "joined up governance" in the whole process, with better cross analysis and exchange of government submissions under the universal periodic review and their relevant voluntary national reviews under the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Ms. Robinson emphasized the importance of using the upcoming high-level political forum as a key moment to measure the progress to date and to assess how the world was measuring up on the particular Goals under review. She noted that the human rights-based approach with the attendant features of participation, accountability and non-discrimination was essential if the 2030 Agenda was to be realized in a way that would "leave no one behind". In closing, she stressed that the process must be meaningful and fully participatory. Participation was both a means and a goal, and it was important to measure and consider development processes and not simply development outcomes.

⁵ www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/Mrs.MaryRobinson.pdf.

20. The moderator asked the panellists about the links between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. Ms. Okai stated that UNDP policy and programme work was guided by the Sustainable Development Goals. The most important aspect was to work with Member States to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and policies. United Nations country teams supported the members in the voluntary national reviews, and UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs co-chaired the task team that was preparing for the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

22. She acknowledged the interrelated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, while noting that Goal 16 was of particular importance as an enabler and accelerator across the 2030 Agenda. UNDP had launched the rule of law and human rights 2030 Agenda accelerator initiative in 2018 to provide programmatic support for the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in crisis-affected countries. In the lead-up to the review of Goal 16 by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019, UNDP was supporting numerous initiatives as the co-facilitator of the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. The Alliance was the coordinating platform enabling Member States, business, civil society and international entities to work together to leverage the reporting process of the high-level political forum.

23. Ms. Okai echoed Ms. Robinson's remarks about the clear linkages between human rights processes and mechanisms and Sustainable Development Goal implementation processes and the need to enhance cooperation between them. This included the need to use the universal periodic review process more systematically in national integrated Sustainable Development Goal planning and localization strategies.

24. Ms. Okai spoke of the critical importance of strengthening national human rights systems, including national human rights institutions. UNDP was part of a tripartite partnership with OHCHR and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to support national human rights institutions in over 90 countries.

25. Mr. Sachs emphasized that there was no difference between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. They were the same agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals should be a tool for the human rights community, and the human rights community should be a key instrument for achieving the Goals.

26. Mr. Sachs stressed that although the challenge differed by country and context, the 2030 Agenda was failing not only, or even mainly, because of the exclusion of rights, but because of poverty. In very poor countries, people and governments lacked the resources to ensure universal access to education, health care and decent nutrition. The realization of these rights depended on international cooperation, money and financing. The world was rich and yet one billion people were suffering in extreme poverty and duress because of the failure of governments and super-rich individuals to fulfil their human rights obligations.

27. Mr. Sachs emphasized that the Sustainable Development Goals could be achieved with a decent budget. He illustrated this through a presentation,⁶ which reflected work that his team had done with the International Monetary Fund to calculate what it would cost to realize the Sustainable Development Goals in the 59 low-income developing countries. His team had concluded that these countries could not ensure education and health care for all and other basic needs on their own with the financial resources available to them. The countries would have to spend another 14 per cent of their gross domestic product just to achieve the basic Sustainable Development Goals, and that was beyond their budgetary means. He noted that \$300 billion per year was needed, and that amount was tiny compared with the size of the world economy. He concluded by saying that unless the money was found, the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights would not be realized.

28. Ms. Devandas Aguilar spoke as a representative of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures and in her capacity as the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons

⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

with disabilities. She welcomed Ms. Robinson's recognition of the role that the special procedures had been playing in connection with the development and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and mentioned that 12 thematic reports of the special procedures had supported the implementation of the Goals. The special procedures system saw every single Sustainable Development Goal as related to human rights. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals would not be advanced without a human rights-based approach, tackling discrimination and reaching those that are the furthest behind.

