

21st meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
Geneva, 4-6 April 2017

Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums

***Stakeholder engagement in global and regional follow-up and review of
Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals***

Update by the secretariat (20 March 2017)

1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stipulate that their implementation, follow-up and review are to be guided by the principles of transparency and participation of all stakeholders and people.

In particular SDG 16, which focuses on non-violence and governance, is closely linked to the principles of the Aarhus Convention. It includes targets on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (target 16.6); ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7); and ensuring public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (16.10).

In the second year of the SDGs, governments and other stakeholders have taken initial steps to implement the SDGs, mainly at the national level. International forums at the global and regional levels are focusing on building and strengthening mechanisms to follow up on and review the SDGs.

2. High-level Political Forum (HLPF)

At the global level, the High-level Political Forum¹ is the central platform for SDG follow-up and review. Convened for the fifth time - and for the second time after the adoption of the SDGs -, the next meeting will take place from 10-19 July 2017 in New York. In line with the long-standing practice of the UN sustainable development process, the HLPF provides for an inclusive and participatory format.

All people can participate in the HLPF through the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS)² approach. The nine Major Groups, identified in Agenda 21 in 1992, have provided a structure for coordination, dissemination of information and communication among stakeholders and with their partners. In addition to the Major Groups, the HLPF includes other relevant stakeholders in its work, such as persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants or volunteer groups.

The HLPF modalities³ include a number of provisions that define the engagement of Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the meetings. Representatives of the Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders are allowed to attend all official meetings of the HLPF; to have access to all official information and documents; to intervene in official meetings; to submit documents and present written and oral contributions; to make recommendations; and to organize side events and round tables, in

¹ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

² See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos>

³ General Assembly resolutions 67/290, in particular paragraph 15, and 70/1.

cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat.

The involvement of Major Groups and other Stakeholders is coordinated through a “Major Groups and Other Stakeholders HLPF Coordination Mechanism”. For the 2017 HLPF, Major Groups and other Stakeholders will again have the possibility to provide written inputs, notably reports on their contribution to SDG implementation. This is of particular importance to voluntary reporting by non-governmental actors who manage significant resources or assets, and therefore play an important role in the achievement of individual Sustainable Development Goals and targets on the ground.

3. Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD)

At the regional level, the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development are the key platforms for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

In 2017, the first stand-alone Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region will take place in Geneva on 25 April 2017.⁴ It will consist of a Policy Segment in the morning on “*The Second Year of the SDGs in the Region – Knowing Where We Stand and Moving on to Prosperity and Well-Being for All*”, featuring a cross-sectoral exchange among key policy makers and other stakeholders with an integrated perspective on the SDG agenda. In the afternoon, the Peer Learning Segment will promote voluntary and more in-depth peer learning and practical exchange of experiences among national SDG coordinators and focal points and other stakeholders in three parallel Regional Round Tables.

To coordinate and promote stakeholder involvement, the Regional Forum will be preceded by a one-day, self-organized civil society consultation on 24 April 2017. Civil society groups that are working on SDGs in the region are participating in the consultative process in the run-up to the Regional Forum, with due representation from all parts of the region and from NGOs working at the national and local level.

Civil society representatives can participate in the Regional Forum. The outcomes of the civil society consultation will feed into the Regional Forum and will be presented by one civil society speaker in the Policy Segment. Other interventions by civil society will be made by representatives selected by civil society through their internal coordination mechanism. Limited funding is made available by UN-DESA to support travel of civil society representatives.

⁴ See www.unece.org/rfsd2017