



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

21 October 2019

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 20 September 2019, I have the pleasure to enclose herewith the summary of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (SDG Summit), held on 24 and 25 September 2019.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized cursive script.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



SDG SUMMIT 2019



The UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the General Assembly (SDG Summit)

24-25 September 2019, UNHQ, New York

Summary of the President of the General Assembly

Introduction

The United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) met under the auspices of the General Assembly from 24 to 25 September 2019 in New York. The “SDG Summit” served as the first occasion for Heads of State and Government to take stock of how far the world has come in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since its adoption in 2015 and identify actions to accelerate implementation. The SDG Summit convenes every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly to “provide high-level political guidance on the 2030 Agenda and its implementation, identify progress and emerging challenges and mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation”.¹

The Summit adopted a Political Declaration —“Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” — by consensus. The political declaration:

- (i) reaffirms the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda;
- (ii) expresses concern that progress is slow in many areas;
- (iii) launches an ambitious and accelerated decade of action and delivery for sustainable development; and
- (iv) pledges to strengthen the effective and participatory character of the HLPF and encourage the peer-learning character of the voluntary national reviews.

Heads of State and Government, UN system and stakeholder representatives engaged in two plenary sessions and six thematic Leaders Dialogues on: megatrends impacting the achievement of the SDGs; accelerating the achievement of the SDGs: critical entry points; measures to leverage progress across the SDGs; localizing the SDGs; partnerships for sustainable development; and the 2020-2030 vision.

The SDG Summit also provided a platform through which States and other sustainable development actors announced more than 100 ambitious SDG Acceleration Actions. The 2019 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) was also launched at the summit.

¹ A/RES/70/1, paragraph 87.

Overall, the SDG Summit demonstrated the continuing strong commitment of the international community to the 2030 Agenda and to multilateral collaboration for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The SDG Summit was held during a week which featured other sustainable development-related events, including the Climate Action Summit and the high-level meetings of the General Assembly on universal health coverage, financing for development, and the mid-term review of the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway). While each meeting was distinct, they were intrinsically linked in their purpose to fast-track efforts towards zero poverty and lives of dignity for all, on a safe, healthy and peaceful planet.

Key messages from the SDG Summit

- ❖ The commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains steadfast at the highest level of government and among stakeholders. Yet it is clear that the world is not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030. The future is now, and the Earth's systems are changing quickly. The SDGs can still be achieved if the international community steps up the speed and ambition of its actions.
- ❖ Many countries have been proactively implementing the SDGs, incorporating them in policies and strategies, and outlining their long-term vision for transformation to more sustainable and just economies and societies. However, the shared view is that the global response is not yet sufficiently transformative. Most of the 21 targets designated for achievement by 2020 will likely not be met and we are not on track for achieving many other targets by 2030.
- ❖ Governments cannot do it alone; they are reaching out to forge new partnerships with civil society, businesses, and the scientific and technological community. National plans must reflect an increasingly interconnected world, and address complex flows of goods, capital, information and people.
- ❖ For such efforts to be effective, it is imperative that all countries pursue the SDGs as systems, fully recognizing the interconnections across sectors, countries and levels, from global to local. Positive synergies need to be harnessed and difficult trade-offs need to be addressed more quickly and effectively.
- ❖ The 2019 GSDR identifies six entry points where interventions can have multiple impacts across the SDGs: human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just economies; food systems and nutrition patterns; energy decarbonization with universal access; urban and peri-urban development; and global environmental commons.
- ❖ Across those areas, governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology are important levers that can help countries to achieve positive synergistic impacts across the SDGs.
- ❖ Financing the 2030 Agenda remains a challenge. Promises on ODA need to be kept, investments need to be increased and made sustainable, tax systems need to be improved, and illicit financial flows and unsustainable debt levels must be effectively addressed. The private sector also has a critical role to play in providing the means of implementation for realizing the 2030 Agenda.

- ❖ While there is sufficient knowledge to act now, it is key to ensure that knowledge is available to those who need it. This requires strengthening the science-policy interface and creating knowledge platforms in every country. Unequal access to scientific data and knowledge systems is a major obstacle to the universal implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly for the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. Urgent action must be taken by development partners to overcome this deficit.
- ❖ Weaknesses in governance, corruption and declining civic space are major obstacles to the SDGs and promoting human rights and supporting actions to foster peace and justice are essential for progress.
- ❖ The world is entering a decade that will be decisive for current and future generations, and for all life on the planet. Through the SDG Summit Political Declaration, Heads of State and Government pledged to make the coming decade one of action and delivery.

