



High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2018

13th meeting: Review of SDGs implementation: SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and half and reverse land degradation and half biodiversity loss.

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Discussant SDG 15: HLPF 2018

1. The theme this year is Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. The key word here is “Transformation”. Transformation is not reformation. It calls for a complete overhaul of the entire system. The SDGs are not happening in a vacuum. They were preceded by other development models that had policies of their own. To make SDG 15 truly transformational, there has got to be new gender responsive and human rights based policies, and new institutions and organizations which focus on the concerns of the marginalized people, changing the underlying rules and incentive structure. Budgeting will be gender differentiated, meaning that resources are allocated in gender equitable ways. The issue here is not whether an equal amount of resources is spent on women and men but whether the allocation is adequate for women and men’s needs

A policy is only as good as its implementation. It is important to ensure that policies translate into practice. The entire value chain, from the global to the national to the grassroots must be kept in the know of what is happening here today, resources must be allocated at all levels to build capacity of the indigenous people and local communities to enhance buy-in.

2. The speaker mentions Integrated approaches. While I agree with him I would also add collaborative partnerships with wetland adjacent communities. Indigenous peoples and Local wetland and forest dependent communities must be recognized as rights-holders and not another category of stakeholders and forests as sovereign spaces rather than multi-stakeholder platforms. Any intervention must be a collaborative venture between the rights holders and incoming stakeholders as partners.

3. The speaker mentions women empowerment as a way forward. I say, Gender consideration in securing tenure rights to land and natural resources must be fully mainstreamed. Unrestricted access to and control of forest and other terrestrial ecosystem resources and meaningful participation in decision mak-

ing processes for both men and women must be mainstreamed in forest governance. Addressing gender issues during the development of forest projects acknowledges that women and men have different roles in the sector and those roles shape their gendered needs, and consequently, equitable share of benefits and it highlights that both women and men's roles are equally important to achieve sustainable forest management and reduce poverty.

4. The VNR, as an accountability tool has got to employ human rights techniques of monitoring and evaluation. The VNR cannot only look at the hardware, the quantitative, the number of forests gazetted. It must also look at the software, the qualitative, the effects implementing SDGs has had on the People e.g how many have been evicted from the forests, what effect has it had on their livelihoods, etc.

5. One speaker notes that protected areas are increasing, and also that we are continuing to lose biodiversity in unprecedented ways. Why is there this discrepancy? Why does biodiversity not increase with increase in protected areas?