

HR and the 2030 Agenda

HRC Intersessional Meeting for dialogue on HR and the 2030 Agenda for SD

Geneva 3 December 2019

Good morning.

Thank you very much to the organizers for the invitation to this intersessional meeting on HR and the 2030 Agenda.

It is my great pleasure to take part today in this session on “HR and SDG implementation at the national level” on behalf of Spain.

1. 2030 Agenda. 2019 an important year.

2019 is a critical year for the 2030 Agenda. Let me recall two important meetings:

- First, the Global Summit for Sustainable Development

The Global Summit, in September, was the first since 2015. It marked the end of the first phase in the roadmap to 2030, the phase of the adoption of the Agenda and its revolutionary concept of Development as a global challenge that affects all.

The Global Summit gave us the opportunity to **review** the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to **discuss** about the challenges ahead.

But the Summit was particularly important in terms of **political guidance**. While recognizing the many efforts made at all levels, the Political Declaration of the HLPF expressed concern that progress is slow in many areas and made an **urgent call to increase the level of our ambition** and to **accelerate actions** at all levels and by all stakeholders if we want to meet the SDGs by 2030. **A call to do more and faster.**

- Second, The HLPF: Goal 16

The second important meeting was **the 2019 HLPF**, in July, which carried out an in-depth review of several Goals and among them **Goal 16** which is directly related to the work of the HRC and with today’s discussion.

SDG 16 provides the **framework for peace, justice for all, and strong institutions**, which are fundamental for accelerating progress of other SDGs.

The July meeting of the HLPF examined the numerous aspects that are related to its **24 targets**. It had a **strong focus on HR** and many HR organizations were present in the room. It also focused on its **links with other SDGs (seven other SDGs are considered closely linked to SDG 16 and are referred as SDG16+)**. Without peace, justice and strong institutions, achieving other goals can be difficult or impossible. And vice-versa, various SDGs (such as poverty or climate change) can help or hinder the achievement of SDG 16

From the discussion at the HLPF and despite the many issues that fall within its scope and the difficulty to go in depth during a half day official session, we drew some important **conclusions** out of it:

- First, that the **relationship between HR and the SDG** is profound and indivisible. The SDGs can only be achieved through a human rights-based approach.
- Second, the need to **further institutionalize SDG 16** in order to accelerate the progress, namely by including its targets in **national and local planning**. This also includes budgeting, monitoring and reporting systems.
- Third, that SDG 16 is one of the **most challenging goals** not only to **implement but also to measure**. One of the problems this SDG faces is the lack of reliable governance statistics and indicators which limits the ability to develop specific measures. To analyse regional or sub-regional trends and further disaggregated data (sex, age, vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities...) can contribute to improve this deficit.

On the positive side we can say that Goal 16 is **explicitly grounded in international human rights instruments and commitments**; and second, that most of the **international organizations**, including the UN system, **and regional organizations, are aligning** their strategic planning and operational activities with the 2030 Agenda.

But before addressing the cooperation with international organizations, let me say a few words about our work on SDG 16:

2. Spanish focus on SDG 16

Promoting **HR, the RoL and Democracy** is at the heart of Spain's public policies. It is an absolute priority of our Foreign policy and an essential element of our development cooperation.

We attach great importance to **HR institutions and mechanisms** that promote and oversight respect for HR.

We think that the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** is an extremely important instrument to monitor progress and help improve policies in the field of HR. As **member of the HRC 2018-20**, we are fully committed to support all initiatives aimed at its consolidation and efficiency.

At national level we attach great importance to the **conclusions and recommendations** of the UPR in order to address the challenges that we have and develop appropriate measures.

We also think that the follow-up of the UPR recommendations offers an **opportunity** to contribute to the national **agendas for sustainable development** as well.

In this line of work, I would like to refer to an innovative practice that Spain has undertaken, consisting in the **alignment of the 168 recommendations made on Spain 2015 Universal Periodic Review (UPR), with the SDGs**.

As a result of this alignment with the SDGs, we have a better idea of the **areas which require priority action** from the Government and Parliament.

We have noted that HR are mainly related with **SDG 16** but not only. We have identified **progress linked to 9 other SDGs** (1,2,3,4,5,8,10,11 y 17).

The **general conclusion** is that HR and Development are inextricably interrelated, they are indivisible, interdependent and reinforce each other. Therefore, it is **important to link both agendas** in order to consolidate the progress achieved in the promotion and protection of HR.

Working on the **coming UPR**, the next challenge would be to **link its implementation and follow up to the Spanish Action Plan** for the 2030 Agenda.

We think that this practice of aligning the UPR recommendations to the SDGs and to national plans can also be **extended to other mechanisms** established by different conventions and instruments aimed at assessing the progress and reporting on the implementation of commitments.

