



Permanent Mission of Iceland
to the United Nations

Written statement of Iceland for the general debate

2020 High-Level Political Forum

"Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development"

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the world tackles the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting global crisis, we are reminded of the importance of Agenda 2030 as a roadmap for building back better. Multilateral co-operation has never been as important, and the international community needs to work together.

The yearly High-Level Political Forum leads our work on the follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals, acting as our guide to address the needs and rights of people worldwide. This is ever more important if the upcoming decade shall be a true decade of action, aimed at opening a door to the future we need.

The Voluntary National Reviews are a vital tool to monitor the implementation worldwide. The Prime Minister of Iceland presented our first voluntary national review at the HLPF last year, along with representatives from the Icelandic SDG Youth Council and a representative of the private sector.

Iceland stays committed to the 2030 agenda and firmly behind the Paris agreement and its targets, aiming for a carbon neutral Iceland in 2040.

The Climate Action Summit and SDG Summit last year revealed that more efforts are needed. Just last month an updated holistic Climate Action Plan was introduced and now Iceland is expected to achieve a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Iceland also remains focused on other global environmental issues, such as pollution of the marine environment and land restoration. Some of the most effective solutions are often innovative and low cost.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, Iceland's Parliament agreed on a new policy for international development cooperation with a focus on addressing climate change, reducing gender inequalities and securing human rights for all. The key pillars of the policy are interlinked and aligned with the SDGs.

Through the 2030 Agenda, UN member states have pledged to ensure that no one will be left behind. We need to accelerate action on gender equality and advancing the human rights of women and girls, creating equal opportunities for all. Women are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are in ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises. Also, we cannot ignore the increased violence against women and girls during the pandemic. The statistics are there and tell an alarming story.

We encourage all member states to grant special attention to groups who lack fundamental rights and pay special attention to vulnerable groups. The promise to leave no one behind also applies to LGBTI individuals, who often face serious human rights violations and are disproportionately hit by the pandemic.

Although we see important achievements in many fields more needs to be done. For example, progress is needed in addressing various non-communicable diseases, including spinal cord injuries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Iceland's 2019 VNR report placed special emphasis on children. It is central for sustainable development and implementing the 2030 Agenda that rights of children are being promoted and protected. Although more children are attending school, we need to do more when it comes to education. My delegation is committed to sharing best practices on the VNRs and earlier this year we worked with UNICEF and other member states on a VNR lab on children and youth inclusion in the process.

At home we continue our implementation of the SDGs. The Prime Minister's Office leads a cross-ministerial working group, which also includes the Association of Local Authorities, the Parliament, Statistics Iceland, observers from the Youth Council for the SDGs and the local UN Association. Wide stakeholder participation is key to accelerated action and transformative pathways – the very theme of our High-Level Political Forum this year. Only together we will realise the decade of action.

I thank you.