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Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders

Note by the Secretariat**

Summary

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>.

* E/HLPF/2019/1.

** The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations. It has been submitted late owing to technical reasons.



I. Women

1. Women today find themselves in very difficult times. This can be seen in rising protectionist Governments; xenophobia, misogyny and discrimination; Governments turning more inwards and backwards to the detriment of the world; and power ever more concentrated among the elite and corporations. It can also be seen in environmental destruction, violations of women's human rights, privatization of public goods and further marginalization and exclusion.

2. It is hard to see a light at the end of the long, dark tunnel. The effects of colonialism and unbridled neoliberalism – including massive poverty, unemployment and landlessness – interacting with patriarchy and other systems of oppression reinforce inequalities, deny women agency and block progress towards sustainable development.

3. Realizing the transformative intent of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring women's human rights and gender justice require more than just efficiency – such efforts must be purposeful. Siloed responses to the world's multiple crises cannot be allowed.

4. This agenda's success necessitates political changes so the Sustainable Development Goals truly benefit the marginalized and systematically excluded. There must be a profound shift from the dominant yet discredited fixation on economic growth to institutionalized leadership for development, justice and peace. This means moving away from extractive industries, military investments and emaciated humanitarian, gender equality and human rights action and reorienting towards empowering feminist and social movements and human rights for all. Governments, corporations, the military industrial complex, international financial institutions and other power holders must be held accountable to human rights and commitments to leave no one behind.

5. The 2019 high-level political forum is critical, as the Sustainable Development Goals under review speak to some of the most pressing structural challenges the world faces:

(a) Goal 17: finance and trade rules that restrict poor countries' policy space to follow their human rights and development objectives must change;

(b) Goal 16: militarized economies must shift to economies guided by the principles of human security for all – women and girls, indigenous, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, disabled, refugee and other marginalized communities across the lifespan – for just, equitable and non-violent governance. Governments must prevent attacks and ensure the safety and leadership of women human rights defenders, peace activists and environmental defenders. The portability and progressivity of rights should be ensured;

(c) Goal 13: unaccountable leaders guided by irrelevant ambitions are bringing irreparable consequences to our biosphere and population. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the lighthouse to guide measures to remain under 1.5 degrees of warming, ensuring ecosystem integrity while promoting gender-responsive climate action and women's participation;

(d) Goal 10: policy coherence and strengthening of the public sector are critical to reducing inequalities between and within countries. This requires reforming macroeconomic dynamics. Goals 10, 16 and 17 are closely intertwined: illicit financial flows, unfair trade rules, debt unsustainability and the undermining by international financial institutions of developing countries' right to development must be addressed;

(e) Goal 8: corporations can help to realize the Sustainable Development Goals when they pay taxes, refrain from predatory practices and ensure labour rights and decent work and working conditions. Social protection is a far more solid priority than private investment. It is also the entry point to the macroeconomic dimension of unpaid domestic and care work and other challenges around women's economic rights;

(f) Goal 4: the Women's Major Group expects meaningful and comprehensive facilitation, support and strengthening of lifelong education and learning. Austerity and other measures impede investment in transforming people's lives.

6. Accountability cannot be postponed: the 2030 Agenda was agreed voluntarily, but it should be technically and politically promoted by the high-level political forum. Thus far, the forum has proven a disappointing space. Unless it transforms modalities to deliver the follow-up and review processes needed to advance the 2030 Agenda for women and girls of every age, ability and status and in every place, it remains an empty shell.

II. Children and youth

7. Inclusion of all people is needed to collectively move towards the future we want while leaving no one behind. This will require transformations in economies, social structures, financial systems and political institutions.

8. There are clear interlinkages and trade-offs across Sustainable Development Goals. Putting society on a path consistent with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda depends on our ability to effectively address them.

9. The trajectory towards sustainable development remains far from desirable. The accumulation of inequalities are undermining sustainability, peace and resilience. The continued wave of anti-collectivism and globalism is further catalysing these adverse effects. The lost aim of Agenda 21 to confront historical injustice hinders the efforts of the high-level political forum. This should be a central focus in assessing the first cycle of the high-level political forum (2015–2019) and developing modalities around the second cycle (2020–2024).

