

The 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Dr. Marianne Beisheim, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)
German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin



Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik
German Institute for
International and Security Affairs

EEAC Policy Briefing (August 27, 2020)

Three Parts:

1 History and Background

2 HLPF 2020

3 Future of HLPF

>> aims versus
achievements?



© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The “hlpf’s” history

- Name: Committee, Council, Platform?
> hlpf as placeholder
- ECOSOC/GA (hybrid, not apex body)
- Core mandate: “Political leadership, guidance and recommendations”
- ... but nothing “too prescriptive”
- Four UNGA resolutions:
 - 2013: A/Res/67/290
 - 2015: 2030 Agenda
 - 2016: A/Res/70/299
 - 2020: A/Res/74/298 (August)



RIO+20
United Nations Conference
on Sustainable Development

SWP



HLPF mandate



SWP

A/Res/67/290 (2013)

© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

- shall provide *political leadership, guidance* and *recommendations* for sustainable development
- *follow up and review* progress in implementation
- enhance the *integration* of the 3 dimensions of SD in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels
- consider *new and emerging* SD challenges
- *action-oriented agenda*

Practice after 2015

- Follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda/SDGs



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

 Ambition is a key word. Member States place great expectations in the HLPF to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

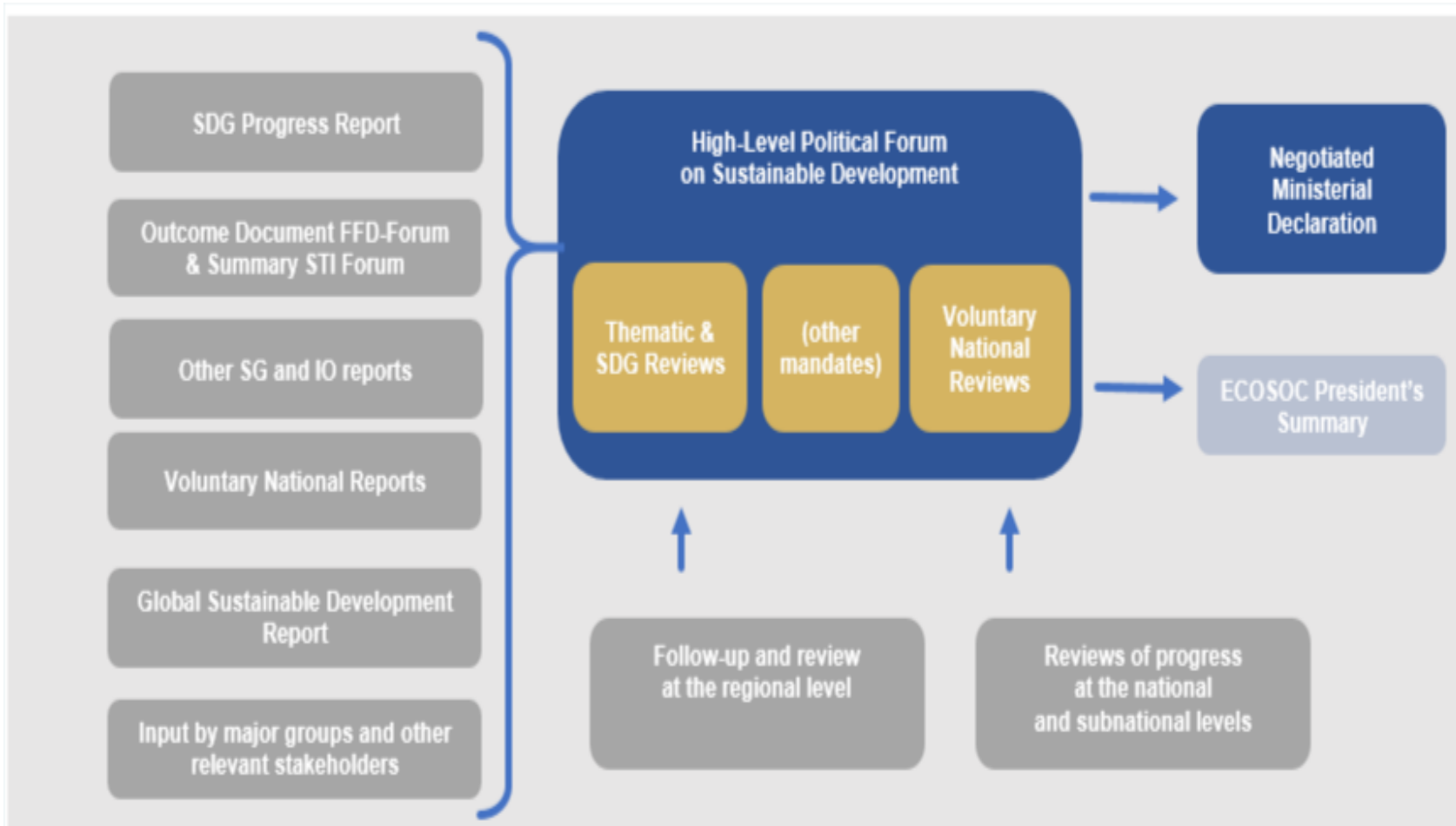
*Oh Joon, President of the Economic and Social Council,
Permanent Representative of Republic of Korea to the United Nations*

