

**United Nations Department of Economic
and Social Affairs**

**United Nations Industrial Development
Organization**

**Report of the expert meeting in
preparation for HLPF 2017 on
Readying institutions and policies for
integrated approaches to implementation
of the 2030 Agenda**

14 to 16 December 2016, Vienna



**United Nations
New York, 2016**



**UNIDO
Vienna, 2016**

UNDESA

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Context and objectives of the meeting

The 2016 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) showed that many countries are already well advanced in their arrangements for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the United Nations in September 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. They are grappling with the challenge of developing policies that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and build on the synergies between the various goals and targets. While the importance of such integrated policies for achieving sustainable development was affirmed at the first Rio Conference on environment and development in 1992, it is yet to be fully translated into effective institutional arrangements and policies. The expert meeting aimed to reflect on how Governments can be best organized and work so as to develop and implement such integrated policies to realize the SDGs.

Integrated policies are also of utmost necessity because the areas covered by the SDGs are closely interrelated. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that some targets refer to multiple goals. Recognizing the synergies and possible trade-offs between goals and targets will make it much easier to realize the SDGs. It will help avoid unwanted side effects of actions aiming to accelerate progress towards one target on the realization of other targets.

For this to happen, it is important to rethink the way institutions are organized, work, make, deliver and review policies. An increasing number of countries have been putting in place inter-ministerial structures and other arrangements to ensure integrated implementation of the SDGs across the Government and with various actors. These are sometimes chaired by the highest level of Government.

It is also important to find ways to ensure cooperation and integrated approaches among institutions dealing with closely interrelated targets under the SDGs. This may entail mapping the interrelations among targets as well as putting in place adequate institutional arrangements, public administration practices, mechanisms, capacities, budgetary arrangements and resources to ensure that sectoral policies are informed by the possible impact of actions on related areas. Given the importance of a “whole of society” approach to realizing the SDGs, it is also critical to engage various stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in decision-making so that they have ownership of SDG-related policies and strategies, and understand linkages. This will also help to leverage synergies and determine how to resolve trade-offs.

The meeting thus aimed to explore how far we have gone in ensuring that institutions are organized and equipped to deliver integrated plans and policies. It focused on the group of SDGs to be reviewed by the HLPF in July 2017, namely the SDGs on eradicating poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, achieving gender equality, building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and oceans (Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) as well as SDG 17 on means of implementation.

All Member States were invited to attend the meeting. Representatives of international organizations, academia and major groups and other stakeholders also participated. The

President of the Economic and Social Council participated in the meeting and delivered opening remarks.

The meeting focused on important interrelations where joint action would bring the greatest benefits, acknowledging that these vary across and within countries. Participants exchanged experiences on how institutional arrangements, plans, policies and means of implementation can best build on interlinkages and help achieve integrated approaches.

The meeting consisted of seven panels involving representatives of governments, international organizations, academia and other non-State actors. Each panel presentation engaged in an interactive dialogue with Member States and other stakeholders.

The report of the meeting is intended to serve as a contribution to the thematic review to be conducted at the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development in 2017.

In advance of the event, a background paper was prepared and made available to the participants. Several UN organizations provided relevant background documents for the meeting. The meeting agenda is attached in the annex. The full documentation is available [online](#). The following describes the main issues raised during the meeting.

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Session 1: Understanding important interactions among the SDGs

The concept of integration is present in many forms in the 2030 Agenda. The difficulty is to translate it at the policy and institutional level. How can nexus thinking inform the necessary shifts in policies and institutional settings? In particular, identification of synergies can inform policies that are “achievement multipliers”. Identification of trade-offs highlights areas in which consultations and negotiations will need to inform the way forward. Integration also has to happen in science and academia, and for cross-cutting dimensions of the agenda such as science and technology.

Since the Agenda was adopted, a multitude of actors have built methodologies and developed empirical work to identify interrelationships, synergies and trade-offs among the SDGs. It will be important to assess how these can be adapted to different country contexts, and in particular contexts where government capacity is limited, such as in LDCs and countries emerging from conflicts. At the end of the day, successful approaches will be those that provide clear guidance for political processes to set up priorities that balance long-term objectives with short-term needs, and reflect those in budget decisions.

Several countries provided examples of how SDGs have been taken up at the national level and how institutional coordination has been enhanced to address the SDGs. Examples include National Councils, clustering of agencies and ministries to work on specific themes, parliamentary commissions on SDGs, national sustainable development strategies, and systematic mappings of institutional mandates in relation to the SDG targets. UN Regional Commissions have conducted work to help countries map out interrelationships of goals within the SDGs. Work has been done on identifying synergies between the SDGs and climate-related goals, strategies and plans (e.g. through analysis of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, INDCs). Several participants pointed to the crucial role of parliaments to interpret the SDGs and guide national implementation, which goes beyond a mere role in monitoring progress made on the various goals. Attempts at enhancing cross-sector collaboration should consider both the political and the working levels. Decades of attempts at enhancing integration should remind us of the necessity to address incentive structures built in institutions and government – there should be incentives for collaboration and for the adoption of holistic approaches.