10. Inclusive formal and informal quality education and lifelong learning are fundamental human rights and key drivers for sustainable development, yet barriers fail to be systematically addressed.

11. "Decent work" must be further defined and protected, especially with the uncertainties of the future of work. Alternative measures of growth must be integrated into formal indicator frameworks, as gross domestic product (GDP) alone fails to capture the well-being of people and the planet.

12. Inequalities continue to deepen, owing to factors such as discrimination, illicit financial flows and unfair trade agreements, human rights violations, various forms of censorship, political and corporate capture and stigmatization and marginalization.

13. Actions towards climate change mitigation are not on par with the commitments made. The transgression of planetary boundaries and biological carrying capacities continue to undermine development efforts and weaken the likelihood of attaining peace, security and equality.

14. Protracted and emerging issues continue to jeopardize progress. These include: a neoliberal growth economic paradigm that puts profit above the well-being of people and the planet, the militarization of economies and politicization of peace efforts for national interests; and corporate concentration and the rising power of

transnational corporations that deepen wealth inequalities, exhaust the planet's regenerative biocapacity, engender modern colonial divides and lead to regulatory capture.

15. The United Nations, in its growing need for funding, is leaning towards the private sector without accountability mechanisms. It is critical to assess the implications of various funding sources and continue thoughtful debate on guidelines for establishing public-private-people partnerships.

16. In order to align our global architecture to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth emphasizes the following:

(a) Integrated territorial development is indispensable to localizing this global Agenda. It addresses inequalities between different types of human settlements;

(b) Building on the work of the United Nations environment agenda, agreement on a universal protocol on plastics is needed. Forests should be given status as protected global commons. Efforts towards the Global Pact for the Environment should be ensured, to strengthen international environmental law and environment-related instruments to enhance the environmental dimension;

(c) Policy approaches should align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development. Concrete initiatives like the United Nations Environment Programme's Environmental Risk in Sovereign Credit project and environmental tax reform programme should be applied universally;

(d) Gender oppression and inequalities remain significant. Essential to overcoming structural barriers that limit agency of girls and young women is the inclusion of their voices in all decision-making spaces;

(e) Evidence from various sources (including formal, informal, traditional and indigenous) must form the foundation of each stage of the policy cycle. Anticipatory, participatory technology assessment platforms are needed to ensure technology justice;

(f) Greater integration and coherence of the various global frameworks and inputs from the Economic and Social Council's subsidiary bodies, forums and initiatives (such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the New Urban Agenda, the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, the Paris Agreement, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum) must be promoted;

(g) Rights-based participation that provides protected spaces for critical segments of society must be ensured, and the high-level political forum reform process should engage major groups and other stakeholders, building on the modalities contained in General Assembly resolution [67/290](#).

III. Non-governmental organizations

17. Stories collected from non-governmental organizations leading up to the 2019 high-level political forum demonstrate the interconnectedness of the goals and the continuing need to take holistic approaches to achieving them. Challenges noted by non-governmental organizations consistently reflected exclusion, disempowerment, reduction of diversity, lack of disaggregated data, separation of sectors, unilateralism and lack of political will. Where non-governmental organizations observed progress,

the processes that brought about progress had at their core human rights, inclusion, empowerment, cultural and environmental sustainability, disaggregation of data, cooperation and true collaboration and integration across sectors, multilateralism and not only will or commitment but also action taken with all stakeholders and with human rights at the centre.

18. Member States, the United Nations system and civil society have committed to people-centred and inclusive partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group calls upon Member States to ensure that civil society and those most affected by policymaking are guaranteed an active and meaningful role in the process of decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, thus ensuring accountability, empowering people to lead their own development and leaving no one behind.

19. Empowerment, inclusion and equality are the outcomes of and the means for achieving sustainable development for all humanity and for our shared planet.

