**High Level Political Forum 2018**

The High Level Political Forum is **the UN’s main platform for sustainable development**, and meets annually at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to review the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. This year, the Forum was held from July 9 to July 18 on the theme **‘Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies’**. The following are the SDGs under review for 2018:

* 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 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
* Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
* 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
* Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

*Progress and Challenges*

The Sustainable Development Goals are interlinked and create a structure to identify weaknesses in countries by using cyclical checks and balances to ensure that progress is made in their implementation. For example, accelerating and facilitating the realization of SDGs 6 and 7 cannot happen without meaningful and effective partnerships for implementation (SDG17), to ensure availability, affordability, and sustainability in the management of **water, sanitation, and energy for all.** During HLPF, Permanent Missions to the United Nations and civil society organizations (CSOs) underscored the importance of good governance, financing, capacity building, and data acquisition and monitoring as cornerstones for effective policy implementation. Officials stated that **we are *not* on track to reach the goals set for 2030**, and they highlighted the fact that equal access to sustainable water and sanitation, sustainable energy and resources could mean the difference between prosperity and poverty. Moreover, in order to achieve the SDGs, there is a great need for the elimination of inequalities in weak government structures that perpetuate this disparity.

*Financing*

One of the main points discussed during several side events at the Forum was the need to not only push for more funding and resources, but also to make more effective use of existing resources. **Adequate and ambitious funding is essential for reaching the Goals**, and actors from international organizations emphasized how they see funding often used for corporate interest rather than sustainable development.

**A key theme of many sessions and events was that development cannot be sustainable unless it is inclusive. ACOUN staff heard particularly that indigenous communities and people living with disabilities should be better represented and supported by their governments.**

*Indigenous Rights*

SDG 15 is undoubtedly linked to the prosperity of indigenous peoples and their rights. Eighty percent of the world’s biodiversity is located in areas inhabited by indigenous communities, communities dependent on these lands for their survival and wellbeing. Additionally, there is a lack of access to and protection of these sacred sites, areas, and landscapes. The criminalization of land rights and human rights defenders is stunting the progress of the SDGs, and indigenous peoples are in danger of being left behind. Civil society groups spoke out on the policies that are being implemented without the consent and participation of indigenous peoples and the need to reverse these practices.

*People living with disabilities*

SDG 11 was addressed in several side events during HLPF. A topic that stood out during these discussions was the inclusion of people living with disabilities (PLWD) in societies. Cities and human settlements are evolving and growing every day, but there are still many obstacles for PLWD. There are more than 80 million PLWD in the European Union, and this number is expected to rise by 2020, as there is a high correlation between disability and aging. Cities are adding ramps and other conveniences for people with disabilities, but this does not ensure their participation in society. Organizations spoke out on the need to bridge the gap between disabilities and participation so that these populations feel comfortable in public spaces. For example, in rural areas, PLWD are impeded from practicing basic hygiene, such as using the bathroom, because there are no accessible toilets. This does not only contribute to poor physical health, but can also be severely damaging to morale and contribute to mental health issues. During HLPF, announcements were made regarding incentives that are being enacted to encourage cities to become more accessible and inclusive. One example is the Access City Award, given to a city in the European Union which has taken the most steps toward creating a more accessible environment for PLWD.

*Voluntary National Review*

Every year during the High-Level Political Forum, countries are encouraged to give a [Voluntary National Review](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018#vnrs) (VNR) to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress on achieving the SDGs at the national and sub-national levels. The VNR is an important mechanism for follow-up and accountability on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 47 countries presented the progress they have achieved in the implementation of the SDGs at HLPF 2018.You can find out more about the states that reported in 2018 here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>.

*Civil Society and HLPF*

Although the HLPF is predominantly a Member State-led event, **civil society has a really important role to play in assessing the progress on implementation, highlighting areas where progress is lacking, and offering suggestions for improvements and the mechanisms to make them.**

Presenters and members of civil society organisations predicted that at the projected rate, member states would be unable to fulfill their obligations to realize the SDGs. One of the main reasons is the monetary restraints of low-income countries and their inability to meet the environmental and social standards outlined in the 2030 Agenda. While some organizations were optimistic about the ability to change the current trajectory in order to meet these objectives, the discussion at side events and civil society meetings led one to believe that this would be impossible without wealthier, developed nations doing more. Civil society meetings focused on the work of countries, specific organizations, and their successes in implementation, which provided examples for additional groups and on the ground efforts. The Anglican Communion Office heard the call to action to better integrate the SDGs and the grassroots work of the church.

*Next steps*

**ACOUN will continue monitoring the global implementation of the SDGs and report to the wider Anglican Communion on how our partners are struggling and succeeding in this effort. Reporting during HLPF 2018 showed that member states are generally failing to meet the goals set in their National Action Plans. Where possible, churches of the Anglican Communion can play an important role in supporting these Plans and demonstrating their own front-line work towards a more just and sustainable world.** **We hope that there will be opportunities at ACC-17 and the Lambeth Conference to encourage Anglican leaders to commit their churches to partnership in reaching the UN’s 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.**