 The Forum will review progress, generate political impetus and launch partnerships and actions to advance shared goals.

*Ban Ki-moon,
United Nations Secretary General*

© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

- Preparatory process: UN-DESA and ECOSOC-Presidency/Bureau
- *Formal outcome document*: Ministerial/Political Declaration supposed to produce “leadership, guidance, recommendations”, but negotiated *before* HLPF > agreed language, no action-oriented recommendations, and no follow-up
- *Informal*: Peer-to-peer exchange > individual learning, not steering



Source: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/un-reforms-for-the-2030-agenda/>; © Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)

HLPF - Workflow

Input

Throughput

Output

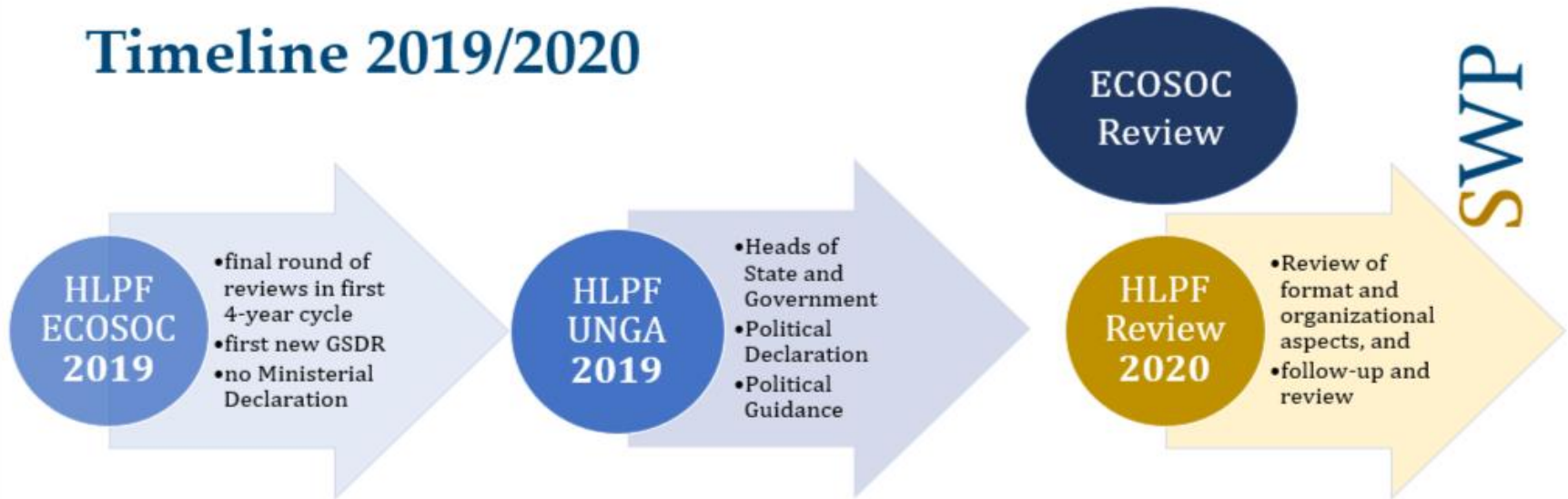
GSDR 2019

Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General

- need to push for real transformations
- focus on relevant interlinkages, harness co-benefits and address trade-offs
- six entry points
 1. Human wellbeing and capabilities
 2. Sustainable economies
 3. Energy decarbonization and access
 4. Food and nutrition
 5. Urban and peri-urban development
 6. Global commons.
- four systemic levers (governance, economy & finance, individ. & collective action, science & tech.) to achieve (not incremental or linear, but) exponential progress



Timeline 2019/2020



© Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)

- First 4-year cycle ended with SDG Summit (HLPF-GA), September 2019
- Political Declaration: Decade of Action and Delivery
- 10 “action points” > struggle to keep ambitious wording/language of 2030 Agenda and SDGs

HLPF IN NUMBERS

HLPF 2020 -- The FIRST Virtual HLPF



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



DAYS



MEETINGS



HEADS AND
DEPUTY HEADS
OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT,
MINISTERIAL
LEVEL OFFICIALS



SPEAKERS
IN PANELS



VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL
REVIEWS



REGISTERED
PARTICIPANTS



VNR LABS



SIDE EVENTS



SPECIAL EVENTS



EXHIBITIONS



VIEWS ON UN WEBTV

Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>; © United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

HLPF 2020: Theme

**“Accelerated action and transformative pathways:
realizing the decade of action and delivery for sust. development”**

- Last-minute change in thematic focus > COVID-19
 - mandate of HLPF to cover “new and emerging issues”