Participation of all stakeholders in planning processes is critical. Making information on who does what available to the public is an important first step. Engagement platforms on the SDGs were mentioned by several countries; they can also serve as repositories for information and practices and help strengthen capacity of local communities.

Although the SDGs are largely synergistic, perception of conflicts and trade-offs is widespread and sometimes dominates the political discourse. Assessing and, if necessary, enhancing the knowledge base on areas that present potential conflicts will be important in

order to challenge perceptions that are not grounded in facts. It will also be important to shift from a static approach to synergies and trade-offs to an approach that demonstrates possible pathways and implementation sequences that match the circumstances and priorities of different countries.

It will be critical to consider all levels, including subnational levels. The national level is of primary importance, but the local and municipal level is where much of the practical decision-making is made; it is also where inclusiveness and participation begin. In federal countries, the provincial / state level is also important. The regional level in turn is crucial for ensuring consistency between global and national agendas.

A necessary condition for integration to succeed is political commitment at the national level to achieve the SDGs. The importance of national visions that can serve as anchors for all sector strategies and plans was mentioned. It was said that there needs to be “political campaigns” for the SDGs, with a financing side to them. One important challenge is to define how development cooperation should evolve. For example, it was mentioned that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) should adopt a broader approach to development cooperation.

In going forward, it will be important not to “forget” the 2030 Agenda when new global agreements are forged. The Paris Climate agreement was the first after the Agenda was adopted; its implementation can proceed in tandem with SDG implementation. Other agreements will follow.

Session 2: Eradicating poverty as a cross cutting objective of institutions and SDG policies

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, going beyond income alone to include elements such as health, education, housing and other living standards. Both measurements and solutions need to address these other dimensions, which interact with each other in dynamic ways. Individual conditions matter as well – for example, poverty can occur at different points in the life cycle; women face unique constraints such as their responsibility for care work; and various elements of identity can increase the chances of being poor as they may be associated with violations of human rights standards. Social and environmental factors are also important – for example, there are well documented correlations between poverty and crime and violence; increasing inequalities and the concentration of wealth can trap people in poverty; and those who derive their livelihood from natural resources may be especially at risk in fragile environmental contexts.

Solutions therefore need to be designed and implemented across sectors – it is not sustainable to have ‘more of everything’, so synergies and trade-offs must be recognized, and leveraged.

Successful poverty eradication strategies must have two components – jobs, and social protection for all. Social protection systems should offer a stable and standardized level of minimum living standards for all people at all times. There is a positive relationship between public expenditure on social protection (as percentage of GDP) and the ratio of people above the poverty line. There has been gradual acceptance of this over the last century and the SDGs (particularly SDG 1.3) help to realize this. At the country level, national social protection strategies need to be part of national development policies. Developing countries are expanding social protection systems.

Measurement of poverty as a multi-dimensional concept has progressed over the past decades. Recent innovations in the methodology, such as including dimensions associated with other SDG measures, have generated more comprehensive ‘multiple deprivation scores’ and study the correlations among various dimensions of poverty at the individual and households levels. Multi-dimensional poverty indexes, including the one produced by OPHI, have been increasingly used by governments to direct resources, as well as to monitor and report on poverty outcomes more regularly over time.

Some countries have registered impressive results in terms of poverty reduction over past decades. China is a prominent example of success in this area. Success factors in China’s experience included championship by high levels of the State Council and collaboration across ministries towards this objective. The emphasis was initially put on the rural poor, addressing dimensions such as hunger, daily subsistence needs, health, compulsory education and housing. Along the way, programmes and interventions have

also evolved to take new realities and learnings into account, such as: managing urbanisation; connecting coastal to interior areas in ways that facilitated the transfer of knowledge, policies and innovations; seeking to ‘leapfrog’ poorer areas onto ‘green’ pathways through infrastructure and technology investments; and enhancing the poverty reducing impact of sector interventions such as in tourism and agriculture.

While China’s example is inspiring, it is clear that poverty reduction strategies have to be grounded into each country’s specific context and circumstances. International organizations can help in this regard by transferring knowledge of other countries’ experience.

Other issues addressed during the session included: reflections on the difficulties of reflecting the ‘feminization of poverty’, given that the smallest unit of most data collected is the household and not the individual; the need for complementary policies such as those that could help in addressing the care needs of children and the elderly; how to improve the connection between macroeconomic and social policies, such as growing and maintaining the fiscal space for making the necessary interventions; how quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels is an essential component of poverty eradication; the growing importance of urban poverty; investing in the ‘culture’ sector (such as traditional heritage), sustainable tourism and urban regeneration as ways out of poverty; and the need to collect more timely and comprehensive data.