Opening session

The opening session celebrated the widespread global effort to implement the 2030 Agenda since its adoption. Within the last four years, many countries have been undertaking efforts to achieve this historical agreement and its 17 SDGs, sometimes under difficult circumstances. The SDGs are being reflected in plans and policies and many countries are keeping track of their implementation, including through the Voluntary National Review (VNRs) presented to the HLPF. Many cities, civil society, businesses, individuals and young people have been taking action and bringing the 2030 Agenda to life in their communities. The HLPF and various other global, regional and national level fora, combined with rising SDG advocacy, have helped to keep the SDGs high on the international agenda.

Overall, there has been some success in reducing extreme poverty, child and neonatal mortality; improving access to electricity and safe drinking water; and expanding the coverage of terrestrial and marine protected areas. However, progress is slow or stalled in many areas, such as with efforts to stem the accelerating loss of biodiversity, combat climate change and its effects, eliminate hunger and ensure food security, and address rising inequalities within and among countries.

But as indicated in the 2019 special edition of the SDG Progress Report, progress so far has been largely uneven within and across countries and regions. A greater number of people are living well below the poverty line, particularly in many Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), countries in conflict and post conflict situations, as well as in some Middle-Income Countries (MICs).

Political conflicts, the climate crisis, gender-based violence, and persistent inequalities are undermining efforts to achieve the SDGs and fueling global increases in migration and displacement. Uneven economic growth, rising debt levels, and heightened global trade tensions are creating new obstacles to realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

To put the world on track for achieving the SDGs by 2030, a more ambitious and fast paced implementation are needed. We must also stand up to the spirit of cooperation and multilateralism which characterized the adoption of the major agreements of 2015. Inclusive and participatory transformation requires international development cooperation and support for peace, justice and

accountable institutions. Understanding the interconnections among the SDGs is essential to devise policies that manage difficult trade-offs. Specific attention must be given to solutions with the greatest impact across multiple sectors.

First plenary

The principle of leaving no one behind is fundamental, particularly with respect to women, youth, children persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the poorest of the poor—as well as regarding SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. In order to leave no one behind, generic and one-size-fits-all solutions are not sufficient. Nuanced approaches are needed that fit national realities, levels of development, national capacities, policies and priorities in terms of achieving the SDGs. International cooperation is critical to bolster the efforts of countries in special situations to reach the SDGs. With respect to MICs, the United Nations was requested to design a specific sustainable development strategy.

Many countries reiterated their full commitment to multilateralism with a strong UN system at its core. Partnerships were championed at all levels, including with the private sector, civil society, scientific and faith-based communities, youth, as well as through south-south cooperation.

Poverty remains the overriding challenge of our times. Climate change is one of the biggest causes for concern, as witnessed by the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, which was cited as just one of many recent and catastrophic natural disasters. Climate change disproportionately affects the world's poorest countries and SIDS, which are faced with unique vulnerabilities that often prevent them from addressing their populations' most basic needs.

To implement the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner, increased levels of financing for sustainable development are needed from all sources, consistent with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for developed countries to meet their ODA commitments. An international disaster fund could be established to address urgent and short-term needs of countries affected by climate change-induced crises.

There is a shared sense of urgency on the need to achieve the SDGs and, in particular, to address climate change. The coming decade will be a key turning point and a test of the ability of the international community to deliver.

Leaders Dialogue 1: Megatrends impacting the achievement of the SDGs

There are significant concerns regarding the pace and transformational character of the global efforts to achieve the SDGs, and the 2020s must be regarded as the decade of delivery. During this decade, the choices made in anticipating and responding to megatrends—such as demographic transitions, slow economic growth, poverty and inequality, environmental degradation and climate change, economic and financial shocks, conflicts, disease outbreaks, technological innovation and development financing—will be crucial in expediting progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Effective actions are imperative for urgently addressing climate change, empowering young people and supporting their innovative ideas for positive change, and ensuring inclusiveness and

good governance. Greater efforts are needed to foster sustainable health systems and quality education for all. Regarding the considerable financial gaps, particularly in low-income countries, there is scope for improving tax systems to enhance domestic revenues and to seek better income distribution.

