



ACTIVITIES REPORT

New York: 8-19 July, High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

CONTROVERSY OVER THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

As you walked the corridors of the United Nations headquarters during HLPF, you could feel the tension of distress from various actors over process' efficiency. While this is a great space for feminist solidarity, networking, awareness raising and knowledge sharing of best practices, you cannot really shake the feeling of: are we really doing enough? Feminist are pushing hard for transformative change, challenging structural barriers on the frontlines and at policy levels. Yet this feeling culminated at the end of the first week as several countries broke the silence on the Ministerial Declaration. This means, that the outcome document of the conference, that had been negotiated upon for months leading up to HLPF and which at this point is meant to best reflect the countries' agreed compromises, no longer had consensus.

There were no surprises in who broke the silence and on what: Russia broke it on the paragraph on gender equality and on youth, Turkey on the paragraph on water, Israel and US on the paragraph on foreign occupation, and some countries also broke the silence on the paragraph on Means of Implementation. As a result, for the first time ever, we had a vote on the entire ministerial declaration, undermining the whole process of what we agreed upon in 2015 in regards to the sustainable development goals. There was a built up of frustration as the forum participants asked themselves: have we really come to this point where we are negotiating back on commitments we have already made through Agenda 2030. Austria, on behalf of 77 countries made a strong intervention at the closing, criticising the vote on the ministerial declaration and urging member states to show greater commitment towards women's human rights in the frame of the sustainable development goals.

Corporate capture of the United Nations and the sustainable development agenda is also proving to be a great source of distress. While countries present their holiday promotional videos at their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), emphasising the importance of the corporate sector in achieving the SDGs, there is no mechanism within the Agenda 2030 process to hold corporations accountable for their externalities. Meaning the effects their actions and unsustainable production have on other countries that are left with the bill for human and environmental costs. Proving how important it is that civil society, who live and fight the consequences of corporate capture, is present at HLPF and on national and regional level.

Ministerial Declaration (the advanced unedited version):

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20419Advance_unedited_2018_Ministrial_declaration_.pdf



VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

One of the tools in place to increase accountability of member states and ensure implementation of Agenda 2030 is the voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Due to their voluntary nature, these vary in quality from country to country. The civil society, as one of the key pillars of Agenda 2030, is meant to be consulted and included in the process of drafting the VNR. At HLPF, through the major groups and other stakeholder mechanism, civil society also get to ask their member states questions regarding gaps in the reporting. These questions are made collectively with several civil society groups, since they are only given 2 minutes to ask them, to better reflect the society's needs as a whole. This part of the HLPF has been heavily criticised for not being effective enough in terms of holding countries accountable in ensuring their progress towards achieving the sustainable development goals. The VNRs, which looks like inviting holiday commercials, and the 2 min critical interventions from civil society is far from the open & constructive dialogue intended in Agenda 2030.

Nevertheless, we are still happy that our #women2030 partners Emma Anakhasyan (RURALDAF, Armenia); Aleksandra Kumbuli (Women for Development, Albania) and Bridget Acakpo-Addra (WEP, Togo) were all selected to represent the civil society during their countries' VNR presentation. All of them have produced shadow reports (coming soon) to their countries' VNRs. Below are their questions and interventions:

Albania

"As mentioned in the VNR, there are challenges for persons with disabilities to access schools and small town institutions. Schools and public institutions often lack safe sanitation facilities for women

and girls. The country lacks sufficient budget for these specific infrastructures as well as for teachers. How is the Albanian government planning to solve this problem? Like most countries, Albania has great challenges with waste collection and treatment, in particular medical, plastic and chemical waste. The VNR shows a decline of 20% of waste treated. The National Strategic Policy Framework does not prioritise waste management as aimed at under SDG12 and 3. Even though the ministry of environment did do a good awareness raising campaign on cleaning up trash, and is phasing out single use plastics, much MORE is needed. My question is in particular about harmful waste such as medical and chemical waste, which concrete steps are planned?"

Armenia

"Armenia is increasingly a water-stressed country, and many communities do not have safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. The situation for rural areas is particularly problematic, especially in schools. How is the Government going to ensure the right to safe drinking water and sanitation for boys and girls? On environmental protection policies and standards, can the government policy for the mining sector be improved, to halt pollution from harmful metals and chemicals and ensure mining sites will be cleaned up, paid for by the companies, not the tax payer? And finally on this issue, when will there be standards for secondary use of wastewater; and improved policies for solid waste management? At least 30% of population in the country can be considered energy poor. Has the Government developed any methods to encourage investment by the financial sector in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the housing sector, including in rural areas? We invite you to see the really interesting Armenian video on rural alternative energy in the UNEP tent at the entrance of the UN building. The NGO sector appreciated the consultations held in advance of the HLPF. However, some civil society sectors were still missing: how will the Government engage a wider array of stakeholders in the future? We will be glad to advice."