Session 3: Ending hunger and promoting food security: what can we learn from the key linkages with other SDGs?

Ending hunger and achieving food security has evolved from being a question of availability to one of access. There is enough food in the world for all. Agricultural intensification is not necessarily needed. In any event, there is very little scope for expansion of production in developing countries as much of the available arable land is already being used for agricultural purposes. Also, in cases where soils are depleted, intensification may not be feasible.

A main determinant of access is affordability with poverty as a main force behind food insecurity and malnutrition. A food systems approach is needed with food security considered alongside poverty eradication, including reductions in non-income poverty. Poverty reduction is itself a matter of addressing social protection in a non-minimalist way. As three quarters of poor people live in rural areas, policies should promote capital accumulation among the rural poor as well as diversification of economic activity in rural areas to build resilience to shocks, as in cases of drought and flood.

At the same time, there are many people living in low income conditions in urban areas who depend on effective food management. Questions of rural-urban migration and employment policy are part of the equation. Sustainability in rural areas and in cities are intertwined.

All reports of the CFS High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition confirm that there is robust evidence of interaction between food security, climate, environment, energy and health. Given these interactions, it can be very difficult to assess the direct or indirect performance of food systems. Among other things, there is a need to look at agriculture in terms of employment, and take into account links between production and consumption.

Food security is closely connected with questions of nutrition. Action on nutrition must also be context-sensitive. For example, in two Asian countries, improvements in food supply did not lead to improved nutrition because of poor sanitation and resultant poor utilization of calories. In addition, much more attention should be paid to food safety. Four times the recommended level of herbicides and pesticides are used in aquaculture, livestock and poultry breeding, with toxicity a significant concern.

Nutrition is multifaceted and the conditions that determine nutrition are within the purview of different ministries such as health and agriculture. A whole-of-government approach to nutrition, strategic decision-making, and linking of technical with political levels is recommended. This may call for leadership at the highest levels of government to

ensure cooperation and a food-based approach, going beyond reliance on mechanisms such as the use of dietary supplements.

The means of implementation are vitally important with a particular need to consider questions of tax administration and public spending. The role of government in food production has been curtailed in recent decades and could be enhanced. For example, there are important opportunities afforded by technology and investment, including in R&D into resilient crops, as well as in marketing. Technology and innovation must be based on local conditions and expectations, however, and may be as simple as introducing different types of seeds and tools. The rapid application of appropriate technology facilitated by the Technology Bank for LDCs also deserves support.

One of the most significant factors in food security is transport. There is a strong need for infrastructure and related investment incentives. A great deal of food does not reach markets due to poor infrastructure and is left to rot.

Local authorities can play a major role in food security, for example in strengthening public procurement from local producers for delivery of school nutrition programmes, and in allowing support for both formal and informal sectors in the food economy. Informal actors such as street vendors should not be pushed aside. At the same time, there is an almost complete absence of data on low income communities. Comparability is needed at global and national levels but local-level metrics are also needed to inform decision-making.

While there are no generalizations, one must be serious about ensuring the convergence of global, national and local pathways to food security. Most decisions in this area are taken by private stakeholders at local levels. The role of private sector and consumer organizations is underestimated, and there is a huge challenge in connecting action by these stakeholders to decision-making. Some countries have found it very helpful to bring all stakeholders in rural development together, including at the village level, and to stress leadership at local levels.

Session 4: What do the SDGs tell us about the determinants of health and their policy implications?

Health and well-being are related to many other SDGs. On the one hand, health outcomes are determined by outside factors such as the natural and urban environment, diets, working conditions, education, the prevalence of violence, and gender-related factors. Some of these factors are in turn influenced by other factors through a “web of causation” On the other hand, actions in the health sector have been demonstrated to have positive spillovers, including to economic growth, poverty reduction, reduction of inequality, education, gender equality and cohesive and inclusive societies. Taking these links into account will be paramount in order to design adequate health policies.

Looking at individual targets under SDG 3 unveils such linkages. The example was given of target 3.4 on non-communicable diseases. Linkages have been documented to many other targets under SDG 3 and other SDGs, in particular SDG 8 (8.1, 8.5 in relation to labour conditions and 8.8); to poverty (1.1.); to food security (2.2 and 2.b); to urbanization and urban planning (through provision of shelter and public spaces); and to the safe management of chemicals (12.4). Action on HIV/AIDS also requires a multi-sectoral approach, for example to provide access to evidence-based interventions to vulnerable populations, such as women and people in prison, or in order to fight discrimination and stigma (SDG 10) and ensure access to justice (SDG 16). The role of education in integrated approaches is clear, as shown by many examples including the role of schools to promote sanitation, healthy nutrition, sexual and reproductive rights education and fight gender violence – all determinants of health outcomes.

