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## Human Rights Council

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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 second 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 of the second meeting, held on 3 December 2019.

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\* The present report was submitted after the deadline as a result of consultations with the Member State.

## I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 37/24, the Human Rights Council held the second of the two intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 3 December 2019. Inspired by the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (General Assembly resolution 74/4), the theme of the meeting was “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. The programme of the meeting consisted of four sessions.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Frank Tressler Zamorano, chaired the meeting. The President of the Human Rights Council, Coly Seck, made brief opening remarks, and the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mona Juul, delivered a video message. The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore, gave her assessment of the promise and challenges of the 2030 Agenda. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reform, Jens Wandel, gave an opening statement focusing on the contribution of the reform of the United Nations development system to accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The topic of the second session was “Reflections and conversation on human rights and accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. The opening panel comprised five panellists: Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs and Director of the Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs at The New School and member of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy; Najat Maalla M’jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; Deprose Muchena, Regional Director for Southern Africa at Amnesty International; Sima Samar, Special Envoy of the President of Afghanistan and State Minister for Human Rights and International Relations; and Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. Building on the pledge in the political declaration of the high-level political forum, the panel focused on the vision of leaving no one behind and on how promoting and protecting human rights could accelerate the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Director of the SDG Lab at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Nadia Isler, moderated the discussion. Representatives of national Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations spoke about their experiences and practices.

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

5. The topic of the third session was human rights and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. It consisted of an examination of specific human rights policies, practices, mechanisms and commitments at the country level, including at the subnational level, that contributed to accelerating delivery and implementation of the Goals, and the role played by the United Nations as it underwent reform. The panel comprised Brian Williams, Resident Coordinator in Albania; María Victoria González-Román, Ambassador of the 2030 Agenda for the Government of Spain; Eva Grambye, Deputy Executive Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights; Roberto Morales Sáenz, Development Analyst at the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica; and George Morara, Commissioner and Vice Chairperson of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. The panellists described how their respective countries and organizations were building on the synergies between human rights and implementation of the Goals at the national level. The Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Geneva, Monica Ferro, moderated the discussion. Participants shared their national experiences and practices.

6. The topic of the closing session was building on the pledges of the political declaration of the high-level-political forum. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reform and Peggy Hicks, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Programme.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Programme.pdf).

Right to Development Division at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), shared their takeaways from the meeting and identified key messages and areas for follow-up for the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

## II. Summary of proceedings

### A. Opening session

7. The Chair opened the discussion by outlining the objectives of the meeting, the modalities and the format. He recalled the outcomes of the first intersessional meeting (see A/HRC/40/34), on which the second meeting would build.<sup>2</sup> The present summary report of the meeting would feed into discussions at the high-level political forum in 2020.

8. In his opening remarks, the President of the Human Rights Council recalled the success of the first intersessional meeting.<sup>3</sup> The political declaration of the high-level political forum called for accelerated action at all levels, including the involvement of all stakeholders, whether public or private, to leave no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A concerted effort was therefore required to come up with lasting solutions and fill the systemic gaps in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. He recalled that the Human Rights Council had adopted 42 resolutions that referred specifically to the Sustainable Development Goals. Many focused on specific groups of rights holders, such as girls and women, children, young people, workers, human rights defenders, indigenous peoples, displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. The resolutions made it clear that sustainable development was more than economic growth; it was an economic, social, cultural, environmental and political process, which was linked to the enjoyment of all human rights without distinction of any kind.

10. The President of the Economic and Social Council delivered a video message.<sup>4</sup> She expressed support for the meeting, which was dedicated to strengthening cooperation and dialogue on human rights and the 2030 Agenda. Human rights and sustainable development were inseparable, and the fundamental principle of the 2030 Agenda – to leave no one behind – struck at the very core of human rights, namely non-discrimination, equal rights and dignity. Respecting human rights was a major step in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. She urged the participants at the meeting to keep in mind those who were set to benefit from their efforts. Behind every piece of data and information and every target and indicator were human beings with aspirations, hopes and human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. She noted the shortfall in achieving the Goals and the need to work together to formulate a way forward that was driven by innovative and practical steps to bring about the desired change. Time was running out in a race that they could not afford to lose.

12. The Economic and Social Council stood ready to work with others to disseminate the recommendations from the intersessional meeting, help guide discussions in New York and across the regions, and promote uptake and implementation at the national level. The report of the intersessional meeting would provide important input for the high-level political forum, and the Economic and Social Council would make good use of it. She reiterated the importance of building on and strengthening existing collaboration between the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council, and she committed to working with all Member States to map out a decade of action that would ensure success.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/ConceptNote.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/ConceptNote.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Coly\\_Seck\\_President\\_HRC.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Coly_Seck_President_HRC.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Mona\\_Juul.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Mona_Juul.pdf).

