

**22nd meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention**  
**Geneva, 19-21 June 2018**

**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 (26 April 2018)*

**I. High-level Political Forum (HLPF)**

1. At the global level, the High-level Political Forum is the central platform for SDG follow-up and review. Convened for the sixth time - and for the third time after the adoption of the SDGs -, the next meeting will take place from 9-18 July 2018 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.
2. The HLPF Secretariat at UN DESA works with the *Major Groups and other Stakeholders HLPF Coordination Mechanism*<sup>1</sup>, a self-organized structure, to fulfill the provisions of General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/290 regarding stakeholder engagement. The mechanism replaced the previous civil society HLPF Working Group. Every year, Major Groups and other Stakeholders are invited by the Secretariat to provide sectoral papers on the theme of the HLPF. These papers are issued as official HLPF documents and translated into the six UN official languages.
3. All NGOs that have accreditation with ECOSOC or that are part of the Commission for Sustainable Development roster can register participants to the HLPF. Since 2016, the HLPF features one official session on multi-stakeholder engagement. The session is organized in close collaboration with Major Groups and other Stakeholders. In 2018, this session will take place on 11 July from 3 to 6 p.m.
4. Through coordination with their organizing partners, Major Groups and other Stakeholders can intervene from the floor during the HLPF. That includes interactive dialogues during the thematic round tables and Q&A sessions after presentations of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Major Groups and other Stakeholders also serve as panelists and lead discussants in the HLPF thematic review segment. Major Groups and other Stakeholders can organize side events within the UN premises during the HLPF.
5. UN DESA funds the participation of a limited number of Major Groups and other representatives from VNR developing countries to attend the HLPF. UN DESA also organizes a pre-HLPF meeting, which provides an opportunity for coordination and strategizing among Major Groups and other Stakeholders.

**II. Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD)**

6. 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. For the UNECE Region, the Regional Forum is of intergovernmental character, with a well-established practice for non-governmental actors to widely

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

contribute to and participate in the meeting.

7. The second stand-alone Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region took place in Geneva from 1-2 March 2018.<sup>2</sup> It consisted of a High-level Policy Segment on “*Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies in the UNECE Region*”, in which high-level participants from governments and other stakeholders shared overall experiences on SDG implementation. The exchange also touched upon the impact of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on SDG implementation and the science-policy interface, including ways to involve the science community in policy-making. In the afternoon of the first day, the Peer Learning Segment promoted voluntary and more in-depth peer learning and practical exchange of experiences in SDG implementation in two sets of five parallel Round Tables centered around the SDGs under in-depth review at the 2018 HLPF (SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15). A session on “*Connecting the Dots*” on the second day explored interlinkages between these goals and how to operationalize them in policy-making.

8. To coordinate and promote stakeholder involvement, the Regional Forum was preceded by a one-day, self-organized civil society consultation on 28 February 2018, with over 100 registered participants. Within the civil society regional engagement mechanism, civil society groups working on SDGs in the region participated in a consultative process leading up to the Regional Forum, with due representation from all parts of the region and from NGOs working at the national and local level.

9. The outcomes of the civil society consultation were presented by one civil society speaker in the High-level Policy Segment. Civil society representatives selected by civil society also made interventions in all the 10 peer learning round tables, the session on “*Connecting the Dots*” as well as in the closing of the Regional Forum. Limited funding was available from the meeting budget to support travel of several civil society representatives.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.unece.org/rfsd2018.html](http://www.unece.org/rfsd2018.html)