The link with food systems appears very strong and demands an integrated approach. In particular, diets are a critical factor in non-communicable diseases - unhealthy diets are already the number one risk factor for the burden of disease, and it is projected that by 2030, overweight and obesity could affect 3.8 billion people in all countries. It is still possible in many countries to avoid the “obesity epidemics”. However, this calls for taking a food systems approach to health.

Trade and related aspects (including property rights and benefit sharing in relation to genetic resources) appear as a determinant of health outcomes, both directly (through, for example, their impacts on affordability of medicines) and indirectly (through their effects on international and national food systems and diets). Whereas there is awareness of this at the international level, participants pointed to a lack of communication and coordination between Ministries in charge of health and trade. This can result in lack of coherence in policies and negotiating positions. Some warned that more attention should be paid to potential tensions between the SDG target that calls for an open trade system and some of the health-related targets. In general, it is critical to assess the health impacts of trade agreements.

Health policy should be everyone's policy. The public sector has a strong role to play, in particular because of the public good nature of many aspects of health, including global pandemics and global health security. There is a need for more public sector research on prevention (taking into account, e.g., environmental health, exercise, lifestyle), as current public and especially private research heavily focus on curative aspects. Achieving SDG 3 will also require addressing what some call the "corporate determinants of health" – which include the strong influence that corporate actors have on global food systems and their impacts on health outcomes and the lack of accountability of the private sector to those suffering from the burden of disease. Public leadership will be needed to raise awareness of the importance of adopting a comprehensive perspective on health and work out its implications for strategies and policies. More broadly, the trend is now towards an approach coined "Health in all policies".

The discussion showcased a range of practical arrangements at the national level to better integrate policies around health, including: multi-sector working groups; national health commissions or inter-ministerial committees; multi-sector alliances within and outside Government; integrated budgeting and accounting frameworks that promote cross-sector collaboration; and analyses that apply a health lens to policies in other sectors. WHO has developed tools in support of such approaches. The "Urban health and well-being" program of the International Council for Science (ICSU) was mentioned as a good example of systems approach to health. In order to raise awareness of policy-makers of the multiple determinants of health, spatial mapping tools are important. In the attempt to foster cross-sectoral integration of policies, issue-based approaches (e.g. focusing on a specific disease) can be more practical than general, sector-based attempts. The generation of mutually recognized evidence that shows the value of specific interventions is important.

Other important issues in relation to SDG 3 include: achieving universal health coverage; finding ways to finance the fight against neglected tropical diseases; giving more prominence to awareness and action on mental health; addressing violence against women and its economic and social costs; addressing the lack of personnel in the health sector that is expected to be more pronounced in coming decades; continuing to work on affordable access to medicine for all; and more generally, finding adequate policies to move from curative to preventive health systems. Addressing these will require integrated policies and tools.

Session 5: Can the SDGs accelerate progress towards gender equality?

The cross-cutting nature of gender equality is underlined in the 2030 Agenda. In the SDGs, gender equality is both a goal in itself, whose realization will be positively affected by progress on other goals, and a means to achieve other goals. This requires both targeted actions to meet the targets under SDG 5, and gender mainstreaming in all the other goals. This has implications for strategies, budgets, legal and institutional arrangements. The goal is clearly applicable to all countries, as no country can claim to have achieved gender equality in full.

Gender equality is a responsibility of society at large. Gender equality measures have to include men, and more generally all groups of the population. Some countries have achieved rapid progress on gender equality, and it would be important to analyze such cases of “positive deviance” in order to understand how such changes could come about. Work on gender equality has to be cognizant of the impact of societal factors that affect relations between men and women. For example, poverty and war have been associated with high prevalence of domestic violence, a significant issue in many countries. In turn, the way women are treated in society also impacts outcomes in terms of health and well-being, for women and for society as a whole.

Importantly, while action toward gender equality is often thought of as pertaining to the microeconomic level, gender equality also has important macro-economic dimensions. For example, unpaid domestic labor in effect “subsidizes” the whole economy in significant ways. Actions towards gender equality may also have important effects in terms of inequality, for example through impacting the concentration of wealth.

While some SDGs have many references to gender in their targets, others do not. Efforts are needed to understand the gender dimension of such SDGs. This means linking existing evidence with strategies in specific sectors (e.g. to address issues faced by women in fisheries or women exposed to hazardous chemicals, or to allocate water rights for irrigation). One participant suggested that in devising policies in other sectors, a “do no harm” principle with respect to gender equality should be applied. In general, impacts of social and environmental policies on gender need to be assessed.

Many countries have national gender action plans or strategies in place. As with other SDGs, these plans will need to be brought together with plans for SDG implementation. Legislation is a critical first step to address issues such as domestic violence. Education is also needed to address mind sets at the societal level, beyond its proven effects in terms of improving women’s health conditions. Greater availability of gender-disaggregated statistics, individual identification of every person as underlined in SDG 16 and information and communication technologies are critical enablers of action towards gender equality.