13. The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights observed that no country was yet on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.<sup>5</sup> Yet the Goals were attainable, and the 2030 Agenda provided a detailed, practical road map to a destination that the world could not afford to miss. The high-level political forum in 2019 had demanded accelerated action for implementation of the Goals. Human rights were accelerators, and the Goals were imbued with rights. For the coming decade, the Goals should be the operational plan of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for delivery of all human rights for all people in all places, inclusively and universally. They were the international community's compact to leave no one behind.

14. To accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations human rights system must step up its engagement through innovation, integration, generation, disaggregation and participation. On innovation, the system's recommendations, including under the universal periodic review, must be better positioned as leverage points for full delivery of rights at the national, regional and international levels. On integration, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms must pursue a deep and visionary partnership with global efforts for climate action. The economies of all nations, the civil, political, social and cultural development of every State and the rights of all people – and future generations – hung in the balance.

15. The human rights system must help generate a bold and courageous human rights paradigm for economic transformation to address inequalities and develop a more sustainable economy. The principle of leaving no one behind demanded disaggregation of data to identify progress for those who were excluded or discriminated against.

16. The human rights system needed to ensure the participation of rights holders, elevating people from protestors to partners, which was critical to the success of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The role of civil society must be protected and enhanced for participation to flourish. In the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, an acceleration in efforts to position rights at the intersections between peace, prosperity and planet would place people at its heart, which would be truly transformative.

17. The Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Reform explained that the aim of the Secretary-General's ambitious reform of the United Nations was to create a more effective organization to ensure a global response that addressed the root causes of conflict and integrated peace, sustainable development and human rights in a holistic way, from conception to execution.<sup>6</sup>

18. Human rights underpinned the Sustainable Development Goals, and a fundamental human rights principle of non-discrimination and equality was captured in the objective to leave no one behind. The Goals were a framework for action, which provided a new opportunity to operationalize human rights standards at all levels for all actors. Accepting the Goals as a global language therefore provided a set of global standards for progress and impact and confronted the lack of real action in the area of human rights.

19. The managerial and substantive elements of the reform were enabling the United Nations system to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda more effectively. Significant structural changes had been made to improve efficiencies, make the peace and security pillar less fragmented and reposition the system of resident coordinators within the United Nations to make the function more strategic with a view to ensuring more integrated approaches at the country level.

20. The Secretary-General had committed to achieving gender balance throughout the organization, since gender equality was a sine qua non of sustainable development and an indispensable outcome of it. The new country-level United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework was a strong planning instrument to organize an effective United Nations response to human rights needs and challenges within the overall framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Kate\\_Gilmore.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Kate_Gilmore.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Jens\\_Wandel.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Jens_Wandel.pdf).

21. The publicly available analytical platforms that directly linked human rights conventions with the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets and indicators could infuse the universal periodic review with new content. Combining the review recommendations with the Cooperation Framework would give country teams a more effective platform for promoting human rights. The internal system-wide coordination mechanisms of the United Nations had created new opportunities to bring human rights, the principle of leaving no one behind and the Sustainable Development Goals closer together.

22. In conclusion, he said that at the core of the reform was the aim of significantly lifting the capacity of the United Nations system to meet the requirements and the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals and thereby increase the relevance of the United Nations and its capacity to promote human rights globally.

23. The Chair concluded the opening session by highlighting the opportunities raised by the speakers for accelerating implementation of the Goals through stronger synergies with human rights.

## **B. Reflections and conversation on human rights and accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

24. The Director of the SDG Lab opened the second session by asking the five panellists how they saw the promotion and protection of human rights as an accelerator for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs recalled that the 2030 Agenda put sustainable development at the centre of the work of the United Nations. The Agenda was grounded in human rights, and promotion of sustainable development was the best investment for peaceful and prosperous societies. The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and human rights called for a more coherent approach across the various pillars of the United Nations, covering peace, development and human rights. There was much in common between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights obligations. For instance, a number of economic, social and cultural rights were included as Goals, and Goal 16 covered several dimensions of civil and political rights.

26. She stressed the importance of the fact that the political declaration of the high-level political forum in September 2019 had been adopted unanimously. In the declaration, the Member States had stressed their unanimous resolve to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Notwithstanding considerable progress in the implementation of the Goals, the world was not on track to achieve them by 2030. Urgent action therefore needed to be taken by Member States and the United Nations.

