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**Implementation of and follow-up to major  
United Nations conferences and summits****Mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable  
development throughout the United Nations system****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations system was requested to mainstream the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development throughout its work. The four progress reports submitted since then highlighted that mainstreaming sustainable development requires a commitment to integrated approaches to development, breaking down silos and enhancing coordination across sectors, both within and between organizations.

The present report explores the issue of mainstreaming sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda, a transformative and universal agenda that has become the overarching framework for UN system efforts to advance sustainable development to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. The Sustainable Development Goals, at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, are interlinked and indivisible, so that progress in one goal will be made only with simultaneous progress in all goals. UN system organizations are acknowledging the importance of this integrated and holistic nature and are shaping their priorities, strategic plans and programs accordingly. Links between sustainable development efforts and progress in the realms of humanitarian affairs and peace and security are also noted.

The report provides an update on work that UN system organizations are undertaking to integrate the 2030 Agenda into their programs, including through the strategic planning process, the creation of updated guidelines and toolkits for use by UN country teams, support to Member States' voluntary reporting on the progress in implementing the SDGs, regional and global fora, and analytical reports, among others. The report also addresses the ways that the UN system is working to make its own facilities and management operations more sustainable.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20 Conference), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Member States renewed the global commitment to sustainable development and outlined a broad vision for the “Future We Want,” centred on the eradication of poverty and hunger. They stressed that this vision would be realized only with a commitment to “mainstream sustainable development at all levels,” respecting the interrelation and interdependence of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.
2. Over the three years that followed the Rio +20 Conference, Member States defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would become the core of the 2030 Agenda, adopted in September 2015. In the outcome document, “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, they called on the United Nations system to align its work to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda—and thus, to mainstream sustainable development into its priorities and programs.
3. In General Assembly resolution A/RES/71/223, Member States reiterated the mainstreaming call that originated from Rio +20 and is embodied in the 2030 Agenda. They called for the “further mainstreaming of the three dimensions throughout the United Nations system,” and they invited the Secretary-General to “continue to report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on progress made, including for the consideration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.” The present report has been prepared pursuant to that request, and it builds on the four<sup>1</sup> previous reports of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development.

## **II. An integrated vision**

4. In the current UN context, mainstreaming sustainable development is often manifested by mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda, with its integration of social, environmental and economic objectives. The 2030 Agenda represents a sea change in the approach that the UN system—and the world at large—takes to development, continuing the vital work of the MDGs, but also reflecting the emphasis on universality, integration and on leaving no one behind. The MDGs were developed by UN system

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<sup>1</sup> A/71/76-E/2016/55; A/70/75-E/2015/55; A/69/79-E/2014/66; A/68/79-E/2013/69.

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experts, based on the Millennium Declaration, which crystalized the internationally agreed outcomes of the major UN summits and conferences of the 1990s<sup>2</sup>. The SDGs, on the other hand, emerged from a long and dynamic process led and owned by the Member States themselves, and they apply to all countries, developing and developed. This ownership and universality, together with the integrated nature of the SDGs, make the 2030 Agenda a transformative roadmap for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

5. Member States recognize the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (AAAA), also adopted in 2015 and rooted in the principles of sustainable development, as integral to the 2030 Agenda. Together with SDG 17 on global partnership, the AAAA identifies a wide range of financial and non-financial resources required for countries to fully implement the SDGs, including capacities, knowledge, science and technology, information and data. The AAAA emphasizes that effective means of implementation will require strong, long lasting actions by Governments complemented by efforts of a range of stakeholders, including the private sector.
6. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provide the overarching vision for development, and they build on a number of intergovernmental processes and their outcomes. In addition to the AAAA, relevant outcomes include the SAMOA Pathway, the Vienna Program of Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda, as well as the Istanbul Program of Action for Least Developed Countries, among others. These outcomes all take as their premise that sustainable development—with a balanced approach to its social, environmental and economic dimensions, and a commitment to equity within and among countries and between current and future generations—is the only way to make lasting progress in today’s world.
7. Member States have also increasingly recognized the potential for development and humanitarian assistance to contribute to shared results that reduce risk and vulnerability, as well as the role of peace and security in ensuring sustainable development outcomes. The Security Council, in its “sustaining peace” resolution 2282 (2016), *emphasized the importance of a “comprehensive approach to sustaining peace,”* including by “promoting sustained and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, and sustainable development,” among other priorities.<sup>3</sup> The General Assembly underscored the same concepts in its in relevant resolutions. Similarly, at the World Humanitarian Summit, global leaders recognized the importance of “preventive diplomacy, sustainable development, climate change action,

