SUMMARY OF SIDE EVENT | HLPF 2017 ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“Nutrition and soils in the 2030 Agenda: a contribution to the HLPF Thematic Reviews”

Monday, July 10th 2017
Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations
MESSAGES EMERGING FROM THE EVENT PRESENTED BY THE CHAIR:

1) The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) should be a trigger for change and create space for transformation, as it serves as a central platform for follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The HLPF thematic reviews (looking closely at a sub-set of SDGs from a particular thematic perspective) can help to achieve a crosscutting review of interlinkages to achieve the SDGs as a package, rather than by looking at progress on individual goals only.

2) Complex systems, such as agriculture, will require systemic solutions: Soils, land and nutrition (connected to poverty, health, sustainable consumption and production and to the protection of natural resources) are crosscutting to the SDGs and therefore looking at all relevant SDGs from the perspective of land and soil or nutrition contributes to thematic reviews of the 2030 Agenda.

3) Global solutions need to be translated to where the action is: we need to link global and local levels to benefit people on the ground. Thematic reviews need to support a coherent global approach for SDG implementation and link global and (sub)-national SDG implementation. This can be achieved by using local examples from different contexts to inform global approaches to SDG implementation.

4) Shrinking spaces for civil society to engage are counterproductive to SDG success: preparatory events in support of the HLPF thematic reviews should be framed by the principles of universality, inclusion – to leave no one behind- and integration to highlight gaps, synergies, and progress to achieve the SDGs. They should consider available data and all types of knowledge, and empower different actors to share priorities on SDG implementation in order to raise accountability and awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

5) Preparatory events should complement and support the HLPF: An enabling environment for more participation and contributions to the review of progress towards the SDGs can be provided in the context of preparatory events. These preparatory events should complement the proceedings at the HLPF by providing the necessary dialogue space required to discuss important crosscutting issues and by strengthening feedback loops from global to local and vice versa.
By looking closely at a sub-set of SDGs from a specific thematic perspective, thematic reviews under the HLPF provide a tool for an integrated implementation of the SDGs. They can provide ideas for cross-sector collaboration and cooperation between UN agencies, scientific institutions and civil society, and most importantly, between citizens and their governments.
For the first time, the HLPF 2017 looks closely at a sub-set of SDGs under the theme: "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". The 2030 Agenda sets clear that its implementation rests on contributions by all stakeholders and a wide range of actors. Their insights should inform discussions at the HLPF to support a coherent global approach for national and local implementation of the SDGs. At the same time, bringing various perspectives together and navigating the complexity of an integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a time intensive and complex undertaking. The HLPF would therefore benefit from preparatory events, which provide an opportunity to strengthen the HLPF by reviewing and synthesizing information ahead of it.

This High-Level Side Event at HLPF 2017 focused on such preparatory events. It presented the outcomes of a thematic review of the SDGs from the perspective of soils and land conducted in Berlin in May 2017 (the results are available at globalsoilweek.org). The event also presented a plan to prepare contributions to thematic reviews from the perspective of nutrition in order to build partnerships and gain insights from other groups aiming to conduct similar exercises.

**EVENT PROCEEDINGS**

A welcome address was given by Reinhard Krapp who opened the event by remarking the impressive group of countries and organizations co-hosting this side event including Germany, Benin, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Guatemala, as well as, partner organizations from science, civil society and UN agencies. He highlighted discussions organized by these partners in previous HLPF-related events on the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, which entails unprecedented levels of complexity for its operationalization. He also pointed the need to navigate this challenge and remarked that preparatory events can contribute to an integrated and coherent approach to SDG implementation and strengthen thematic reviews at the HLPF. He spoke of keeping up the political momentum of HLPF by recognizing it as a process, preparatory and follow-up processes included.

Event Chair Alexander Müller introduced the rationale for the event co-hosts to contribute to the thematic reviews of the SDGs and to the work of the HLPF by explaining that thematic reviews – as conducted at the HLPF - can allow for a crosscutting review of interlinkages in order to achieve the SDGs as a package, rather than by looking at progress on individual goals only. He
also described the reason for combining soils and nutrition as crosscutting themes for such reviews. Soils and land are the basis of health and nutrition. Not only do they constitute a fundamental component of food production and employment, but healthy soils and land are also the basis for many of the 17 SDGs. He proposed that we should think of progress on nutrition (also in terms of its links to sustainable agriculture, health, to ending poverty, sustainable consumption and production and to the protection of natural resources) as a clear indicator of a successful implementation of the SDGs in an integrated manner.

He restated the importance of crosscutting reviews of the SDGs as a package and posed the following questions for the event: 1) How can the HLPF benefit from preparatory events? 2) Why should the SDGs in the context of a thematic review be addressed in a crosscutting fashion, instead of individually? And 3) How should contributions to the thematic reviews from the perspective of Nutrition be organized ahead of HLPF 2018/19?