Engagement of civil society, including shadow reporting, was suggested as a way to improve accountability on SDG 5.

Investing in women and girls is critical. Gender-sensitive planning and budgeting in particular are important levers for action that need to be given full consideration. Gender budgeting does not imply a need for additional resources; rather, it results in different allocations of resources that often have strong positive social impacts. This is all the more true as, for example, gender correlates with other dimensions such as poverty and inequality. For example, gender-sensitive design of roads and other infrastructure has been proven to improve social outcomes compared to “traditional” solutions.

The good work done on the normative framework was mentioned, but it was generally agreed that regulation must be followed by implementation efforts. In this regard, national mechanisms for gender equality are often underfunded. A stronger link to funding channels is needed, even though encouraging examples exist - an example given during the meeting was a programme for women’s empowerment for climate change in a South Asian country, financed by the Green Climate Fund. While many public institutions providing funding use so-called “gender markers”, private institutions and public–private partnerships tend not to use gender criteria, and this was perceived as a challenge by several participants. Integrated approaches to funding may be a good way to address gender equality in broader contexts, for example in countries that suffer from natural disasters. Addressing gender issues in rural areas is often challenging, due to a number of factors including lower density of infrastructure (e.g. health clinics), fewer opportunities for employment, and lower availability of financing.

Session 6: Maximizing the impact of infrastructure and industry on other SDGs

SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure is central to the achievement of all SDGs, as a catalyst and multiplier. Industry and infrastructure are needed in order to achieve a wide range of public goals. Given the urbanisation trend, physical and e-infrastructure can reduce the pressure on urban centres and contribute to making the cities of tomorrow sustainable. In turn, innovation is a way to enhance the services that infrastructure and industry provide to society. Industry and infrastructure have economic, social and environmental impacts, which depend on their nature. These impacts – positive as well as negative – have to be assessed and inform public policy. Strategies and policies should seek to maximize positive impacts of infrastructure and industry on all the SDGs.

Different goals and interests often make it difficult to formulate cohesive industrial and innovation policies. Clear and well-articulated goals that are transparent, publicly visible and predictable can serve the interests of all actors. Aspects such as social inclusion, employment, innovation and job creation need to be balanced in this process. Investing in human capital is essential in order to increase public participation, react to new challenges to government and governance and broaden the skills available to countries and industries. It is also important to consider the informal sector in the formulation of policies, with the aim of increasing the formal part of the economy. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in terms of job creation but also have specific capacity building needs, and they have to be given due consideration in national strategies and policies.

Examples of national strategies for industry, technology and innovation were given during the discussion. Other institutional arrangements include MoUs between the Ministry of Industry and other Ministries, for example in relation to environmental impact assessments. There were examples of countries simplifying procedures for small enterprises to become formal. Among other things, public administration needs to focus on sustainable resource use and land use planning. The latter is instrumental in trying to govern the industrialization process in rapidly growing cities. There is often a capacity gap in this domain. Moreover, it is important to explore new methods for increasing participation and balancing the interests of stakeholders.

Financing has been repeatedly identified as an obstacle for innovation systems and especially for infrastructure. Political will is part of the equation. But public resources are by themselves insufficient to cover the needs, and other approaches may be needed to mobilize private resources, including from institutional investors.

International organizations play a critical role in the formulation of norms and standards for industry. They can also help transfer expertise and technology to developing countries to develop their industry and enhance their innovation systems. For example, UNIDO's flagship Programme for Country Partnership currently being implemented in some countries is a

forum for coordinating and integrating the efforts of all relevant stakeholders- national, international, and public and private actors- and can foster a more effective resource mobilization, and ensure coordination of relevant actors and ministries to enhance the industrialisation process. South-South cooperation focusing on industrial development has been growing and has become a major factor. There is potential for traditional bilateral assistance to further benefit from multilateral cooperation through UN agencies and South-South cooperation. New partnerships including academia, the private sectors and government can also be useful.

Session 7: Integrated actions for oceans

Oceans are connected to many of the SDGs. In addition to the environmental dimension of oceans, the targets under SDG 14 highlight their social and economic dimensions, in relation to poverty, food security, economic growth and jobs, water, gender, and many more. For example, “blue economy” as a concept goes beyond a particular sector and can be a way to frame sustainable development in relation to the many facets of oceans. At the land-sea interface, coastal economies and ecosystems require integrated planning and management that incorporate social, economic and environmental aspects.

This complexity translates into challenges for governance frameworks at different scales, which have to balance a web of competing interests. In addition to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the overarching framework for international legislation on oceans, a myriad of global, regional and sub-regional agreements exist; lack of enforcement, compliance and coordination have repeatedly been mentioned as issues in relation to this web of agreements.