The principle of “leaving no one behind” is being embraced in many national development plans, development cooperation actions and responses to humanitarian crises. Many countries are aligning their national development plans or strategies to the 17 SDGs, creating institutional frameworks such as SDG inter-ministerial committees and operational plans or guidelines on policy interventions at national and sub-national levels, and implementing inclusiveness through specific measures to accommodate persons with disabilities such as recognizing sign language as an official language.

Everyone should benefit from the transformative changes that technological progress is enabling in many areas, including education, healthcare, finance and agriculture. The provision of social services needs to be considered in a world in which workers compete globally for jobs and in which the nature of work and jobs is changing. This would also require stronger international cooperation on taxation issues.

The combination of slow global economic growth and sluggish investment in developing countries creates the likelihood that poverty will increase in several countries. It was said that there is a need for well-designed structural reforms to unlock barriers to growth and build the foundation for future prosperity. Financial challenges exist through a variety of angles: tax reform for equity and social services; addressing illicit financial flows, fighting corruption, tax evasion and money laundering; better regulation to avoid financial crises; and mitigating debt distress.

The existential crisis of climate change, irregular migration, rapid urbanization, population growth, technological advancement and current trends in financing for development are also all strongly impacting SDG implementation and achievement.

Multilateralism is widely perceived to be under threat, jeopardizing global cooperation and solidarity to achieve the SDGs. There was a call for a comprehensive approach with a wide range of policy instruments—from political to cultural—to counteract instability brought by the undermining of the rules-based international order.

It is important to expand partnerships to a wider set of stakeholders, particularly to the private sector, given rapid technological advancements and the need for innovation at all levels. Scientific cohesion, open data sources and collaboration are also needed, and can help to make technology an enabler for inclusive development.

Leaders Dialogue 2: Accelerating the achievements of the SDGs: critical entry points

The world is not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030. The Earth’s systems are changing fast and the coming decade—and hence the next legislative period of each country—is the decisive window of opportunity to trigger intentional change. Changing course calls for application of the levers of governance, business and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology toward the SDGs. Governments cannot do it alone. This implies not only new partnerships with civil society, businesses, as well as the scientific and technological communities; but also that

national plans must reflect an increasingly interconnected world and must address, according to national contexts, the flows of goods, capital, information and people.

The 2019 GSDR was discussed as an important tool to help guide countries as they shape their policies for the upcoming decade of action for SDG implementation. The GSDR key messages were highlighted, including the urgency of fighting inequality, climate change, biodiversity loss, and the unsustainable generation of waste. The overarching message is that in order to achieve sustainable development, the world must decouple growth from environmental degradation and inequality and increase opportunities for vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, small-scale farmers, landless people, indigenous peoples and others.

The importance of keeping the integrated nature of the SDGs front and center when making sustainable development policies and plans is fundamental, working across ministries and offices and involving many stakeholders, including the private sector, indigenous peoples, women, farmers, and other members of civil society. The success or failure of a country should not be measured based only on GDP but should rather reflect advances towards the various SDGs. Development cooperation should reflect the needs of the many stakeholders of developing country partners.

The dialogue focused on critical entry points identified in the GSDR, particularly through the lens of sustainable consumption and production, food systems and nutrition patterns. The GSDR identifies six critical entry points for action, where interventions can have multiple impacts across the SDGs: human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just economies; food systems and nutrition patterns; energy decarbonization with universal access; urban and peri-urban development; and global environmental commons. For these and many other entry points, education is a key driver of progress. Technology and innovation are also critical in advancing the SDGs, and examples of ongoing projects included a Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Roadmap for SDGs. Innovation is viewed as a global public good.

The particular needs of SIDS and LDCs need to be more fully addressed. Development partners were requested to scale up support as a moral imperative, as SIDS are on the front lines of the impacts of climate change, and highly indebted countries require assistance, including through innovative mechanisms like debt for climate action swaps.

The issues of governance, rule of law, access to justice and the fight against corruption recurred as cross-cutting themes. Participants called for increased transparency around the value chains of food and other products, so consumers are able to make informed decisions that take into account environmental and social impacts, including working conditions of producers.

