



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



## Civil Society Statement and Questions at VNR SAUDI ARABIA during HLPF 2018

We appreciate the openness shown in the Kingdom's VNR. It also showcases some impressive material achievements.

The development of non-hydrocarbon energy sources in and for the country toward Goal 7 warrants special commendation. These resonate with Goal 17 also, given their inherent global significance. Accordingly, a concern arises from efforts under Goal 6: that infrastructure projects do not degrade the environment in the process.

Numerous human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies, have found breaches of the overarching principle and state obligation of gender equality. The report on Goal 5 reflects a misunderstanding that gender equality should be selective, partial, gradual and slow.

Forms of discrimination on grounds of sect, nationality, work and descent, and sexuality also manifest as material detriments, variously obstructing sustainable development while violating non-derogable human rights. Examples of arbitrary punishments, torture and execution of non-discrimination advocates are notorious. And the VNR does not spark optimism that KSA's government grasps the development issues involved or the values at stake for a state in the international system that institutionalizes such abuse.

On Goal 8, progress implementing ILO's Decent Work Program in KSA since 2016 is needed.

1. Toward Goal 11, the Kingdom reportedly is building new cities and developing existing ones, using the best urban-planning practices, with UN-Habitat. We also have witnessed the selective destruction of living communities, as in al-`Awamiya last year.<sup>1</sup> How can we reconcile the apparent contradiction?

2. The Kingdom has joined few human rights treaties, but the 2030 Agenda envisions “policy coherence” with states’ human rights obligations. What measures are afoot to ratify the human rights treaties?

3. What are the existing and future arrangements for engaging all stakeholders, including civil society, women, youth, minorities and migrant workers within the framework of cooperation and capacity building for sustainable development?

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<sup>1</sup> “UNSRs: Saudi Demolition Violates Human Rights,” *HIC-MENA News* (24 May 2017), at: <http://www.hlrn.org/news.php?id=p2psaA=#.Wz6qXPb4fqc>.