

**“Leaving no one behind” only a hollow slogan,
while leaving the State of Palestine behind, as usual**

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development. HLPF plays a vital role in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process serves as its basis. In 2016, 22 countries, and, in 2017, 43 countries took part in the VNR process at HLPF.

While “leaving no one behind” has been the motto of the Agenda 2030 and HLPF platform since their inception, HLPF 2018 will be at “transforming our world” as promised to remove obstacles to self-determination, colonization and foreign occupation (A/RES/70/1, para. 35), particularly with regard to Palestine. The USA has denied visas to the State of Palestine’s HLPF delegation, preventing their travel to New York to attend at HLPF. This is despite the fact that the State of Palestine is among 47 countries that submitted its VNR for 2018. Palestine has its session at HLPF, today, 17 July 2018, for which the permanent mission to the UN will present to the HLPF instead of the agreed-upon interactive dialogue with the authors.

In-person participation at international platforms can be symbolic, but visas are indispensable for participation at HLPF and other international forums is belligerent and deliberately obstructive. Preventing the Palestine delegation’s active engagement at international institutions is another way to silence Palestinians and prevent the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination. In this regard, the UN Headquarters host country never should transform multilateralism and development participation into a privilege for a U.S. Administration unilaterally to decide at its political discretion.

Recently, with its unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as the “capital of Israel” and moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Palestinian-owned land in Jerusalem, the U.S. Administration crudely and obviously demonstrated its stance to back Israeli acquisition of territory by force, occupation and colonization. At the United Nations, a body that *de facto* recognized the State of Palestine and issued numerous resolutions affirming Palestinian self-determination and independence as a state, the U.S. Administration has long played its obstructionist role also through exercising its veto power to the derogation of effective measures to uphold international law.

However, blocking Palestine’s effective engagement at HLPF, the U.S. Administration also is diminishing the HLPF potential to keep the Palestinian government accountable within international forums and advocacy work calling for progress in implementation. Key messages of the Palestinian delegation that would be echoed in the UN headquarters are not different from those raised under Israel’s illegal occupation for more than half a century, and by the General Assembly resolving to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) together.

The concept of sustainable development is inextricably linked to peoples’ sovereignty and independence. Israel’s illegal occupation, colonization and imposition of its system of institutionalized, material discrimination against the indigenous people of Palestine remain the central injustices in the Middle East and main impediments for Palestine to achieve sustainable development. The Palestinian people’s

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representatives' participation in the HLPF also would provide a needed opportunity for other countries, major groups and other stakeholders to raise questions on SDG implementation, thus seeking accountability.

In this context, we call upon the international community to address the lack of in-person participation of the Palestinian delegation at HLPF, and to urge the UN to pursue effective measures to ensure official delegations' participation without such arbitrary and restrictive visa procedures. HLPF participation should be encouraged as a step toward enhancing accountability, and with further follow-up at international and national levels through inclusive dialogue.

SIGNATORIES

1. Abibiman Foundation – Ghana
2. African Diaspora and Development Day (AFFORD UK)
3. Alliance of Inclusive Muslims (AIM) - Malaysia
4. Arab Campaign for Education for All
5. Arab Network for Democratic Elections
6. Arab NGO Network for development (ANND)
7. Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR)
8. Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)
9. Association of Community Development Action (ACDA) / BURUNDI
10. Association Tunisienne de Femmes Démocrates - (ADFT)
11. Associative Fabric – Morocco
12. Center for Studies and Investigations on Women (CEIM) – Spain
13. Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia
14. Coalition2030- Irish coalition for SDGs
15. Coordination Platform on Development Effectiveness (CPDE)
16. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
17. Disabled Peoples International (DPI);
18. Dóchas – Ireland
19. Economic and Social Watch – Palestine
20. Egyptian Association to Enhance Civic Participation
21. Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR)
22. Finnish NGDO platform to the EU
23. Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan
24. GCAP – Ghana
25. GCAP – Italy
26. Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work and Family
27. Gestos (HIV and AIDS, communication and gender)- Brazil
28. Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)
29. Global Policy Forum
30. Green Liberty – Latvia
31. Habitat international coalition (HIC)
32. IBON International
33. International Forum of Platforms (IFP)
34. Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)

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35. Irish Environmental Network (IEN)
36. Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability
37. Jordanian Women Union
38. Komuniti Muslim Universal (KMU) Malaysia
39. La Brique Association (Burkina Fasso)
40. Lanka Fundamental Rights Organization- Sri Lanka
41. Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
42. Mauritanien Network for Social Action
43. Mourakiboun – Tunis
44. Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV)
45. MUSONET - Mali
46. New Women Foundation (NWF) Egypt
47. Nonviolence International
48. Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek
49. Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)
50. Pax Romana (ICMICA-IMCS)
51. People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty (PCFS),
52. Reaccion Climatica – Bolivia
53. Regions Refocus
54. Roots for Equity
55. Sisters of Charity Federation – USA
56. Social Watch
57. Society for International Development (Sid)
58. Sudani Civic Forum (SCF)
59. Teacher Creativity Center (TCC)
60. The Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (AFRPD),
61. The Center for the Development of Civil Society, - Armenia
62. The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity- AMAN (Transparency Palestine)
63. The Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)
64. The International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific)
65. The Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre (LHAHRDEV) - Nigeria
66. The Lebanese Union of Persons with Mobile Disabilities (LUMPD)
67. The Temple of Understanding
68. Transparency Association – Bahrain
69. Union Network of Migrants (UNEMIG)
70. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) India
71. Women Task Force
72. Women's FfD Group
73. Yemeni Democracy Watch
74. Young Men Association (YMA)
75. Youth Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean (FLACJ)