

Draft for discussion**Elements on the issue ‘Review, monitoring and accountability’ for the post-2015 agenda on sustainable development**

In order for the new post-2015 agenda on sustainable development to have an effect, for the world as a whole to develop sustainably, and for future generations to be able to live a life without poverty and in human dignity, the global community must analyse and make visible the progress towards achieving these goals. An effective and efficient monitoring and accountability mechanism for the post-2015 agenda which is acceptable for all states is therefore required to track commitments, enable sharing of experience and reciprocal learning, and focus development and transformation efforts. The set of goals proposed in the OWG report – which is supported by Germany as the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 agenda – defines a global level of ambition which every member state has to contribute to. In doing so, it is necessary to take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, respect national policies and priorities. A review of implementation of national contributions to achieve the set of goals could be a way to promote accountability of national authorities.

The following basic principles for an effective and efficient monitoring and accountability mechanism could be considered:

- **New quality:** a review, monitoring and accountability mechanism for the post-2015 agenda should go beyond simply monitoring global progress but include an **analytical review element** which provides information on the **contributions of individual countries** to the goals, gaps of implementation and on progress by **theme**, and which is the basis for constructive exchange and peer learning that encourages and helps countries to reach targets.
- **Three pillars:** a review, monitoring and accountability mechanism could have the following pillars:
 1. **indicators and monitoring** as a prerequisite for (2) and (3);
 2. a **mutual review process** based on **country reports/national implementation plans, regional peer learning and thematic reviews** (each on an individual theme);
 3. the **Global Sustainable Development Report** using a comparable global indicator system to provide central information on the status of global goal achievement.
- **Criteria:** the review process should be designed to be **transparent, inclusive, - and also independent** as far as feasible - and ensure a certain regularity in the review. Participation in the review process should be connected with improved incentives for countries to subject themselves to the review. To implement the principle of global partnership, **civil society, academia and the private sector** should be part of the accountability mechanism: they could commit to their own specific contributions as well as help collect data.
- **Efficiency:** it is necessary to establish the review process as far as possible using **existing monitoring and review structures for other processes**, to avoid overstraining international and national capacity, or to utilise them and avoid establishing parallel systems.

1. Indicators and monitoring

- A robust and efficient review, monitoring and accountability mechanism needs a **basis of current data** and **informative indicators** for comparative purposes, to measure success, changes and progress in goal achievement. The monitoring

system should build on established statistical standards and practices, avoid duplication and parallel structures, and take into account the availability of data and national statistical capacity.

- The **statistical capacity** to create a current and informative data basis (particularly the availability of **disaggregated data**) accordingly needs to be strengthened if necessary. For this, **existing cooperation arrangements and partnerships** should be utilised (e.g. PARIS21) and statistical institutions should be strengthened if appropriate.
- There could be both a **needs assessment** and an **efficiency review** in advance of the monitoring system and indicator definition, to identify the challenges in data collection and focus the monitoring on actual feasibility. An analysis of cross-linkages between goals and targets is needed to adequately reflect these through indicators and also to avoid duplications and to sharpen goals and targets.
- The set of goals and targets should be further elaborated through appropriate indicators, both quantitative and qualitative. Tracking progress should be **manageable** even for the least developed countries, without reducing the transformative ambition of the agenda in the process. Gaps in measurability should be closed by new instruments and innovative methods.
- Indicators should as far as possible be results-oriented, while taking into account the central principles of effective cooperation.
- There must be a value added for **national policy**, and states should not be overburdened by an international monitoring system (*reporting burden*).

2. Elements of a review process based on country reports

A regular review should be established within the framework of the annual HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC, which links the national, regional and international level (multi-layered process), giving states sovereign control over national contributions (ownership) to the globally agreed post-2015 goals. The following elements merit further consideration:

- a. It seems advisable to give **priority** to the **national level** (national targets), as a high level of engagement and accountability can only be achieved at the national level. Country reports/national implementation strategies should be drawn up in a transparent and inclusive process ('whole government approach'), and if possible build on existing strategies (e.g. sustainability, development, poverty reduction strategies), update these and make them coherent. Management processes and mechanisms ensuring feedback loops between recommendations resulting from the review and implementation strategies (to be modified as necessary) are a central feature.
- b. At **regional level** a peer review/learning mechanism drawing on existing structures and institutions may be beneficial, as states tend to compare themselves with their immediate neighbours, conditions, instruments and goals are most likely to be comparable, and peer learning is possible. The regional level can also help prepare countries to take part in the global review. Use of suitable '**eminent persons**' as reviewers can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of the review mechanism.
- c. At **international level** it may be helpful for governments to present their country targets and lessons learnt within the framework of a mutual review process, and report on the efforts and concrete measures taken to achieve the goals, and what their result was. They would accordingly be **reviewed based on their own targets and goals**. This approach offers opportunities to encourage ownership of implementation and participation in reporting and review. The focus of the review should be on evaluating the **level of ambition** (*scoping*) in the context of the global partnership, challenges in implementation, and recommendations and ongoing feedback for national policy-making.

- This comprehensive review process could offer states an **incentive** to subject themselves to the review as on the one hand it could lead to **improved access to the necessary funds for implementation** and on the other hand could offer a forum for new **partnerships** and **constructive dialogue** and **peer learning**.
- There could also be a parallel **thematic review** as a contribution to the annual thematic focus of the HLPF, to provide information on selected progress by **theme**.
- The **HLPF** is the primary forum for the review process. However, it should also be ensured that all processes from other bodies with respective mandates (e.g. UN DCF), culminate in the HLPF, giving it political weight. To establish an efficient and robust review, monitoring and accountability mechanism, **strong secretariat structures** are also needed, together with clear decision-making and participation structures.

3. Global Sustainable Development (GSD) Report

- The Global Sustainable Development Report could report every 4 years on progress of **global goal achievement**, complementing the comprehensive review process. It could focus on particular issues requiring the more immediate attention of the heads of state and government so that they can address them during the HLPF under the auspices of the GA.
- The report could analyse progress and **and gaps of implementation** as a whole (aggregating the results from the country review process), with the emphasis on a specific theme (not goal!). A central feature of the report should be policy lessons and recommendations providing highlights for HLPF agenda setting .
- In addition, every year there could be a report giving more basic statistical information on goal achievement, analysed e.g. by region or by topic, not by country in order to avoid finger-pointing.
- The reports could be commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, with the assistance of a consortium of **relevant UN organisations**. **Academia** should also be included in the development of the report. As with the periodic IPCC report, cross-border academic partnerships could be supported, so that research findings are directly incorporated in the review, monitoring and accountability process. An advisory or expert panel should have a quality assuring role.