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<sup>2</sup> Including the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development, Habitat II, and others

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016)

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human rights and investments in inclusive societies” to prevent and mitigate the impact of humanitarian crises.<sup>4</sup>

***Resolution on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review***

8. The General Assembly echoed this commitment to cross-pillar integration in A/RES/71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the UN development system. The resolution reaffirmed the universal and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda and called for a comprehensive realignment of the UN development system to ensure a coherent, coordinated and integrated approach to supporting of Member States.
9. The QCPR resolution cited the need to move towards “integrated action in response to the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,”<sup>5</sup> called on the UN development system to enhance its efforts in a “flexible, timely, coherent, coordinated and integrated manner”<sup>6</sup>, and requested it to “mainstream the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as appropriate, into the work of each entity of the United Nations development system.”<sup>7</sup> The resolution further instructed the entities of the UN development system to reflect the 2030 Agenda in their strategic plans, to dedicate and mobilise sufficient resources to respond to the integrated nature of the Agenda, and to “ensure a coherent approach to addressing the interconnections and cross-cutting elements” of the SDGs, including recognition of the link between development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace. In addition, the resolution stressed the need for increased transparency, accountability and responsiveness to maximise the Organization’s impact, results and effectiveness in support of SDG implementation.

***The Secretary-General’s commitment to prevention—through integration***

10. When Secretary-General Antonio Guterres took office at the beginning of 2017, he made it clear that he saw sustainable development as an important end in itself but also as a critical component of promoting peace. The Secretary-General noted that “the links between the 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace are found not only in Goal 16 on strong institutions and inclusive societies, but across all 17 goals.”<sup>8</sup> He has stressed that the roots of conflict can be found in “competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalization and exclusion, poor governance, weak institutions, sectarian divides,” and exacerbated by

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<sup>4</sup> World Humanitarian Summit, Chair’s Summary,

<https://consultations.worldhumanitarian summit.org/bitcache/5171492e71696bcf9d4c571c93dfc6dcd7f361ee?vid=581078&disposition=inline&op=view>

<sup>5</sup> OP 47

<sup>6</sup> OP 2

<sup>7</sup> A/RES/71/243

<sup>8</sup>Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Remarks to General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on “Building sustainable peace for all: synergies between the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and sustaining peace,” 24 January 2017

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“climate change, population growth and the globalization of crime and terrorism.”<sup>9</sup> The Secretary-General is pursuing integrated approaches to these challenges. In this context, he is also emphasizing the need for a surge in diplomacy, in partnership with regional organizations.<sup>10</sup>

### **III. A year of transition**

#### ***Work of the Chief Executives Board***

11. Throughout the current reporting period, the mainstreaming of sustainable development into the work of the UN system has also been advanced through actions by inter-agency coordination mechanisms, in particular the UN system Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies. In April 2016, the CEB adopted a set of “Common principles to guide the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”, emphasizing the UN system’s commitment to country-led, country-owned and results-based approaches to implementation that are people-centred and leave no one behind. The Board has also affirmed preventing and resolving crises, addressing root causes, managing risk, building resilience and sustaining peace as shared objectives of the entire UN system. Achieving high standards of transparency and accountability, and ensuring results-oriented service delivery, are also high priorities.
12. In addition, the CEB has endorsed a “Statement of Commitment,” developed through the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), on the importance of combatting inequalities and discrimination while implementing the 2030 Agenda. In this Statement, CEB members affirmed the UN system’s support to Member States’ ambitions for a more equal world respectful of human rights and dignity and agreed to put this imperative at the centre of member organizations’ strategic frameworks, policy guidance and global plans of action in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To bring the affirmed commitment to life, a shared United Nations framework for action on equality and non-discrimination has been developed, presenting a coherent, strategic, whole-of-system approach to combating inequalities and discrimination, fully grounded in the United Nations’ norms and standards.
13. Also through the HLCP, in 2016 the CEB developed and adopted a set of eight “Common Core Principles for a UN system-wide Approach to Climate Action.” These Principles focus on the need to maximize synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, strengthen UN system responsiveness to Member States’ needs and build inclusive partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders.

