

# UN High-level Political Forum Advocacy Briefing

This NCD Alliance briefing document provides guidance to national and regional advocates regarding the UN High-level Political Forum and outlines concrete opportunities for engagement.

The adoption of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2030 Agenda) in September 2015 was a landmark for the NCD community, as the 2030 Agenda included a standalone target on reducing premature mortality due to NCDs (Target 3.4). This was the first time NCDs were included in a global development framework with dedicated targets to measure progress, providing an important platform for the NCD community to further consolidate NCDs as a development issue.

## 1 What is the High-level Political Forum (HLPF)?

The ECOSOC [High-level Political Forum](#) (HLPF) on sustainable development is the main United Nations body that provides political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development, and addresses follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments. Member States agreed that the HLPF would be the central body to monitor and review progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda at the global level.

## 2 Where, when, and who attends the HLPF?

The HLPF convenes in July every year at UN headquarters in New York, and delegates meet to discuss progress towards and challenges in achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). Member State representatives, UN agencies, inter-governmental organisations, major groups and other stakeholders, and the media attend the HLPF. Non-governmental organisations must have valid ECOSOC accreditation in order to attend. More information is available by clicking on the [Registration](#) tab on the website. The President of the ECOSOC appoints two co-facilitators each year to lead the discussions. The co-facilitators for 2017 are H.E. Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, and H.E. Ambassador Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria.



### 3 How are the SDGs monitored and reviewed at the HLPF?

In 2016, Member States [decided](#) that, for the next four years, the HLPF on sustainable development would conduct thematic reviews that address cross-cutting and emerging issues across the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, economic, and social. For the remainder of its current cycle, the HLPF will focus on the following annual themes and goals:



**2017**  
Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world



**2018**  
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies



**2019**  
Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality



The HLPF consists of high-level panels and dialogues, roundtable sessions, voluntary national reviews, and side events. The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) are state-led, and intended to review progress on the SDGs at national and sub-national levels. The VNRs are one of the main ways for governments to report on progress on the SDGs at the global level, and should facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Documentation to support country VNRs will be posted on the [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#) as it becomes available. Each year, Member States volunteer to present their VNRs; over 40 countries have indicated that they will present VNRs in 2017.

In addition to the VNRs, the following reports measure progress towards achieving the SDGs at the global level:

- Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This report provides a global overview of progress towards achieving the SDGs using available data from the [global indicators for the SDGs](#), highlights the theme of the HLPF session, and provides information about specific population groups that are lagging behind in achieving the SDGs.
- [Global Sustainable Development Report](#) (GSDR). The GSDR is intended to strengthen the interface between science and policy at the HLPF and support policy-makers by providing a strong evidence-based report to promote poverty eradication and sustainable development.



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#### 4 What is the process and timeline for governments to develop VNRs?

Governments first indicate their intent to develop and present a VNR as early as September of the year prior to which they will present. Once a country indicates they will present a VNR, a country-profile page is created on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform [website](#), which will eventually house the VNR presented to the HLPF and any supporting documents.

For 2017, countries are encouraged to submit their VNR by 16 June so they may be posted and translated as needed for the HLPF. Given this timeframe, it is crucial for NCD advocates to liaise with their governments in-country to understand how NCDs and health are incorporated. WHO country offices are supporting the preparation of health-related sections of country VNRs, offering an opportunity for advocates to liaise with WHO colleagues.

The Secretary-General developed [proposed guidelines](#) for the VNRs, but these are voluntary and governments can develop their VNRs in any format.

As stipulated in the 2030 Agenda, the development of VNRs must engage all relevant stakeholders; in practice, the extent of this engagement varies from country to country. Engaging with the WHO is one way for civil society to be involved, as is engaging with the ministry of health. While the ministry of foreign affairs is most likely to compile the VNR, the ministry of health will likely be engaged and NCD civil society can advocate, the inclusion of NCDs in any material produced by the ministry of health.

In addition to working with the WHO and ministry of health colleagues, all UN regions host stakeholder preparatory meetings to discuss regional perspectives on the successes and challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up and review. These meetings engage Member States, the United Nations and other institutions, and major groups and other stakeholders, and many include a component for civil society dialogue.

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#### 5 What is the main outcome of the HLPF?

The main outcome of the HLPF is a Ministerial Declaration, which is negotiated by two Member State co-facilitators. Since the 2017 HLPF Ministerial Declaration will be the first for a thematic review of the 2030 Agenda, the official format has not yet been finalised. However, we expect the declaration to include the following components: an opening section acknowledging the thematic review, the status of the main goals under review, and next steps.

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#### 6 Why is it important for NCD advocates to engage with the HLPF?

The HLPF is the main global monitoring and review mechanism for governments to report on progress towards and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including SDG3 on health and Target 3.4 on NCDs. Therefore, in addition to the WHO monitoring processes of the global 25x25 NCD targets, this is an important mechanism for monitoring global progress on NCDs.

In addition, the HLPF affords NCD advocates with the opportunity to:

- Illustrate how NCDs are [a cross-cutting issue](#) that requires the attention of and integration with non-health sectors. These links are particularly clear in 2017, as the goals under review include SDG2 on nutrition and SDG3 on health.
  - Establish themselves as part of the international development community. Most, if not all, of the risk factors for NCDs lie outside SDG3 on health, and the thematic reviews of the HLPF will mean that NCD-related goals will be discussed over the next few years, even though SDG3 will not be the focus.
  - Frame NCDs as an issue relevant to health and non-health sectors, and highlight the potential for co-benefit solutions for NCDs and other development priorities, including food and nutrition security, poverty eradication, women's empowerment, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation.
  - Actively reach out to stakeholders they may not have engaged to date, thus enabling their NCD alliance to broaden its support base for NCDs.
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## 7 What can NCD advocates do?

- **Find out if their country is conducting a VNR** and/or what their country's plans for engagement in the HLPF are:
    - **Contact the ministry of foreign affairs** to find out if the ministry of health and its NCD department are engaging in this process, and offer technical expertise to ensure that NCDs will be addressed as part of the VNR and linkages drawn between SDG 3 and the other SDGs under review. This includes highlighting NCD good practices and paying attention to the cross-cutting nature of NCD prevention and control policies and programmes. Governments will be looking for examples of such progress to showcase to the international development community.
    - **Work with the ministry of health to promote the inclusion of NCDs** in the VNR country statements delivered at the HLPF ministerial segment. This provides an opportunity to frame NCDs as both a health and development issue (*while it is important to include NCDs in the VNRs, it is equally important to advocate that NCDs form part of a minister's oral statement*).
    - **Connect with other health and development civil society organisations** involved in this process to highlight co-benefit solutions, identify synergies and make use of additional advocacy opportunities to influence this process.
    - Find out if their country has a national civil society network on sustainable development and how they can join.
  - **Find out how to be part of their country's delegation to the HLPF** and be aware of registration deadlines to attend the HLPF.
  - **Contact their regional/national WHO office** to understand how they are supporting the development of their country's VNR and opportunities for civil society to engage in the process.
  - **Stay in touch with the NCD Alliance** to share updates and intelligence.
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