Watch our interventions

- Emma's intervention: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx0QvOaXcaU>
- Sascha's intervention: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fggFJnmpeBU>
- Bridget's Acakpo-Addra (#women2030 partner) intervention: <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/hlpf-2018-acakpo-addras-review-on-togo-vnr/>
- Sascha at "Innovation at the HLPF 2018": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpoonOfbEwY>



SIDE EVENTS

Defend the defenders – from high destruction to fast transformation

We held a very successful side event together with our #women2030 partners: Global Forest Coalition and APLWD. Looking at the drivers of deforestation and toxic e-waste, we held a multi-stakeholder dialogue with civil society, UN Women and member states on how to break the structural barriers faced by human rights of women’s human rights and environmental defenders.

- Download the agenda here:
<http://www.wecf.eu/download/2018/07%20July/DefendthedefendersProgram.docx>
- Read more here: <http://www.wecf.eu/english/calendar/2018/HLPFsideevent.php>
- Watch the livestream of the event here:
<https://www.facebook.com/WECF.INTERNATIONAL/videos/10156293924685977/>

Mapping the gap: barriers and opportunities for civil society in VNRs

Women’s major group have done a mapping on how civil society are included (or excluded) in the production of country’s VNRs. Quite quickly into the side event it became quite clear that many of our WMG members were feeling the same distress in terms of actively being excluded from the process. Many testimonies indicated that countries would not take adequate steps to ensure an open an engaging consultation process when drafting their VNRs. This is quite problematic, not only because civil society is one of the pillars of Agenda 2030, but also because member states at the UN repeatedly

emphasises the importance of civil society and that the sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without them. Our partners Aleksandra and Emma gave interventions at the event.

- Read more here: <http://www.wecf.eu/english/calendar/2018/WMGsideeventHLPF.php>
- Watch the livestream of the event here: <https://www.facebook.com/WECF.INTERNATIONAL/videos/10156296313320977/>

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS (EHP) AT THE HLPF

WECF was represented by Hanna Gunnarson, the youth coordinator of the Ostrava project, during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the United Nations. In preparation of the HLPF, the Women's Major Group, which WECF helps to coordinate, organised a **'strategy meeting'** for women's organisations participating.

At this strategy meeting WECF introduced the youth group and the Environment and Health Process (EHP) and presented how the youth group will continue to support social media actions linking in particular to SDG3 (health), SDG5 (gender equality), SDG12 (chemicals, Sustainable Consumption and Production) and SDG16 (Good Governance).

A big push for the EThe director of WECF organised a face to face meeting for all civil society groups from the European Region with the new executive coordinator, Ms Olga Algayova, of UNECE - responsible for the SDG process in the wider European region. The 1,5 hours meeting to place on Wednesday 12 of July at the UN. In that meeting Sascha Gabizon of WECF informed about WECF policy advocacy activities and the link to the Environmental Health and global Chemical Convention processes.

Alla Kuvatova from Tajikistan represented the WECF network partners from Central Asia and spoke in the plenary of the HLPF and prepared the civil society questions to the government of Tajikistan on their VNR - Voluntary National Report. In her intervention she referred to key priorities of the **Ostrava declaration** including access to water and sanitation in particular also for vulnerable groups and school girls, the problems of increasing HIV AIDS rates and ending forced and early child marriage.

Aleksandra Kumbuli (Women for Development, Albania) who also participated at the 6-EHP Ministerial conference reminded the Albanian delegation on the lack safe sanitation facilities for women and girls in schools and public institutions. She also asked which measurements are planned to solve this problem as well as the great challenges, Albania has, with waste collection and treatment, in particular medical, plastic and chemical waste.



BILATERAL MEETINGS

WECF and our partners had several bilateral meetings with delegations and UN institutions (ie Swedish delegation, EU and DEVCO, Georgian Delegation and Olga Algayerova, Executive Director of UNECE), to advocate for stronger commitments to gender equality and women's human rights. We also discussed the needs and the future of implementation in our region. In the meeting with Olga, we discussed the progress of our regional civil society mechanism and the regional forum on sustainable development coming up in March 2019.

FACTSHEETS

Another very powerful advocacy tool used during HLPF 2018 was the factsheets produced by the members of Women's Major Group. Many members, with varying expertise and experiences from across the globe (on site and from home) made a feminist analysis and demands for the topics discussed at the forum. WECF and our partners were very active in particularly drafting the fact sheets on energy, consumption & production, means of implementation and water.