29. Ms. Devandas Aguilar stated that the ambitious 2030 Agenda created new commitments and responsibilities for the international community and States, but corresponding resources had not been allocated to ensure that the goals could be accomplished. The special procedures were addressing the process of resource mobilization, and the special procedures and human rights mechanisms in general were there to support States in taking a human rights-based approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. They aimed to provide technical assistance and recommendations to help States in developing the initiatives and policies needed to advance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

30. To illustrate this, Ms. Devandas Aguilar described how, as Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, she had written a specific report about how to develop disability-inclusive policies to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and about the elements that should be incorporated in any policy to make sure that persons with disabilities were not left behind. Accountability mechanisms needed to be in place at the international and local levels. Those persons who were left behind must be brought into and be able to participate in conversations.

31. For the Sustainable Development Goals to be a success for persons with disabilities and members of other disadvantaged groups, it was essential to measure progress and enhance ways to identify the beneficiary populations in order to assess if policies were having the desired effects. Data collection and disaggregation remained a big challenge in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for many disadvantaged groups. She concluded by reaffirming the great opportunity that the Sustainable Development Goals represented and cautioning that the opportunity would not be realized without greater resource mobilization and a human rights-based approach.

32. In the discussion, Ms. Robinson welcomed the practical activities of UNDP. She remained concerned by the divide between New York and Geneva and encouraged Governments to make better use in New York of their Geneva knowledge and expertise with the human rights mechanisms. She appealed to Governments covering the Human Rights Council to make a special effort to reach across to those reporting in a voluntary soft way to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and integrate the better and stronger universal periodic review approach.

33. Ms. Okai said that UNDP would be looking closely at the issue of inequality in 2019, notably in its Human Development Report. She observed that inequality pertained not only to developing countries, but also to developed countries and middle-income countries that still had marginalized populations. A new approach was needed that went beyond looking at inequality only from the perspective of rich-to-poor redistribution, and UNDP aimed to come up with proposals and policy recommendations.

34. Ms. Devandas Aguilar reiterated that the special procedures recognized that additional resources must be found to pay for the new responsibilities being attributed to States. She also stressed that even with resources, an inclusive and participatory human rights-based approach was needed for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals to be successful.

35. Mr. Sachs emphasized the importance of raising resources through taxation. He acknowledged that discrimination, neglect and marginalization were important issues and that poor governance was a problem in some places; in his view, however, poverty was the greatest real problem for many people and their governments in many countries. He insisted on the importance of identifying financial resources prior to the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in September 2019.

36. In the interventions from the floor,⁷ many delegations affirmed the importance of the rights-based approach to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, with some emphasizing the importance of ensuring a more coherent approach to the Goals and human rights and the need for and value of human rights input into the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Others affirmed the role of development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in the protection of human rights. Examples were offered of national initiatives integrating human rights with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

37. The meeting was described as a contribution to overcoming the divide between New York and Geneva. The potential for the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to address complementarity between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights was mentioned. The importance of participation by civil society, business, women and girls and other stakeholders in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals was raised. A few speakers addressed finance and resource mobilization for the 2030 Agenda, while others emphasized the importance of strengthening governance institutions.

38. In her concluding remarks, Ms. Devandas Aguilar stressed that the Sustainable Development Goals were a global agenda. While there was an important focus on the poorer countries, the 2030 Agenda applied to all countries, even the richest ones, which also needed to tackle the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. Mr. Sachs noted that four years into the 2030 Agenda, there had been no breakthrough on financing. In his view, if there was no breakthrough on financing the Sustainable Development Goals at the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in September 2019, the 2030 Agenda would not succeed.

40. Ms. Okai agreed with Mr. Sachs that financing was an issue that must be tackled differently. Official development assistance (ODA) could provide only a fraction of the money needed, and unless things were done differently and private sector money was unleashed or innovative financing initiatives were developed, the Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved.

41. In response to a question about how the work of human rights mechanisms could be better reflected in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, Ms. Robinson suggested that it would be possible to match the Sustainable Development Goals that were being considered by the high-level political forum with the relevant reports of the human rights mechanisms and the treaty bodies. The reports should be made available to those reporting or commenting on voluntary national reviews. To better link the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council, Ms. Robinson suggested holding in New York a joint meeting of the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council about reporting under the universal periodic review and under the high-level political forum. On the issue of capacity-building and resources, she agreed with much of what Mr. Sachs had said, and she highlighted the importance of responsible, accountable government and tackling corruption to stop the flow of money out of poor countries.

