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BACKGROUND GUIDE

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST
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Welcoming letter from the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Chairperson

Dear delegates,



It is my greatest pleasure and honor to serve as a Chairperson to this very committee. For many decades the international community has been striving to elaborate the formula for success for achieving sustainable development –the term which incorporate the coherent and mutual coordination of the main components of our life. The adoption of 2030 Agenda became a breakthrough that demonstrated that the entire world cannot stay indifferent toward newly occurring and provocative challenges. It is not difficult to realize that these challenges or even treats require immediate address as well as comprehensive approach of the United Nations Governments, international and regional organizations, civil society and, certainly, individuals.

Continuing from this point, you as individuals can make your own immeasurable contribution which will boost the progress towards reaching Sustainable Development Goals. We are expecting from you bright ideas and innovative solutions as long as we value the power of debate and peace we are aspired to promote. Let us be a part of the change together. Let us demonstrate that especially we have the power to influence the overall global progress and shape the society.

Sincerely yours,

Alexandra Kosyreva

HLPF Chairperson

CONTENTS

Committee overview	3
Main terms and definitions.....	5
I.Preventing women’s social exclusion.....	6
Introduction.....	6
International and regional framework.....	7
Current actions and planned initiatives.....	11
Conclusion	11
Bibliography	13
Further research	14
II.Sustainable Use of the Oceans, Seas, and Marine Resources	16
Introduction.....	16
International and regional framework.....	18
Bibliography:	20
III.Ensuring urban resilience and sustainable urban development in Small Island Developing States.....	21
Introduction.....	21
International and regional framework.....	22
Current actions and planned activities	23

“Decisive, coordinated global action can solve the problems created by Humanity”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Committee overview

In the year of 1992 the United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) established the predecessor of the **High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which was designed to monitor and foster the outputs of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Adopted in the same year these documents became milestones on the path towards sustainable development for the global community.¹

Therefore, the idea of elaboration of the concept of sustainable development that incorporate three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, took several years of multiple debates, for instance, the Millennium Summit in 2000 as well as the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the Future We Want (2012) which, in fact, proclaimed the creation of HLPF. In the year of 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) established the set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and enshrined the responsibilities of HLPF.

“Our Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the Goals and targets over the coming fifteen years. To support accountability to our citizens, we will provide for systematic follow-up and review at the various levels, as set out in this Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The High Level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will have the central role in overseeing follow-up and review at the global level.”²

“Indicators are being developed to assist this work. Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making. Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible. We agree to intensify our efforts to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. We are committed to developing broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP).”

¹ UN DSD, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - United Nations System.

² Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

HLPF meetings are conducted in two different formats: once every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly (GA), and once every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Under the auspices of ECOSOC, Member States, UN system entities, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders convene in order to discuss the progress on the 2030 Agenda. As a result of the meeting, Forum adopts an international declaration on sustainable development, which is submitted to the UN GA.

HLPF's mandate is set out in the Future We Want, as well as in UN GA resolution 67/290 of 2013, which collectively defined HLPF's format and clarified its organizational aspects. As the matter of fact, the Forum is mandated:

- to conduct follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda;
- to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs;
- to ensure that all three dimensions of sustainable development are integrated in all processes and outcomes;
- to verify that emerging issues in the context of sustainable development will be on the international community's agenda.

In order to fulfill its mandate, HLPF provides political leadership and guidance to the international community on how sustainable development can be implemented and monitored via involving the work of other relevant institutions in the process.³

All the developments and new tendencies in the contest of progress towards 2030 Agenda can be found in annually published Global Sustainable Development Report.⁴ With the support of ECOSOC, HLPF promotes technology and knowledge transfer in order to achieve sustainable development as well as to improve cooperation along with coordination inside the UN and to strengthen communication and cooperation between science and policy makers. It conducts state-led reviews with participants from the ministerial level as well as other relevant actors. Furthermore, NGOs and other organizations possess special rights to participate in the dialogue and to contribute to HLPF's work.

In 2017 HLPF was holding its meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC from 10-19 of July. The major focus was on poverty reduction and promoting prosperity around the world, whereas in-depth review specifically of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17 was conducted with the purpose of “[revitalizing] the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.”

³ UN General Assembly, Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290), 2013, p. 3.