Land/Biodiversity

http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SDG15_HLPF2018_WMGfactsheet.pdf

Sustainable Consumption & Production:

http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SusConsumptionProduction_WMG2018.pdf

Cities & Settlements

http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Cities-Settlements_WMG2018.pdf

Energy/Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights

<http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Energy-Gender-Equality-and-Women%E2%80%99s-Human-Rights.pdf>

Water

http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Factsheet-water_final.pdf

Women Human Rights and Environmental Defenders

(link coming soon)

International Solidarity: Local needs/Global action

(link coming soon)

Means of Implementation

(link coming soon)

Activities report from HLPF 2018

[Women Engage for a Common Future](#)



OUTREACH

WMG's outreach team, led by our Hanna Gunnarsson, continued the colour coded campaign from previous years. The solidarity dress code campaign, as it is unofficially called, shines light on different topics discussed at HLPF from an intersectional feminist perspective. Every day, members receive a daily communications plan with suggested tweets and media (graphics). The campaign was super successful in terms of mobilisation! It made more than 25 million impressions and reached 3,7++ million people. While it was very active on Twitter, with a particular aim to influence decision-makers, many of our WMG members from across the world also joined the campaign on Facebook even though they were not personally in New York. For example, see:

<https://www.facebook.com/DIVAFiji/photos/a.145081285655827.33107.135883596575596/1020102411487039/?type=3&theater>

[#FeministDemand](#)

This was the main hashtag for our members engaging in HLPF 2018. Members and other interested parties were encouraged to follow the hashtag to get the latest updates on gender equality and sustainable development.

#Nodirtybusiness

When Executive Director of UNEP, Erik Solheim compared civil society with Terrorists, while endorsing several huge multinational corporations such as Walmart and Exxon, it became quite clear that we have a huge problem with corporate power's influence over UN processes. This campaign aims to move the lens from rhetorics of individuals' responsibility to live sustainably, to the big polluters who put profit over people. We want them to be held accountable for their actions, and push for system change. Civil society holds governments accountable at HLPF, through the voluntary national review (VNR) process, but not businesses. Yet, major corporations play an active part in blocking the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since this year the SDGs under review are all linked to areas where there is corporate capture, it is key that we do some myth busting on their "solutions".

Women's Human Rights Defenders (#HandsOffWHRDs)

2016 and 2017 were some of the deadliest years for women's human rights defenders (WHRDs) fighting on the frontline for their human rights and environmental justice. This campaign shows what real wonder women look like, it pays tribute to freedom fighters and raises awareness of the work left to do to ensure their safety and full enjoyment of their human rights.

Activities

- Produced an outreach strategy & communications plan
- Coordinated 10 WMG members
- Daily campaign messages shared with WMG members
- Made 40+ graphics:
https://www.facebook.com/pg/WomensMajorGroup/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1814790558601588
- Created an analytics report
- 5 meetings with the outreach team
- Held 3 twitter storms (one on WMG messaging; one on our online action to raise awareness about women's human rights and environmental defenders; and another one on the Polish ban on abortion)
- 8 daily group photos
- Moderation of WMG's social media platforms
- Moderation of WMG's whatsapp groups
- Live tweeting during side events and official events
- Daily analytics reports & one final impacts report
- 1 offline action on WHREds
- Campaign was translated into 3 languages (Arabic, Spanish and French), and our members also shared our messages in their own local languages.

Our impact on twitter

- **25,864,689 impressions** were made (meaning, the potential number of times our messages were seen)
- **3,759,829 people** were reached
- **1,245 people contributed** to the online campaign (and we know many contributed to it offline too and on other platforms)
- **7,413 tweets** were posted and shared
- **4,852.5 USD** is the market value of our hashtag on twitter (meaning, to have the same impact, marketers would normally pay this amount to online platforms)
- We were trending at least twice on twitter
- And several country delegations quoted our campaign content in their interventions.
- Shareable gif with our impact: [bit.ly/feministdemandFacebook](https://www.giphy.com/gifs/feministdemandFacebook);
[bit.ly/feministdemandTwitter](https://www.giphy.com/gifs/feministdemandTwitter)
- Article on our twitter storm on women’s human rights and environmental defenders: <https://worldgivereport.com/2018/07/16/handsoffwhrds-a-movement-to-defend-human-rights-leaders-in-latin-america/>



OUR DELEGATION

Sascha Gabizon (WECF international, Women's Major Groups UNECE regional organising partner), Hanna Gunnarsson (ibid, stand-in WMG organising partner for the UNECE region), Ida Bakhurdize (WECF Georgia), and our local partners Aleksandra Kumbuli (Women for Development, Albania), and Emma Anakhasyan (Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment & RURADALF, Armenia).

ABOUT WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP (WMG)

The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where governments recognized Women as one of the nine important groups in society for achieving sustainable development. The WMG is an official participant in the United Nations processes on Sustainable Development. Other processes use the major group or similar systems, with the WMG active in the processes of the United Nations Environment Program since 1996. The Women's Major Group has the responsibility to facilitate women's civil society active participation, information sharing and input into the policy space provided by the United Nations (e.g., participation, speaking, submission of proposals, access to documents, development of sessions). The WMG is self-organised and open to all interested organisations working to promote human rights-based sustainable development with a focus on women's human rights, the empowerment of women and gender equality. WECF, represented by Sascha Gabizon and Hanna Gunnarsson, is one of the elected organising partners of Women's Major Group. To learn more, visit the website:

<http://www.womenmajorgroup.org>

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The organizer is responsible for the content.