C. Building synergies between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation at the national level

42. Mr. Bambara delivered a presentation⁸ about the linkages between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation in Burkina Faso. He described two links between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. First, recommendations of human rights mechanisms helped to analyse key areas and identify groups in society that

⁷ European Union, Cuba, Japan, Bahamas, Georgia, Uruguay, China, Belgium, Egypt, World Bank, Franciscans International (joint statement), Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (joint statement) and Luxembourg. Some of the statements are available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

⁸ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

were being left behind. They contributed to policy measures, budget lines, monitoring measures and chains of responsibility in government. Second, Burkina Faso produced reports for the universal periodic review and treaty bodies that contained material useful for the voluntary national review, and it was using treaty body reporting as input for its upcoming review.

43. To illustrate the value of recommendations from human rights mechanisms for the Sustainable Development Goals, Mr. Bambara referred to Goal 4, which required that all children complete primary and secondary school by 2030. Recommendations from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2016 and the universal periodic review in 2018 would help Burkina Faso to achieve this Sustainable Development Goal.

44. The office in Burkina Faso that drafted reports to the treaty bodies endeavoured to ensure consistency with work on the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, efforts were being made to address the challenges of consultation with State and non-State actors, including the national human rights institution.

45. The national human rights action plan of Burkina Faso focused on Sustainable Development Goals and pursued better synergy between the human rights implementation plan, treaty body recommendations and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by merging and consolidating human rights recommendations and applying to them to relevant Goals and relevant targets of the Goals.

46. Ms. Grambye's presentation⁹ focused on lessons learned from the country-level experience of the Danish Institute for Human Rights and on the development of tools and methodologies for work on human rights and Sustainable Development Goals. She noted that the Danish Institute for Human Rights had been engaged with the 2030 Agenda from the outset, seeing the Agenda and human rights as potential mutual reinforcers. Ms. Grambye summarized the lessons learned as "the five Cs" – convergence, convenience, complementarity, coherence and consensus – five key elements that paved the way for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing human rights in an integrated manner.

47. Ms. Grambye illustrated the key element "convergence" using the online database of the Danish Institute for Human Rights,¹⁰ which linked articles of human rights conventions with targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The database showed that 92 per cent of the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals were linked to specific articles in international human rights instruments.

48. Ms. Grambye stated that the lesson learned that related to the key element "convenience" was that the substantial links between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals meant that reporting by States to human rights bodies could double as Sustainable Development Goal reporting. States could rely on high-quality analysis and recommendations received from the human rights monitoring mechanisms to guide Sustainable Development Goal implementation. To make this treasure trove easier to use, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, in collaboration with OHCHR, had developed a database based on an algorithm that made machine-readable the thousands of recommendations from the universal periodic review, treaty bodies and special procedures and linked them to specific targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, for specific countries and vulnerable groups.¹¹

49. Ms. Grambye noted that integrated approaches were convenient and enhanced efficiency and accountability. They involved the key element "complementarity" in that they combined a whole-of-government approach with a whole-of-society approach. The Danish Institute for Human Rights had also developed a platform to assist companies in understanding how their due diligence in human rights could contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁹ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/EvaGrambye.pdf.

¹⁰ See sdg.humanrights.dk.

¹¹ See sdgdata.humanrights.dk.

50. Ms. Grambye stated that, with regard to the key element “coherence”, combining human rights obligations with Sustainable Development Goal commitments provided a unique framework for the coherence of domestic policies and measures. It also allowed for a clearer understanding of the focus and gaps of the human rights mechanisms.

51. Ms. Grambye noted that, with regard to the key element “consensus”, the 2030 Agenda reflected global political consensus. The broad acceptance by States of universal periodic review recommendations constituted a strong consensual basis for action on human rights and on the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. Ms. López opened her presentation¹² by noting that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay considered the Sustainable Development Goals as closely linked to its work on human rights. She gave a detailed presentation of the Recommendations Monitoring System (SIMORE), the online database for following up on the recommendations of the human rights and sustainable development mechanisms. She stressed that SIMORE was more than a computer tool to assist with compliance with recommendations. It was also a human system, bringing together civil servants and providing access to civil society. SIMORE, launched in 2014, had facilitated the development of the national human rights plans of Paraguay.