27. Referring to the 10 cross-cutting areas of action in the political declaration, she said that the commitment to leave no one behind was clearly an entry point for promoting human rights, and included an explicit commitment to targeted and accelerated action to remove all legal, social and economic barriers to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Strengthening institutions to make them more effective and accountable was important to empower marginalized people to claim their rights, and ensuring more participatory and representative decision-making processes was key to building trust and leaving no one behind. People must be at the centre of all action.

28. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children noted that violence against children was a worldwide problem. All forms of violence and underlying factors needed to be tackled, a task that required all 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be addressed. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Goals were interlinked and indivisible. It was important to switch to a systemic and comprehensive child rights-based and gender-based approach to ensure greater protection and empowerment of children.

29. She added that a human rights-based and child rights-based approach would accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: if children were considered as actors and drivers of change, projects would be more effective, particularly at the grass-roots level. Clear accountability regarding who was doing what was essential to a successful multi-stakeholder approach.

30. Ms. Samar expressed her conviction that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in any country contributed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights in all countries. Coming from a country that had experienced over 40 years of conflict and poverty, she noted that conflict increased poverty and insecurity and posed a big challenge to the implementation of the Goals. Discrimination, poverty, inequality and corruption contributed to the continuation of conflict.

31. Countries in conflict needed particular attention. The violation of human rights had caused conflict, and conflict in turn obstructed development. The Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved where conflicts continued. The implementation of the Goals, with an inclusive human rights-based approach, would help countries to promote good governance and sustainable peace.

32. She concluded by noting that failure to eliminate all forms of violence against women would be an obstacle to promoting equality and to fully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of human rights.

33. Mr. Muchena observed that while at the international level everybody believed that human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals were two sides of the same coin, there was no such agreement at the country level, judging from how some States reacted to human rights movements. Many countries spoke about embracing human rights but did not embrace human rights defenders. Rhetoric needed to be translated into action.

34. In order to move forward with the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, inequality needed to be addressed. Six of the seven poorest sub-Saharan countries were in the Southern Africa region. Those countries were rich but unequal, and as economies grew, the benefits needed to be shared inclusively. While he saw no strong vision or imagination within the region to decisively tackle inequality, he hoped that the present moment of dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda would be the start of such change.

35. Ms. Fukuda-Parr asserted that human rights were essential for promoting the transformative agenda, which was a core aspiration of the 2030 Agenda. Business as usual would not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Notwithstanding enormous progress, the latest Global Sustainable Development Report had highlighted enduring poverty and unprecedented levels of inequality, and indicated that the world was at a tipping point with respect to the global climate change and biodiversity loss.<sup>7</sup> Accelerating the pace of progress in poverty reduction and changing course on climate change and inequality were urgent challenges. Human rights principles and human rights activism, actors and processes were essential to accelerating the implementation of the transformative 2030 Agenda.

36. The 2030 Agenda highlighted the need for a heavy dose of social protection, macroeconomic policies that were pro-poor, and progressive taxation with institutional mechanisms for participation and the development of income-generating productive sectors.

37. In analysing the voluntary national reviews submitted in 2017 and 2018, the Committee for Development Policy had found that the objective of leaving no one behind had been mentioned largely rhetorically, as the strategy for how to actually go about achieving that objective was vague in most cases. Of the various strategies relevant to leaving no one behind, most countries had emphasized social protection, but had neglected the important role of macroeconomic policies in productive sectors for achieving the Goals. In most reviews, there was no mention of the commitment to reach the furthest behind first, or the need to avoid pushing anyone behind.

38. During the moderated exchange with the panel, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs observed that much more could be done using the high-level political forum to integrate efforts to realize human rights and implement the 2030 Agenda. As the forum moved into its second cycle (2020–2024), what really mattered was implementation and tangible delivery for the people. She commended

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<sup>7</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, (United Nations, New York, 2019).

the Human Rights Council for holding the intersessional meetings as a way to promote knowledge and exchange with the forum. In July 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had presented the Council's contribution to the forum, an exchange of knowledge that was vital and must be continued.

39. Member States should make better use of the reporting processes in which they were involved. For example, the universal periodic review could help with the preparation of the voluntary national reviews and vice versa. Although the objectives and modalities of the two reviews were different, they had many complementarities. The Secretary-General, in his guidelines for voluntary national reviews, explicitly encouraged States to coordinate reporting processes, including for human rights.<sup>8</sup>

40. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children noted the importance of moving from a reactive to a proactive approach in breaking down silos and identifying incentives for cross-sectoral collaboration, not only in terms of child protection but also in other areas. A human rights-based approach meant having the population at the centre of policy, which required a reliable picture of the national and grass-roots levels. In order not to leave anyone behind, disaggregated data was required to determine who was at risk and therefore who needed to be reached. It was useful to have a repository of all of the data collected by many actors, to avoid repetition and ensure a more comprehensive information system.

