

**Conclusions of the Jesuit/Ignatian delegation at the
High Level Political Forum at the United Nations
in New York from July 9-16, 2019**

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SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY SECRETARIAT
The Promotion of Justice



JESUITS
USA Northeast Province



Jesuit Conference
Office of Justice and Ecology



I. Overview

A Jesuit/Ignatian Delegation attended the [High Level Political Forum for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030](#)

The seventh session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2019) took place under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The session took place from 9-15 July 2019 and at the ministerial level from 16 to 18 July 2019. HLPF 2019 addressed the theme, 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'. It conducted an in-depth review of SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), in addition to SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals) which is reviewed each year. The programme is available [here](#). Forty-seven countries conducted Voluntary National Reviews ([VNRs](#)) for HLPF 2019.

In addition to the annual July ECOSOC session, HLPF will also convene for [one and a half days](#) in September 2019, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. One combined outcome document will result from the two sessions.

For the first time, at the initiative of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus (SJES), and with the help of the Christian Life Community (CLC/CVX), a Jesuit/Ignatian delegation came together to participate in this forum. The delegation was comprised of representatives of CLC/CVX (Ann Marie Brennan and Joan Woods), Ecojesuit (Pedro Walpole SJ and Brex Arévalo), Fe y Alegría (Nate Radomski of Magis Americas), Loyola Chicago University Institute of Environmental Sustainability (Nancy Tuchman and Max Melstrom), the Maryland and USA Northeast Jesuit Province (Nicholas Napolitano), the office of Justice and Ecology of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the USA (Cecilia Calvo), Jesuit Refugee Service (Kevin White SJ), and the SJES (Valeria Méndez de Vigo). Ignatian Solidarity Network participated in the side event as mentioned below.

The delegation is very grateful for the support given by Father General Arturo Sosa SJ who spoke in a [video](#) about how the SDGs were formed by the international community in a process of solidarity and hope for all. He shared his thoughts on how the SDGs and the UAPs are connected, reminding us that Jesuits have long been accompanying marginalized people and communities, working for justice and reconciliation, and caring for our Common Home – all in-line with the SDG motto to “leave no one behind.” It is also worth noting that even [Pope Francis endorsed the SDGs](#) when they were formalized at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2015.

II. Common Activities by the Jesuit/Ignatian delegation

The activities undertaken by the delegation were as follows:

- Follow up of the general debates. Analysis of the eight Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR).
- Hosting of a side event on July 11, at the USA Northeast Jesuit Conference Center, entitled [“How can the Ignatian Family collaborate in the care for our Common](#)

[Home](#)". The panel comprised several representatives of the Jesuit/Ignatian delegation, and was followed by engaged open discussions.

- Side event organized by Caritas entitled "Bringing the Agenda 2030 to life: the role of faith based groups in delivering the transformational principles of the Agenda 2030 on the ground". Delegation member Pedro Walpole SJ provided the main address to the panel.
- Meeting with Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Holy See Mission at the United Nations, and discussions of how the Jesuits can be more involved in the work of the UN and their promotion of the SDGs.
- Meeting with Joseph Donnelly, Caritas representative at the United Nations.

III. Observations of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

There has been an impressive response by governments, civil society and other stakeholders to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda during these last years. [The official report](#) presented at the HLPF highlights many advancements. However, it also identifies many areas that need urgent collective attention. The natural environment is deteriorating at an alarming rate; the goal to end extreme poverty by 2030 is being jeopardized as we struggle to respond to entrenched deprivation, violent conflicts, the climate crisis and vulnerabilities to natural disasters. Global hunger is on the rise, and at least half of the world's population lacks essential health services. More than half of the world's children do not meet standards in reading and mathematics; and women in all parts of the world continue to face structural discrimination.

The report emphasizes that much deeper, faster and more ambitious responses are needed to unleash the social and economic transformation to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Some ideas, which arose at the sessions:

- Availability of quality-disaggregated data is vital to make informed decisions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Ensuring high quality, inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities for all is critical to achieve all the SDGs.
- Partnerships and international cooperation are fundamental particularly in education, health, and the environment.
- Development strategies in least developed countries (LDCs) should have a clear focus on inclusiveness.
- Decent work and economic growth are interlinked with all the other SDGs. New technologies and artificial intelligence pose challenges that need to be addressed.
- Strengthening the role of stakeholders is vital, among others, through the engagement in the VNR Processes at the country level and through discussions at the High Level Political Forum.
- Progress in combating climate change is crucial and needs to be accelerated to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, in accordance with the recent [Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#). All SDGs are connected to and exacerbated by the climate crisis.
- Peace, Justice and civic space are paramount to achieve the SDGs.

- More ambitious and urgent action is needed and should be supported by concerted action and commitment that is aligned with the motto “leaving no one behind”. This includes addressing the substantial financing gaps.
- This requires that we urgently address the root causes of inequality. Inequality has increased substantially – 26 billionaires have as much wealth as 3.8 billion people, half the global population.
- Although it is recognized that VNRs can present a certain picture of a country’s progress toward the SDGs, and are an opportunity to reconfigure the dialogue between the government and the people, there is little evidence of institutional spaces for stakeholders coming together. The shrinking space of civil society organizations is generally not addressed. Note the crackdown and criminalization of human rights and environmental activists. A clear gap exists between the concerns of civil society and the opportunities for meaningful engagement in new policy making that successfully addresses these concerns. See the civil society organizations’ [report](#) entitled “Spotlight- Reshaping Governance for Sustainability-Global Society Report” on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- Civil society urgently calls for a doubling of efforts to achieve the SDGs, but achieving the SDGs is in danger due to the general lack of concrete action against climate change, an increase in inequalities, and repression of civil society’s activism. From September 24-25, 2019, there will be an evaluation of the four years of VNRs and the reform of the High Level Political Forum. In addition, there are several calls for mobilization by civil society organizations and platforms from 20-27 September.

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