

# 2021 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



## Final Report

2 August 2021

  
MINISTÈRE  
DE L'EUROPE  
ET DES AFFAIRES  
ÉTRANGÈRES

*Liberté  
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NORWEGIAN AGENCY FOR  
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## I. About the 2021 High Level Political Forum

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development and the ECOSOC General Debate took place from Tuesday, 6 July to Friday, 16 July 2021. The ministerial meeting of the forum was from Tuesday, 13 July to Thursday, 15 July 2020. The theme for this year was:

*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective Path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.*

Due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic, this year's HLPF was held online again with virtual meetings and sessions, and the program incorporated specific segments on:

- ▶ Taking a bird's eye view of the world situation regarding the SDGs and the impact of COVID-19.
- ▶ Ensuring that no one is left behind.
- ▶ Building resilience against future shocks through rethinking and restructuring our social and economic systems and investing in sustainable infrastructure for advancing the SDGs.
- ▶ Reviewing the nine SDGs in focus in 2021 through meetings on:
  - Ending poverty and hunger and transforming towards inclusive and sustainable economies (SDGs 1, 2, 8, 17)
  - Transforming consumption and production and addressing and mitigating climate change (SDGs 12, 13, 17)
  - Building more peaceful, equal, and inclusive societies (SDGs 3, 10, 16, 17)
- ▶ Addressing SDG 17 throughout the programme in each SDGs session together with the SDGs to be reviewed, and through dedicated meetings on investing in SDGs and on mobilizing science, technology and innovation and strengthening the science-policy-society interface.





- ▶ Reviewing the SDG targets with 2020 as a completion date.
- ▶ Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on the realization of the SDGs in countries in special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries) and how to support the response and recovery in the special context of those countries.
- ▶ Analyzing the regional dimension of the recovery from COVID-19 and the situation regarding the SDGs, building on the work of the United Nations regional commissions and the outcomes of the regional sustainable development forums.

- ▶ Exploring subnational and local dimensions.

The first week included numerous speakers and panels on the theme and above thematic issues, and the second week centered around Voluntary National Reviews. This year, 42 Countries presented on their progress towards implementing the SDGs. The programme-at-a-glance can be [found here](#), and the full detailed programme for the HLPF, including speakers and bios can be [found here](#). The Listing of Side Events (including the VGA side event) can be [found here](#).

## II. VGA Involvement in Advance of the HLPF

One of the VGA's three Areas of Focus under our [2021 Action Plan](#) is "Global Engagement," with a focus on the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Beginning in February 2021, members of VGA with the Coordinator began preparing for the HLPF. In March 2021, a draft sectoral position paper was shared with the membership for edits and feedback, which were incorporated into the final draft. The paper was submitted on 1 April 2021 and has been posted to the UN Sustainable

Development website [here](#), with the full position paper submitted at the end of May and posted [here](#).

VGA also successfully applied and was chosen to be one of a dozen [exhibits](#) for this year's HLPF - [www.volunteergroupsalliance.org](http://www.volunteergroupsalliance.org) - which focuses on "Volunteer Stories" collected from VGA members that highlight in a searchable database how volunteers are delivering the SDGs based on individual SDGs and country of involvement.

## Net changes in overall participation 2019-2020



Net = % people volunteering more - % people volunteering less



2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Volunteer Groups Alliance Final Report

### III. VGA Involvement at the HLPF and Side Event

Due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic, this year's HLPF was held online for a second year in a row. As one of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS), we had several formal opportunities to engage with the HLPF, including the right to:

- ▶ Organize side events
- ▶ Speak at thematic roundtables and comment during thematic reviews

#### Side Event

On July 6, VGA held a very successful side event as part of the HLPF on [“Volunteers and COVID-19: How volunteers help build back better during the pandemic to achieve the 2030 Agenda”](#) with nearly 600 registrants.

During the side event facilitated by Mei Cobb, VGA co-chair and Senior Director of Volunteer Engagement at United Way Worldwide, attendees learned about how volunteering contributed to the COVID-19 response and was supported during the pandemic in Guinea, France, and [Chile](#).

France Volontaires presented the first experimental study published last May on the contribution of international volunteering for exchange and solidarity to the 2030 Agenda. The

objectives of this study were to observe this contribution and to develop an analysis method, focused on the SDG 4 (“Education for All”) and Madagascar. You can read the full report in [French](#), or the summary report in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).”

Attendees also heard about the [key-findings](#) from a recent survey on volunteering during COVID-19 that was commissioned by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme as part of their research for the next State of the World's Volunteerism Report. More details can be found in UNV's new paper [“From care to where? Understanding volunteerism in the global South: A multi-country study on volunteering before, during and beyond COVID-19”](#).

The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) presented the [findings](#) of a study that they had undertaken to learn more about how volunteering leadership structures helping advance the 2030 Agenda have been impacted by the pandemic.

Finally, attendees heard volunteer voices from Jordan, Peru (members of IAVE's [Global Network of Volunteering Leadership - GNLV](#)), Kenya and [Guinea](#) (by video).



## Impact of COVID-19 on Volunteering Activity



- ▶ Despite the pandemic, 55% of respondents stated they had an increased number of people who wanted to be volunteers and 77% stated that COVID-19 had opened up opportunities for their volunteer mobilisation work.
- ▶ But 55% stated the pandemic lockdown had reduced volunteering activity in their country.
- ▶ 63% of survey respondents stated they had moved from supporting face to face volunteering programmes to online volunteering programmes.
- ▶ **84% Have revised their strategic approach to work through online support and engagement with VIOs and volunteers**

A recording of the event can be found [here](#). A special thanks to Clarisse Bourjon, Mei Cobb, Raaida Mannaa, and Celina Menzel for all their planning and support.