Last week I took part in a **CoE Conference** on HR, the RoL and Democracy and the SDGs where we held an interesting discussion on the **role reports and outputs** can play in the implementation of the SDGs.

For instance, the CoE has more than 200 conventions and many of them with follow-up mechanisms -such as **GREVIO** (violence against women), **GRETA** (human trafficking), **ECRI** (Racism and Xenophobia) **GRECO** (corruption CPT (torture) **CDS** (European Committee of Social Rights) to mention only a few- which could serve the States not only to improve their policies in the specific fields but also to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Our **conclusion** is that further **aligning the recommendations**, reports and outputs of HR mechanisms with the Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda **reinforces the role of oversight instruments at national level, both** in the field of **HR** and in the implementation of the **SDGs**.

3. **Civil society participation**

Let me say a few words about the **Spanish experience** on partnerships and participation as the second topic singled out for this session.

Spain like many other countries works to **integrate the SDGs** into our national planning and public policies.

We approved a national **Action Plan** for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in June 2018 and underwent a **Voluntary National Review** at the HLPF in July the same year.

The **solid construction of the SDGs** at national level has been possible thanks to the involvement of the central government (from different ministries and at different levels), the implication of regional and local governments and that of all stakeholders - civil society, the private sector, universities and think-tanks-, together with the support of the Parliament and all political parties. This **“whole-of-society effort”** resulted in a great asset for the Spanish Plan.

We have been working ever since in its **implementation** and in the **revision of our governance model**, with a High Commissioner at the Presidency of the Government.

One year after launching the Plan, we have prepared a **Progress Report** aimed at assessing the progress and at assuring accountability.

Focusing on the **participation of the different stakeholders**, I would start by saying that the Agenda was perceived since the beginning as a powerful tool for transformation and an **opportunity for modernization at all levels**.

Spain is a very decentralized country and one important aspect of our model is the **sub-national dimension**. We consider that **regional and local authorities and cities** play a critical role in implementing and achieving the SDGs. They are closer to people, and very often in a better position to provide public services. The localization of the SDGs is one of our priorities, and the application of **HR principles a central element** of it.

We also think that different **stakeholders -civil society, private sector, youth and other non-governmental stakeholders**, also play a critical role in **implementing and achieving the SDGs**. Our work was initially focused on defining the appropriate representation and communication channels in order to share experiences, expectations and demands, and to include their contribution.

We supported the creation of **multi-stakeholders platforms** on the SDGs which played an important role in the preparation process of our Plan of Action. The organizations most closely linked to development cooperation were the first to take steps. Platforms for dialogue and cooperation followed with the involvement of all sectors resulting in a highly dynamic process with many contributions, publications and a variety of public events. This led to the drafting of a common position document. In April this year the Chamber of Deputies of the Spanish Parliament hosted the most important event in this process with the involvement of different stakeholders.

Among the CSO, it is worth to mention the **Federation of HR defense and promotion Associations of Spain**. Their activities are mainly focused on two areas:

One of them is **reducing inequalities and discrimination**. They have consultative status at the UN and work on different vulnerable groups, in particular refugees and migrants, with a gender perspective.

The second main area of work is **reinforcing partnerships**. They are part in the project "Europe in the World, engaging in the 2030 Agenda cross-sectoral CSO coalition" to engage European citizens and decision makers in implementing the SDGs (financed by the EU).

CSO also played an important role in the preparation of the Spanish report to the UPR. To this end, an open consultation process was launched in July, and an on-line facility was created in the Ministry web page for NGOs to send their contributions (14 contributions were received). In October, we organized an informative session in order to share with the CSO the main lines of the Spanish report.

We highly appreciate the active involvement of **NGOs** and believe that they provide an important and a valuable contribution to our efforts. We also consider that **Youth** has a key role in achieving the SDGs and that we have to find ways to assure a meaningful involvement of young people in the processes associated with the 2030 Agenda.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, following the call made by the Political Declaration in September, I would like to say that we need to **work together in a more coherent and coordinated way.** Based on our experience there are three aspects I would like to stress:

- **1st, to further incorporating the SDGs in our work,** in particular **SDG 16** and the **link between SDGs and the HR,** in order to increase their impact and accountability;
- **2nd, to further increasing the role of the oversight institutions** in assisting the States to achieve the SDGs, also by supporting the capacities of planning and reporting on HR.
- **3rd, the need to strengthening partnerships** and reinforce the HRC and other international HR institutions as **platforms for dialogue and cooperation,** delivering on the **global partnerships of SDG 17:** that means the **involvement of all stakeholders** -local governments, civil society, citizens, the private sector, youth and others-, and supporting **participatory processes** -particularly important in times when we are perceiving shrinking spaces for civil society participation-;

Achieving the SDGs can only be done **through cooperation.** We have **high national ambitions, but we are also committed with our partners** to promote and defend **human rights worldwide** as the **only possible way** to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Thank you for your attention