



HLPF 2019 REVIEW OF SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS WWF BRIEFING

WWF Recommends

Guaranteed safe civic space and an end to wildlife crime and corruption to ensure empowerment, inclusivity and equity for local communities

At HLPF 2019 under the theme of “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, WWF calls upon member states and all stakeholders to recognise and include the following elements as fundamental for the full and effective implementation of SDG 16 and related targets:

- Ensure the legal, regulatory and policy environment enables a **vibrant civil society** and empowers individuals and communities to **defend their rights** and build inclusive, equitable societies (*related targets: 1.4, 4.7, 5.1, 5.a, 5.c, 10.2, 10.3, 11.3, 15.2, 15.5*);
- Provide more robust guidance for Member States to **ensure that civil society can contribute to Voluntary National Reviews and SDGs implementation**. This could occur, for example, through transparent and formal multi-stakeholder processes, and regular and open communications on SDGs implementation (*related targets: 5.5, 5.a, 6.b, 10.2, 10.3, 11.3, 13.b, 17.17, 17.18*);
- Wildlife crime deprives local communities of the long term benefits from sustainable use of these resources. As part of target 16.4 to “strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime”, member states must **effectively enforce laws and reduce corruption to prevent wildlife crime**, and take complementary action to protect the rights of local communities and improve their livelihood conditions (*related targets: 1.3, 1.4, 10.2, 10.3, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, Goal 15 targets*).

Background

Guarantee safe civic space for the realisation of inclusivity and empowerment and the fulfilment of peaceful and equitable societies

A vibrant and safe civic space, including access to justice, decision-making and transparent information, is an incontestable condition for the achievement of the SDGs. It creates the conditions necessary to empower inclusive, participative processes and accountability and for people to defend their individual and collective rights. It delivers on the promise to “Leave No One Behind” outlined in Agenda 2030. But the shrinking of civic space is a global phenomenon. Attacks on core civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression have increased in number and

intensity. In 2017 alone, more than 40 laws were proposed or enacted by governments aimed at restricting Civil Society Organisation (CSO) registration, operation, and funding (CIVICUS 2018).

Despite the protection afforded to them by human rights law, environmental human rights defenders increasingly face heightened risks and suffer grave violations of their rights as a result of their defence of land, environment and indigenous rights. They are subjected to killings and detention, threats and intimidation, stigma and criminalization from State and non-State actors. The number of environmental human rights defenders killed every year is increasing, with 200 people killed in 2016 (Global Witness 2017). Indigenous, women and minority human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable. Environmental justice requires protection for these groups from environmental and health hazards, but equally as important, it requires their meaningful participation in decisions that affect the place in which they live, work, and practice spirituality.

Guaranteeing and respecting individual and collective rights, and the traditional institutions and values that have sustained stewardship of nature for centuries, is integral to the achievement of the SDGs in a number of ways, including for poverty alleviation, food security, health and wellbeing, economic growth, climate mitigation, preserving nature on land and below water and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

End wildlife crime and corruption which threatens the livelihood of rural communities

Illegal wildlife trade, including trade in high value timber and aquatic species, represents the largest direct threat to the future of many of the world's most endangered species. It is threatening the integrity of many of the earth's most precious protected and conserved areas that are inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. These resources, if well managed, provide tangible benefits to communities and contribute significantly to national economies and development objectives, including poverty alleviation, food security, livelihoods and human and environmental health.

Wildlife crime can have negative impacts on poor people, either because their natural resource base is being depleted, or through insecurity introduced by wildlife criminals. This undermines the capacity of rural and Indigenous communities to derive sustainable and equitable economic benefits from their wildlife resources. Those that harvest wildlife illegally often profit least from the trafficking, as prices rise sharply along the trade chain.