Climate change was widely regarded as a paramount challenge that requires immediate and concrete actions for mitigation as well as adaptation and disaster preparedness. In this regard, it is imperative to undertake actions that engage the SDGs as systems and fully take account of the interconnections among goals and targets and across sectors, countries, and levels, from global to local, harnessing positive synergies and addressing difficult trade-offs.

Leaders Dialogue 3: Measures to leverage progress across the SDGs

The commitment to the 2030 Agenda remains resolute yet achieving the SDGs will require redoubled efforts and accelerated integrated actions at all levels, as time is limited, and progress is not fast enough. Success will require a whole-of-society approach for implementation, with collaboration among countries and various stakeholders. The impact of actions can be maximized through levers such as governance, economy and finance; individual and collective actions; and effective application of science and technology.

Speakers were optimistic about the future and presented many initiatives that are having positive impacts toward reaching SDG targets. But there was also broad agreement that progress is not taking place fast enough.

The SDGs are highly integrated, and the world is very interconnected. Focusing on one goal or target at a time and working in silos is therefore unlikely to result in overall success. Transforming to a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society requires strengthening the focus toward all the SDGs and ensuring cooperation among the different measures or levers for action.

The role of national governments is imperative for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Several countries reported having committed to putting the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda at the center of their planning and budgetary processes. They are also seeking ways to strengthen cooperation with other actors, including the private sector, academia and civil society. A State that listens to the needs and aspirations of its people can facilitate a dialogue between the public and government, so that public inputs are taken into account in the formalization of legislation.

There was agreement that the scale of investment needed to address all of the Goals is high and that States require greater support from the private sector to strengthen domestic resources. Development assistance is also important, including for MICs, to overcome challenges and reduce vulnerabilities.

Platforms for cooperation and new partnerships involving the private sector, civil society academia and others are needed, along with shared values around the importance of the SDGs. There was general agreement that the United Nations' role in coordinating progress, facilitating global partnerships and convening the HLPF was an important one, and should be supported.

Leaders Dialogue 4: Localizing the SDGs

There is broad support for integrating and contextualizing the 2030 Agenda into national development plans and budgets, and in shaping and delivering public policies at national and sub-national levels. Countries are undertaking actions to translate the SDGs into national realities. Actions to localize the SDGs include the incorporation of the Goals in national and local sectoral and other development plans and budgets, the establishment of SDG monitoring and evaluation platforms for real-time follow-up, and the establishment of coordination mechanisms and parliamentary committees. In their localization efforts, some speakers also referred to their prioritization of specific SDGs, targets and indicators.

Speakers also showcased examples of how local and regional authorities are implementing the SDGs at the grassroots level. Local and regional authorities were described as the "first responders" in SDG implementation. Mayors and local and regional governments are actively mobilizing the

business sector and society at large for SDG action. It was noted that the more local SDG implementation gets, the easier complex integrated policymaking also becomes.

SDG localization transforms the “global goals” into local aspirations. The challenge of ensuring that global level decisions benefit the most marginalized persons at the local level is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

A whole-of-society approach is essential for localizing the 2030 Agenda. In the localization national and local processes, consultations and discussions are held with all relevant stakeholders—youth, women, men, older persons, persons with disabilities, the private sector, local communities, and development partners. This is central to achieving progress. In this spirit, broad ownership of the SDGs and implementation process is one key ingredient of successful localization of the SDGs. Raising awareness on the SDGs requires more engagement and effort at all levels of society.

Although progress has been made, climate change and other challenges threaten to reverse momentum. Data gaps and lack of appropriate institutional capacity were identified as main challenges related to tracking the 2030 Agenda at national and sub-national levels and in setting up robust follow-up of SDG implementation.

The role of parliamentarians in ensuring SDG-enhancing legislation, budgeting, and oversight was stressed, as was the need to include women and youth in decision-making. Useful partnerships in SDG implementation are being pursued and there is need for an increased focus on meaningful partnership building with all relevant actors.

It was also highlighted that the United Nations system, including through its regional commissions, funds and programmes and specialized agencies, as well as through the reformed UN Country Teams, is actively supporting countries in localizing the SDGs. The need for balanced regional development was also discussed.