41. She emphasized the importance of indicators and accountability mechanisms and noted the need for a more comprehensive assessment of exactly what was to be measured.

42. Addressing systemic challenges in Afghanistan, Ms. Samar spoke about the work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. She highlighted the importance of justice and accountability, both in her country and in every other country. Human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals should be a reality for people on the ground and not just paper exercises in the universal periodic review and voluntary national review mechanisms, as people had the right to live with dignity.

43. Ms. Fukuda-Parr reiterated that the human rights principles of equality and participation were at the core of the transformative agenda. Equality must be embedded in macroeconomic policy and in policies for productive employment creation. Embedding human rights principles into an economic and social development model was essential to a transformative agenda.

44. Mr. Muchena called for civil society, Governments and institutions to come together to reflect the growing convergence of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. As an example of that convergence, he referred to a case in Eswatini in which a judge had relied on the Goals in his refusal to grant an eviction order. Unfortunately, that case was not well known outside Eswatini.

45. In the interventions from the floor,<sup>9</sup> several delegations welcomed the fact that the second intersessional meeting was being held and reaffirmed the indivisible and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The principle of leaving no one behind was mentioned frequently as a guiding principle to realize the 2030 Agenda. Encouragement and commitment were expressed with respect to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

46. Numerous States affirmed the value of integrating the relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals into policies, plans and activities, and spoke

<sup>8</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2019 Edition* (New York, 2018), annex II.

<sup>9</sup> Azerbaijan on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, European Union, Colombia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Philippines, Angola on behalf of the Group of African States, Pakistan, Australia, India, Montenegro, China, South Africa, Bahamas, Sweden, Egypt, Netherlands, Norway, Council of Europe, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Child Rights Connect and Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII made statements. Some of the statements are available at [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx).

about measures that they were taking to that effect at the national level and in their international development cooperation. Examples of such measures included national workshops and the exploration of a “systems change” approach to the Goals.

47. The centrality of the right to development to the 2030 Agenda was highlighted, as was the value of international and regional cooperation and the need to mobilize financial and other resources, including from the private sector. Some delegations spoke about the need for systematic collection and analysis of disaggregated data. United Nations reform was recognized as being important for more effective promotion and protection of human rights and realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

48. Among the specific themes mentioned were the importance of accountability for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals; empowerment and the rights of women and girls; the indivisibility and interdependence of rights; democracy, the rule of law and good governance; the essential role of civil society and the importance of protecting civic space; the need to address inequality within and between States; the need for economic reforms; the threat to human rights and the Goals from climate change and natural disasters; the importance of the peaceful settlement of conflict to realizing the Goals; and child rights and the contribution of children to efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

49. Mr. Muchena expressed agreement with the delegation of South Africa on the importance of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The response to climate change required recognition of inequality between and within countries. In that connection, it was important to underscore the greater responsibility of wealthy industrialized countries in particular.

50. In response to a question from the delegation of the Bahamas about rights-based monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and leveraging the universal periodic review to monitor activities linked to climate change, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs stated that some countries had already reported in their voluntary national reviews on the human rights standards embedded in their constitution or legislation.

51. In that regard, Ms. Samar said that a particularly helpful mechanism was an independent national human rights institution with a sufficient budget and a clear mandate to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. She suggested that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or another in-country United Nations agency could act as an accountability mechanism to support Governments as they report on implementation of the Goals in their voluntary national reviews.

52. In response to a question from the delegation of Sweden about development cooperation and the human rights-based approach, Ms. Fukuda-Parr said that bilateral cooperation could play an enormous role in empowering local actors to monitor and participate in implementation. She highlighted the critical issue of data and the need to support national statistical offices in the area of data disaggregation, as there was no substitute for the work of the national statistical offices.

53. In response to a question from Child Rights Connect about enhancing child participation, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children recalled that child participation was a fundamental principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that systemic arrangements needed to be made to consult children on implementation, monitoring, policy and programme design.

### **C. Human rights and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level**

54. The focus of the third session was to highlight specific experiences of linking the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights policies, practices, mechanisms and commitments at the country level. Ms. Ferro asked each of the panellists to share their national experiences.

