



## **BRIEF ON STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

### **The Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Review Process of the Economic and Social Council and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

#### **Introduction**

During its 74th session, the General Assembly is scheduled to review the implementation of its resolutions [67/290](#) and [70/299](#) on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). In conjunction with the review process of the HLPF, the General Assembly will also conduct a review of the arrangements contained in resolution [72/305](#) on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) ([A/RES/68/1](#)). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **HLPF modalities review** will continue with an alternative modality as communicated in a [letter from the PGA](#) referring to instructions from the Co-facilitators, Benin and Georgia, and **requesting Member States to provide their written inputs to by 25 March 2020**.

#### **Stakeholder Participation**

[The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#) advocates for the implementation of SDG 16+ peaceful, just and inclusive societies and urges Member States to engage in current review of the modalities of the HLPF with a view to enhancing stakeholder participation at the HLPF of civil society and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

A shared [principles paper](#) for the HLPF, developed by the [Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network](#), [Action for Sustainable Development, Forus](#) and [Together 2030](#), are advocating for the meaningful engagement of major groups and diverse stakeholders at the HLPF. [Paragraph 89 of the 2030 Agenda](#), [paragraph 14 of 67/290](#) and [paragraph 11 of 70/299](#) all note the importance of the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the HLPF. This participation must be meaningful, but the major groups and other stakeholders also need to review their engagement with the HLPF to ensure the mechanisms for participation are effective, legitimate and representative.

##### **a. Strengthening civil society participation:**

The 2030 Agenda is explicit in mandating its follow-up and review processes at all levels to be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and to support reporting by all relevant stakeholders. (Art 74.d). With shrinking civic space across the globe, many civil society actors are faced with barriers to inclusion and participation. This includes threats to the personal safety of human rights activists and defenders, who are prevented from participating meaningfully in development planning and policy making processes. This trend risks excluding from policy making the needs and voices of the most vulnerable in society, including women, children, youth, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless people. A whole-of-society approach is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda and ensures that the HLPF addresses issues that matter on the ground. Strengthening meaningful participation in the HLPF and its follow up, including civil society and private sector participation, is critical to ensuring accelerated delivery on the SDGs and the promise to leave no one behind.

*Useful references:*

[Guidelines on participation in public affairs](#), noted in A/HRC/RES/39/11, adopted by consensus UN Independent Expert's recommendations for participation in the 2030 Agenda implementation

*Key message:*

Acknowledging that the current HLPF modalities have brought in the participation of Major Groups and stakeholders, there could be improvements to facilitate participation at the HLPF. We encourage Member States to ensure that the HLPF be made as inclusive as possible by strengthening participation through (but not limited to):

- Allocating specific time for (and number of) stakeholders' oral interventions in all parts of the HLPF, including the VNRs and the regional fora;
- Allowing for submission of complementary VNR reports, to be posted on the official VNR website and considering creating spaces to discuss their findings;
- Encouraging the use of e-platforms/virtual participation modalities to ensure stakeholder engagement is as broad, safe and inclusive as possible, and soliciting views from representatives of groups at risk of being left behind;
- Providing adequate resources to DESA to efficiently support multi-stakeholder engagement, including engaging stakeholders from the global South and countries in special situations; and
- Considering ways to encourage broadening HLPF participation modalities beyond the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders.

*Suggested new language under A/RES/67/290 along these lines:*

- *“Decides to ensure stakeholder participation is as broad, safe, and inclusive as possible through exploring the possibility of increased use of e-platforms and virtual participation modalities for the official meetings of the forum and its preparatory processes.”*
- *“Stresses the need to ensure that the forum provides a safe space for exchange of experience and condemns all acts of intimidation and reprisal, both online and offline, by State and non-State actors against individuals, groups and organs of society who seek to cooperate, are cooperating or have cooperated with the forum.”*
- *“Stresses the need to provide adequate resources to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in order to ensure 2030 Agenda follow up processes are open, inclusive and participatory.”*

#### **b. Strengthening National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) participation:**

As independent institutions mandated by the state, NHRIs play an important role in the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda at the national level. At the end of 2019, 80 NHRIs world-wide have been granted A-status, meaning they are fully in line with the guiding principles ensuring their credibility and independence. Embedded in national constitutions or other national legal frameworks, these institutions exercise a broad range of responsibilities, including monitoring and reporting on the existing human rights situation, providing recommendations to governments regarding proposed legislation related to human rights, carrying out human rights education and advocacy, and hearing of complaints and their transmission to competent authorities. In the context of Agenda 2030, NHRIs significantly contribute to an increasing integration of HRBA in policymaking at the country and local level. Many NHRIs have complaint handling mechanisms enabling them to provide independent and complementary statistical data related to the achievement of the SDG indicators.

*Useful references:*

Merida Declaration, outlining the NHRI's role in achieving the SDGs and ensuring no one is left behind

Publication outlining NHRIs role as an accelerator and guarantor of sustainable development  
Publication outlining good practices of African NHRIs work on sustainable development

*Key message:*

- NHRIs are not explicitly mentioned as a recognized stakeholder in the ECOSOC and HLPF resolutions. Recognizing their unique status and the valuable contribution of national human rights institutions world-wide to the implementation of 2030 Agenda, specific reference to national human rights institutions should be included in the stakeholder engagement modalities.

*Suggested language:*

- Under HLPF resolution A/RES/67/290 (OP 14 and OP 16) introduce the following text: “*Paris Principles compliant national human rights institutions and their networks*”.
- Under ECOSOC resolution A/RES/72/305 (OP20) introduce the following text: “*Paris Principles compliant national human rights institutions and their networks*”.
- Propose a new stand-alone OP along these lines: “*Decides to enhance the inclusive and consultative nature of Forum [or Council] by ensuring Paris Principles compliant national human rights institutions and their networks can take part in its work and discussions under the same modalities as civil society and other stakeholders in order to make the best use of the unique expertise these institutions can provide.*”