 - Positive narrative: SDG-sensitive recovery & Build Back Better (Sendai Framework) > window of opportunity for transformation
 - Negative effects of Covid-19 on goal attainment, danger to again debate development (prioritizing SDG1) versus sustainable development
 - Innovation and digitalization
- First time: no subset of goals reviewed in-depth
- Message from President of UNEA 5
- 2020 targets (biodiversity et al.) not really discussed

HLPF 2020: VNRs

- 47 VNRs, mostly high-level presentations, some pre-recorded, others online-live
- Politicization(Armenia/Azerbaijan; Russia/Ukraine; China; Syria, Libya)
- Interactive dialogue, incl. major groups and other stakeholders, also involving local civil society, but direct peer interaction was missing
- 17 VNR labs to discuss good practices more in-depth
- VLRs: cities, local governments
- Post-VNR follow-up and adjustments

HLPF 2020: Ministerial Declaration

- No agreement after long and difficult negotiations and two silence procedures (ECOSOC Pres. draft resolution July 17 available)
- held up on similar issues as in previous years (“peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation”, Rio principles/CBDR etc.)
- also new conflict lines (climate change, “green”, Covid-19, civil society participation, gender-based violence, trade/WTO)
- missed chance
 - to explain *how to* BBB and achieve SDG-sensitive recovery
 - to push acceleration framework and forward-looking commitments for Decade of Action; instead (yet another) Platform of Actions launched by UNDESA
 - to fulfill main mandate: provide political guidance, leadership, and recommendations

HLPF 2020: Informal Elements

- Informal Summary of ECOSOC President (upcoming)
- about 200 online side events, up to 600 people in side events
- interesting debates about BBB,
for example new narrative “not about protecting nature but being custodians for human welfare and equity in the future”
- more focus on the “HOW”-question,
for example German Side Event (prerecorded, Deutsche Welle and France24) on “„A Green and Better Recovery – for all?“ > asked others what actions and support they expect from the UN and from countries in the Global North
- Pop-up side event on Rio+20 idea for SD Council
- parallel Special Events

Special Events

2020 HLPF

A series of courses and workshops, co-organized by UN DESA and UNITAR, featuring speakers and experts from academia, national governments and other sectors on crucial topics related to the implementation of the SDGs.