Leaders Dialogue 5: Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Multi-stakeholder partnerships that engage civil society organizations, youth, the private sector, and others can clearly ensure a more inclusive implementation of the SDGs aimed at concrete policy actions and results. Concrete partnership initiatives are being pursued across the spectrum of SDGs. Having a defined vision and framework helps to ensure the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder approach, which involves working with partners with different objectives.

Many highlighted the importance of a revitalized global partnership and the spirit of global solidarity for the achievement of the SDGs. This requires particularly facilitating access to external support such as financing, technology and capacity building. There was also a call for effective development cooperation, including among Southern partners, to mobilize the financial and non-financial means of implementation and enhance the national capacities to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Some speakers stressed the need for development partners to harmonize their efforts and align with the countries’ sustainable development priorities.

There is an urgent need to create an enabling environment and systemic change at all levels for combatting corruption, addressing misaligned policy actions, promoting long-term private investment and enhancing the capacities of those furthest behind, including LDCs and other countries in special situations.

The private sector has a crucial role in supporting and driving global action for sustainable development. To enable systemic change and unlock the potential of the private sector's contribution to the SDGs, efforts are needed by government to foster an enabling environment for scaling up and out, including addressing misalignments in policy frameworks at the global level that hinder long-term private investment flows in support of the SDGs.

There are ongoing efforts to implement climate-smart partnerships and international cooperation for SIDS in line with countries' national sustainable development needs. Some speakers underscored the need to arm micro, small and medium enterprises with tools to effectively promote climate action. The Paris Agreement cannot be delivered upon without the engagement of the private sector, and there is a need to move towards "business-as-unusual".

The potential contributions of public-private partnerships and other innovative financing mechanisms can help to fill the current financing and capacity gaps.

Leaders Dialogue 6: The 2020-2030 Vision

Most of the 21 targets designated for achievement by 2020 will likely not be met. Actions regarding these targets will be critical to put the world on track to achieve all the targets by 2030. Strong political will and revitalized multilateralism will be determining factors in realizing the SDGs by 2030; no single State can advance sustainably without the collective support of other States. Equally, strengthened partnerships among all stakeholders are also central for more inclusive approaches to help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs over the next decade.

The global challenges the world is facing are serious, yet science gives hope that the SDGs are still possible to achieve. Awareness of attainable trends and crucial interlinkages among the Goals was emphasized. The need for evidence-based policy was also highlighted, notably in connection with addressing the increasing impacts of climate change. Reference was also made in this regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and undertaking clean energy reforms to safeguard the environment.

Effective waste management was also highlighted as vital for the achievement of the SDGs. The safe management of radioactive material was also discussed, given that it poses a significant threat to current and future generations. The need for sufficient supplies of clean water was also mentioned in view of increased water pollution.

Forest management and more efficient land use were underscored in the context of environmental protection, along with the need to ensure sufficient land as forest cover. The dangers posed by increased flooding were also highlighted. A risk-informed and resilient agenda should be adopted to ensure that natural disasters do not reverse progress in sustainable development.

To improve fiscal capacity and realize favourable economic growth, there is an urgent need to address corruption and promote good governance. Environmental finance was highlighted in the context of cooperation with the United Nations for “smart development”.

It was underscored that the decade 2020 to 2030 must be a decade of accelerated action and transformation. To do this, it is imperative to put people and their rights at the center of decision-making and ensure a whole-of-society approach involving all people, to ensure that no one is left behind. Governments must do more to foster an enabling environment for meaningful social, economic and political inclusion. Speakers highlighted how they are taking action in those various areas. They need to address legal and institutional barriers hindering full participation in society by all people. Trust in government and judicial systems is important, as is the need to improve social network literacy through strengthened critical thinking, democracy and the rule of law.

Commitments were made towards multilateralism: by acting collectively, it will be possible to address global challenges and promote sustainable development for all. The 2030 Agenda has the potential to revitalize multilateralism.

Second plenary

Progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda is slow and unequal. Gaps remain that require a break from traditional approaches, particularly for financing. They require the introduction of inclusive policies and in-depth transformation to accelerate development models and focus on equality and social inclusion. Access to education and healthcare and sustainable food systems are critical, as are the pursuit of peace and crisis prevention, and mainstreaming stakeholder consultations at all levels of policymaking.

