



## UN Monitor #04

### Political Declaration for the HLPF and the SDG Summit – from Zero to Second Draft

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The Political Declaration for the High Level Political Forum will be adopted by Heads of State and Government (HOSG) at the General Assembly's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit in September 2019. With the aim of reaching consensus, Member States have started negotiations and are now deliberating a [second draft](#) of the Political Declaration. The Declaration is currently titled, "Gearing up for a Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development: Political Declaration of the SDG Summit" and is divided into three sections: "I. Our Commitment, II. Our World Today, III. Our Call to Accelerated Action."

The negotiations are being co-facilitated by Ms. Sheila Gweneth Carey, Permanent Representative (PR) of the Bahamas and Mr. Olof Skoog, PR of Sweden. The second draft of the Political Declaration was distributed in the PGA's letters on 10 June 2019 and the next meeting to discuss the Political Declaration will take place on 17 June 2019. Some key areas of note and concern are becoming apparent based on observations in changes from the [zero draft](#) of the document to a [second draft](#).

#### **New Inclusions**

Overall, the second draft shows more references to gender equality (paras. 6,9,18,23c) and vulnerable and marginalised groups (paras. 4, 23a) as well as highlighting issue areas of "access to inclusive and quality education, healthcare, food security and improved nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, reliable sustainable energy and quality and resilient infrastructure for all." (para. 7). Additionally, some references to the development/humanitarian nexus have been incorporated (paras. 19, 23f, 23g).

Further, in para. 23i the declaration now calls for "high-quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics" as well as support to "countries who face the greatest challenges in collecting, analyzing and using reliable data." This may provide some additional leverage for UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Regional SDG Fora as well as add some credibility to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process with data autonomy and disaggregation creating a [potential to shift asymmetrical power distribution](#) inherent in data collection and analysis.

#### **UN SG's Progress Report, GSDR and Trade-offs**

An interesting area highlighted in the Political Declaration pertains to utilising the Secretary-General's Progress Report and the [Global Sustainable Development Report \(GSDR\)](#) to inform section two, "Our World Today" and section three, "Our Call to Accelerated Action." While the report is not yet publicly available, drafts have been circulated and the report's main findings were presented at the [UN Deputy Secretary-General's informal briefing](#) on the Global Sustainable Development Report and the Special Edition of the Secretary-General's SDG Progress report.

The second draft of the Political Declaration, in para. 17 enumerates the GSDR's entry points for transformation and transformative levers (or tools) to achieve the SDGs. Central to the report is a recognition that between the SDGs there exist not only synergies and interlinkages but also trade-offs. A nod to this is included in para. 23d of the second draft—"we will strive to equip institutions to better address the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between the Goals and targets to ensure a whole-of government approach that can bring about transformative change in governance and public policy". While it remains unclear what trade-offs Member States have in mind, this can potentially open broad and useful discussions regarding trade-offs between social, environmental, and economic goals and the practices that engender them: like illicit financial flows, land use, extractive industries, and rapid industrialisation to name a few. While the discussion moves in the right direction of acknowledging that economic development gains cannot be accepted at the expense of social and environmental losses, the envelope can be pushed a bit further to expose practices and policies that might be impediments to achieving the SDGs.

### **Financing the 2030 Agenda**

An area for concern within the Political Declaration relates to financing for the SDGs and partnerships. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) is noted in both the zero draft and second draft. Para. 9 in the zero draft reads: "International public finance can play a critical role in this respect, complementing domestic resource mobilization, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda" but was changed to para. 11 in the second draft, reading as "We...commit to accelerate the implementation of commitments across the seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda." While recognising commitments made across the AAAA, this change downplays the vital role of public financing central to underpinning multilateral nature of the 2030 Agenda, as is the responsibility of Member States in ensuring sufficient financing for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The zero draft of the Political Declaration included references to challenges associated with mobilising sufficient funding in both the second section (para. 18) and third section (para. 23b). The zero draft notes: "the mobilization of sufficient financing remains a major challenge. Investments critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals remain underfunded. Systemic risks are increasing and parts of the multilateral system are under strain." However, this paragraph was entirely struck from the second draft, leaving only a reference to financing for the Agenda in para. 23b, wherein it states: "governments, the private sector and other stakeholders need to increase the level of ambition in domestic public and private resource mobilization". Not only does this build on the aforementioned obfuscation of Member State responsibility, but it also shifts the burden of financing the 2030 Agenda to other actors. The consequences of this burden shifting are explored in detail in ["A Fatal Attraction? Business Engagement with the 2030 Agenda."](#)

It is anticipated that the negotiations for the Political Declaration will continue leading up to the High-level Political Forum in July and possibly beyond.

### **Political Declaration, Political Significance**

The SDG Summit and the Political Declaration are approached with much anticipation and expectation as the HLPF meets only every four years at Summit level and under the auspices of the General Assembly. The SDG Summit is part of a week from 23-27 September 2019 of high-level meetings on Climate Change, Financing

for Development (FfD), Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the elimination of nuclear weapons, and a review of the SAMOA pathway for small island developing states (SIDS).

In a [May 30, 2019 Letter](#) the President of the General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, notes that the five Summits are: “linked in their ambition to fast-track efforts towards zero-poverty and lives of dignity for all, on a safe, healthy, and peaceful planet”. Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) Amina Mohammed also [emphasised the significance](#) of this Summit week at a joint meeting of UN development entity boards: “we are working with the PGA, ECOSOC and the co-facilitators to ensure that the five September summits lead to mutually-reinforcing outcomes to take SDG implementation to the next level”. At a [briefing on this high-level week](#) the DS-G again reiterated its political significance noting that through the week: “leaders from government and beyond can send a clear signal to the world: we are taking the decisions that will get us back on track”.

Many Member States, UN Agencies, and civil society organisations agree that the world is not on track to achieve the SDGs and their targets. In the [Secretary-General’s Progress Report](#) on the SDGs, he notes “the global response thus far has not been ambitious enough” and that progress on many of the goals lags behind. However, the Political Declaration at present offers merely a restating of the 2030 Agenda and a variety of recommitments, without offering a manifest alternative way forward. This calls into question whether or not accelerated action is needed or instead a new way forward altogether, and whether or not the Political Declaration and SDG Summit will meet their expectations this September.

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