55. Mr. Williams highlighted two overarching points. First, everything that the United Nations did at the country level in Albania was aimed at providing help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and concerned human rights. Those two objectives were



integrally linked. Second, the United Nations development system reform had been helpful in strengthening its ability to promote human rights and the Goals at the country level.

56. He proceeded to illustrate those points with examples from his experience with the United Nations in Albania. The first example concerned the United Nations country team's ability to respond quickly to a risk of contentious anti-defamation legislation being adopted to regulate the news sector and web news services. As full-time Resident Coordinator, he had been able to reach out to OHCHR and respond much more quickly than would have been previously possible. The example illustrated cooperation with the United Nations human rights system and showed how repositioning had allowed an even more timely and effective response to specific issues when they arose.

57. The second example concerned the universal periodic review and the tremendous value that it offered. The United Nations ran sessions in Albania for the Government to prepare for its review. In addition, UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) had helped the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a web platform that tracked recommendations made under the universal periodic review and other processes such as reviews under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That platform allowed civil society, the press, parliament and others to view what recommendations had been made and the status of the response to them.

58. The third example concerned the issue of financing. It was important for resources to be available to establish human rights programmes that really made a difference in people's lives. With respect to Goal 10, on reducing inequality, or Goal 5, on gender equality, progress would be made only if finances for well-resourced programmes were available. In that respect, the reforms to the United Nations development system were making a difference by empowering Resident Coordinators to focus on raising resources for the entire United Nations family and by encouraging development partners to support pooled financing and joint financing. He stressed the value of pooled funding and the importance of partners supporting it without earmarking.

59. His fourth example concerned the Albanian national statistical office and the importance of disaggregated data to reach those left behind. He presented ongoing efforts by OHCHR to support collaboration in Albania between the national human rights institution and the national Statistical office while encouraging the independence of the two institutions.

60. Ms. González-Román noted that the high-level political forum in September 2019 had been particularly important in terms of political guidance, including the call in the political declaration to do more and faster.<sup>10</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 16 was vital and must be further institutionalized to accelerate progress, through the inclusion of its targets in national and local planning and in budgeting, monitoring and reporting systems.

61. Spain had aligned the 168 recommendations made in its 2015 universal periodic review with the Sustainable Development Goals, which had helped to identify areas that required priority action from the Government and Parliament. The practice of aligning the review recommendations with the Goals and national plans could be extended to the recommendations of other human rights mechanisms, including the mechanisms of the Council of Europe.

62. Spain had integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its national planning and public policies. It had approved a national action plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in June 2018 and had presented a voluntary national review at the high-level political forum in 2018. It had taken a "whole-of-society" approach to supporting the action plan, with regional and local authorities playing a critical role in implementing and achieving the Goals. Stakeholders needed to work together in a more coherent and coordinated way to achieve the Goals.

63. Ms. Grambye observed that discussion of country-level best practices in the Human Rights Council and in the high-level political forum was paramount to success in realizing

<sup>10</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Maria\\_Victoria\\_Gonzalez-Roman.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Maria_Victoria_Gonzalez-Roman.pdf).

the pledge to leave no one behind.<sup>11</sup> Analysis by the Danish Institute for Human Rights in 2015 had shown that more than 90 per cent of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals directly reflected elements of international human rights and labour standards. That overwhelming convergence suggested that human rights reporting and recommendations were highly relevant to guide implementation of the Goals and that the Goals indicator framework would produce human rights relevant data.

64. Her first key message, therefore, was that by linking up the Sustainable Development Goals, which were non-binding in nature, with international human rights and labour standards, which were binding, and by using the available data and information, it was possible to ensure that implementation of the Goals increased the realization of human rights.

65. Her second key message was that the human rights system was emerging as an accountability mechanism for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. One approach to integrating human rights data into Goals planning and policy was to integrate human rights into voluntary national reviews. According to the Danish Institute's analysis, more than 80 per cent of the voluntary national reviews presented in 2019 had referred to human rights.

66. Another approach was to involve national human rights institutions in Goals planning and implementation. National human rights institutions often collected important quantitative and qualitative data and were therefore important partners in the reporting and planning process. She described an integrated planning approach undertaken by Danish parliamentarians in a cross-party Sustainable Development Goals network supported by an expert body. Her third key message was thus that the human rights system thus provided data and qualitative information that could guide implementation of the Goals and accountability at the national level.

67. Mr. Morales Sáenz focused his presentation on the implementation in Costa Rica of the Sustainable Development Goals in national planning and in specific public policies, and how that implementation was supported and monitored across government at all levels.<sup>12</sup> The focus in Costa Rica was on the fight against poverty, on sustainable production and on sustainable communities as entry points to implement the Goals in the national planning instrument. Public policies that impacted on the Goals, such as those addressing poverty, peace and justice, were reflected in national targets and goals.