53. Ms. López explained that all state institutions must have focal points to address human rights. This contributed to public policy taking account of recommendations received from the universal periodic review and other United Nations mechanisms. More than 40 institutions and 80 focal points in the central government and countrywide were linked to SIMORE, which allowed government officials to reflect human rights recommendations in their work, which in turn allowed for better and more timely human rights reporting. In Paraguay, non-governmental organizations engaged in human rights had access to SIMORE, which enabled them to monitor the implementation of recommendations. In 2017, SIMORE had been expanded to cover follow-up on treaty body recommendations and the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby making more visible the connection between human rights recommendations and the Goals.

54. Ms. López stated that Paraguay had helped to establish SIMORE for Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Uruguay; and the establishment of SIMORE for Argentina was pending. Paraguay had received requests for SIMORE from Costa Rica, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and other countries, as well as from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for use in the Commission’s country and thematic reports and other areas.

55. Ms. Patarachoke noted that in Thailand, the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights were looked at holistically, as they were both about the well-being of people. The focus on addressing gaps between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights should be at the country level. In the first year of the Sustainable Development Goals, Thailand nationalized the Goals in the country strategy for the next 20 years in the national economic and social development plan. Then Thailand localized them when the Cabinet designated the governor of each province to be a Sustainable Development Goal focal point responsible for receiving input from civil society, the private sector and academia.

56. Ms. Patarachoke stated that her responsibilities for the Sustainable Development Goal voluntary national reviews and for reporting to the treaty bodies placed her in a good position to link the reports. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand was also the focal point for the participation of that country in the universal periodic review. Since 2017, Thailand had prepared an annual Sustainable Development Goal voluntary national review primarily for its domestic value. An open-ended working group on multi-stakeholder engagement allowed political space for civil society to provide input to Sustainable Development Goal implementation. This reflected a bottom-up approach to the Goals.

57. Ms. Patarachoke noted that, in November 2017, the Government of Thailand had declared human rights to be a national agenda linked to sustainable development. The Government had established a national committee on advancing human rights and

¹² See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

sustainable development, which was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and had two subcommittees. Ms. Patarachoke stated that she chaired the subcommittee devoted to reporting obligations, which provided a platform to link reports of the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review. Thailand planned to assign the Sustainable Development Goal voluntary national review to this platform, and it also aimed to link its universal periodic review report with the Sustainable Development Goals in 2021, when it would undergo the universal periodic review.

58. Each of the panellists was asked whether coordination among those responsible for the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights was sufficient at the country level and whether States making recommendations under the universal periodic review that were accepted used development assistance sufficiently to support follow-up for their accepted recommendations.

59. Mr. Bambara responded that in Burkina Faso, there was dialogue between the mechanisms for coordination and follow-up on recommendations from the human rights mechanisms, as well as with the office responsible for the Sustainable Development Goals. Coordination mechanisms and procedures were being further developed. Burkina Faso benefited from the support of different partners and countries, including countries that had formulated universal periodic review recommendations for Burkina Faso.

60. Ms. Grambye observed that there appeared to be widespread coordination and willingness to coordinate at the national level. The challenge was to develop the right mechanisms. She emphasized the importance of sharing good practices to facilitate learning about coordination, including by making data easily available. She also mentioned that some unusual partnerships had developed at the country level, such as national human rights institutions working directly with national statistical offices. ODA was probably not used sufficiently for universal periodic review recommendations, but it was not the fix for either human rights or the Sustainable Development Goals. Other types of financing streams needed to be found.

61. Ms. López observed that SIMORE had shown that it was possible to determine which Sustainable Development Goals corresponded to which human rights recommendations. The universal periodic review had resulted in recommendations that had facilitated a national human rights plan. Resource needs required discussion throughout her country's region. The discussion would have to be grounded in human rights and make the case for more mechanisms, more funds and bigger budgets.