⁴ UN DESA, Global Sustainable Development Report 2016, 2016; UN DSD, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - Global Sustainable Development Report; Sustainable Development 2015, The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Main terms and definitions

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, as well as girls and boys. Achieving gender equality means to create a situation when the social and cultural environment recognizes rights of both men and women as an equal value.

Gender-based abuse is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Overfishing is when more fish are caught than the population can replace through natural reproduction.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is a term which, in fact, lacks accepted definition, however according to the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, there are 51 SIDS are in the world. Although the exact figures will vary depending on the measures used, by any calculation they make up a significant proportion of the world's states: for example, the 37 SIDS that are UN Members represent almost one-fifth of the UN Membership. SIDS are mainly located in two regions, with 23 in the Caribbean and 20 in the Pacific, and nine in the rest of the world (scattered across Africa, the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea).

Urban resilience refers to the ability of human settlements to withstand and to recover quickly from any plausible hazards.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) represents the complex of measures aimed to reduce the damage caused by natural hazards like earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones, through an ethic of prevention.

I. Preventing women's social exclusion

Introduction

It is internationally recognized that women's participation has a key importance in achieving sustainable development and sustaining peace. In the modern world women perform as agents of change who bring unique vision of solving global-scaled issues. However, gender inequality and women's social exclusion as a consequence remains to exist and represents the barrier for comprehensive development in wide range of spheres. Women all around the globe experience oppressions as to gender in *health, education, economy and politics* areas. The process of females' advancement is a challenging task that requires coordinated efforts and close cooperation of United Nations, national Governments, international financial institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector and women's groups, youth organizations and individuals.

Women and girls continue to face structural barriers, failures of governance, pervasive violence, including the targeted killing of women's human rights defenders, femicide, harmful practices, discriminatory social norms and stereotypes that deny or restrict their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as undermine their sexual and reproductive health and rights. These imbalances deny women and girls, their full potential and the enjoyment of human rights, and they represent losses for the entire world.

The history of the issue

The global society has been facing inequality as to gender since the ancient times. Until the end of the nineteenth century, women were treated as the inferior sex as to males being excluded from participation in public life, especially in areas of politics, education and employment in certain professional spheres.

The process of legal women empowerment starts from entitling to political rights. In the year of 1893 New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote in the national elections. By that time, the United Kingdom had already witnessed the changed public's suffrage campaigns for female voting for almost half a century. However, only at the end of World War I, British parliament granted women over the age of 30 the right to vote, if they met the property criteria by the Representation of the People Act. Since that times the chain of actions aimed at women advancement have been involving more and more states. However, this process if still did not reach its end and requires overcoming plenty of ideological and legal challenges. More than two centuries after Bentham, Saudi Arabia, the last country to deny this right to women, allowed women to participate in municipal elections.

Continuing the topic of political involvement, nowadays the average proportion of women in parliament has doubled over the past 20 years. Women take 23% of parliamentary

seats and 18% of minister`s ones as well as 47% of females occupy the position of head of state⁵. However, it still can be considered as underrepresentation that women lack position in leadership and management at level positions in the public and private sectors. To that extent, less than one-third of senior- and middle-management positions are held by women.

It is important to recognize that women`s social exclusion stands not only for political rights entitlement and underrepresentation in decision making process. As a matter of fact, as to economic sector, the proportion of women in paid employment out of the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in to 41 per cent for the past 20 years. In the labor market, women worldwide make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, whereas they carry out three times as much unpaid household and care work as men—including cooking and cleaning, fetching water and firewood, or taking care of children and the elderly.

With all aforementioned, the issue of women`s social exclusion is related to poor health as well. Nowadays, 1 in 5 women and girls aged 15 to 49 across 87 countries experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner; harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, - all that continues to rob women and girls of equal opportunities. What plays even more devastating is that at least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation.

In fact, despite the progress made for the past decades, two thirds or 493 million of the world`s adult illiterate population are women, whereas about 130 million girls are not attending the school – that severely restricts a woman`s access to information and opportunities. Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women are still the main obstacles for females` full enjoyment of education. Increasing women`s and girls` educational attainment benefits both individuals and future generations.

All that mentioned requires close attention of the entire world in order to ensure that every female can fully enjoy.

International and regional framework

After foundation of the United Nations (UN), the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women - *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)* - was established under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1946.