### Interventions

VGA was also successful in arranging for a volunteer Lead Discussant, Suran Maharjan from VSO Nepal, to participate in the HLPF session [Building resilience against future shocks through structural changes and investment in sustainable infrastructure](#). You can hear his remarks starting at 1:29 in [this recording](#) and read them [here](#).

VGA coordinator David Styers was able to give an intervention on behalf of

Volunteers for the HLPF session [Vision and priorities of civil society, the private sector and other major groups and stakeholders: realizing the SDGs during the COVID-19 recovery](#). You can hear his remarks starting at 1:14:30 in [this recording](#) and read them [here](#). David was also provided an intervention for [Scenarios and possible medium and long-term trends related to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of SDGs](#). You can hear his remarks starting at 1:20:45 in [this recording](#) and read them [here](#).

For the VNRs presentations, NOREC's Helge Espe, an official member of Norway's delegate, gave the country's [response](#) to Malaysia's VNR.

## IV. Voluntary national Reviews (VNRs)

Of the 42 VNRs\* prepared for this year's HLPF, at least 25 (60%) mention the positive contributions of volunteering to the SDGs:

Bhutan	Iraq	Norway
Colombia	Japan	Paraguay
Cuba	Lao PDR	San Marino
Cyprus	Madagascar	Spain
Czech Republic	Malaysia	Thailand
Denmark	Mexico	Tunisia
Dominican Republic	Namibia	Uruguay
Egypt	Nicaragua	
Indonesia	Niger	

Another three mention volunteering but not how it contributes to the SDGs:

Antigua and Barbuda	Qatar	Sierra Leone
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### Three VNRs Examples

**Madagascar** – The legislative framework is mentioned concerning the incorporation of the SDGs into national framework documents: “The existence of a legislative framework materialized by law n ° 2015-015 of 10 August 2015 relating to volunteering facilitates the implementation of the SDGs by the volunteers.”

Concerning the dimension “Leaving no one behind,” the participation of young people and volunteers in development is recognized. In addition, the action of France Volontaires is welcomed: “Efforts are being made at the sectoral level

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\*Please note that the VNRs for the Bahamas and Guatemala are still not available.

to involve all stakeholders. Indeed, institutional volunteers from the Ministry of Communication and Culture (MCC) in collaboration with volunteers from the NGO France Volontaires have cooperated in the field of health, in particular: the fight against COVID-19, the fight against hunger, popularization of the law on reproductive health and family planning, sensitization on menstrual health and networking of actors working on sexual and reproductive health.”(Page 40).

The contribution of volunteering is mentioned for SDG1 Poverty eradication, in particular in the area of Risk and Disaster Management, SDG11 Sustainable cities and communities, and SDG15 Life on land, in particular in connection with forest management.

**Tunisia** – Volunteering is cited among the highlights of the report: “The cross-functionality of volunteering and the support provided by voluntary groups to the various development actors have given it an integrating power around SDG17 and an accelerator of all the SDGs, including the SDGs identified as priorities for VNR 2021, such as SDG3 and SDG10.”

Regarding the appropriation of the SDGs by non-state parties, an entire part is devoted to the engagement of Tunisian volunteering and its role in the fight against Covid-19 is recognized. The volunteers of France Volontaires are

also mentioned in connection with the “Help your brother” initiative to collect social assistance during the COVID-19 crisis in which they participated (page 69).

Also interesting, the recognition of the Tunisian government for:

- ▶ the lack of measurable indicators and monitoring of volunteering actions, making it difficult to measure their contribution and impact; and
- ▶ the absence of a specific legal framework for volunteering, allowing access to a protected and recognized status.

Finally, note the recognition of young people as “leaders of change and engines of sustainable development, peace and security” who must face a “socio-economic marginalization, accentuated by the COVID 19 crisis.”

**Niger** – The contribution of volunteers to SDG3 Health, with 60.21% of deliveries being carried out by volunteers from community relays, which has led to improved indicators.

It is also affirmed that, “The implementation of the law on volunteering in Niger, adopted in March 2014, will help to strengthen the interventions underway.”



## V. Ministerial Declaration of the 2021 HLPF

Below is language highlighting volunteers that was approved with the adoption of the [Ministerial Declaration](#) by Member States on Thursday 15, 2021:

*22. We commit to promoting public engagement and innovative partnerships through a whole-of-government approach, regional and local mobilization and actions, and meaningful participation and involvement of communities, people, civil society, volunteers, academia and the private sector. Resource mobilization is crucial for health systems and social-economic recovery. We stress in this regard that further support is needed from developed countries, especially regarding the transfer of technology, capacity-building and financing to developing countries. We commit to strengthening cooperation to close the digital divide within and among countries. Fulfilling official development assistance (ODA) commitments is urgent as international public finance is critical for supporting the sustainable recovery from COVID-19, while taking into consideration that domestic and international efforts have to go hand in hand, and domestic revenue mobilization needs to be complemented with support from all sources. We stress the need for the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. We reaffirm the outcome of the forum on financing for development follow-up of the Council. 10 We welcome the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, and invite Member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, to provide voluntary financial contributions and technical assistance to ensure its full and effective implementation, and urge the United Nations system and other relevant international and regional organizations to support, in a coordinated manner, the activities of the Technology Bank, while respecting the relevant provisions of the intellectual property rights-related agreements.*