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<sup>9</sup> Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Remarks to the Security Council Open Debate on “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace,” 10 January 2017.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

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14. In order to reinforce and operationalize the Common Core Principles, in March 2017, under the auspices of the HLCP, UN system entities adopted a “UN system Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action,” seeking to promote and guide joint action and to deliver co-benefits across the different global agreements. The Strategic Approach identifies eight thematic impact areas that would benefit from increased and improved collaboration among UN system entities: Normative Guidance on Climate Change; Inter-relationship between Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and SDG Implementation; Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation; Data and Observations; Climate Finance and Investment; Climate Change, Sustainable Development, Peace/Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Nexus; and Education, Advocacy and Collaborative Action. Implementation of this strategic approach and its impact areas will be carried out using existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms to advance new, integrated joint initiatives.
  15. In programme countries, demand for UN support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda grew, with close to 100 UN Resident Coordinators and country teams reporting requests for support. As is discussed further below, the UN Development Group in 2016 built on the CEB common principles to guide UN support on mainstreaming and accelerating 2030 Agenda implementation, including through policy support.
  16. UN organizations are also committed to ensuring that their operational infrastructure and business models are optimized to support 2030 Agenda implementation. The High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), as part of its newly adopted Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2020, has pledged to work towards a UN system with a higher degree of integration, coordination, accountability, and transparency in its operations. The interconnected humanitarian, development and peace agendas will be better served by the new approaches to business models and workforce that the UN system, through HLCM, has committed to deliver.

### *Mainstreaming sustainable development in strategic plans*

17. Member States called for mainstreaming sustainable development in UN entities’ work in the 2012 QCPR resolution (67/226). In the 2016 QCPR resolution Member States repeated the call to “continue to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into the work of each entity of the UN development system” and specifically to mainstream the SDGs in their strategic planning documents. Member States further requested entities to outline a common approach in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at various Executive Board meetings throughout 2016. Notably, the UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women Executive Boards made the decision to include a common chapter in each of their strategic plans.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/>

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18. Broadly speaking, UN system organizations are taking steps, using a variety of approaches, to align their work to the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations Strategic Planning Network (UNSPN), an informal network of strategic planning and results-based management professional staff from across the UN system, took stock at its recent annual meeting, and found that most organizations can report some type of progress in this alignment.<sup>12</sup>
  19. Several organizations have reviewed strategic or medium-term plans and presented the findings to their governing bodies (e.g. WFP, FAO, ILO, UNDP, Regional Commissions); others are setting up an internal mechanism for their review and elaboration (e.g. ITU, IFAD) by the end of 2017. The process of alignment in general is made more complex by the fact that organizations are simultaneously working to integrate other global commitments and outcomes tied to their core mandates and missions, including the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and others.
  20. While most organizations are working to align their programming holistically to the entire 2030 Agenda, some have started by prioritizing those SDGs that are closest to the organization's core mandates. Some also are carrying out analysis to determine the SDG targets where they can provide support through existing programmes and achieve concrete results in a relatively short timeframe. Organizations have acknowledged the tension between gravitating toward existing data and indicators (often inherited from the MDG era) and strengthening capacity to assess progress against the new set of SDG indicators.
  21. UN organizations, including FAO, IFAD, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNWOMEN and WFP have developed a range of internal performance monitoring systems, dashboards, reports and briefs for reporting results toward mainstreaming the SDGs in their programming. As an example, UNEP has developed a live SDG Portal which allows for the mapping of partnerships around the SDGs. ITU has developed a tool to report on its work around the different SDGs, and FAO has developed a dashboard to monitor trends of relevant SDG indicators.
  22. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has developed an integrated policy model to identify SDG cross-linkages<sup>13</sup>. In addition, ESCAP and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) jointly support the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