62. Ms. Patarachoke affirmed that better use could be made of the recommendations from the universal periodic review and treaty bodies in prioritizing actions under the Sustainable Development Goals. She noted that, in addition to the accepted universal periodic review recommendations, the recommendations that were not accepted were also important. While recognizing the importance of resources, she highlighted that knowledge was more important than money and that South-South cooperation was also very important.

63. In the interventions from the floor,¹³ additional speakers affirmed the synergies between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. There were further examples offered of national and international practice involving human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, and some speakers reiterated the importance of cooperation among stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels.

64. The efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to promote complementarity between the 2030 Agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 were highlighted. Other themes raised included greater harmonization of the reporting requirements for human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, support of the national human rights institutions for the realization of the Goals, the gap between the

¹³ Chile, Ecuador, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, United Nations Association of the United States of America, Thailand on behalf of ASEAN, Romania, Israel, Philippines, Sikh Human Rights Group, Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, Poland, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Czechia, Singapore and Sweden. Some of the statements are available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

requirements of internationally recognized rights of indigenous peoples and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the importance of youth engagement at the national level to connect human rights and the Goals.

65. Mr. Magazzeni highlighted four aspects of the discussion: (a) the importance of coordination at the national and international levels on Sustainable Development Goals and human rights; (b) better integration and alignment of Sustainable Development Goals and human rights efforts starting with the universal periodic review as an accepted part of the recommendations from the human rights mechanisms, but extending to the treaty bodies and other mechanisms; (c) greater coherence in the reporting in the Human Rights Council and in the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Economic and Social Council on issues relating to Sustainable Development Goals and human rights; and (d) leveraging ODA to better support ongoing developments at the country level.

D. Global partnerships to support the synergies between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation

66. Ms. Isler opened the fourth session by asking the panellists to address what it took for different stakeholders to have meaningful partnerships that contributed to the synergies between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals and what it took to create incentives for stakeholders to join forces to accelerate those synergies.

67. Mr. Ladd started by focusing on the elements of effective partnership. A strong partnership was something where people would come together because they had a common objective or at least mutually compatible objectives. This meant they could “co-create” and then “co-govern” a relationship that produced a positive outcome in that direction. Partnership required making a visible and identifiable contribution, which could be money, political will or effort, and taking something out of the partnership that contributed to the common goal. It was important to measure whether that was happening, and there was a need for concrete indicators or at least assessments about whether the partnership was working.

68. Mr. Ladd spoke of the latest report of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, entitled *Policy Information for Transformative Change*, as the initial contribution of the Institute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The conclusion of the report was that innovations that had driven transformative change towards development were those that were grounded in universal and rights-based approaches, that embedded economic policies and activities in social and environmental norms and that fostered truly participatory decision-making processes.

69. Mr. Ladd concluded by emphasizing the importance from a research perspective of having disaggregated data on who was being left behind. This determined how much guidance could be provided to countries, groups, society and governments to put in place policies that could address the situation of those being left behind. There should be more investment, more effort and more focus on obtaining strong disaggregated data sets that allowed for research, advocacy and policy development that would prevent people from being left behind.

70. In her presentation,¹⁴ Ms. Cerri introduced the World Business Council for Sustainable Development as a membership organization that brought together about 200 multinational companies to tackle sustainability challenges that they were unable to tackle individually. This global coalition of leading businesses worked to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world where sustainable business was more successful. Business had a role to play, with opportunities for it to capture and with a responsibility to generate solutions to the societal and environmental challenges laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be realized without meaningful business participation, which was an engine of economic growth and employment, a driver of technology and innovation, and a source of finance. The Guiding Principles on Business

¹⁴ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/Ms.KitrhonaCerri.pdf.

and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework were a key framework for companies to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal agenda.

71. Ms. Cerri spoke of four drivers that were motivating business responses to human rights and noted that what they had in common was that they were risk-based approaches. Having a risk-based motivator could sometimes cause companies to be inward-looking and could act as a barrier to engaging with the partners and supporters necessary to make a real transformative impact on the Sustainable Development Goals.