⁵ - The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015
[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

Adopted in 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* enshrined contained in its Articles 1 and 2 principles of brotherhood and equality among people as a common value. Since the 1970s, the world has witnessed many national and international attempts to eliminate gender inequalities in all the domains of women's daily lives. Established by *General Assembly (GA) resolution 31/136 the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women*, which was implemented between 1976 and 1985, put integration of women in the development agenda.

The multi-year work of the CSW turned to adoption of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* in 1979. The document stated that the complete development and welfare of a country, the prosperity of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.¹⁰ The practical meaning of the Convention was in forming the basis for constitutions, courts and national laws of Governments that enshrined that females can enjoy their rights and have an opportunity for full and effective participation in decision-making at different levels as well as equal access to quality education, economic resources, employment and leadership. Under this treaty, gender inequality was stated as result of discrimination against women. To that extent, CEDAW called for equality in opportunities and outcomes. CEDAW defines discrimination and the range of steps that states must take to eliminate it, affirms women's rights in specific areas and makes provisions for ratification, monitoring and reporting.

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women of 1993 recognized "*the urgent need for the universal application to women of the rights and principles with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings*". The Declaration provided a definition of gender-based abuse, calling it "*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life*". The Declaration became a complementary instrument that strengthened the work of the CEDAW. As a consequence of the GA 54/134 resolution, in 1999 November 25 was designated as the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*.

The next step was taken with the adoption of the *Beijing Platform for Action of 1995*, the outcome document of Fourth World Conference on Women which became key global policy guideline on gender equality and was signed by all governments that considered it as a "necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace." The Platform provides a blueprint for women's empowerment that is exceptionally clear, straightforward and actionable. The document includes gender analysis of problems and opportunities in 12 critical areas of concern, and clear and specific standards for actions to be implemented by governments, the UN system and civil society, including, where appropriate, the private sector.

In addition, the Platform provides the first global commitment to gender mainstreaming as the methodology by which women's empowerment will be achieved. In 2015 the international community was convened with the purpose of reviewing of 20 years of progress since contained in the *Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20* aimed to assess how far Member States and other stakeholders have come in implementing the commitments. Sustained and long-term commitment upon transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Declaration serves as an important source of guidance for women advancement during 20-year history. Report reviews the national-level implementation of the Platform and highlights the trends and priorities in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern, concluding with an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation.

The UN's guiding documents for women, peace and security are the Security Council (SC) Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security and 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013) on sexual violence in armed conflict became the basis for women empowerment in the period of armed conflicts and enforced women's role in peace sustaining. Considering the changes in gender-based perspective, particular tendencies remain the same. After declining in the last year of 1990s, in early 2000s major civil wars almost tripled from four in 2007 to eleven in 2014. Consequently, the changing face of global conflict has had a particular and devastating impact on women: gender inequalities were deepened by violence. For instance, half of the world's 65.6 million forcibly displaced (22.5 million refugees, 3.2 million asylum seekers and 38.2 million internally displaced people) are women. In this context, the issue of humans' rights protection, especially females' rights took its special priority as long as gender based violence performed as a central tactic of terror. Sexual violence is used as a tactic to displace refugee and IDP populations, while the ideological opposition of extremist groups to girls entering public spaces, including educational institutions, is placing them more generally at a heightened risk. Women and adolescent girls in conflict-affected countries face a heightened risk of falling victim to sex. The situation is deteriorating in the fact of limitation of opportunities of the global community to track all the cases of rights violations. Sometimes females being terrified do not seek for help of governmental institutions, consequently, great number of violence and discrimination cases remain uninvestigated. In this regard, women and girls advancement represents the crucial aspect for the entire society.

Aforementioned SC resolutions have laid the foundation for the efforts of the UN to expand the role of women in leadership positions in every aspect of prevention and resolution of conflicts, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, and to improve protection of women

and girls within a framework of rule of law and respect for human rights. The UN's primary roadmap for operationalizing its women, peace and security agenda was described the 2010 *Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding*, which specified concrete commitments for the UN system in such areas as conflict resolution and economic recovery, along with that focuses on institutional reforms in relevant UN entities.