20. For the 2019 Sustainable Development Goals under review, the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group calls upon Member States, with their unique responsibilities, and all stakeholders to work collaboratively on the following:

(a) Goal 4: ensure free and accessible quality education for all, in particular for girls and women; support educators through professional development and adequate financial compensation; and expand the vision of education beyond “preparing workers” to be more holistic and inclusive, using formal and informal structures and respecting local and indigenous cultures, native languages and cultural diversity in order to prepare global citizens to contribute to a sustainable society;

(b) Goal 8: use goal-driven development rooted in human rights to achieve economic growth, opportunity and decent work; take action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and decouple economic growth from environmental and sociocultural degradation; eradicate human trafficking and slavery in all forms; and review and revise current GDP-based indicators for Goal 8 in order to capture and learn from a disaggregated picture of growth that shows the impacts of growth on marginalized groups and on workers;

(c) Goal 10: ensure equality and freedom from discrimination for all, respecting human rights and providing comprehensive social protections; address inequalities between countries, eradicating abusive trade practices and tightening global restrictions on speculative trading; monitor global food prices; reform international financial bodies to ensure more equal representation of low- and middle-income countries; ensure equitable financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, including through redistributive fiscal policy; and uphold the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;

(d) Goal 13: align actions with the Paris Agreement; adopt risk-informed disaster planning that includes all stakeholders, especially those most vulnerable to climate risks; empower local communities to strengthen their own resilience; place long-term resilience at the core of disaster preparedness and response actions; prioritize ecologically sustainable practices; and act with urgency on climate change impacts already affecting lives and ecosystems, utilizing multilateral cooperation and cross-sector collaboration;

(e) Goal 16: ensure transparency and meaningful access to government systems at every level and for every person; empower the most vulnerable with full and equal access to justice mechanisms; promote peace to ensure sustained security, rule of law, justice and inclusiveness; uphold the independence and integrity of the judiciary; and integrate the rule of law and governance-oriented approaches throughout sustainable development efforts and priorities;

(f) Goal 17: form partnerships that include civil society and are sensitive to local sociocultural contexts; improve transparency; expand access to technological tools while ensuring their ethical use; and include in meaningful ways the voice and committed actions of civil society in the process of designing and effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda.

IV. Local authorities

21. Local and regional governments understand the global agendas as one single universal framework addressing many of the planet's most urgent priorities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the New Urban Agenda – which the Local Authorities Major Group conceives of as an accelerator for implementation – constitute a key asset to preserve our planet and the well-being of communities around the world.

22. Local and regional governments' mobilization and involvement to localize the Sustainable Development Goals is progressing in all regions: there is mounting evidence worldwide that such governments are taking action and innovating to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Local and regional government associations at the national, regional and international levels are creating favourable momentum to raise awareness and push for bottom-up implementation of the Goals. Such governments have been able to foster capacity-building and mutual training and sharing of lessons. The first-ever local and regional governments' forum, organized within the 2018 high-level political forum, provided an important space for dialogue between local and regional governments, Member States and the United Nations system entities involved in the definition and implementation of and follow-up to this Agenda.

23. With over 65 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets closely related to the delivery of basic service provision in the hands of local and regional governments, it will be critical to strengthen local institutions. Although the 17 Goals are integrated and indivisible, special attention should be paid to Goals 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17 as critical accelerators of strong local ownership and empowerment.

24. Increasing mismatches between responsibilities, development expectations and means of implementation are preventing local and regional governments from contributing their full potential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Restrictive legal, financial or institutional frameworks have limited such governments' ability to mobilize funds for sustainable investments in all world regions.

25. Voluntary national reviews do not sufficiently reflect the involvement of local and regional governments in the implementation of global agendas. Such governments have been consulted in the drafting processes for voluntary national reviews in only 45 of the 102 countries that reported to the United Nations between 2016 and 2018. To fill this gap, voluntary local and regional reviews are being promoted by the local and regional government networks around the world to foster reporting on localization.

26. The constituency of the Local Authorities Major Group commends the content of the Seville commitment, promoted by the Governments of Cabo Verde, Ecuador and Spain, which calls for cementing a global-local movement to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group reiterates the importance of the localization of the global Goals in order for them to be fully owned and shaped by local actors.

27. The Group underscores the relevance of mobilizing a multi-level coalition around localization and setting up enabling national frameworks that empower local actors to develop and lead their own Sustainable Development Goal strategies. Sound governance and integrated territorial development approaches must be reinforced within accountable, multi-stakeholder and effective local institutional frameworks.