SDG LEARNING, TRAINING AND PRACTICE CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOPS

Tuesday, 7 July 2020 -
Monday, 13 July 2020



HIGHER EDUCATION SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE (HESI) SPECIAL EVENT



A global conversation on how higher education institutions can support a green recovery from COVID-19, co-organized by UN DESA, UNESCO, UNEP, UNGC's PRME, UNU, UN-HABITAT, UNCTAD and UNITAR.

Wednesday, 8 July 2020
8:00 - 10:00 a.m. EDT

Hosted by UN-Water, the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework launch is a high-level and multi-stakeholder moment to generate commitments for ambitious solutions on water and sanitation in support of the Decade of Action to deliver SDGs by 2030, by strengthening country planning, implementation and knowledge sharing for SDG 6 while supporting country response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



SDG 6 GLOBAL ACCELERATION FRAMEWORK LAUNCH

Thursday, 9 July 2020
8:00 - 9:30 a.m. EDT



LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS FORUM

Monday, 13 July 2020
8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. EDT

Organized by UN DESA, UN-Habitat, Local 2030, UNDP and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, the event brings together mayors, governors, national governments and all relevant stakeholders to highlight the crucial role of local action in achieving global commitments and to share solutions in building back better in the recovery from COVID-19.

Jointly convened by WBCSD and UN DESA, the event brings together business leaders and sustainability champions from across the world for an engaging virtual dialogue to explore the lessons learned, highlight transformative solutions and build collaborative synergies around the new normal we want.

CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICERS FOR SDGS



**Build back better:
navigating business risks
and opportunities in a
post-COVID world**

Tuesday, 14 July 2020
8:30 - 10:00 a.m. EDT



SDG ACCELERATION ACTIONS TO BUILD BACK BETTER

Tuesday, 14 July 2020
8:00 - 8:50 a.m. EDT

Organized by UN DESA, the event aims to showcase and galvanize ambitious new SDG Acceleration Actions by governments and other actors to contribute to the Decade of Action and Delivery in the context of post COVID-19 realities.



Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020#other> (flyer) ; © United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The Future: HLPF Review (now during 75th GA)



- Review “format and organizational aspects” after first cycle
- Constructive discussions in 2018/19, good wording in Political Declaration
- 2020: Old conflict lines reappear, e.g. for example, more “action oriented” for “decade of action and delivery” but sovereignty issues and “PBI” concerns; hierarchy of goals; NGO participation ...
- postponed to 75th UNGA (Opening will include “SDG Moment” 18.9. and Biodiversity Summit 30.9., Climate Week)

Political Declaration 2019 (A/Res/74/4)

Para 27: To demonstrate our determination to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to do more and faster. To this end, we commit to: ...

d. Strengthening the high-level political forum:

we pledge to carry out an ambitious and effective review of the format and organizational aspects of the HLPF and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level ... with a view to **better addressing gaps in implementation** and linking identified challenges with **appropriate responses, including on financing**, to further **strengthen the effective and participatory character** of this intergovernmental forum and encourage the peer-learning character of the voluntary national reviews...

2021 HLPF/ECOSOC Theme & SDG Reviews

- *Theme = composite compromise*
“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development:
building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”
- *SDGs in focus:* 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17;
- plus the *targets with a 2020 timeline* (after CBD in May 2021, WTO decisions on fishery subsidies, Oceans conference and Int. Conference on Chemicals Management – both postponed)

2021 HLPF: VNRs



- 23 VNRs so far formally registered (inc. Czech Republic, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden)
- many second-timers
- **window of opportunity** to push for honest stocktaking, evaluation of measures, and new and additional commitments
- both, prep and follow-up of VNR



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

For SWP publications on sustainable development governance:

<https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/dossiers/sustainability-climate-and-energy/>

For on-going project work on the HLPF Review:

<https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/projects/high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf/>

Thank you!

Dr. Marianne Beisheim

Global Issues Division

Senior Associate

Tel. +49 30 88007-448

marianne.beisheim@swp-berlin.org

twitter.com/MBeisheimSWP

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

German Institute for

International and Security Affairs

Ludwigkirchplatz 3–4, 10719 Berlin

www.swp-berlin.org

