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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
(New York, 9-18 July 2018)  
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 9 October 2018.

**United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
(New York, 9-18 July 2018)**

**- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -**

The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) met this year under the general theme of 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies' and concluded with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration. The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level.

This year the Forum reviewed in depth six SDGs: water and sanitation (SDG 6); energy (SDG 7); cities and human settlements (SDG 11); sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12); terrestrial ecosystems, forests, desertification, land and biodiversity (SDG 15); and global partnership (SDG 17). Forty-six countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews on their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, among them ten EU Member States, bringing the total number of EU national reviews to twenty-four.

The HLPF maintains its impressive convening power: more than 125 Heads and Deputy Heads of State and Government, Ministers, Vice-Ministers and other Ministerial level officials, and over two thousand representatives from governments, the UN system and other organisations, civil society and the private sector participated.

Due to the SDGs under review, there was considerable environmental focus in the discussions and events this year. Strong and broad-based commitment to the implementation of these SDGs came through in all sessions and events, with a shared sense of urgency and understanding that actions need to be accelerated now. As always, the side-events were a major part of the HLPF and where some of the most interesting discussions took place.

The EU had high visibility with Commissioners Vella and Mimica leading the EU delegation with participation also by Members of the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee. Strong EU messages were passed focusing in particular on circular economy, biodiversity and sustainable energy with the well-attended EU flagship event on the 'Global circular economy for inclusive and sustainable future' as the main occasion. The event successfully presented the EU approach on circular economy and its application at global level, offered views and experiences from developing countries complemented by contributions by various stakeholders.

The formal programme of the HLPF consisted mostly of thematic discussions with specific sessions for the SDGs under review this year. The second week, which featured ministerial level participation, was devoted to the group and country statements in the General Debate and the Voluntary National Reviews.

The EU was actively present and intervened on the basis of the agreed EU Key Messages which proved to be very useful, allowing the EU to state its messages and also to react to specific issues as needed.

From such a rich, long and multi-faceted meeting it is difficult to define the main general messages and takeaways. The EU clearly came across as a positive force committed to driving the implementation of the SDGs and in particular the issues in focus this year. On the environmental topics there were a few issues consistently mentioned: need for a systems approach as the only way to adequately address the SDGs; sense of urgency to act on the environment, particularly biodiversity; integration of biodiversity concerns and linking it with climate; uptake of the circular economy approach beyond the EU; tackling the plastics challenge and in particular single use plastics; food waste; and the crucial role of the private sector.

The HLPF resulted in a Ministerial Declaration. The EU was in general disappointed with the Declaration both in terms of process and substance, but decided to support it, while making a strong principled statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the text. Unfortunately, several calls for vote were made by others on trade, gender, foreign occupation and on the declaration overall. The whole declaration was voted for the first time and passed with 164 votes in favour and 2 against (US and Israel).

Looking forward, the EU is starting reflections both in New York and in Brussels for the two HLPF meetings in 2019, including the first Heads of State and Government level HLPF at the General Assembly in September 2019.

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