28. The Group calls on national Governments and the international community to join this local-global movement for the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and to partner with local and regional governments in this process, especially by fostering adequate financial instruments and resources to support localization; promoting multi-level, permanent and structural dialogue between national, local and regional governments and their networks; strengthening the capacities, resources, technologies, innovation and data necessary for long-term transformation; promoting territorial and urban-rural cohesion; and energizing decentralized development cooperation to support the implementation of local 2030 agendas.

29. The Group reiterates the commitment of its organized constituency towards the localization of the global agendas and the well-being of its communities. The task is too large for any single level of government or any single stakeholder to fulfil alone. As the closest level of government to citizens, the Group is committed to leaving no one and no place behind and calls on national Governments and the international community not to leave local and regional governance and territorial cohesion behind.

V. Workers and trade unions

30. The trade union movement calls for a new social contract for Governments, business and workers, with a universal labour guarantee that provides a protection floor for all workers. This means rights and women's equality are respected, jobs are decent, with minimum living wages and collective bargaining, workers have some control over working time, social protection coverage is universal, due diligence and accountability drive business operations and social dialogue ensures just transition measures for climate, technology and displacement.

Recommendations to Governments

Labour rights implementation (Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 16)

31. Labour rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining, hand in hand with social dialogue, are not only key factors for sustainable economic growth and job creation, but also pillars of democracy. Building democratic processes is in turn a cornerstone for sustainable development.

32. The ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), must be followed by effective implementation and enforcement systems.

33. Systems must be in place to grant the enforcement at the national level of the ILO Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014 (No. 203), as well as ILO conventions on child labour.

34. Business accountability and transparency in investments and due diligence in global supply chains must be ensured as prescribed by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

35. A universal labour guarantee must be established that provides a labour protection floor for all workers, which includes fundamental workers' rights, an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and ensuring safe and healthy workplaces.

Inclusive labour markets policies (Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 4)

36. Through social dialogue, pro-employment policies must be designed and implemented, including on youth employment, aligned with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

37. Governments must urgently allocate at least 6 per cent of GDP to social protection floors and a further 6 per cent to quality and free public education.

38. In the context of climate action and technological shifts, systems must be developed to support life-long learning, and support must be given to the establishment of an international governance system and standards for digital business platforms, as well as regulations to govern data use.

39. Concrete actions must be undertaken for the formalization of the informal economy according to the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), supported by the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).

Expansive policies on wages (Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 10)

40. Statutory minimum wages that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families must be implemented and enforced. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living and be evidence-based, regularly reviewed by social partners and adjusted for inflation. Collective bargaining rights must be ensured to achieve fair wages above the minimum wage level, and collective agreements with sectoral coverage should be promoted.

41. Robust equal pay and gender-based anti-discrimination legislation, including implementation of pay transparency measures, must be put in place and enforced.

Implementation of social protection systems (Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 10)

42. Social protection systems should be extended to ensure universal coverage to workers in all forms of work through a combination of tax-based social protection floors and contributory social security, in line with ILO standards (Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)).

Climate justice and just transition (Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 13)

43. Social partners must be involved in the development and implementation of policies and strategies for ambitious emissions reductions, in order to ensure a just transition that guarantees decent jobs.

VI. Scientific and technological community

44. The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group, co-organized by the International Science Council and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, actively contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and supports the 2019 theme, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

45. International science and engineering organizations are well placed to foster equality and inclusiveness within global society by enabling solutions-oriented knowledge for the benefit of all. The Group reaffirms the role of science (including natural and social and human sciences) and engineering in sustainable development, as will also be discussed in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report.

46. The Group highlights the importance of actions to advance science as a global public good and for enhancing engineering and technology in pursuit of sustainable development, for the benefit of all. Scientific knowledge, data and expertise must be universally accessible and its benefits universally shared. The practice of science must be inclusive and equitable, as must opportunities for scientific education and capacity development.

Key messages and recommendations

47. The integrated and interdependent nature of the Sustainable Development Goals requires a significant increase in collaboration across disciplines and sectors, engagement with policy-makers and stakeholders, as also shown in international initiatives such as Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa and Transformations to Sustainability, supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and follow-up work to the 2017 International Science Council report on Sustainable Development Goal interactions. The Group also calls for an enhanced science/technology/policy interface in the United Nations system.