The prioritizing of the issue of empowerment of women as a tool for effective combating poverty, hunger and disease and for stimulation of the overall development was made by the predecessor Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the UN in 2000. MDGs made the foundation for further strategy of advancement of women's position within the society and underscored the necessity of continued efforts upon that issue on the global scale. In the contest of gender-based approach, for the 15-year period two thirds of developing countries have achieved several targets to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education that is the «recipe for success» for inclusive participation in the society. However, by the year of 2014, 52 countries had not guaranteed equality between men and women in their Constitutions.

Regarding the regional framework, decent number of initiatives was implemented. For example, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation endorsed in 2011 recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment are critical to achieving development results and agreed to accelerate and deepen efforts to (1) improve information systems with disaggregating data by sex; (2) integrate targets for gender equality and women's empowerment in accountability mechanisms; and (3) address gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of development efforts, including peacebuilding and state building.

Numerous regional commitments also underscore the importance of gender equality. For example, the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (the Convention of Belem Do Para). Here we can mention adopted in 2003 by the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, that became the basics for started in 2010 African Women's Decade. Moreover, in the year of 2011 European Convention on Preventing Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was adopted along with the Pacific Islands Forum Gender Equality Declaration in 2012. The strategic guide "Political empowerment of women: framework for strategic action in Latin America and the Caribbean of 2014-2017 takes its place.

Current actions and planned initiatives

The successor of MDGs – the SDGs were adopted by the UN GA Resolution 70/1 “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. In the context of SDGs Goal 5 is aimed at achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Goal 5 sets the purpose to cover the following targets:

- Ending of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminating of all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- Recognizing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- Ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. The most recent developments upon the issue relate the 72nd session of the GA that prioritized addressing women in the context of “striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”. This issue stands for mediation and sustaining peace, global migration, achieving decent lives, sustainable development and human rights.

On May, 30-31 the UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs conducted expert-group meeting in the lead up to the HLPF with a purpose of exploring good practices, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.⁶

Moreover, as a result of the meeting in July, complex thematic review of SDG 5 was elaborated and published. It illustrated the main shifts and tendencies in the contest of gender-based perspective.⁷

Conclusion

In the modern world women continue to face unequal representation in all spheres of life. The primary responsibility of the global community is to ensure that women do not experience discrimination and nullifying their rights, to establish monitoring mechanisms and to grant adequate implementation of gender-responsive policies and development of appropriate use of

⁶ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/5/announcer--experts-meet-at-the-un-ahead-of-high-level-political-forum>

⁷ 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14383SDG5format-revOD.pdf>

sex disaggregated data for gender analysis to identify the effectiveness of their implementation. Empowerment of females represents a great importance, vis á vis a challenging task. Improving of their wellbeing requires a comprehensive approach, including gender-responsive legislation and policies in all areas such as health, sexual and reproductive one, nutrition, educational and economic outcomes across different stages through addressing issues of fundamental safety and integrity of person, prevention and protection from violence, harmful practices and discrimination.

Global community needs to change the narrative of women being victims in need of protection, to ones of promoting understanding their role as critical participants in peace and development efforts. Consequently, mobilizing the entire society towards the promotion and protection of rights of women and girls thought their full participation in all spheres will provide new tools for additional advances related to implementation of sustaining peace concept and will contribute to achieving the SDGs by the date of 2030.

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- http://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/sg-report_synthesisen_web.pdf?la=en&vs=5547
- <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>

Further research

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Gender Equality: Why It Matters <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

II. Sustainable Use of the Oceans, Seas, and Marine Resources

Introduction

Oceans and seas have always been serving as the driving force for development of economic, political and cultural connections between countries. Being the main components of the Earth's hydrosphere, they cover about 70.9 per cent of the earth's surface and represent the greater natural reserves that carry out about 50% of global primary production, supporting the greatest biodiversity on the planet⁸. They are also one of the largest carbon reservoirs in the Earth system, holding up to 54 times more carbon than the atmosphere.

Oceans and seas regulate the Earth system via transferring heat around the world, driving climate and weather systems. Oceans supply living and nonliving resources from fisheries to marine biotechnology, from minerals to renewable energy. As to economic benefits, marine resources provide social and economic goods and services, advance tourism and recreation mechanisms; ensure marine transport and security coastal protection. Even more, Marine Protected Areas contribute to poverty reduction by increasing fish catches and income, and improving health. They also help to improve gender equality providing women with the opportunity to be employed in the spheres related to at small-scale fisheries.

