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**Evaluation Survey  
of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development  
for the UNECE Region 2017**

## Evaluation Survey of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2017

### Results

#### 1. Introduction and overall characteristics of the sample

The Evaluation Survey was sent to all registered participants in the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region 2017 (Geneva, 25 April 2017) on 15 June 2017. It remained open until 30 June 2017.

During this period, 67 responses were received (out of a total of 380 registered participants). Most of the responses came from representatives of UNECE governments (28.4 per cent) and non-governmental organizations (32.8 per cent).

Table 1 shows the complete breakdown of respondents according to the organizations to which they belong.

**Table 1. Organization of respondents**

Group	Percentage	Number
UNECE Government	28.4	19
UN department, fund, programme, specialized agency or related organization	10.5	7
Intergovernmental and regional organization	10.5	7
Non-governmental organization	32.8	22
Private sector	0	0
Academia	6	4
Others (please specify)	11.9	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>67</b>

The governments who participated in the survey are Albania, Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland and Turkey. Responses were received by more than one participant in a number of cases. Switzerland, with five responses, accounted for 26.3 per cent of all government answers.

Most respondents participated in the policy segment and almost half of them in *Round table I. National and local adaptation of SDGs*. Full details are shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Participation by segments, all respondents.**

Segment	Percentage	Number
Policy segment (plenary session)	86.6	58
Round table I. National and local adaptation of SDGs	47.8	32
Round table II. Subregional cooperation for SDG implementation	19.4	13
Round table III. Data and Monitoring	34.3	23
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>67</b>

Respondents from government participated in the policy segment and mostly (79 per cent) in *Round Table 1. National and local adaptation of SDGs*.

## 2. Assessment

Participants were asked to assess the Forum regarding five areas. Table 3 summarizes the responses received.

**Table 3. Assessment by areas, all respondents, percentages**

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	1.5 (1)	16.4 (11)	26.9 (18)	41.8 (28)	13.4 (9)	100 (67)
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0.00 (0)	9.0 (6)	32.8 (22)	38.8 (26)	19.4 (13)	100 (67)
Providing a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences with other participants	1.5 (1)	7.5 (5)	29.9 (20)	38.8 (26)	22.4 (15)	100 (67)
Providing an opportunity to establish new useful contacts	0.00 (0)	11.9 (8)	28.4 (19)	44.8 (30)	14.9 (10)	100 (67)
Relevance of subject to your work/area of expertise	0.00 (0)	4.5 (3)	19.4 (13)	56.7 (38)	19.4 (13)	100 (67)

**Note:** Absolute numbers in brackets.

The five areas received consistently high marks. In particular, 76.1 per cent of respondents stated that the Forum was very or extremely useful regarding its relevance to their work/area of expertise. The event was also highly regarded as providing a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences with other participants, as 22.4 per cent of respondents considered it extremely useful in this regard, while an additional 68.7 valued it as useful or very useful.

From a comparative point of view, the identification of good practices and useful experiences is the area that received a less positive assessment, as 17.9 per cent of respondents considered that the Forum was not useful or just somewhat useful in this regard. However, the overall assessment continues to be positive, with 55.22 per cent of respondents considering that the Forum was very or extremely useful in this area.

Looking only at the responses provided by UNECE governments (table 4), the aspect that is most appreciated is the provision of a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences (73.7 per cent consider the Forum very useful or extremely useful in this respect). There is an area where answers from governments deviate from those obtained in the overall sample: the relevance of subject to area of work or expertise, which is much lower among government participants. While in the total answers received, 76.1 per cent considered the Forum to be very or extremely useful in this regard, the percentage falls to 52.6 among governments<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This may suggest that some government representatives participating in the Forum did not have a direct involvement on SDG issues.

**Table 4. Assessment by areas, governments, percentages**

Areas	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Total
Identification of good practices and useful experiences	0.0 (0)	21.0 (4)	15.8 (3)	47.4 (9)	15.8 (3)	100 (19)
Knowledge and information relevant for your future work	0.0 (0.0)	10.5 (2)	42.1 (8)	31.6 (6)	15.8 (13)	100 (19)
Providing a forum for exchange of information and sharing of experiences with other participants	0.0 (0)	10.5 (2)	15.8 (3)	47.4 (9)	26.3 (15)	100 (19)
Providing an opportunity to establish new useful contacts	0.0 (0)	26.3 (5)	21.0 (4)	36.8 (7)	15.8 (3)	100 (19)
Relevance of subject to your work/area of expertise	0.0 (0)	5.3 (1)	42.1 (8)	36.8 (7)	15.8 (3)	100 (19)

**Note:** Absolute numbers in brackets.

Participants were also asked to provide their opinion on various aspects regarding the preparation and organization of the Forum, which are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, all respondents, percentages**

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0.0 (0)	9.0 (6)	29.9 (20)	49.3 (33)	11.9 (8)	100 (67)
Structure of the Forum (plenary and parallel round tables)	0.0 (0)	13.4 (9)	25.4 (17)	41.8 (28)	19.4 (13)	100 (67)
Documentation	0.0 (0)	7.5 (5)	44.8 (30)	37.3 (25)	10.5 (7)	100 (67)
Communication with participants prior to the event	3.0 (2)	13.4 (9)	26.9 (18)	34.3 (23)	22.4 (15)	100 (67)
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	3.0 (2)	10.5 (7)	32.8 (22)	32.8 (22)	20.9 (14)	100 (67)

**Note:** Absolute numbers in brackets.

The aspects which received the most positive assessments were the programme (61.2 per cent of respondents thought that it was excellent or very good, while only 9.0 per cent considered that it was

poor or needed improvements) and the structure of the Forum (61.2 per cent against 13.4, in the same classification).