48. Inclusiveness and equality are enabled also by making knowledge more accessible in order to support decision-making, innovation and benefit-sharing. The Group calls for open science and open innovation and works towards effective operationalization of the concept, as in the African Open Science Platform, supported by the South African Department of Science and Technology and directed by the Committee on Data for Science and Technology of the International Science Council.

49. The Group calls attention to the importance of strengthening critical skills and capacity in science and engineering and technology to design and implement solutions to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. This is also required for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and effective institutions, as demonstrated by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations' Committee on Anti-Corruption, which contributed to the International Organization for Standardization's standard 37001 on anti-bribery management systems.

50. Assessing the opportunities and implications of rapid technological change for science and for society, in particular with regards to digital transformations, the Group also addresses the impact on well-being, as addressed in the report on "Understanding well-being in the context of rapid digital and associated transformations – implications for research, policy and measurements" developed by the International Network for Government Science Advice.

51. Aligning priorities and leveraging actions by connecting international agendas (such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Paris Agreement) requires strong and effective partnerships, mobilizing data and information and science advisory capacities in integrated ways, in particular to address systemic and cascading risks. The Group, with its global membership-based organizations, stands ready to contribute to the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, 22nd session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Sustainable Development Goals summit, the Global Climate Action Summit, and related international endeavours such as the upcoming United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

52. The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group thematic paper provides examples of activities by academies, scientific unions and international science organizations towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals under review by highlighting relevant best practices and studies.

53. The Group recalls the importance of furthering the 2019 high-level political forum message to the upcoming Global Climate Action Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals summit, which will also include the launch of the Global Sustainable Development Report. The Group stands ready to contribute to these processes.

VII. Persons with disabilities

54. Inclusion and equality for all persons with disabilities is an indivisible and interdependent human right, which is a principle enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Goals on education, employment, reducing inequalities, climate change and peaceful and inclusive societies, in particular, must be guided by the Convention. There are a number of principles and rights enshrined in the Convention that could potentially apply to most, if not all, Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

55. Persons with disabilities are incredibly diverse in their identities, and those who experience other and intersecting forms of discrimination are at further risk of being excluded from society. All persons with disabilities, and particularly those from underrepresented groups, in rural and urban areas, including persons with albinism, persons with leprosy, persons with psychosocial, intellectual, sensorial and developmental disabilities, as well as children, women, older persons, indigenous peoples and others with disabilities must have equal opportunities to contribute to sustainable development to truly achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

56. In many places, the socioeconomic gap between persons with and without disabilities is increasing, because persons with disabilities experience low levels of education, higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity and a lack of social protection in comparison to their peers without disabilities. Moreover, persons with disabilities encounter barriers due to lack of or reduced access to health care and other services – an increased risk of violence and abuse, lack of access to justice, minimal participation in political and public life, discriminatory attitudes in sexual health, reproductive rights and the right to family life, lack of birth registration and lack of access to an inclusive and quality education in their own language – and encounter the effects of the increasing risks and vulnerability that climate change is creating.

57. Consequently, system-wide reform is required to strengthen national policies and legal systems to ensure that all persons with disabilities can access quality education, employment, disaster risk reduction programmes, justice systems and other processes, ensuring that the policies do not exacerbate discrimination, but rather promote access to mainstream and inclusive programmes. To measure these policies, programmes and activities should be administered, as should indicators such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

58. Both the 2030 Agenda and the Convention require the collection of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data disaggregated by disability. Despite this, limited disability data is available at the global level. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics short set of questions and the United Nations Children's Fund/Washington

Group module on child functioning are sustainable, internationally comparable and suitable for disaggregating by disability status and monitoring progress in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, it is critical to foster partnerships between statisticians, policymakers and organizations of persons with disabilities to address policy gaps to achieve the Goals and the objectives of the Convention.