Lack of political traction and low priority given to oceans were pointed out as reasons for slow progress – issues such as pollution and overfishing have been with us for decades. The adoption of SDG 14 as a standalone goal for oceans offers an opportunity to put oceans higher on the political map. The connections that are made in SDG 14 targets with other goals may help in this regard. Making links with the Paris Climate Agreement may benefit implementation of the SDGs as well. For example, it was reported that two-thirds of the INDCs submitted so far referred to oceans.

At the national level, weak institutional systems in relation to oceans can stifle growth. There has been significant progress since 1992 when oceans were included as a chapter of Agenda 21. Experience of mechanisms such as integrated coastal zone management, ecosystem approaches and marine spatial planning has been accumulating, providing lessons that can inform enhanced integration going forward. Attempts at integrated management have initially focused on coastal zones and have extended to exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Yet, efforts in this regard are not well tracked. In many countries, multiple sector strategies that interface with oceans are not well coordinated. While many countries have strategies focused on oceans, the poverty dimension and other social aspects, including gender, are often weakly addressed in such documents; there is a need to better align such strategies and plans with plans for the implementation of SDGs.

Several examples of efforts that have supported enhanced integration were mentioned by participants. They include Europe’s maritime strategy at the regional level; and multi-sector and multi-stakeholder task forces, councils or coordination mechanisms at the national level. High-level political support for such mechanisms is important. Some participants mentioned the importance of creating institutional processes that can promote the contribution of ocean resources to national economies. From the perspective of small island developing States

(SIDS), citizen science and civil society / local community engagement are important, including awareness raising, co-design of management arrangements, and participatory management.

Capacity building needs are important, in particular for SIDS, many of which have EEZs that are disproportionately larger than their land territory. Financing is often a concern, with lack of secure funding and reliance on project resources that do not enable institutional continuity and build-up of national expertise.

Enhanced monitoring and evaluation appears necessary at many different levels. This includes, in particular, assessment of marine resources that can support “blue economy” activities; assessments of the performance of existing institutions (for example, marine protected areas) in economic, social and environmental terms; tracking commitments made at various international conferences; and enhanced science-policy interface on oceans.

An example of international, multi-stakeholder partnership, the Coral Triangle Initiative, was discussed in detail. This partnership, which involves several countries of the Asia-Pacific Region and development partners, has evolved to incorporate multiple institutional arrangements, including cooperation arrangements focused on capacity building. A Regional Plan of Action serves as rallying point for the coordination of actors at different geographical levels, from the regional to the sub-national.

National supreme audit institutions, individually or through the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), can support national efforts to enhance the effectiveness of institutions, including those working on oceans. Based on the experience of INTOSAI, a critical success factor for institutions to work coherently is the identification of all relevant institutional stakeholders, followed by clear assignment of responsibilities and leadership to address specific issues.

Other important issues in relation to SDG 14 included: marine biotechnology; access and benefit sharing in relation to genetic resources, in particular in the context of biodiversity in the area beyond national jurisdiction; the need for action on integrated food chains; the need to focus more on positive aspects of fisheries and tourism, in particular on their economic potential for countries such as SIDS that heavily depend on them; the use of existing international instruments to address social issues, including labor conditions in fisheries; the importance of addressing pollution from plastics; and the need to include intergenerational equity in current efforts to manage ecosystems, which requires a long-term perspective.

The forthcoming Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, to be held in June 2017 in New York, was mentioned as an opportunity to galvanize concerted and cooperative action among all stakeholders to address the multi-faceted dimensions of SDG 14.

Closing remarks

The closing remarks underscored the high interest of the meeting's discussions for the 2017 HLPF, which will capture the experiences from two years of SDG implementation and guide the way forward. National interest and engagement is high – forty countries have signed up for presenting their voluntary national reviews at the HLPF.

Many common elements were highlighted in the different sessions of the meeting. The meeting provided many concrete illustrations of how progressing towards one of the SDGs can impact the others. One clear message was that understanding the important interrelations among the SDGs is critical to accelerate their implementation. But this has to go beyond complex mappings to develop simple and straightforward messages that illustrate the policy implications of these interrelations and can be used by decision makers.

Effective institutions are critical for implementing the SDGs. To do this, three mutually associated ingredients are key: structures, mechanisms or processes, and incentives. Because institutions are not separate from the cultures, societies, histories and politics within which they exist, it is necessary to look outside them and engage with a diverse range of stakeholders. This is not an easy task; and the solution may not be to directly reproduce the web of interconnections across goals and targets into a corresponding web of interactions between the many parts of Government and other stakeholders.

Many countries provided examples in relation to all the SDGs covered in the meeting. Some are creating new coordination structures to drive SDG implementation. Others have devoted important roles to the planning or another ministry. The discussions highlighted the importance of engaging institutions in charge of financial and budgetary matters. But it is clear that efforts must go beyond the organizational structures and elaboration of common strategic objectives and develop policy documents platforms, implementation mechanisms and review processes and measures that help all parts of Government to translate objectives into concrete outcomes action plans through new and efficient ways of working together. The importance of leadership at the highest level, at the sector and sub-national levels, and within society at large is important.