72. Ms. Cerri noted that there was a real need for greater acceptance of the fact that tackling human rights issues made a positive contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal agenda. To illustrate this, Ms. Cerri used two examples, one being related to forced labour in the Thai fishing industry and the other being related to land rights in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, both examples being drawn from *The Human Rights Opportunity: 15 Real-life Cases of How Business Is Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals by Putting People First*, which had been published jointly by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the non-governmental organization Shift. The examples demonstrated that embedding respect for human rights in companies’ operations and, more importantly, in their supply chains was an effective way to secure business continuity and to build trusting relationships with the communities and stakeholders that business relied upon. There was a strong business case for these actions and, by doing this, companies had the potential to break down significant barriers to development and to positively impact the Sustainable Development Goals.

73. Ms. Ameline described how the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had sought to ensure that human rights had been brought to bear on the Sustainable Development Goals from the beginning. The Committee had managed to ensure that it would be the Goal 5 evaluator and engaged in mainstream inclusion of women in the Goals. The first element of the transformation of society was equality between men and women, which was a precondition. It was absolutely essential that all States and all partners considered equality between men and women to be the strategic investment of the highest priority. This required accelerating legislative adaptation. It also required regional approaches that ensured that women had greater visibility in political leadership, and it required effective genuine convergence between the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals.

74. Ms. Ameline noted that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was not just a binding legal mechanism but also a road map for the future. She concluded by saying that there could not be sustainable development without placing priority on promoting the rights of women.

75. Mr. Tiwana emphasized that it was essential to create enabling conditions for partnerships. When looking at the rubric of partnerships and placing people at the centre of those partnerships, conditions were needed throughout the world that allowed people to freely organize, to freely communicate with each other and to freely connect to shape the political and social structures around them.

76. Mr. Tiwana stated that civic space must be created, which was premised on the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly. According to research conducted by CIVICUS, only 4 per cent of the world’s population enjoyed these freedoms in a fully adequate way. If progress on the 2030 Agenda was to be made, there needed to be more focus on creating enabling conditions for the participation of people and civil society organizations.

77. Mr. d’Ovidio welcomed the fact that decent work and economic growth were included as one of the Sustainable Development Goals. He described the core elements of the human rights framework for Goal 8 as the prevention of child and forced labour, non-discrimination and the freedoms of association and collective bargaining. Unless partnerships were put together, there was no way that this very challenging and ambitious Sustainable Development Goal could be realized.

78. Mr. d'Ovidio emphasized the importance of partnership in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. He illustrated that with target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was about eliminating modern slavery, forced labour, child trafficking and child labour. After describing the challenges of meeting that target, he spoke about Alliance 8.7, the global partnership aimed at driving innovation, accelerating action, leveraging resources, strengthening research and sharing the knowledge that was generated.

79. Ms. Murabit observed that, when talking about partnership, there always seemed to be a reinventing of the wheel or the discussion was without due recognition of the fact that many partnerships already existed. There were many activists, leaders and other people who had been working on the Sustainable Development Goals for their whole lives, and in many of the discussions about partnerships, those local leaders and local voices were being left behind. She emphasized that it would be almost impossible to translate many of the high-level discussions, like the current one, into change on the ground unless those discussions were expanded to include the people and leaders on the ground doing the work day in, day out. She gave an example of how her own experience in Libya, from 2005 to 2015, had confirmed this. She stressed that if there was to be legitimacy about human rights, about sustainable development and about who or what was being served, then questions needed to be asked about who was not in the room when programme decisions were being made. Voices of local leaders needed to be recognized and amplified.

80. In the interventions from the floor,¹⁵ several speakers welcomed the meeting and expressed appreciation for the information shared about national experiences and online resources. Previous statements about the synergies between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals were echoed. Other issues raised included partnerships, stakeholder engagement and national initiatives for integrating human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation. The importance of gender equality and inclusive high-quality education was also highlighted. The national experiences that were mentioned included a Sustainable Development Goal “tracker” to collate and synthesize data on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with scope for integrating human rights data and a national coordination council for sustainable development under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister and including the national commissioner for human rights.