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<sup>12</sup> 1-2 December 2016, Rome, Italy. 50 strategic planners from 22 UN organizations participated in the meeting (UNCTAD, UNODC, UNIDO, ITU, ITC, WIPO, UNEP, UNAIDS, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNOOSA, UNFPA, WHO, UN-Women, UNHCR, UNOCHA, UPU, UNV, WFP, IFAD, FAO)

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the model used to identify the priority and sequencing at the national level for the 17 SDGs as illustrated in the CSN Development Report 2016, visit:  
<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CSN%20Report%202016.pdf>

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as a subregional platform in Central Asia for mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development into national development strategies as well as for reviewing and reporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to respective regional and global fora. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has identified three priority nexus areas (Water – Energy – Food Security Nexus, Poverty – Decent Work – Sustainable Growth Nexus and Equality – Inclusion – Justice Nexus) where the region can pilot a methodology for analyzing interlinkages between goals and targets across different sectors.

23. In their strategic planning, UN organizations recognize that securing adequate financial and non-financial resources is a prerequisite for supporting SDG implementation and mainstreaming sustainable development in a meaningful way. It is clear that the UN will have to mobilize a wide range of capacities, technology, knowledge, expertise to promote 2030 Agenda implementation. As part of the strategic planning process, organizations are seeking innovative ways to secure the needed financial and non-financial resources.

#### ***Follow-up to the World Humanitarian Summit***

24. At the conclusion of the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, the former Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the heads of eight UN entities, with endorsement from the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration, issued a Commitment to Action to “transcend the humanitarian development divide” and work toward collective outcomes that reduce needs, risk and vulnerability.<sup>14</sup> The document declared that the 2030 Agenda provides “a common results framework under which both humanitarian and development actors can work together to ensure the safety, dignity and ability to thrive of the most vulnerable,” recognizing the imperative to fully respect humanitarian principles. These leaders committed to pursue these shared results, based on context, through the use of (i) pooled and combined data, analysis and information; (ii) better joined up planning and programming processes; (iii) effective leadership for collective outcomes; and (iv) financing modalities to support collective outcomes.<sup>15</sup>
25. Since the Summit commitment, the organizations have started operationalizing these commitments in different settings. In February 2017, in West Africa, OCHA and UNDP convened resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, donors, NGOs and members of the broader development and humanitarian communities to kick-start the new integrated approach in the region. In March 2017, the Government of Denmark organized a meeting together with the World Bank, OCHA and UNDP to demonstrate high-level engagement in the agenda and to

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Secretary-General, World Health Organization, United Nations Development Programme, World Food Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Population Fund, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and endorsed by the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.worldhumanitarianissummit.org/sites/default/files/media/WHS%20Commitment%20to%20Action\\_8September2016.pdf](https://www.worldhumanitarianissummit.org/sites/default/files/media/WHS%20Commitment%20to%20Action_8September2016.pdf)



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further explore implications at the country level for UN entities, NGOs and other partners, and Member States. During 2017 and into 2018, country and regional-level discussions will continue to sustain the strong momentum around achieving better results for people in vulnerable settings, particularly those facing protracted and recurrent crises. While gaining and maintaining humanitarian access during acute crises will remain a priority, these interventions will need to link to long-term sustainable development efforts.<sup>16</sup>

***Transforming normative guidance into country strategies: UNDAF Guidelines***

26. To address both the challenges and the opportunities inherent in the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has produced a set of guidelines for the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF). The new guidance “orients UN programming to the 2030 Agenda,” with an emphasis on programming approaches aligning sustainable development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding action.<sup>17</sup> As the Guidelines note, UNDAFs must operate in contexts where other frameworks, including the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) will also be in effect. The Guidelines further identify *‘leaving no one behind’* as the overarching principle, and assert that this principle is bolstered by a commitment to human rights, gender equality, sustainability and resilience, and accountability.<sup>18</sup> The new UNDAF guidance addresses emerging trends in country demand for UN support to the 2030 Agenda, building on the UNDG Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach, and mainstreams the three dimensions of sustainable development and principles underlying the 2030 Agenda.<sup>19</sup>
27. The new generation of UNDAFs will address the multidimensional causes of poverty, inequalities and discrimination and seek to reduce vulnerabilities of the most marginalized people. They will promote closer working arrangements and coherence across the development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding agendas, integrating the principles of sustainability and resilience, including with multidimensional approaches to managing disaster risks and climate impacts, and protection of development gains. They will also aim to forge stronger linkages between the UN normative and operational contributions and among the local, regional and global dimensions of the