The oceans and seas are vital for national and global economic well-being and social prosperity. Over 40 per cent of the world's population lives within 100 kilometres of the ocean or sea, consequently all nations are directly connected to the oceans and seas through rivers, lakes and streams. In the contest of global economy, market value of marine and coastal resources and industries is estimated 5 per cent of global GDP. Oceans serve as the world's largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on the oceans as their primary source of protein. Moreover, oceans absorb about 30 per cent of carbon dioxide produced by humans, buffering the impacts of global warming.

The major difficulties we face nowadays in the context of sustainable use of oceans are:

- **Unsustainable fishing.** 90% of the world's fisheries are exploited, while billions of unwanted fish and other animals die needlessly each year. Unsustainable fishing is the largest threat to ocean life and habitats.
- **Inadequate protection.** As it has been already stated cover the oceans cover more than 70% of our planet's surface, but only 3.4% of the oceans has been protected. What is worse, the vast majority of the world's few marine parks and reserves do not meet necessary protection. Without more and better managed

⁸ Life Below Water: Why It Matters http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/14_Why-it-Matters_Goal-14_Life-Below-Water_3p.pdf

marine areas, the future of the ocean's rich biodiversity - and the local economies it supports - remains uncertain.

- **Shipping and related pollution.** The oceans are huge highways, across which we ship all kinds of goods. This heavy traffic lead to oil spills, ship groundings, anchor damage, and the dumping of rubbish, ballast water, and oily waste around the world.
- **Climate change.** This complex phenomena affects the coral bleaching, rising sea levels and water temperature, changing species distributions

Increasing levels of debris in the world's oceans are having a major environmental and economic impact. Marine debris impact biodiversity through entanglement or ingestion of debris items by organisms, which can kill them or make it impossible for them to reproduce. About 20 per cent of world's coral reefs have been effectively destroyed and showed no prospects for recovery. About 24 per cent of the remaining reefs are under imminent risk of collapse through human pressures.

Furthermore, improper marine management results in overfishing. The lost economic benefits from the fisheries sector are estimated to be around US\$50 billion annually. According to estimations of the World Wildlife Fund which work focuses on healthy and resilient marine ecosystems that support abundant biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods, and thriving economies, the total value of the oceans as an asset is at least 24 trillion USD, including direct outputs of such aforementioned spheres as fishing, services such as tourism, trade and transport, as well as other ecosystem services, for example, carbon sequestering. In this regard, businesses play an important role in the area of ocean management as their practices and operations can greatly affect marine life and resources as well as generate waste and pollution. Beyond those industries that directly depend on marine ecosystem services and its biodiversity, all businesses should share the responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of ocean and marine resources.

One of the major difficulties in the contest of sustainable use of marine resources that has already need briefly described is inadequate fishing. Hereby, there is a necessity to conserve and rebuild the global fish stocks that have been mainly affected by the industrialization. Approximately 350 million jobs globally are linked to the oceans through fishing, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism and research activities. Furthermore over a billion people depend on fish as their primary source of protein. If we continue on the current trajectory, only one third of the amount of fish available from capture fisheries in 1970 will still be available by 2050⁹.

⁹ Crisis in Global Oceans as Populations of Marine Species Halve in Size Since 1970 <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/crisis-global-oceans-populations-marine-species-halve-size-1970>

International and regional framework

With the purpose to address the issue of proper water management the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was adopted in the year of 1982. The document provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. The Convention describes the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources.

Since the establishment of the UNCLOS the international community has prioritized the importance of oceans for common prosperity and development. The treasure of water resources was first embodied in Rio Declaration on Environment and Development as well as in Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 in 1992 and in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002. Agenda 21 provides the programme of action for achieving the sustainable development of oceans, coastal areas and seas through integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas, including exclusive economic zones. In the framework, the UN agencies that were dealing with oceans and coastal issues formed the Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC SOCA) in 1993. The work upon the issue of sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources is carried out by various UN agencies, for instance, Food and Agriculture Organization: in the year of 2001 the agency jointly with Iceland and Norway implemented Reykjavik Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem that led to adoption of Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem

The United Nations High-Level Committee on Programmes decided in 2003 the establishment of an Oceans and Coastal Areas Network (subsequently named "UN-Oceans") to build on SOCA. Additionally, one of the key agencies responsible for the addressing the issue is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Created with the purpose of achieving sustainable use of oceans and seas UNCTAD Oceans Economy approach is based on 5 pillars which are economic development, conservation and sustainable use and inclusive social development (especially in developing countries, LDCs and SIDS, the scientific knowledge pillar, and the governance pillar. At the UNCTAD 14 Conference Agency obtained a new mandate on oceans and seas that called on UNCTAD "in cooperation with relevant agencies to support developing countries, in particular SIDS in the design and implementation of regional and/or national economic development strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources. Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) was adopted in 2012 on the occasion of the Third Intergovernmental Review Meeting

(IGR-3) on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). Today it supports and serves as the principal guiding document for the future work of the GPA. (The agreement includes a total of 16 provisions focusing on actions to be taken between 2012 and 2016 at international, regional and local levels).

The new era of international responses stated in the post 2010s. In the Rio+20 2012 outcome document the Future We Want Member States also stressed the importance of “the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through their contributions to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work”.

The Ocean Conference held in June of 2017 became the first UN conference of its kind on the issue and raised global consciousness of ocean problems ranging from marine pollution to illegal and over fishing, from ocean acidification to lack of high seas governance. The call for action formally adopted at the conclusion of the Conference that stated the commitments which address all the issues needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14— “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”. Sustainable Development Goal 14 recognizes the environmental and social benefits that healthy oceans provide, as well as the fact that their resources and assets are being eroded by a range of man-made actions that are, nonetheless, both manageable and within the scope of Goal 14.

The following proposals are in focus:

- Reducing marine pollution and debris including from land-based activities;
- Promoting sustainable exploitation of marine resources;
- Halting the destruction of marine resources especially through acidification;
- Eliminating harmful subsidies that promote fishing overcapacity;
- Ensuring full implementation of regional and international regimes governing oceans and seas;
- Protecting marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including by establishing Marine Protected Areas;
- Encouraging sustainable small-scale fisheries.

Conclusion

Unless nations overcome short-term territorial and resource interests along with carrying out long-term planning the state of the oceans will continue to deteriorate. The strong leadership, new partnerships as well as personal responsibility of individuals is needed for achieving coherence between jobs and economic development and healthy oceans, seas and marine resources.

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III. Ensuring urban resilience and sustainable urban development in Small Island Developing States

Introduction

The population of Small Island Developing States (SIDs) is approximately 65 million out of which 38 million (59%) live in urban areas, and trend of urbanization is increasing. Although more than half of the population lives in cities, SIDs are not traditionally part of global discussions in the area of urbanization. However, rapid urbanization represents a significant challenge for national and local governments in SIDs. Growing populations in the limited land space puts pressure on already fragile coastal ecosystems and agricultural areas, which are also affected by the adverse impact of climate change. Although SIDS face many shared challenges, urbanization within SIDs is diverse. Scattered around the world, SIDs are often economically, culturally and geographically distinct from one another - especially when it comes to styles of “urban” governance, topography and demographics. SIDs hit extremes in variations of urbanization rates – some countries are 100% urbanized such as Singapore, whereas some countries are below 10% (for example, Trinidad & Tobago). The urbanization rate amongst SIDS in the immediate future is expected to be 1.5 per cent, just below the global average of 1.8 per cent but with striking regional and national differences. In the fastest-urbanizing region, the Pacific, the urbanization rate is currently calculated at 4.3 per cent, increasing to 16 per cent in peri-urban areas. Rapid urban growth can also be observed in other regions, for example in Haiti (3.9 per cent), Trinidad and Tobago (2.2 per cent) and Cape Verde (2.1 per cent). Five cities in SIDS have now a population of over one million inhabitants (Singapore, Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Havana (Cuba), Kingston (Jamaica)). However, sustainable urban development is equally important to all SIDs as well as many other countries, in order to make cities, towns, and villages of all sizes more functional, resilient, accessible, and sustainable.

It is necessary to underline that the problem of sustainable urban development in SIDs is induced by the land scarcity and demand in both urban and rural areas which increase the pressure on good governance of land administration and management systems in SIDs. Population growth and urbanization drive up land value, which affects housing and property and makes implementation of planning and zoning regulations more difficult. Common issues identified in SIDs include unplanned rapid urbanization, limited resources and capacity, remoteness and challenges of connectivity, and issues of management including but not limited to inadequate land administration, systems for customary and other lands, difficulty in searching land titles because of manual land registration systems, delays in registration or customary land declarations, and lack of direct public access for all land information currently stored manually.