Progress remains very unequal and many countries continue to confront challenges, particularly in terms of poverty, vulnerability to climate change, environmental degradation and lack of financing and technological resources in implementation.

Vulnerability to climate change was consistently highlighted as one of the major challenges in achieving the SDGs. Calls were made for the Secretary-General to appoint a Climate Advisor. G7 and G20 members were also called upon to phase out fossil fuels and increase investment in statistical systems.

The importance of leaving no one behind was reiterated. Many countries have prioritized this principle in their national policies, actions and projects, to help the most vulnerable. The mobilization of domestic resources was highlighted, while multilateral cooperation should also be stepped up, including through the strengthening of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Experiences of progress toward achieving the SDGs were shared, including through actions such as integrating the SDGs into regional, national and local sustainable development plans and strategies. Many countries have strengthened capacity building, enhanced statistical data collection and invested in education. Several countries looked forward to presenting their Voluntary National

Reviews at the 2020 HLPF. Some noted the value of having regional and sub-regional SDG centres as venues for partnership engagement.

Support was expressed for the UN reform proposal to establish a multi-country office to work on SDG acceleration in the North Pacific.

Summary of the SDG Summit's video messages on leaving no one behind

Women and girls– A call to achieve gender equality worldwide highlighted the theme *Innovate for Change*. Innovation is a tool to create more inclusive societies and break barriers through new ideas and technologies. In that regard, women and girls are playing their part to pave a way for a better world. Thinking outside the box to expand access to public services and improving infrastructure so that it can meet women's needs was also advocated, along with providing access to education that helps women thrive. Women must be assured a seat at the table so that their voices are heard.

Youth– There are 1.8 billion young people in the world of which 200 million are not attending secondary school. Moreover, schools can often be unsafe. But this generation has solutions, and young people want to co-create global solutions in partnership with leaders. Schooling must go beyond literacy and numeracy; problem-solving skills and soft skills are just as important. Young people are the future and they have a voice – they just need to be heard.

Children– Children have increasingly taken action aimed at supporting migrants, countering climate change, and promoting peace-building, as well as gender equality in education. They are stepping up efforts to reverse current trends threatening the enhancement of inclusive and sustainable societies. Children are calling upon the international community, particularly Member States, to act to guarantee a prosperous future for all.

Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Migrants– Those who are forced to flee their homes are among the most vulnerable. In 2018 alone, around 17 million people were displaced by natural disasters. Key approaches to address this situation include enhancing economic and educational opportunities; reducing inequality and poverty in communities with high levels of displacement; mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change; and providing clean water, food and medical care to ensure dignity and health.

Persons with Disabilities– Leaving no one behind cannot be achieved without the active engagement and inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides a framework for action, guiding Member States in the design and implementation of strategies, laws and policies that can enhance the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. The United Nations can play a key role to raise awareness and support policy-making, especially concerning women and girls with disabilities who are often double victims of discrimination. National Action Plans for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda represent a key platform to address discrimination while fostering participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Older Persons– The SDG Summit benefitted from the depiction of older persons from around the world who offered their own perspectives on living as older persons, in particular their relationship with younger people. It was also noted that there are many benefits to living with older persons. The barriers to services that they continue to experience were also cited.

Persons Living with HIV– The SDG Summit heard a message narrated by a woman living with HIV. She recounted being raised by her grandmother, following the death of her parents from AIDS, who died due to lack of medication availability. With her grandmother’s support, the woman went on to become a nurse. Today, her virus is undetectable and she and her partner (who is HIV negative) are raising a child together in a village. Her brother and his partner have adopted an HIV+ child and have moved to the city for better job opportunities and to better cope with the existing stigma. She highlighted that living with HIV did not define her and her family and made a call for ending AIDS together.

Indigenous Peoples– Messages were heard from diverse indigenous peoples from around the world on the importance of the SDGs and their potential role to reduce inequalities faced by indigenous peoples. The importance of access to quality education and, in particular, indigenous education was also cited. Good health and wellbeing were highlighted as the essence of being connected to one’s land, language, culture; and to physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. The messages emphasized that the SDGs represent a general framework that governments, along with the private sector and civil society, can use to implement programmes that benefit indigenous peoples to fight poverty, inequality and injustice.