68. In 2016, the Government had adopted a national pact to commit every public institution to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. It had also established a cross-governmental multi-tiered committee to ensure implementation of the Goals at all levels and in every sector. Indicators had been established based on the available data: at present, data was available for approximately 73.1 per cent of the indicators, and the aim was to have 100 per cent of the data required to track every indicator. The national statistics institute was endeavouring to capture the missing data and ensure disaggregation by population, sex and territory of origin.

69. The Government had ensured the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in the implementation process, and had striven to ensure that public policies linked to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals were supported with the necessary budget. National policies were also in place for assisting minority groups, resisting the effects of climate change and helping students to stay in school.

70. Mr. Morara focused on his experience in Kenya.<sup>13</sup> He gave an overview of the history of a memorandum of understanding that had been developed between the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics with the support of OHCHR. A total of 29 population groups – including persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and indigenous groups – had been identified as either left behind or the furthest behind, and were therefore the focus of information-gathering in the national census.

<sup>11</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Eva\\_Grambye.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/SecondSession/Statements/Eva_Grambye.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

71. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics had developed a framework for enhanced monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 16. The Commission was focusing on strengthening data to work with ministries, departments and agencies to ensure that Goal 16 was guaranteed and safeguarded.

72. Ms. Ferro asked the panellists to address how national mechanisms responsible for human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals could best communicate with one another and avoid duplicate reporting burdens and procedures. In response, Mr. Morara spoke about a one-stop national reporting mechanism in Kenya, which brought together the required information and generated more unified reporting. Mr. Morales Sáenz suggested that evidence-based public policies and robust plans would make it easier for Governments to report. Ms. Grambye proposed that making existing human rights data more accessible could help to alleviate the reporting burden, and that human rights reporting could be used for the Sustainable Development Goals: for example, reporting under International Labour Organization conventions could be used for reporting on Goals 8 and 16. In Ms. González-Román's view, there could be no better way to monitor progress and help achieve the Goals than by using the existing mechanisms.

73. In response to a question from Ms. Ferro about synergies resulting from United Nations reform, Mr. Williams said that the reform of the United Nations development system and the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework meant that planning was being overhauled with a focus on reaching out to all parts of the United Nations system, including non-resident agencies.

74. In the interventions from the floor,<sup>14</sup> many delegations echoed earlier comments welcoming the second intersessional meeting, and reaffirming the indivisible and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, and the importance of leaving no one behind and of support for accelerating delivery of the Goals.

75. Many speakers described national policies and other measures to build on the synergies between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. Among the measures were institutional mechanisms including a national council for sustainable development chaired by the prime minister; a national coordination council for sustainable development chaired by the deputy prime minister; a cross-governmental national committee for information; a national human rights council with governmental and civil society membership; a dedicated council on the Sustainable Development Goals; a national Goals stakeholder forum; and a Goals champions programme. Other measures included a variety of initiatives such as online tracking systems for the implementation of human rights obligations and the Goals, many national development plans, and specialized publications. The importance of international cooperation was repeatedly mentioned.

76. The following specific themes were mentioned: the critical roles of civil society and the private sector; gender equality, empowerment and the rights of women and girls; non-discrimination, good governance, the rule of law and the importance of Goal 16; budgetary alignment with Goals implementation plans; the contribution and protection of human rights defenders to the realization of the 2030 Agenda; the involvement of persons with disabilities; the importance of reducing economic and other inequalities; the urgency of combating climate change; the need for resources, financial inclusion and economic reforms to counter rising inequalities; the essential role of statistical offices and the value of data collection, disaggregation and analysis; the contribution of children and youth; voluntary city-level reviews; institutional support for a rights-based approach to implementation of the Goals; and the role of national human rights institutions. The key role of parliaments and parliamentarians in the protection of human rights and the

<sup>14</sup> Bahrain, Croatia, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Israel, Ecuador, Uruguay, Georgia, India, Thailand, Brazil, Luxemburg, Nepal, Greece, Paraguay, Azerbaijan, Belgium, UNDP, UNFPA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, International Service for Human Rights and Child Rights Connect made statements. Ireland, Plan International and United Nations Association of the United States of America made written submissions. Some of the statements are available at [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/SecondIntersessionalMeeting2030Agenda.aspx).

achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and measures to support them were also highlighted.