81. It was affirmed that United Nations technical assistance for Sustainable Development Goal implementation should be informed by international human rights norms, and there was a call for measures to enable joint planning, implementing and reporting for human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. Other speakers emphasized the need to connect the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations with the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and to include representatives of indigenous peoples in discussions about the 2030 Agenda.

E. Bringing the human rights narrative to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

82. In the closing session, Ms. Barthelemy and Ms. Hicks drew out some of the main threads of the day, key messages for bringing the human rights narrative to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and follow-up to the intersessional meeting.

83. Ms. Barthelemy emphasized the breadth of agreement in the room that the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights were two sides of the same coin. She noted that there was broad agreement that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was not on track and that it was worrisome that it was lagging on issues such as climate change, food security and conflict, all of which had long-term impacts. She noted the overall sense that linking efforts to protect and promote human rights with the efforts to

¹⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Cabo Verde, Bangladesh, Greece, Norway, Azerbaijan, Finland, Malta, UPR Info, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, Mexico and Association of World Citizens. Some of the statements are available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

achieve the Sustainable Development Goals would be a very powerful way to accelerate progress.

84. Ms. Barthelemy noted the often expressed feeling that there was a gap between the United Nations communities in Geneva and New York. She suggested that the gap that existed between those two communities was a gap between the development and human rights communities that extended beyond the United Nations. When the issue of human rights was raised in New York, there was some hesitation to take it up in the forums that dealt with development. This could perhaps be attributed to the tone and language used. Greater emphasis on the treaty bodies and universal periodic review making recommendations and mobilizing support for countries to implement human rights and Sustainable Development Goals might result in a greater willingness to discuss human rights. In the high-level political forum on sustainable development, civil society and other stakeholders had important roles, which included the organization of one session.

85. Speaking of the voluntary national reviews, Ms. Barthelemy recalled Ms. Robinson's assessments that they were weak and that the weakness of accountability for the 2030 Agenda might hinder its implementation. She noted that when the voluntary national reviews were created, they came as an unexpected achievement, given that the negotiations were difficult and that the Sustainable Development Goals were not treaty commitments. The reviews were voluntary, but they were also constructive, and their main purpose was to allow exchanges of experience and the building of partnerships.

86. With over a hundred countries having conducted voluntary national reviews, there was clearly scope for improving the fulfilment of that purpose. The reviews were less systematic than the universal periodic review and had no recommendations. Nonetheless the voluntary national review helped to advance implementation by focusing the State's attention on what was being done at the national level. Ms. Barthelemy also mentioned work being carried out to improve the voluntary national reviews. She noted that the President of the Economic and Social Council was introducing some improvements already in 2019. There would be another opportunity when the high-level political forum on sustainable development was reviewed in 2020. Nonetheless, it was important to also use the universal periodic review to examine the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, because of its more systematic character. Ultimately it might be fine to have different approaches in the universal periodic review and voluntary national review processes.

87. Ms. Barthelemy emphasized that it was very important to make sure that the summary report of the intersessional meeting, which would be a Human Rights Council contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, received visibility and attention in New York. This would be raised with the President of the Economic and Social Council so that the programme had a space in July where the report could be presented.

88. Ms. Hicks outlined five key messages from the meeting: (a) human rights were crucial to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; (b) there were concrete suggestions for how to bridge the divide between New York and Geneva; (c) it was important to take full advantage of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to demonstrate the links between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals; (d) the role of partnerships to support Sustainable Development Goal implementation should be broadened, including by bringing in those who were most affected by the Sustainable Development Goals, but shrinking civil space was an obstacle to this; and (e) efforts must be accelerated in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Human rights were part of the solution, not a problem, in terms of fully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

89. The Rapporteur summarized some key themes and messages of the meeting, which are reflected below in the conclusions and key messages.¹⁶

¹⁶ His summary is available online at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SDGS/2030/Mr.MichaelO_Flaherty.pdf.

III. Conclusions and key messages

90. The meeting examined numerous aspects of the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. Many evidence-based examples illustrated that the relationship was profound and indivisible. There was a widespread sense that the Sustainable Development Goals could only be realized through a human rights-based approach to their implementation at the local, national, regional and global levels. Strengthening synergies between the 2030 Agenda and human rights would also ensure better coherence between political commitments and legal obligations.

