

Global follow-up and review progress – PGA consultations

Australia's considerations

6 April 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to reflect on these questions today.

Given the time constraints, I will respond directly to some of the questions posed in the note circulated yesterday.

The HLPF as the key forum for discussion on the global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It should provide member states an opportunity to share their lessons, successes and challenges with measuring progress to implement the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

The HLPF should review progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in a holistic and integrated way, capturing all inputs – including from member states, the non-government sector, civil society, academia and the business sector.

Starting with themes, Australia recommends one theme for the entire ECOSOC cycle and that the HLPF be aligned with the ECOSOC theme.

This would support coherence between the HLPF and ECOSOC and facilitate broader discussion to better reflect the integrated nature of the SDGs, and help avoid siloed discussions.

This approach would recognise the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs and the need for cross-cutting consideration of the significant inter-linkages between the Goals and targets.

Australia believes the thematic focus of the HLPF and the mandated thematic reviews of the SDGs are the same in the context of HLPF.

To further support coherence, we would support merging the ECOSOC High Level Segment with the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF.

Also on coherence, when considering the timing of the DCF, we would encourage broader contemplation of the sequencing and relative proximity of the DCF, the FFD Forum, and the HLPF, to ensure that each fora is able to benefit from the discussion that proceeded it.

Turning to Voluntary National Reviews, we would hesitate to support the introduction of common reporting guidelines as this could constrain innovation and dynamism. We reiterate the country-led and voluntary nature of these reviews and the benefits of maintaining a flexible and open discussion on shared issues, challenges and successes.

We would encourage the HLPF to identify good practice and successful innovative approaches in the presentation of National Voluntary Reviews, so we can continually improve presentation. Of course, we could support flexible common reporting guidelines if there is widespread agreement amongst member states.

We would encourage innovative approaches to presentation of National Voluntary Reviews, including joint presentations. We consider that joint presentations, either from countries within a shared region or by countries with shared challenges could more meaningfully reflect on shared challenges, vulnerabilities, gaps and lessons learnt, and more readily identify shared best practices, emerging trends and innovations. Such an approach would provide a ‘platform for partnership’ (SGs report, par 27) and could also support more dynamic engagement with, and feedback from, the HLPF.

As for the frequency of reviews, the 2030 Agenda does not stipulate a frequency for reviews, although acknowledges that more frequent reviews could establish stronger national engagement. Australia considers there is greater value in allowing individual countries to assess their suitability and readiness to report on their progress. This approach would provide greater value to the broader follow-up and review process, rather than a prescriptive reporting frequency.

In terms of inputs to the HLPF, the processes for collecting inputs for consideration at the HLPF should be open and accessible to a wide range of stakeholders. As specified within the 2030 Agenda and the Secretary-General's report, the HLPF must take a holistic view of implementation in order to provide the political impetus at the highest level to consider the effectiveness of implementation, bridge gaps and improve joint outcomes.

Australia does not support the development of a template for inputs. Similar to the common reporting guidelines for Voluntary National Reviews, this restricts innovation and flexibility and assumes a shared baseline of input, which may not be appropriate or relevant for all contributing stakeholders.

We support the suggested development of an SDG database (SG report, par 55) for consolidating the various contributions to the follow-up and review process. To ensure the process is holistic and inclusive, this SDG database must be open, transparent and accessible to a wide range of stakeholders, including the non-government sector, civil society, academia and the business sector.

It will be important to have some mechanism to annually synthesise input to the database or we risk being unable to full appreciate and use the potentially broad range of inputs.

Following the SDG process, we have a lot of experience on different ways to capture and synthesis multiple inputs – we should learn from these efforts when considering how best to summarise or synthesise inputs submitted to the database. One option could be that contributions that are not inter-governmentally agreed could only be submitted after the provision of a brief summary that would also be posted on the website.

Support for the database and any synthesising approach should be considered as part of current broader discussions on how the UN system will reprioritise its processes and structures to best support implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Australia acknowledges both the GSDR and the SDG Progress Report will be the primary inputs to inform attendees at the HLPF on developments to progress the SDGs. The value of other inputs should be weighted against the quality of the data and analysis they contain.

To maximise effectiveness, utility and cohesiveness of the GSDR and SDG progress report, the two reports must have clear individual purposes.

Australia recommends the SDG Progress Report provides an annual update snapshot of progress against the SDGs, based on the indicator data. We expect it to also provide a high-level narrative on lessons learnt, successes and challenges to support the data. This should take a similar format to the MDG reports.

The GSDR should be a flagship publication, to provide detailed, evidence-based reflections and recommendations to inform policy-makers and HLPF attendees on the progress of activities to promote poverty eradication and sustainable development.

How will the UN system support implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Regional commissions

Australia agrees that regional commissions should take a leadership role in coordination regional inputs from member countries and relevant regional organisations. This will better streamline the reporting process and better ensure all relevant contributions are appropriately captured and provided to the HLPF.

Functional commissions

As we are already seeing, functional commissions are reflecting the 2030 Agenda and the global follow-up and review process in their future work schedules. Australia agrees with the SG's report that no functional commission, or single institution more broadly, can claim exclusive ownership for the review of a specific goal. Australia would like to see the functional commissions continue their current mandates, taking into account

Agenda 2030. They should provide their input to the HLPF through their existing communication channels with ECOSOC.

I would like to thank the co-facilitators for this opportunity to further discuss how the Agenda 2030 follow up and review system will work, and look forward to continued engagement to find practical, and perhaps innovative solutions to these questions.