Moreover, natural disasters and climate change severely affect the growth trajectory of SIDS and their ability to achieve sustainable development. Increased migration towards the coastal and urban areas brought with it an increase in the economic cost of damage from natural disasters. SIDS are located in some of the most disaster-prone regions in the world and comprise two-thirds of countries with the highest relative annual losses due to disasters. Between 2001-2010, the estimated cost of damage was US \$22,457 million; almost triple the figure of the previous decade, US \$8,944 million.

International and regional framework

In 1976, the UN held in Vancouver the first summit on the topic of cities, Habitat I, followed-up two decades later by Habitat II in Istanbul. Both conferences were an opportunity for experts and urban stakeholders to discuss various contemporary concerns and challenges, such as quality of life within urban spaces, distribution of services, regulatory use of land, and environmental protection. Habitat II unveiled the Habitat Agenda, a core document that contributed to the creation of the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) and served as a roadmap regarding environmental-friendly and nondiscriminatory urban policies. In order to foster regular debates between policymakers on the issue of human settlements, UN-Habitat established the World Urban Forum (WUF), a summit that takes place every two years and strives to increase coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders and constituencies for the advancement and implementation of sustainable urbanization.

Analyzing the issues caused by poorly-managed urbanization the UN has also initiated the efforts regarding climate change and global warming, underlining the importance of adaptation, particularly within cities that significantly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Aimed to address the change of climate and mitigate its effects the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)- a 1992 international treaty - put on the agenda preventing further global temperature increase, and as a part of this, the Conference of the Parties (COP) was established as a forum for annual dialogue on the issue. 20 years Later urban resilience was recognized as a core strategy for climate change adaptation in the first international agreement that introduced is *the Future We Want agenda from the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)*.

SIDS have a long-standing commitment to sustainable development. Immediately following the 1992 Rio Conference, SIDS reaffirmed the principles to sustainable development embodied in the Rio Declaration, developing a landmark action program adapted to their specific context at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados 1994. The *Barbados Program of Action (BPoA)* guides efforts towards sustainable development, having been further enhanced and updated through the *Mauritius*

Strategy for the further Implementation in 2005 and the recently-released *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) of 2014*. Though the BPoA only mentions resilience in terms of local communities and disaster risk management, the SAMOA Pathway sets out specific national, regional and international measures to build resilience of SIDS. The SAMOA Pathway calls for effective, inclusive and sustainable implementation of the integrated management of water resources as well as facilities and infrastructure for safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management systems including the exploration of desalination technology where economically and environmentally feasible.¹⁰ Above all, it calls to support SIDS for risk assessment and data, land use and planning (paragraph 52(a)). The document also recognizes the potential of sustainable transportation to improve social equity, health, the resilience of cities, urban-rural linkages and the productivity of rural areas of SIDS, and calls for gaining access to environmentally sound, safe, affordable and well-maintained transportation (paragraph 66, 67(a)). Coordination of UN System actions for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway takes place through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESAP). Its over fifty members developed a matrix for the follow up to SAMOA Pathway, focusing on mandates specifically directed at the United Nations system as well as on areas where the UN system is already engaged through its programmatic work. Most of the international initiatives recognize that urban resilience building and disaster risk reduction should be integrated at all levels through sustainable development planning across sectors. Under the same objectives, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction was held in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan in 2005 and adopted the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*, which is the guiding document in strengthening and building international cooperation to ensure that disaster risk reduction is used as a foundation for sound national and international development agendas. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) instituted a biennial forum in 2007, the Global Platform for DRR, in an attempt to encourage stakeholders to better communicate, share, and coordinate their actions regarding risk management and disaster prevention. UNISDR established the Making Cities Resilient Campaign in 2011, which encourages local governments to transform cities in order to become more robust and absorb multiple shocks, while providing them with a handbook introducing the necessary tools and practical goals on how to do so.

Current actions and planned activities

A number of ongoing UN processes are in place to advocate for urban resilience, to advance climate change adaptation, sustainable development, and DRR in SIDS, because in order

¹⁰ Samoa Pathway - outcome document, paragraph 65, 2014 <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537>

to address this topic efficiently, it is essential to comprehend how urban resilience, climate change adaptation, DRR, and sustainable development are interwoven and impact one another.