59. The ultimate objective of both the Convention and 2030 Agenda is for every person with a disability to be recognized as an equal citizen, in every country, with full rights, on an equal basis with others, and with dignity, respect and freedom. The Group, as persons with disabilities, have as much of an obligation to achieve this goal as others do. The question that must be asked is the following: is it not better, as persons with disabilities, to begin taking steps toward this goal by embodying the spirit of the global agenda and by being proactive and visible advocates and partners of transformative change? Inclusion is a two-way process, and it must therefore be asked if the stakeholder group of persons with disabilities is also applying the principles for which it advocates.

VIII. Volunteer groups

60. Volunteers and support for their efforts are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the United Nations Volunteers *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*,¹ an estimated one billion volunteers are freely giving their time to make a difference on the issues that affect them and their communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. As recognized by the Secretary-General in his synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda (A/69/700), the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be realized without the contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers and volunteer-driven organizations in both developing and developed countries.

61. Volunteering is a universal phenomenon, but it does not occur at uniform rates, nor is it uniformly effective. It is strongest when it is recognized and supported. National and local governments, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society, volunteer groups, and volunteers themselves have a role to play in creating and sustaining an enabling environment for volunteering. When this succeeds, the power of volunteering is unlocked, and volunteers are enabled to make the greatest possible contribution to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

Promoting active citizenship and strengthening people's ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals

62. Volunteering is often the first step towards active citizenship and can help strengthen people's ownership of their community's development. Some Governments recognize the value of systematic legislation, policies, structures and programmes for volunteer engagement and have structures to enable more people to volunteer. When Governments have created a conducive environment for civic engagement and, more particularly, for volunteers to participate, or when they have been responsive to volunteer-led community initiatives, volunteers are more effective in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, volunteers are important for holding Member States accountable for their commitment to the Goals.

63. The social, legal and political context in which volunteers operate matters greatly in terms of what they can or cannot contribute to the eradication of poverty.

¹ United Nations Volunteers, *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report* (2018), available at www.unv.org/sites/default/files/UNV_SWVR_2018_English_WEB.pdf.

The political bargain between States and citizens, the Constitution and legal framework, the social fabric in different countries, the interaction between local, national and global governance and the diversity of governance actors working at various levels are all elements that affect who can and cannot enter spaces, whose voices are heard and who influences decision-making.

Promoting inclusion

64. Embedded in communities, volunteers can often access places that others cannot and can form a bridge between the formal and informal provision of public services. Volunteers are at the forefront of responding to disasters, as evidenced by the recent situation caused by Cyclone Idai in Mozambique. They extend support to the most vulnerable and empower marginalized people to take an active role in addressing the challenges they face.

65. The stakeholder group representing volunteering offers the following recommendations to Member States:

(a) Formally recognize the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Member States' voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum;

(b) Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognized and supported in the national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of General Assembly resolution [67/290](#), which supports the participation of non-governmental actors;

(d) Ensure that the accountability, transparency and review framework for the Sustainable Development Goals involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalized voices, as well as the volunteers who work closest with them.

IX. Ageing

66. Ageing is a global phenomenon that has clear implications for the Sustainable Development Goals and for efforts to reduce inequalities, which increase throughout life as the impact of discrimination accumulates and people experience new forms of discrimination in older age. The current number of people aged 60 and above (962 million) is projected to rise to 1.4 billion by 2030, with the highest proportional growth in Africa and Asia.

67. Global ageing and growing inequalities are two trends that must be addressed together. Societal systems and policies must adapt in the context of population ageing. This change process is critical to well-being for all, and not older people alone.

68. Lifelong learning, decent work and employment opportunities, tackling economic and social inequalities, ending ageism and ensuring equal rights in older age are frequently raised by older persons as issues of concern.

69. Member States are obliged to uphold the universal values shared across continents and cultures and to ensure the equal rights of all persons in their territories in line with the principles and standards of international human rights treaties. Older persons must be protected by public policies that are aligned with these human rights principles and standards and that are implemented by programmes that take a life-course approach, are age-inclusive, tackle ageism and address older persons' rights

and needs. However, policies for ageing are often uncoordinated, fragmented or non-existent and lack attention to human rights standards.

