



UN Monitor: COVID-19 Round-Up 05/05/2020

The **2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF)** is scheduled to review the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and progress towards the SDGs on 7- 16 July 2020**. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has released a [provisional programme](#) and [concept note](#) for the 2020 HLPF. DESA has also announced new modalities for virtual side events and exhibitions:

"Given the situation linked to COVID-19, after careful consideration, it has been decided that all Side-events and Exhibitions will be held **virtually**. Nevertheless, we do invite interested parties to submit their applications to organize an [exhibit](#) or a [side event](#) during the 2020 HLPF following the [guidelines and criteria](#). Application process will be open until **29 May 2020**. After registrations are closed on 29 May, the Secretariat will still screen applications and inform approved organizers so that they provide links to the virtual platforms of their events and exhibitions. **Only those events and exhibitions that have been approved will be part of the official programme for HLPF Side-events and Exhibitions.**"

The outcome of the HLPF - as in previous years - will be a [Ministerial Declaration](#) adopted after negotiations by Member States – and subject to the silence procedure in place due to the coronavirus. These negotiations will move forward in the coming month, with co-facilitators Ambassador Georgi Velikov Panayotov of Bulgaria, and Ambassador Amal Mudallal of Lebanon steering the process. The Declaration will be based on a [recently released structure](#), including but not limited to:

“Impact of COVID-19 to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, SDGs and the decade of action and delivery”;

“Leaving no one behind, human rights, addressing inequality and the needs of the most vulnerable, gender equality, social inclusion and the impact of COVID-19”;

“Means of implementation, financing (including debt relief, combatting illicit financial flows, multilateral trading system), scaling up health spending, technologies, digitalization, capacity building, technical assistance, data, science-policy interface, innovation, impact on society.”

In 2019, the [HLPF Political Declaration](#), co-facilitated by Ambassador Sheila Gweneth Carey of the Bahamas and Ambassador. Olof Skoog of Sweden, was conducted through a series of in-person, informal negotiations during which Member States discussed, at length, both a [zero](#)

[draft and second draft](#). Negotiations included a silence procedure process not for the complete process but only to resolve the final outstanding issues **and with some transparency on the issues in debate/dispute**.

After in-person negotiations, the document went through two rounds of silence procedure and the deadline was extended not [once](#), but [twice](#) to give delegations further time to negotiate and confer with capitals. Agreement by [silence was broken](#) by a delegation wishing to include plastic litter in oceans in the declaration's section on environmental degradation. The amended Declaration was re-submitted with success: silence [was not broken](#) and the Declaration was adopted.

The 2020 Ministerial Declaration will also [use silence procedure process in a different way](#), with virtual and email negotiations in place of in-person informals, and the penholder role of the co-facilitators heightened. For details see [UN Monitor: COVID-19 & Silence Procedure](#).

Regional preparations for HLPF

The UN has been holding **Regional Fora on Sustainable Development (RFSD)** to prepare for the 2020 HLPF.

The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development [met in-person](#) 24-27 February and issued a [summary report](#) highlighting major findings and recommendations. Among them: "Africa contributes the least to carbon emissions globally, but is most vulnerable to climate change." And pre-dating the COVID-19 calls for debt relief, the report highlights:

"The increasing public debt and illicit financial flows are critical challenges to financing investments for sustainable development. By 2018, Africa's total government debt averaged 59 per cent of GDP, with ratios higher than 100 per cent in at least six countries. During 2011–2016, Africa lost about \$100 billion per annum in trade mis-invoicing."

The UNECE RFSD [met virtually](#) on 19 March 2020 with a focus on the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), a key element driving both the Decade of Action and the 2020 HLPF theme, and the region's first ever [regional report on SDG progress](#). The [Chair's report](#) of the meeting notes:

"The 2019 GSDR identified four levers that can help relieve the pressure on the available resources: science and technology; the economic and financial system; governance structures; and collective and individual behavior. It is important to note that technology alone will not solve the problem, but it can support using resources more efficiently. Science and technology should be combined with changes in all of the other levers."

The Asia Pacific RFSD was originally planned for 20 May, will now take place in a [virtual format](#). Further the Latin America and Caribbean RFSD, originally intended for 31 March, was [postponed](#). The Arab RFSD originally meant to take place 7-9 April, has also been [postponed](#).

Finance and sustainable development

Following the virtual **Financing for Development (FfD) Forum** on 23 April, Member States [adopted an outcome document](#) titled, “Follow-up and review of the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The document reaffirms the importance of financing the 2030 Agenda in light of COVID-19.

The **Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (FACTI) Panel** is continuing to meet virtually to discuss issues related to their mandate. Two upcoming [virtual meetings](#) will be open to all stakeholders (registration required), with a 5 May meeting on “[Improving Cooperation in Tax Matters](#)” and an 8 May meeting on “[Cooperation and Settling Disputes](#)”. The FACTI Panel [positions its work](#) as part and parcel of the 2030 Agenda:

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda contain many pledges of Member States related to financial accountability, transparency and integrity. However, insufficient progress has been made on these commitments, eroding the ability of States to raise resources and undermining efforts to successfully achieve the SDGs. Hidden, secret, fraudulent and misleading transactions prevent States from enforcing the law, collecting their fair share of taxes, and ensuring equity and inclusiveness in our economies.”