Multidimensional strategies are necessary to address the multiple facets of poverty, deprivation, discrimination and marginalization. For example, the meeting discussed the close link between combatting poverty and ensuring food security, and the value of a whole of government approach to challenges such as hunger, malnutrition, ill-health and the relative deprivations of women and girls.

Implementing the SDGs requires going beyond the just national ministries. Parliaments have a critical role to play. Local authorities should be mobilized. Supreme audit institutions can contribute to oversight and advise on implementation. Citizens and local communities must be empowered. The SDGs are a whole of society undertaking, and it is important that they are owned and advocated for by all.

In order to face oncoming challenges, including the effects of climate change, urbanization, migration, ageing and technological change, decision-making has to overcome short termism and look to the long term. For example, in order to eradicate poverty, a life-cycle approach is necessary, as gains and losses in human development are cumulative, and people rise above or fall below minimum levels of income depending on events and shocks. Doing this changes how we think about and work for maternal health, early childhood development, quality education, labour market policies, social protection and care.

Knowledge will need to constantly be expanded. This includes, for example, taking a new look at issues related to the measurement of poverty and its impact on women, and at various levels of disaggregation. The need for enhanced monitoring and implementation was mentioned in most of the sessions and appears as a critical cross-cutting issue. There is an increased understanding of the need for new approaches in many of these areas, including through better and more timely administrative data.

The meeting was a reminder to look into the means of implementation at national and local levels. International cooperation is critical to address the dire lack of capacities, finances and other resources to implement SDG strategies in many countries. International cooperation is needed through aid, technology support and tax cooperation. It is important to constantly keep the focus on the most disadvantaged countries and those in situations of conflict.

The closing took note of a range of specific recommendations on issues the HLPF could raise in its ministerial declaration. It could send a strong message on the need to consider the interactions among the SDGs including those with the climate change Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. It could call for going beyond coordination and identifying tools and measures to ensure operationalization and support the development of truly integrated policies. It could call for developing pragmatic and efficient ways to monitor the impact of policies and programmes on eradicating poverty and sharing prosperity.

The closing also took note of several issues the Committee of Experts on Public Administration should further discuss in preparing its contribution to the HLPF and ECOSOC, including institutional issues related to SDG implementation or issues related to the mobilization of domestic resources.

The full documentation of the meeting is available online at:

<https://publicadministration.un.org/en/News-Events/Vienna-Meeting>

Annex: Meeting agenda

Day 1 – Wednesday, 14 December 2016

09:30 – 10:00 Opening

Mr. Li Yong, Director General, UNIDO

H.E. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations,

Ms. Marion Barthélémy, Acting Director, Division for Public Administration and Management, UNDESA

10:00 – 12:00 Panel 1 – Understanding important interactions among the SDGs

Guiding questions:

What are important linkages among the targets of Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14 as well as between them and the other SDGs?

Which SDG or targets may be expected to bring benefits across all SDGs?

What plans, strategies and institutional arrangements are being put in place at the moment to implement the SDGs?

What is the experience thus far with national sustainable development plans and coordinating structures in readying institutions for integrated approaches to the SDGs? What are the implications for ongoing SDG implementation efforts?

How could governments and other stakeholders contribute to mapping important interrelationships among the SDGs?

Moderator: Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, UNITAR

Speakers:

Mr. Uchita de Zoysa, Sustainable Development Advisor, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Sri Lanka

Mr. Måns Nilsson, Research Director, Stockholm Environment Institute, and Professor of the Practice of Policy Analysis, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Ms. Mathilde Bouyé, Associate, SDG Delivery Team, World Resources Institute

Lead discussant:

Mr. Stefan Jungcurt, Editor and Team Leader, Earth Negotiations Bulletin, International Institute for Sustainable Development

13:45 – 15:45 Panel 2 – Eradicating poverty as a foremost objective of institutions and policies across the SDGs

Guiding questions:

Which targets have the greatest impact on reducing poverty and are there critical trade-offs in the short- or long-term?

What institutional mechanisms are in place to address the interlinked challenges of poverty eradication at the national and local levels as well as in the area of development cooperation? What has worked and why?

What policy lessons can be learned from past experiences with engagement of marginalized groups and other key stakeholders with regard to implementation of SDG 1?

How has poverty eradication been ‘mainstreamed’ across government planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation?

Moderator: Mr. José Cuesta, Chief, Social and Economic Policies Unit, Office of Research, UNICEF

Speakers:

Ms. Sabina Alkire, Director, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Department of International Development, University of Oxford

Ms. Isabel Ortiz, Director, Social Protection Department, ILO

Ms. Jiang Xiheng, Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation Department, Development Research Centre of the State Council, China

Lead discussant:

Mr. Roberto Bissio, Coordinator, Social Watch

16:00 – 18:00 Panel 3 – Ending hunger and achieving food security: what can we learn from the key linkages with other SDGs?