The focus on urban areas within the context of climate change, DRR and SIDs is important because well-managed cities and urban areas can address challenges such as environmental degradation, resource depletion, vulnerability to the effects of climate change and increasing demands on urban infrastructure due to urban growth and sprawl. Well-designed urban areas with the high population concentrations and dense urban settlements can present opportunities for the efficient provision of adequate services such as water and electricity.

In 2015 *the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)* was adopted to continue strengthening efforts toward building resilient human settlements. Finally, it is important to mention the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the UN General Assembly (GA) in September 2015 and *the Paris Agreement on climate change (2015)* since they both address the issue and include particular references to SIDs. They aim to promote sustainable, inclusive, prosperous, and universal socioeconomic development. Amongst the 17 SDGs integrated within this transformative agenda, three pertain directly to the idea of resilience within cities: Goal 6, “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, Goal 7, “ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”, Goal 9, “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”, Goal 12, “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, Goal 11, “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, Goal 13, “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact”, and Goal 15, “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”.¹¹Talking about other related UN bodies, UN-Habitat provides groundwork on these issues with the help of two of its programs: the City Resilience Profiling Program offers national and local officials with monitoring and follow-up tools to efficiently evaluate urban resilience, while the Cities and Climate Change Initiative reinforces local governments’ capacity to ensure disaster preparedness, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. UN-Habitat also launched the Sustainable Urban Development network (SUD-Net), an innovative network of global partners, promoting inter-disciplinary approaches to sustainable urban development. The initiative aims to strengthen the climate change response of cities and local governments by developing tools for enhancing capacities of local governments.

The process has started on a regional level first - in the Caribbean - with the launch of the Caribbean Urban Agenda, addressing urban issues that are of a distinct Caribbean nature. It is a

¹¹ Progress of Goal 15 in 2017 <https://sustainabledevelopment>

“holistic and comprehensive framework” that includes thematic programs, a research agenda, a knowledge management facility and capacity building. Additionally, UN-Habitat’s new paradigms for sustainable urban planning are going to provide another framework input for developing a settlement planning agenda for all SIDS. Other regional initiatives, such as the Pacific Urban Forum series are also contributing valuable inputs. It is recognized that climate change and urbanization in SIDs should be vertically integrated, for example through the inclusion of urban issues in national climate change policies. Several SIDs settlements are proponents of this idea and are among the champions in this field. They are Apia (Samoa), Lami (Fiji), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea), Port Vila (Vanuatu) and Honiara (Solomon Islands). In this regard, continuing describing the work of other relevant agencies upon the issue the Ecosystem-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) put in place by the UN Environmental Program (UNEP), which seeks to diminish the damages caused by disasters in developing countries by improving ecosystem and resource management. The UN Development Program (UNDP) has introduced groundbreaking initiatives regarding climate change adaptation by endorsing green, low-emission, and climate-resilient development strategies (Green LECRDS) as an effective means towards sustainable development. Lastly, since building urban resilience at levels of individuals, institutional and private sector is essential, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been significantly contributing to the advancement of resilience, working closely with the UN on this topic. For example, the Medellín Collaboration on Urban Resilience, which was announced at the 7th World Urban Forum in 2014, is a perfect illustration of the ongoing coordination of the UN and CSO efforts. This alliance targets over 2,000 cities (including the number of SIDs) with the purpose of strengthening their socioeconomic and environmental structures. CSOs have also played an essential role in preparing for Habitat III, as they provide local and grassroots perspectives. For example, the Knowledge Centre on Cities and Climate Change (K4C) is an online platform and resource that keeps track of shared experiences, best practices, and innovative strategies regarding urban resilience, climate change, and DRR.

Conclusion

The environmental threats facing SIDS are the same ones that are facing all nations. But economies of larger scale can better mask the impacts of using their natural resources than smaller states. There is a wide spectrum of potential solutions to the problem of sustainable urban resilience in SIDs: sustainable urbanization and sustainable urban management could provide opportunities for governments to enhance resilience through sustainable water and waste management, as well as through responding to climate change adaptation and increasing disaster risk preparedness. However, the questions arise about which emerging issues most urgently require policy attention and our task to identify it and to prioritize those points.

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