



MGCY on HLPF

Overview

June 2014

The Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY) is the official constituency for children and youth within the United Nations sustainable development processes including the post2015 agenda. Through extensive consultations within its constituency, the MGCY strongly affirms that the following factors must lie at the core of any High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) proposal:

- *Action, Implementation and Accountability* through the adoption of a hybrid “AMR-UPR+” mechanism and synergy with the SDGs Framework.
- Mainstreaming of Youth positions within the decision making mechanism/process of the HLPF
- Ensuring long-term decision-making by establishing a High Commissioner for Future Generations to work alongside and support the HLPF.
- A strong mandate with the HLPF reporting directly to the General Assembly.
- Funding to be made available to stakeholders from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds to ensure the inclusivity of the new body

Mechanisms must be built into the mandate of the HLPF that encourage and cultivate a culture of accountability. The forum should build upon and not regress from the successes from the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) process, and should provide genuine engagement with the Major Groups in decision-making processes, particularly empowering children and youth. The HLPF must bring sustainable development to the forefront of the political agendas of both the UN system and Member States alike. It should take a cross-cutting and holistic approach which considers the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development in order to secure the “Future We Want” for children, youth and future generations.

Action and Accountability

One of the shortcomings of the CSD was that it lacked the framework for follow up on implementation of sustainable development on all levels. Therefore, action, implementation and accountability must establish the very foundation of the HLPF. Similarly, the framework for tracking progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be embedded within the forum. Short-term goals, indicators and plans of implementation must accompany and complement the longer-term indicators of SDGs in order for progress to be made. Additionally, the HLPF must have a mandate to follow up on the implementation of voluntary commitments and provide entry points for the Major Groups to sufficiently provide the accountability framework going forward.



The most ambitious decisions on the promotion of sustainable development are useless if not implemented. That is why the HLPF needs to be equipped with effective monitoring and implementation mechanisms. The Major Group for Children and Youth call for a hybrid “AMR-UPR+” accountability mechanism similar to, but building upon the successes of both the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process of the Human Rights Council. This mechanism would serve as a crucial way forward for Member States to report and track progress on their own efforts to achieve these goals, delivered on an annual or semi-annual basis. This will not only improve the accountability and transparency of on-the-ground implementation of the SDGs at all levels, but it will also encourage shorter term action plans by governments to measure and achieve progress on an incremental scale. As with the AMR, the focus of the sessions should center around implementation. However, to ensure that accountability is also a focus of these sessions, the UPR model of peer reviewing on progress made by Member States in implementing sustainable development must be embedded within this new mechanism. Ultimately, implementation of sustainable development by Member States will take place at the national level. Therefore, similar to the UPR in the Human Rights Council, this new hybrid mechanism should require Member States to submit National Reports on Sustainable Development every two years, as opposed to the voluntary nature of the national reports in the AMR. To maintain consistency in guidelines for reporting, these national reports could potentially track and review progress on national implementation of *all* Sustainable Development Goals.

Like the UPR, inputs from the Major Groups and other stakeholders should be explicitly included in the review process of these national reports, and should be seen as crucial for the transparency, legitimacy and overall effectiveness of the review mechanism. Member States should also be encouraged to consult with civil society organizations on a national level for input in these national reports.

Long-term and forward-looking decision-making

Since the HLPF will be the main UN body for sustainable development, the original definition of which is “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*”^[1] We welcome the Secretary-General Report *Intergenerational Solidarity and the Needs of Future Generations* (2) and call for the implementation of the first of the report’s suggestions, namely a High Commissioner for Future Generations which would work alongside the HLPF. The additional perspective of shining a light upon the needs and interests of future generations and helping to promote holistic, interconnected approaches would strengthen and add further legitimacy to the work of the HLPF. The means and mechanisms by which the HLPF addresses intergenerational equity (a cornerstone of sustainable development) is critical to ensure its impact.



Through acting as an entry point, not only co-ordinating with the Major Groups, but by being visible to the public at the international and national levels, it would help contribute much needed trust and transparency to the UN system, the HLPF and its functions. *The High Commissioner for Future Generations need not come with legal implications that would infringe upon Member States' national sovereignty.* Instead, it would provide a long-term and forward-looking perspective on the cross-cutting and emerging issues of sustainable development that the HLPF would be mandated to cover. The inclusion of a High Commissioner for Future Generations would be a long overdue opportunity for Member States to take action to explicitly demonstrate their commitment to ensuring intergenerational equity and the importance of future generations in achieving sustainable development, as has been highlighted continuously for decades.

Participation

Youth participation in decision-making should be highlighted and incorporated into the core of the HLPF. Therefore, MGCY calls for a bottom-up approach to agenda setting at the HLPF. We welcome the fact that Major Groups, including Children and Youth, have been ensured full and timely access to meetings, documents and other information from the forum. The forum should allow for inclusive and genuine engagement of the Major Groups from all backgrounds, including constituencies traditionally marginalized from the decision-making process including those that are unrepresented within the current Major Group structure. This should include regional proposals such as the ESCAP initiative to increase the number of constituencies from the current 9 major groups to 16 recognised groups. Measures must be taken to include input and interventions from the Major Groups in all high-level meetings and modalities for Major Groups participation in the General Assembly high-level segment must also be guaranteed. Youth concerns should be mainstreamed within the decision making process of the HLPF and funding should be made available to stakeholders from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds to ensure the inclusivity of the new body.

Mandate

The MGCY considers that the overarching goal of the HLPF should be to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD). The “hybrid” format under which the HLPF will convene, under ECOSOC though quadrennially directly under the General Assembly, is new and untested. The HLPF runs the risk of becoming subsidiary in all but name to ECOSOC, which would place it in a similar position to the CSD with the resource, and authority concerns that this would entail. Placing the HLPF within ECOSOC limits its ability to adopt binding decisions and therefore limits the HLPF’s impact and reach. The HLPF substantive sessions should focus on the themes of action, implementation



and accountability and should provide a framework for following up on progress made by Member States and the UN system on sustainable development. Additionally, regional meetings should be held in association with the UN regional commissions, to maximize participation and engagement and incorporate people marginalized from participation otherwise.

This is what we expect. This is a future we are prepared to take ownership of.

[1] World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). *Our common future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 p. 43.

[2] *Intergenerational Solidarity and the Needs of Future Generations*. A/68/322, 15. Aug. 2013.