



Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind

27 – 29 May 2019

Rome, Italy

Session B2: *Promoting equality and protecting fundamental freedoms*

Date: 28 May 2019, 11:00 – 12:30

Description:

One of the fundamental objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the realization of human rights. Similar to the intrinsic nature of human rights, the Agenda is universal, indivisible and interdependent and balances the three dimensions of sustainable development (the economic, social and environmental). The Agenda anchors the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, full respect for international human rights treaties, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the Declaration on the Right to Development and other frameworks.

It is therefore imperative that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is linked to human rights treaty obligations, particularly the nine-core international human rights instruments.¹ The value of ensuring synergies between the concluding observations and recommendations of human rights mechanisms, such as the treaty bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and special procedures on the one hand, and the Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) on the other cannot be underestimated. Although states are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress, drawing on participation and contributions from a diverse range of groups, there are risks of exclusion. By way of example, a cursory review of VNRs indicate limited, if any, references to indigenous peoples and minorities in concerned countries.

The importance of fundamental freedoms, particularly the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, in the implementation of SDG16 and Agenda 2030 as a whole, are essential for promoting participation, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. An enabling environment for civil society allows a better space for achieving all SDGs. (A/HRC/73/279)

The benefits of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of SDG 16 include the following:

- Sharpening the search for the root causes of inequalities to enhance people-centred development;
- The integration of human rights commitments into national planning and budgeting processes;
- The promotion of inclusive, equitable and accountable institutions, such as the justice and security sector, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and gender equality machineries;
- Visibility for the work of human rights defenders and serving as a global shield against human rights violations.

¹ See list here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/coreinstruments.aspx>

Objectives:

The session on “promoting equality and protecting fundamental freedoms” will assess the extent to which access to justice and effective rule of law have been informed by human rights obligations and vice versa. The session will specifically examine the following questions:

- What role do global, regional and national human rights mechanisms such as the UPR, treaty bodies, special procedures and NHRIs play in enhancing access to justice, equality and the rule of law?
- What strategies have such mechanisms used and what are the common themes and threads? What are the main challenges and lessons in their efforts to protect and promote the human rights of various groups (see suggested list in cross cutting section below)?
- Moving forward, what can be done to enhance synergies between the accountability frameworks of global and regional human rights treaties and the HLPF? How can these ensure that human rights commitments are effectively translated into laws, policies and actions in the context of SDG 16?

Key questions:

- 1) Which groups are being left behind as beneficiaries of the rule of law due to the lack of a human rights lens? How are traditionally excluded groups such as women, children and youth, including those who face multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of factors such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, be better served by the rule of law and access to justice?
- 2) What key interventions and policies can help ensure that the human rights are universal in practice?
- 3) How can we enhance data-driven monitoring and reporting processes to support the work of human rights mechanisms? How do we ensure that these processes capture the experiences of the groups mentioned above?
- 4) What is the role of global, regional and national actors in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms?
- 5) In a global environment where the civic space is being eroded and there is increasing attacks on journalists and human rights defenders, how can SDG 16 be a means to reverse these trends?

UN Women, OHCHR, UNDP, IDLO, and UNESCO have been facilitating the organization of this session