To answer these questions, he introduced the outcomes of the Global Soil Week 2017 (GSW17), which was hosted by twenty-three partners from four governments, intergovernmental and academic organizations, and civil society networks. He highlighted that the GSW17 convened over 300 people from around the globe to review the sub-set of SDGs under special consideration by the HLPF 2017, focusing on main progress and challenges related to soil and land issues. By piloting a thematic review framed by the principles of universality, inclusion and integration, the Global Soil Week generated insights into follow-up and review methodologies to highlight gaps, synergies, and progress complemented by available data and non-traditional forms of knowledge, and empowered different actors to share priorities on SDG implementation in order to raise accountability and awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Müller referenced the Global Soil Week outcomes, which included a set of policy messages on sustainable soil management and responsible land governance, as well as a report on lessons learned from the methodology that was applied. He remarked that the participants of the GSW17 were able to create linkages between sustainable soil and land management and governance and the six SDGs up for the Thematic Review in 2017, as well as to crucial issues under SDG 15, 16 and 17. Finally, he stressed that the methodological conclusions that were drawn from the Global Soil Week will be beneficial for thematic reviews in general, and especially, for the idea to support thematic reviews from the perspective of nutrition in the coming years.

**Daouda Maiga**, from the Ministry of Agriculture of Burkina Faso, spoke from the perspective of the Government co-hosts of the Global Soil Week and highlighted the crosscutting importance and nature of the issue of healthy soils for the SDGs. He stated that soils are the primary basis for prosperity and for the healthy nourishment of the world. In this regard, he highlighted farmers as
“the first agents of human health” and therefore of utmost importance for “Leaving no one behind,” a key principle guiding the implementation of the SDGs. Finally, he pointed to the value of efforts such as the Global Soil Week looking at several SDGs from the perspective of a crosscutting theme and concluded his remarks by reaffirming the renewed political commitment of the Governments co-hosting the GSW17 to continue supporting this fruitful platform.

**Joan Carling** represented the indigenous peoples’ perspectives and stressed that “we cannot achieve the SDGs without the effective participation of those furthest left behind...we cannot engage with them if their rights are not protected”. She called for coordinated efforts that allow for the effective participation of all stakeholders, where every person’s “right to participate” is recognized. She referenced a set of guidelines developed by GSW17 participants which could be used by governments to report on progress made on land governance accountability and which are included in the GSW17 Final Report.

**Thomas Gass**, ASG of UNDESA, thanked the organizers of the event for their continued support of the HLPF and stressed that the Agenda is too huge, too ambitious, too comprehensive, to deal with in our usual ways, he said: “We need to move from the mind-set of control and coordination to a mind-set of mobilization and empowerment, otherwise we will be the obstacles to SDG achievement.” He mentioned the need to adapt institutional structures to the new 2030 Agenda and increase collaboration across actors working on the different themes of the SDGs.

In this regard, he highlighted that structures and alliances or spaces such as the Global Soil Week are critical, since they allow us to discuss synergies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Drawing lessons from the discussions to inform future contributions to the SDG Thematic Reviews from the perspective of nutrition: **Ruth Richardson**, from the Global Alliance for the future of food, argued strongly for a shift of focus towards food systems, in
such a way as to “break down silos” and to identify interconnections amongst various issues. By considering the SDGs in a systems-based approach, key issues such as indigenous rights, conservation of nature and protection of biodiversity can be addressed adequately. A key aspect to achieving the SDGs will be to identify synergies between the goals. She remarked that thematic reviews based on health and nutrition have the potential to accelerate achieving several SDGs. Nutrition, much like soils and land, needs to be considered as a crosscutting issue, relating to several SDGs.

The German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), represented at the event by Anke Niederhaus, renewed its commitment to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of nutrition. She called for more coordinated efforts to ensure healthier diets. Instead of only focusing on safeguarding the world’s food supply in the face of a growing population, she pointed to the need for a shift in focus needs to address the role of healthy eating, nutritional deficiency and related diseases. By shifting focus away from purely production-oriented initiatives, she said nutrition and agriculture can become part of the solution, and ultimately catalyse the realisation of the SDGs. She reaffirmed that BMEL looks forward to continued collaboration with partners on thematic reviews for Nutrition within the 2030 Agenda.

Comments from the floor highlighted the need for increased capacity building for the rural poor and smallholder farmers, whose voices are often not heard, but who are the true agents of change. The importance of preparatory events to the HLPF, also in the shape of Expert Group Meetings (EGMs) on the SDGs as conducted ahead of HLPF 2017 was highlighted. It was mentioned that inclusiveness needs to be effectively managed to expand it for nexus issues (such as water, land and cities) being discussed next year. Human rights were mentioned as an integral part of nature by questioning how we can deal with the idea of giving governance power to nature, and not to ourselves. The concern was raised over the lack of grassroots involvement in some country’s National Voluntary Reviews. On a similar note, land rights were highlighted by focusing on land grabs by large corporations, highlighting specific examples in Haiti and Puerto Rico.

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