77. Concluding the session, Ms. Ferro asked the panellists to respond to two questions: one about strengthening cooperation for implementation, including with non-State actors, and one about the participation of children in the 2030 Agenda process.

78. Ms. González-Román suggested that Goal 16 should be reviewed in the high-level political forum every year. Civil society and youth could play a greater role at the national level. While there was not much room for formal participation by civil society at the international level, its already substantial informal participation could be enhanced.

79. Ms. Grambye observed that the major uptake of the 2030 Agenda by the private sector appeared to be based on business opportunity rather than accountability. Since the private sector had been heavily involved in formulating the 2030 Agenda, it could also be invited to report through voluntary business reviews. The private sector could be asked to highlight best practices, such as how human rights due diligence could support the Sustainable Development Goals. The Danish Institute planned to analyse company corporate social responsibilities reports and connect the results to the Goals.

80. In the view of Mr. Morales Sáenz, the participation of private sector and other non-governmental actors in the formulation of public policies should be enhanced. He also spoke about the experience in Costa Rica with child participation in public policy formulation and the importance of the participation of groups left behind.

81. Mr. Morara recalled that the Kenyan national reporting mechanism involved government entities and civil society, which helped inform the debate, and that civil society was involved in the preparation of and follow-up to universal periodic review reporting in Kenya. He supported calls for a greater role for parliaments in the process of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and mentioned an informal parliamentary caucus in Kenya that worked to ensure greater focus on the Goals in Parliament.

#### **D. Building on the pledges of the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

82. In the closing session, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reform and Ms. Hicks shared their observations, conclusions and key messages with respect to the meeting.

83. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reform welcomed the country-level examples that demonstrated how the recommendations of human rights mechanisms identified vulnerable groups and aided understanding of the action needed to target those furthest behind. The human rights agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were accelerators for a common agenda, which was to leave no one behind. Looking ahead, a key question was how to achieve closer integration of those agendas.

84. He highlighted the significance of data collection and analysis, and stressed that the focus must be on what needed to be measured in order to accelerate progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, to avoid drowning in excessive reporting and non-actionable information. He spoke about the challenge for United Nations reform, with its focus on integration and action on the ground, to harness better the intersection between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

85. He concluded by observing that while poverty was decreasing, inequality was increasing. There was a clear need to join hands to effect meaningful change, country by country and group by group, to pursue sustainable development in a way that secured a life in dignity for all.

86. Ms. Hicks focused on five areas in which key messages had been delivered. First, she stressed the urgency of the need to accelerate progress towards implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Human rights norms and standards helped States to identify practices, measures and innovative steps towards inclusive sustainable development. They were critical accelerators for implementation of the Goals.

87. Second, the repositioning of the United Nations development system and broader United Nations reform efforts offered critical entry points for advancing human rights implementation and countering rising inequalities and climate change. Accelerating implementation of the Goals would require action to be stepped up and account to be taken of human rights. Increased investment to support data disaggregation would be essential in order to formulate evidence-based policies to address the drivers of exclusion and pursue human rights-based transformative economies.

88. The third key area was protecting and expanding civic space and promoting meaningful participation, as the Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved without stronger civil society engagement and protection.

89. Fourth, data and recommendations from the international human rights mechanisms must be better leveraged. Reporting on the Goals should be linked more effectively with United Nations human rights reviews and reporting through the voluntary national reviews, thus ensuring stronger accountability and efficiencies. The Universal Human Rights Index, under which the recommendations of human rights mechanisms were searchable by Goal, could help with making that link.

90. Fifth, in order to fulfil the promise of the human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Human Rights Council's engagement with the high-level political forum needed to be further consolidated. The ongoing forum review was an opportunity to strengthen linkages between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals and provide greater space for civil society and national human rights institutions.

91. The two intersessional meetings had served as important occasions for exchanges on how better to capitalize on the synergies between the realization of human rights and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. She expressed hope that the process would gain momentum – the meetings had already been helpful in building bridges between Geneva and New York – and that the links that had been established between the voluntary national reviews and the universal periodic review, treaty bodies and special procedures would be further consolidated and encouraged.<sup>15</sup>

### III. Conclusions and key messages

92. **The meeting reaffirmed the indivisible and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and the 2030 Agenda as crucial for ensuring accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by the end of the decade.**

93. **Only by respecting, protecting and fulfilling all human rights can the Sustainable Development Goals be achieved for all, leaving no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first.**

94. **Given that implementation of the 2030 Agenda was currently lagging, during the coming decade of action and delivery, more would need to be done and faster, with specific and targeted action, to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of human rights.**

95. **Growing inequalities demonstrated the need for a special focus on countries and groups of people that were being left behind, including in efforts to tackle the effects of climate change as a matter of global urgency. People who were left behind were often those who were economically, socially and politically marginalized. The meeting therefore reaffirmed the centrality of the pledge to leave no one behind in ensuring delivery on the 2030 Agenda for all.**

96. **Conflict and insecurity also posed a great challenge to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Greater attention needed to be given to the imperative of human rights-focused prevention and conflict resolution to accelerate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

<sup>15</sup> See E/C.12/2019/1 and [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CrosscuttingThematicIssues.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CrosscuttingThematicIssues.aspx).

