

United Nations Human Rights Council

Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda: Decade of Action and Delivery on the SDGs

Geneva, 3 December 2019

Session 2: Reflections and conversation on human rights and the “Decade of Action and Delivery of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”. Building on the pledge of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum Declaration; “Leave No One Behind”: How can promoting and protecting human rights accelerate the realisation of the SDGs

Statement by Mr Max Gilbert, Adviser, Directorate of External Relations, Council of Europe

Agenda 2030 seeks a more sustainable future for all. This includes emphasising the responsibility of States to respect, protect and promote human rights and that is one of the Council of Europe’s main purposes.

The Council of Europe contributed from the outset to the process leading to the adoption of Agenda 2030 and we have been clear about our determination to embed it in our work.

By definition, our philosophy is that most, if not all, of the Council of Europe’s activities contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular those related to human rights, as well as empowerment, inclusion and equality, which are specifically mentioned among the objectives of this session.

As such, it has not been necessary for the organisation to set up new objectives, instruments or activities, but rather to align existing activities with the relevant SDGs.

This has been reflected as of the current 2018-2019 biennium programme of activities and budget, which clearly identifies to which specific SDGs each programme is linked. In terms of our new biennial priorities, the SDGs are integral to our programme design. Moreover, our intergovernmental committees have been tasked with contributing in their respective fields to the implementation of the Agenda and reviewing progress regularly.

The unique added-value of the Council of Europe is a combination of:

- its pan-European membership of 47 member States;
- its multi-stakeholder dimension: in addition to its intergovernmental bodies, the Council of Europe’s unique structure includes the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Conference of International NGOs, as well as the European Court of Human Rights;

- its standards: a comprehensive measurable normative framework which can be used as indicators/benchmarks to evaluate progress made in SDG implementation, which include conventions, which are legally-binding treaties on those States which have ratified them;
- its monitoring/follow-up bodies and processes;
- its technical support provided to individual countries for capacity-building; and
- its global outreach: most of the organisation's conventions and activities are open to participation by non-member States.

While recognising that the main responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 2030 is with the member States, we consider our role as an international organisation as being to assist and facilitate our member States in their contribution to SDG implementation.

In particular, the Council of Europe, through its instruments, can contribute to the national implementation reporting by its member States and a number of member States have already referred to their work in the Council of Europe in their national reporting.

It is with this purpose in mind that we created a specific website to assist member States to draw on the organisation's work in the preparation of the national reviews. Council of Europe member States are thus encouraged to draw on the Information on the website to illustrate that their participation in the organisation's work also contributes to their national implementation of Agenda 2030.