



2026 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Side Event Concept Note

Event Title: Sustainable Futures for All: Inspiration from *Tough Old Broads* (Film Screening)

Date: TBC

Time: TBC

Location: TBC

Target Audience: Member States, civil society, older person-serving organizations, intergenerational participants (youth, adults, older persons)

ECOSOC-Accredited Event Sponsor: Loretto Community; **ECOSOC-Accredited**

Co-Sponsors: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate; International Longevity Centre - Canada, NGO Committee for Social Development, Congregation of Notre Dame, Dominican Leadership Conference

Event Partners: 261 Fearless, The SustainabilityX® Magazine, Be Embraced Foundation, AVON

Objectives

This side event aims to:

1. **Inspire** HLPF participants — delegates, civil society representatives, and UN staff — with a powerful, human-centered vision of what perseverance, courage, and hope make possible;
 2. **Spark conversation** on the intersections of gender, age, and the 2026 HLPF review goals through the lens of lived experience;
 3. **Elevate the voices** of older women as drivers of sustainable development
 4. **Reinforce the spirit of action** needed to realize SDG progress in the critical final years to 2030.
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Format

Duration: Approximately 2.5 hours

Programme:

- Welcome and context-setting (2 min)
- Opening Remarks - Permanent Mission of Canada (TBC) (8 min)
- Film screening (90 min)
- Moderated panel discussion with filmmaker, Stacey Tenenbaum, and featured ‘broad’s’- Kathrine Switzer, Siila Watt-Cloutier, and Sharon Farmer (30 min)
- Response to panel - International Federation on Ageing (TBC) (5 min)
- Open Q&A (10 min)
- Closing Remarks - UN DESA Programme on Ageing (3 min)
- Thank you (2 min)

Venue: TBC

Background and Rationale

The 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals is now four years away. Progress has been deeply uneven, and on many fronts, alarmingly slow or regressing. Yet this moment — because of its urgency — is a moment for igniting hope, renewing conviction, and mobilizing action. History is full of examples of change that seemed impossible. What those examples share is a refusal to say no.

The 2026 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convenes under the theme *"Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its*

SDGs for a sustainable future for all." Its in-depth review goals — SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) — represent some of the most foundational challenges and most powerful levers for transformation available to the international community.

This side event offers a hope-filled, human-centered contribution to the SDG conversation: a film.

The Film

Tough Old Broads (2026) is a feature documentary written, produced, and directed by acclaimed Canadian filmmaker **Stacey Tenenbaum** (*Shiners, Scrap, Pipe Dreams*). The film follows three trailblazing women who broke barriers and transformed the worlds in which they live:

- **Kathrine Switzer**, who in 1967 became the first woman to officially run the Boston Marathon, defying officials who physically tried to remove her from the course, and whose activism helped bring the women's marathon to the 1984 Olympics;
- **Siila Watt-Cloutier**, an Inuit Environment, Cultural and Human Rights Advocate, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, and recipient of the United Nations Champion Of The Earth Award and The UN Human Development Award, who became the first person to frame climate change as a human rights issue, filing an international petition against the United States on behalf of the Inuit people whose way of life was being destroyed by a warming Arctic; and
- **Sharon Farmer**, a lifetime civil rights activist and photographer who became the first person of colour to serve as Director of White House Photography, bearing witness to history from the Civil Rights movement through the Clinton administration and beyond.

These women did not fight for recognition and then retire. They have been shaping history for decades, and they are not done. As one character observes early in the film: "*Toughness doesn't have to be forceful. It can be gentle.*" The film is funny, defiant, moving, and ultimately — profoundly hopeful. Change is possible.

SDGs and the Crosscutting Lens of Gender and Age

The three women featured in this film are embodiments of the SDG agenda as lived, fought-for realities. Their stories speak to the goals under review at HLPF 2026, illuminated through a crosscutting lens of gender equality and the wisdom, vitality, and determination of older persons.

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation Siila Watt-Cloutier's story is inseparable from water. The Arctic ecosystems and Inuit communities she has championed for decades depend entirely on safe, stable, and clean water systems — systems under direct and accelerating threat from climate change. She has fought to reduce the pollution and environmental degradation that impacts water quality and destroys the aquatic ecosystems on which Indigenous peoples depend for their survival, culture, and identity. The protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems — rivers, wetlands, lakes, and the Arctic itself — is not a technical footnote to sustainable development. It is foundational to it.

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy The energy transition must be just and inclusive to succeed. Across the world, 645 million people — disproportionately women, older persons, and rural and Indigenous communities — still lack reliable access to electricity (*2025 Sustainable Development Goals Report*). Watt-Cloutier's story challenges policymakers to ensure that the transition to renewable energy is designed *with* communities, not simply *for* them. Women and older persons must be active participants in, and beneficiaries of, the clean energy future.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure Kathrine Switzer's story is one of systemic transformation driven by personal courage. She did not wait for the system to change — she ran through it. Her activism ultimately changed the infrastructure of sport for hundreds of millions of women worldwide. Sustainable and quality infrastructure must serve human well-being, not merely economic output. It must support healthy, active lifestyles — the kind that Switzer has championed her entire life, arguing that women's access to sport and movement is a right, not a privilege.

Tough Old Broads itself speaks to another dimension of SDG 9: the critical importance of digital infrastructure in enabling storytelling, amplifying voices that must be heard, and preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. Increasing access to digital infrastructure is not merely a productivity goal; it is how communities tell their own stories, on their own terms, and pass them on to future generations. Inclusive innovation requires breaking down the barriers — structural, institutional, and cultural — that prevent women and older persons from contributing to, and benefiting from, technological progress.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities Sharon Farmer's life's work as a photographer and activist is a testament to the principle that sustainable communities must be equitable, representative, and just. Her photographic witness to the Civil Rights movement, to the corridors of power, and to the streets of the United States speaks to the social fabric that SDG 11 seeks to build and protect. The goal's vision — cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable — remains unfinished. Farmer's story reminds us that the city is not merely a built environment; it is a place where people belong, or are made to feel they do not. Sustainable cities must be places where older women, and all people, can move freely, live safely, and contribute fully.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals *Tough Old Broads* is a film about partnership — with allies, with community, with the generations that follow. All three women speak to the power of intergenerational connection: of sharing passion and showing younger women and men what is

possible. SDG 17's call for a revitalized global partnership must include older persons as equal contributors, not afterthoughts.

Crosscutting: Gender and Age *Tough Old Broads* was made, in Tenenbaum's own words, "to share the wisdom and experience of older women with a new generation and to inspire all people to remain vital and outspoken as they age." The film is a direct challenge to ageism and gender bias — both of which are systemic barriers to SDG achievement.

Conclusion

With four years remaining until the 2030 SDG deadline, the world needs more than data. It needs stories. It needs galvanized hope and rekindled commitment to achieve the SDGs, inspired through storytelling.

Tough Old Broads is a reminder that change is possible. These women looked at systems that excluded them and said: *We can do this*. Let us look with renewed eyes at the SDG commitments and echo: *We can do this*.