97. Accelerating progress would require greater coherence and alignment of efforts to meet human rights obligations and implement the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals. A human rights-based approach to development was more necessary than ever, and strong leadership and political will was required for the decade of action and delivery.

98. The transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda required people to be put first and human rights-based public policies to be adopted, including stronger social protection and pro-poor macroeconomic policies to counter rising inequalities. Sufficient political will and financial resources must be ensured in order to realize all human rights and to strengthen institutional mechanisms for increased public participation.

99. Lessons could be learned from the good practices shared during the meeting, including Member States' institutional arrangements, innovative data platforms, national action plans and cross-governmental and cross-societal approaches. It was crucial to continue sharing knowledge and experience regarding human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

100. Human rights data and analysis are central to addressing exclusion, discrimination and inequalities. There was broad acknowledgment of the importance of disaggregated data as the basis of inclusive policies that prioritized those furthest behind. There should be greater investment in closing gaps in data gathering and analysis, including through innovative ways of data collection.

101. The 2020 comprehensive review of the global indicator framework would provide an opportunity to pursue data disaggregation and advocate a human rights-based approach to data collection and reporting.

102. National statistical offices played a crucial role in supporting implementation of the Goals. Further efforts should be made to support the adoption by national statistical offices of a human rights-based approach to data collection and analysis, and to promote cooperation between national statistical offices and national human rights institutions.

103. Ongoing reforms of the United Nations system, including the United Nations development system, offered critical entry points for closer partnership between human rights actors and development actors in advancing human rights and ensuring accelerated progress on the 2030 Agenda.

104. Continued efforts should be made to maximize the opportunities offered by the reform of the United Nations development system to strengthen integration of the three pillars of the United Nations in order to promote transformative action on the ground, including by strengthening the intersection between the realization of all human rights and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

105. The enhanced roles of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams offer opportunities to break down silos and step up action to achieve truly sustainable development, advance human rights and human rights-based policies, counter rising inequalities and address the drivers of exclusion.

106. Achieving the 2030 Agenda would require a "whole-of-society", multi-stakeholder approach. Stronger, inclusive and meaningful public participation in the development and monitoring of policies on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with adequate resource allocation would be vital, and should include civil society, parliaments, youth, children and groups at risk of being left behind.

107. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would require the expansion and safeguarding of civic space and protection of human rights defenders. Civil society organizations were important development partners with innovative ideas to help achieve the Goals.

108. National human rights institutions could also play an important role, given their connection with marginalized groups and given that they were in a position to identify gaps and develop policies and measures for those likely to be left behind.

109. The private sector had an important role to play in accelerating delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights should form the foundation for guidance on private sector engagement.

110. The high-level political forum modalities review in 2020 would present a critical opportunity to strengthen the linkages between human rights and implementation, follow-up and review regarding the Sustainable Development Goals. It would also provide an important opportunity to enhance the meaningful participation of civil society and national human rights institutions in the forum process.

111. Accountability for implementation of the Goals needs to be strengthened, and the work of the human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, special procedures and treaty bodies, could enhance voluntary national review reporting, including through the identification of those being left behind and specific priorities for targeted action and resources. Indeed, the universal periodic review was widely highlighted during the meeting as a key entry point for increasing reporting efficiency, enhancing accountability, advancing implementation of the Goals and contributing to prevention efforts.

112. The Human Rights Council should continue to develop its work aimed at identifying and leveraging synergies between human rights and the 2030 Agenda with a focus on facilitating the exchange of practical experience and peer learning. It should also continue its systematic exchange with the Economic and Social Council, including through regular briefings between the two bodies.

113. The Human Rights Council's engagement with the high-level political forum should be further consolidated, including through increased use of the Council input for the annual forum session and engagement of the Council-mandated independent experts in forum processes and discussions. It would be valuable for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to brief the annual forum, with a view to bridging divides, strengthening the integration of human rights in the implementation of the Goals and ensuring no one is left behind.

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