Guiding questions:

What institutional arrangements are most likely to lead to positive interactions among policies designed to achieve SDG 2 and other SDGs?

What are successful examples of integration of infrastructure and technology for achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture? How can finance and technology be further leveraged to promote integrated approaches?

What is the role of the centre of government in successful implementation of SDG 2? How and when should inter-ministerial coordination be strengthened?

Moderator: Mr. Ernesto Soria Morales, Senior Policy Analyst, Policy Coherence for Development Unit, OECD

Speakers:

Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Professor and Tun Hussein Onn Chair of International Studies, Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia and former Assistant Director-General, FAO

Ms. Laura Sommer, Policy Adviser, International, Sustainable Development and Food Systems Unit, Federal Office for Agriculture, Switzerland

Ms. Cecilia Tacoli, Principal Researcher and Leader of Urban-Rural Linkages Team, International Institute for Environment and Development

Lead discussant:

Mr. Patrick Caron, Chairperson, Steering Committee of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, Committee on World Food Security

Day 2 – Thursday, 15 December 2016

10:00 – 12:00 Panel 4 – What do the SDGs tell us about the determinants of health and their policy implications?

Guiding questions:

How could institutions with a strong influence on health outcomes be incentivized to give greater consideration to health-related targets in policy-making?

What are examples of institutions and policies outside the health sector proper that support improved health outcomes?

What institutional arrangements are needed to resolve possible trade-offs between national economic development and the health of individuals and communities?

Moderator: Ms. Agnes Soucat, Director, Department of Health Systems Governance and Financing, WHO

Speaker:

Mr. Obijiofor Aginam, Director Ad-Interim and Officer-in-Charge, Head of Governance for Global Health, UNU-International Institute for Global Health

Lead discussant:

Mr. Saroj Jayyasinghe, Professor, Department of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

13:45 – 15:45 Panel 5 – Can the SDGs accelerate progress towards gender equality?

Guiding questions:

What has 30 years' experience with national machineries for the advancement of women taught us about institutional mechanisms and means for promoting integrated approaches to gender equality?

What should be the relationship of national machineries for the advancement of women with other areas of government?

What institutional changes are being made to build on the specific linkages between SDG 5 and other SDGs and accelerate progress towards gender equality?

Moderator: Ms. Christine Brautigam, Director, Intergovernmental Support Division, UN-Women

Speakers:

Ms. Emilia Reyes, Coordinator, Gender Policies and Budgets, Equidad de Genero: Ciudadania, Trabajo y Familia, A.C.

Ms. Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future

Lead discussant:

Ms. Ranjani Krishnamurthy, Independent Researcher and Consultant on Gender, Poverty and Development

16:00 – 18:00 Panel 6 – Maximizing the impact of infrastructure and industry on all SDGs

Guiding questions:

How can the impact of infrastructure, industry and innovation on all other SDGs be maximized?

Are there examples of countries that have started aligning their national industrialization and infrastructure plans with this kind of integrated thinking, and if so what are some initial ideas?

What arrangements are needed to ready institutions and policies for integrated approaches to SDG 9?

Moderator: Mr. Philippe Scholtès, Managing Director, UNIDO

Speakers:

Mr. Marcos Alegre Chang, Vice Minister of Environment, Peru

Mr. Pavel Kabat, Director General and CEO, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Mr. Yao Shenhong, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of China to UNIDO

Lead discussant:

Ms. Meera Venkatesh, Director, Division of Physical and Chemical Sciences, Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, International Atomic Energy Agency

Day 3 – Friday, 16 December 2016

10:00 – 12:00 Panel 7 – Integrated actions for oceans

Guiding questions:

What are successful arrangements at the national level to enhance the benefits from the use of marine resources to the economy and to poor communities in particular?

What lessons can be taken from decades of experience in integrated coastal zone management, which tries to implement integrated approaches to the development of coastal areas?

How do countries relate ocean authorities to other institutions? Are there any interesting country cases where institutional changes are introduced in accordance with the need for integrated approaches to oceans?

What are examples related to means of implementation including partnerships that help enabling integrated approaches to address the specific needs of small island developing States?

Moderator: Mr. Julian Barbière, Head, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO

Speakers:

Ms. Biana Cicin-Sain, President, Global Ocean Forum, and Director, Gerard J. Mangone Center for Marine Policy, College of Earth, Ocean and Environment, University of Delaware

Mr. Widi Agoes Pratikto, Executive Director, Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security

Mr. Mark Gaffigan, Managing Director, Natural Resources and Environment, Government Accountability Office, United States

Lead discussant:

Ms. Asha Singh, Head, Oceans Governance, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission

12:00 – 12:30 Wrap-up

Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee, Chief, Policy Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA

Mr. Taizo Nishikawa, Deputy Director-General, UNIDO