

## Outcome Document

### Side event at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: lessons learned for supporting a human rights-based approach to the SDGs

The side event took place on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April at the Africa regional Forum on Sustainable development (ARFSD). The event brought together representatives of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, National Human Rights Institutions (Ghana, Cameroon and Denmark), National Planning authorities (Uganda) and the Women's Major Group to **highlight key lessons and experiences of how human rights can be integrated in practice in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.**

The 2030 Agenda is explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties as well as other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to “realize the human rights of all” and the 2030 Agenda needs to be implemented in a manner consistent with international law.

The key messages and recommendations that emerged from the speakers and the constructive discussion at this event were as follows:

#### SDGs and Human Rights

- **SDGs and Human Rights are inextricably linked.**
- A human rights-based approach can support more effective SDG implementation if applied in a systematic manner. Among other things, it can: support the development of better indicators and collection of data to ensure that no one is left behind; support more effective dialogue and participation; and guide and support more targeted laws, policies and programmes by using the recommendations of human rights bodies as guidance for SDG implementation.
- A human rights-based approach should strengthen agency and meaningful participation of rights holders.
- There are key tools available to all to support a human rights-based approach to the SDGs. These include the [Universal Human Rights Index](#), and the [Human Rights Data Explorer](#) which links SDG targets with specific recommendations of international human rights bodies which can inform SDG related strategies and programmes.

Availing of tools like the Universal Human Rights Index, the National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD) and the SDG gender Index data, including in the context of preparation of a Recommendations Implementation plan or National Human Rights Action plan would be vital to strengthen the synergy between follow up and review mechanisms of the SDGs and the human rights mechanisms. Employment of human rights indicators including the ones already captured under the SDGs would be important to concretize the SDG-Human Rights nexus on the ground.

#### National Human Rights Institutions

- National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are key accountability mechanisms for SDG implementation. This has been recognised in the 2030 Agenda through the inclusion of a specific indicator on the existence of independent NHRIs. Among the best practices of African NHRIs that can serve to inform and inspire others include advising governments on a human rights-based approach to the SDGs, and collaboration with national statistical offices to support collection of disaggregated data to ensure no one is left behind; and support for data generation in key areas of Goal 16 in particular.

### **Policy and Institutional Coherence**

- Policy coherence is key to effectiveness and efficiency. It is crucial that human rights laws, policies and programmes are aligned with SDG policies and programmes to avoid duplication and inefficient use of resources.
- Stronger linkages should be sought between SDG focal points, Ministries of planning, National bureaux of statistics on the one hand and government institutions responsible for human rights and National Human Rights Institutions on the other.
- Development plans at various levels of government need to be reviewed for compliance with a human rights-based approach to development as a good practice.

### **Data and Human Rights**

- Official data is insufficient to properly measure progress towards SDGs. Meaningful partnerships need to be fostered in order to ensure adequate data collection and disaggregation for accountability. A successful example of such a partnership is the MoU between the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.
- Data disaggregation is needed based on the prohibited ground of discrimination enshrined in international law. Disaggregation should be consciously pursued for meaningful achievement of the SDGs for all.