70. Member States can accelerate progress by acknowledging and confronting ageism, a key driver of social and economic discrimination and inequalities in older age, and which restricts the potential of millions to contribute to sustainable development. Ageist attitudes stereotype, discriminate and exclude older persons. Successfully confronting ageism unlocks a wealth of economic, social and individual capacity, supporting sustainable development.

71. The stakeholder group on ageing made the following recommendations:

Sustainable Development Goal 4

(a) Ensure lifelong learning opportunities that respond to the rights and preferences of older persons. Reskilling, training and retraining equips older persons to be active agents in a complex and changing world;

(b) Adapt learning opportunities, content and methodologies to the interests and preferences of older persons;

(c) Ensure basic literacy and numeracy for all older persons and enable digital inclusion, a prerequisite to fulfilling the right of all to education and ensuring full participation in society.

Sustainable Development Goal 8

(a) Provide social protection and flexible working arrangements in order to facilitate and improve conditions for older persons in the informal and formal labour markets;

(b) Recognize the specific contributions of older people in both urban and rural settings. This includes paid, unpaid and volunteer work;

(c) Remove age-restrictive policies on access to microcredit, loans and financial investments;

(d) Enact and enforce national and global anti-age discrimination legislation and review age-related exemptions in existing equality legislation.

Sustainable Development Goal 10

(a) Ensure all people across the life course have age, disability and gender-equitable social protection and pension systems by means of the universal implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 1, target 3, on social protection floors and other measures;

(b) Enact affordable, high-quality, person-centred and accessible social services, including universal health care, including long-term care, for all older persons;

(c) Ensure meaningful participation of older persons in all planning and decision-making processes, including through information on rights and entitlements;

(d) Put in place a binding international legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons.

Sustainable Development Goal 17

(a) Prioritize and finance the collection of age-disaggregated data at the national, regional and global level;

- (b) Support national statistical offices in gathering, systematizing and disaggregating age-related data;
- (c) Take notice of, finance and support the ongoing work of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data;
- (d) Ensure systematic inclusion of upper age groups in monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

X. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement

72. Despite progress, serious challenges remain for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Most of the Goal targets are off track and not likely to be met. In Asia Pacific, there are widening inequalities and poverty exacerbated by mega-free-trade-agreements, regressive tax systems and illicit financial flows, resource grabbing, patriarchy and fundamentalism, human rights violations, degradation of the environment, denial of peoples' access to resources and services, climate change, militarism and shrinking democratic spaces. Such systemic issues will continue to compromise the achievement of the Goals under review and of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

73. To realize the ambition of Goal 4, education must be reframed as a basic human right and a public good guaranteed by the State. Concretely, Governments in the region must allocate at least 4 to 6 per cent of GDP and 15 to 20 per cent of total expenditures to education. Teachers' rights, welfare and empowerment must be guaranteed to recognize and facilitate their meaningful contribution to policy development and the fulfilment of education goals.

74. If Goal 8 is to be truly transformative, it must enable women and men to move out of low-productivity, informal, insecure and vulnerable work. It must promote a rights-based and human-centred employment policy that will create decent jobs, fully respect workers' rights, especially the right to association and collective bargaining, and promote universal social protection and genuine social dialogue. Decent work is integral to sustainable development, eradicating poverty, addressing inequality and ensuring productivity growth with a just transition for climate justice, as well as the full utilization of technological advances. There is an urgent need for a universal labour guarantee based on fundamental workers' rights to ensure adequate living wages, limits on hours of work and the safety of workplaces for all.

75. For Goal 10, economic policies and institutions that entrench inequalities and discrimination must be challenged. Trade rules skewed to developed countries and their elites must be overhauled. To redistribute wealth, individuals and corporations should pay their fair share through the taxation of their assets, and the revenues collected must be used to finance social services. The Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement mechanism urges Governments to promote social enterprises to increase opportunities and income-generating activities and contribute to reducing inequalities.

76. Goal 13 must translate to adequate and appropriate climate finance contributed by countries on the basis of historical responsibility for global warming and to reparations to all affected parties. An end must be put to fossil fuels and to market solutions to climate change. Climate action must be prioritized in the mainstream budgeting and planning processes across countries in the region.