91. Human rights principles, including non-discrimination, participation and accountability, must inform Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, the human rights treaty bodies and the special procedures, could make valuable contributions to informing policy and planning for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, particularly at the national and local levels. The reports and recommendations of human rights mechanisms should inform voluntary national reviews on Sustainable Development Goal implementation both in their preparation at the national level and in their delivery and consideration at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Human rights mechanisms should continue to be sensitive to the Sustainable Development Goals in their work.

92. There was widespread concern that the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda was lagging. Insufficient resource mobilization, poor governance, corruption and lack of accountability were among the causes mentioned that needed to be addressed urgently. It was also emphasized that the Sustainable Development Goals were a global project that placed demands on every Member State. Additional resources must be generated from a variety of sources, which included increased ODA, the business and financial sectors, and taxation. It was suggested that the human rights basis of the 2030 Agenda required that additional resources be made available for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Improvements to governance and combating corruption more effectively could also provide substantial additional resources for the Sustainable Development Goals. The human rights-based approach was central to better governance.

93. Sharing knowledge and experience relating to human rights-based Sustainable Development Goal implementation between countries and within regions, including through South-South cooperation, was important. There was a rich body of knowledge and experience to draw on, including in the context of regional arrangements in ASEAN and the European Union. A variety of innovative data platforms, institutional arrangements and practices existed that supported the synergies between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national, regional and international levels. The national data platform and related experience of one State had been made available to and adopted by other States. Other national unified human rights platforms, known as national monitoring reporting frameworks, also offered potential to exploit synergies between the human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation processes.

94. There were many examples of connections being made between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation planning in Member States, including in generic and thematic national human rights action plans and in development cooperation. Experience showed that there were numerous synergies that, in addition to contributing to better human rights and Sustainable Development Goal implementation, could also reduce the human rights reporting burden on States and improve voluntary national reviews in the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The importance of cross-governmental and cross-societal engagement to the realization of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals was repeatedly mentioned, as was the importance of support at the highest level of government.

95. The Sustainable Development Goals are about empowerment and meaningful partnerships. Rights-holders were the primary beneficiaries of development, and they must be at the heart of efforts to “leave no one behind”. Space must be made for people at the grass-roots level and for youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other marginalized and vulnerable persons and communities to be active participants in the realization of Sustainable Development Goals. It was important to draw on their experience to learn what does and does not work.

96. Partnerships among governments, the United Nations and other international organizations, civil society and business were necessary for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Strong partnerships required clear common objectives, visible and identifiable contributions, and periodic assessments of whether the partnership was working. To be able to make its essential contribution, civil society must enjoy freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, and civic space must be protected.

97. United Nations support for Sustainable Development Goal implementation at the country level must be human rights-based. National human rights institutions had a crucial role to play in the delivery of all Sustainable Development Goals, and there was room for their greater engagement. Business, including small and medium-sized enterprises, also had important roles, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provided the foundation for human rights-based engagement by business with the 2030 Agenda.

98. Data collection, disaggregation and analysis were very important for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, particularly for ensuring that the challenges faced by the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are clearly identified and addressed. This need was being met in some countries by partnerships between national human rights institutions and national statistical bodies.

99. An immediate task that emerged from the meeting was how to further enhance the synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. Efforts must be made to bridge the gap between the human rights community in Geneva and the development community in New York. Suggestions for doing that included the delivery of strong human rights messages at the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in July 2019; ensuring that the programme of the high-level political forum had a space for the presentation of the present summary report; and convening a joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council to explore complementarity between the universal periodic review and the voluntary national review mechanisms.

100. More generally, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should increasingly be integrated in the universal periodic review, and the human rights treaty bodies and special procedures should continue to be sensitive to the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States and other stakeholders must make better use of the universal periodic review outcomes and reports of the treaty bodies and the special procedures to guide Sustainable Development Goal implementation planning, follow-up and reporting, including in the preparation and consideration of voluntary national reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Finally, it was important that States and other stakeholders continue to share experience and good practices in integrating and aligning the implementation of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and international levels.