By contrast, comparatively less favourable assessments were received regarding organizational arrangements (53.7 per cent of respondents stated that they were excellent or very good, while 13.4 per cent thought that they were poor or needed improvement) and communications with participants (56.7 per cent and 16.4 per cent, in the same classification)<sup>2</sup>.

Documentation for the meeting also received high marks: it was the area that obtained the least negative assessments (only 7.5 per cent of respondents considered that it needed improvement and no one stated that it was poor). Positive scores were high but somewhat lower than those received by the programme and the structure of the Forum (56.7 per cent of respondents thought documentation was excellent or very good).

The assessment regarding organizational arrangements by government participants (table 6) is less critical than in the overall sample (no respondents stated that they were poor or need improvement). The structure of the Forum is the area most government respondents singled out as needing improvement (21 per cent of total). However, this is an aspect that also was appraised as excellent or very good by 63.2 per cent of respondents. In addition to the organizational arrangements and the structure of the Forum, documentation also received high positive marks (measured as the sum of very good and excellent scores). Only one respondent mentioned that the documentation needed improvement.

**Table 6. Assessment of the preparatory and organizational aspects of the Forum, governments, percentages**

Aspect	Poor	Needs improvement	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Programme	0.0 (0)	15.8 (3)	26.32 (5)	47.4 (9)	10.5 (2)	100 (19)
Structure of the Forum (plenary and parallel round tables)	0.0 (0)	21.0 (4)	15.8 (3)	57.9 (11)	5.3 (1)	100 (19)
Documentation	0.0 (0)	5.3 (1)	31.6 (6)	57.9 (11)	5.3 (1)	100 (19)
Communication with participants prior to the event	0.0 (0)	15.8 (3)	26.3 (5)	36.8 (7)	21.0 (4)	100 (19)
Organizational arrangements for and during the event	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31.6 (6)	47.4 (9)	21.0 (4)	100 (19)

**Note:** Absolute numbers in brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the text comments received suggest that these opinions referred not only to the Forum, as was the intention of this Survey, but also to other SDG-related events that took place just before the Forum.

The overall assessment of the event was very positive (table 7), with 29.9 per cent of respondents considering that it was excellent and 46.3 per cent that it was good. There are no significant differences between the assessment given by all respondents and by government representatives.

**Table 7. Overall assessment of the Forum, percentages**

Assessment	All respondents	Governments
Not satisfactory	4.5 (3)	5.3 (1)
Adequate	19.4 (13)	15.8 (3)
Good	46.3 (31)	52.6 (10)
Excellent	29.9 (20)	26.3 (5)
Total	100 (67)	100 (19)

**Note:** Absolute numbers in brackets.

An overwhelming share of respondents (86.7 per cent) would recommend that other experts from their countries or organizations attend similar events in the future, while 11.9 per cent may consider such a possibility. Only one respondent declined making such a recommendation. Government responses show a more hesitant attitude: while 68.4 per cent of respondents would recommend future participation, 31.6 per cent were not completely sure.

In their comments, respondents explained some of the reasons for their assessment of the Forum. On the positive side, providing a central point to meet, access to information, variety of participants and topics, giving visibility to important issues and the quality of the moderation were mentioned as praiseworthy. A number of respondents emphasised that this is the first event of its kind and much was achieved in a single day. The experience accumulated will serve to devise a better Forum in the future.

Critical comments were raised regarding a number of aspects, including concerns regarding the added value of the Forum in connection with the HLPF and the excessive number of prepared statements in detriment of spontaneous dialogue.

### **3. Suggestions for the future**

There were a number of suggestions for future work. Not surprisingly, as many of the respondents were NGO representatives, a number of respondents suggested increasing the role of NGOs and creating clearer channels for their participation.

Some respondents also suggested that more time should be allocated to the Forum, given the involvement of so many countries and the need to cover a wide range of topics. A longer Forum would also facilitate a more active involvement of NGOs in the debates and, more generally, a broader dialogue. Ensuring the representation and active participation of all member States to have a meaningful dialogue was a shared concern.

Some specific suggestions that were raised by particular individuals concerning:

**a) Focus**

- Defining clear aims and outputs for the Forum, with a clear outcome. The relevance of the Forum for the HLPF has to be made explicit.
- More and smaller round tables to facilitate discussion.
- Examination case studies, both regarding policy and data issues.
- Organizing meetings on topics that focus on specific targets and indicators for particular goals.
- Side events to support more structured dialogue on core issues for SDG implementation in UNECE work.
- Encourage a focus on solutions and strategies, going beyond the simple enumeration of problems.
- Stronger focus on monitoring.

**b) Partnerships and networking**

- Enhance collaboration with the private sector.
- Involve the scientific community and make space for its contributions.
- Diversify the range of participants by reaching out to other groups such as parliamentarians and local authorities.
- Devise mechanisms that promote networking.

**c) Organizational and logistic aspects**

- Circulating a list of participants during the Forum.
- Improving physical accessibility.
- Simplifying registration.

As for the substantive topics to be considered in future editions of the Forum, the following were raised:

- Thematic plenary debates linked to SDGs reviewed at the HLPF.
- Presentation of the results of UNECE sectoral work regarding SDG implementation.
- Means of implementation of SDGs.
- Best practices, good solutions and exchanges of experiences.
- Looking further into some of the issues raised in *Round table I: National and local implementation of SDGs*.
- Specific topics mentioned: older persons and persons with disabilities, leave nobody behind and human rights; SDG implementation and involvement of NGOs.