77. Achieving Goal 16 requires addressing the systemic issues at the root of conflict and marginalization in the region. Critically, Governments must shift resources away from military spending to social services. Civil society space must not only be

recognized but also progressively expanded. Urgently, State authorities must put an end to all forms of attacks and harassment against rights defenders.

78. Goal 17 is the most vital component of the 2030 Agenda, and therefore a business-as-usual approach is not an option. The long-standing commitment of developed countries to dedicate 0.7 per cent of gross domestic income to official development assistance should be met unconditionally. Trade should protect policy space for development and peoples' rights. States must carry out human rights, environmental and Sustainable Development Goals compatibility impact assessments of tax policies, trade and investment agreements and new technologies. Member States should put in place a regional tax body to reform the taxation architecture and synergize regional cooperation on taxation.

79. Recognizing the significance of these issues and resolving structural and systemic barriers is necessary and should be given due attention. The way forward is to recast development as a process organized and lead by the people to achieve development justice.

XI. Together 2030

Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals for all: ensuring inclusiveness and equality for every person, everywhere

80. Inclusiveness, equality and equity are not just issues for developing countries. Though marginalization and vulnerability take different forms in different countries, and different groups are left behind in different contexts, the presence of these groups and individuals is universal and constant. Reducing these domestic disparities must be elevated as a priority. The significant gaps between developed and developing countries persist and are even widening. It should not be forgotten that entire countries can be left behind.

81. Ensuring inclusiveness, equality and equity means approaching the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated manner. The realization of the set of Goals under review will not be possible if progress across the other Goals is not also ensured. The voluntary national reviews should reflect the implementation of the 17 Goals in a universal, integrated and interrelated approach.

82. Over three years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, stakeholder engagement remains limited. The high-level political forum has the potential to have an incredibly meaningful impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, this can only be achieved by increasing civil society engagement. The high-level political forum should establish a formal mechanism for reporting that brings the contributions of civil society out of the shadows.

83. The upcoming review of the high-level political forum will provide crucial opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the follow-up and review mechanism of the Sustainable Development Goals. All stakeholders must be included in the review process, which must be transparent and participatory, in the same ways as in the open working groups.

84. For the specific Goals under review, particularly Goal 4, Governments must ensure that everyone, girls and boys alike, and including people affected by emergencies and crises, have access to free, universal, quality, equitable, safe and inclusive education. They must also ensure that both children and adults have adequate health and nutrition to allow them to achieve maximum educational attainment. Similarly, it is important to consider interlinkages across the Goals. In

Goal 4, schools can play a critical role in protecting children from violence. Consequently, there are targets in Goal 4 that can directly contribute to the Goal 16 targets related to violence prevention.

85. With respect to Goal 8, efforts are needed to promote job creation and improve the quality of jobs. This means strengthening the implementation of labour standards, going beyond the payment of living wages. Efforts must likewise be made to end child labour. Governments must incorporate climate-smart and resilient thinking into infrastructure and economic plans to ensure economic growth opportunities are not washed away by disasters.

86. Regarding Goal 10, efforts are needed to address inequality within countries through measures including progressive taxation, improved implementation of social protection mechanisms and universal, free and equitable public services, and ensuring greater visibility for women and persons with disabilities and equal access to justice. Inequalities also increase children's risk of experiencing different forms of violence. The failure to protect children from violence can also contribute to and exacerbate inequalities and discrimination.

87. With respect to Goal 13, national Governments must put in place actionable plans to improve the use of renewable energy sources at the level of every household. High- and low-income countries should initiate decarbonization in accordance with the Paris Agreement. In addition, Governments must promote traditional and local knowledge on climate mitigation to allow people to use their knowledge and practices to manage their livelihoods.

88. Regarding Goal 16, national and international norms on peace, justice and governance must be strengthened. This must be backed by coordinated efforts to build institutional capacities and mechanisms for inclusive participation. Similarly, Governments must prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings. Evidence-based solutions should be delivered through strong child protection systems, guided by policy solutions and multisectoral responses and backed by investments that enable their application.

89. With respect to Goal 17, accountability and monitoring systems must be put in place, and national Governments must commit to implementation strategies that ensure a participatory and inclusive approach.