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<sup>16</sup> The topic of mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development by linking the developmental efforts with humanitarian efforts is particularly important in the context of the Arab region which is facing an unprecedented level of crisis and displacement. The current refugee crisis in the Arab region provides a good example of where development and humanitarian approaches need to come together.

<sup>17</sup> Draft UNDAF Guidance for UNDG Endorsement

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> In the MAPS approach, Mainstreaming aims to generate awareness amongst relevant actors and help governments incorporate the agenda into national and subnational plans, strategies and budgets; acceleration aims to help governments accelerate progress in multiple targets, identifying constraints to progress in a number of goals most relevant to the local context, and policy support means that multiagency and multidisciplinary teams are able to offer surge support to countries on specific issues, while also helping them strengthen institutional capacities.

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2030 Agenda.<sup>20</sup> Through six mutually reinforcing programming approaches, the UN system will be enabled to deliver on the principles of the 2030 Agenda, namely: results-focused programming, capacity development, risk-informed programming, development, humanitarian and peacebuilding linkages, coherent policy support and partnerships.

28. A robust, nationally driven and flexible common country analysis (the United Nations' impartial assessment of a country's situation)<sup>21</sup> will reflect the multiple risks that countries face, including those that could trigger economic loss, political tensions, and undermine and reverse progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The next generation of UNDAFs, building on the CCAs, will promote a "whole of UN system" approach to sustaining peace and building peace in fragile and conflict affected settings in line with the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolution on sustaining peace.

#### ***United Nations Evaluation Group***

29. In 2016, the United Nations Evaluation Group issued revised guidelines that incorporate the 2030 Agenda into the norms and standards of evaluators working in the UN system. The first norm asserts that "within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote, in their evaluation practice, the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. In particular, they should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Evaluators are required to exhibit core competencies including knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals, among other principles.<sup>22</sup>

### **IV. Early progress on implementation by the Secretariat**

#### ***Support for national level implementation***

30. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has prepared "Guidelines to Support Country Reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals" for its UN country teams. These practical guidelines, recently endorsed by the UNDG, emphasize the importance of national ownership but also the vital supporting role the UN system can play to make country-led reviews robust, inclusive and participatory. The guidelines propose possible structures for national SDG reports, offer guidance on the types of stakeholders to engage and ways to engage them, and present a range of analytical approaches that could assist in the preparation of country reports. These approaches include trend analysis, focus group discussions, poverty and social impact

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<sup>20</sup> For instance, ESCAP is developing a guidance document in 2017 to ensure coherence in the approaches to disaster risk reduction and resilience across six policy frameworks: (i) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; (ii) UN Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030; (iii) Paris Agreement on Climate Change; (iv) Agenda for Humanity; (v) New Urban Agenda; and (vi) Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

<sup>21</sup> <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-UNDAF-Guidance.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards, <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

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analysis and benefit incidence analysis, microsimulations, and others. In addition, the guidelines include checklists and a listing of resources available to support SDG reporting. They aim to build mutual accountability, facilitate policy dialogue, build capacity in monitoring of the SDG indicators framework, and advocate for effective 2030 Agenda reporting.

31. In addition, early guidance to countries starting new UNDAFs in 2016—even before the new UNDAF guidelines were formally endorsed—has also yielded positive results. These UNDAFs show an enhanced focus on fewer strategic priorities; greater emphasis on the normative agenda; support to quality data collection, monitoring and reporting; and increased use of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. Member States are also pursuing multi-country UNDAFs where appropriate and fostering broader multi-stakeholder engagement.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Regional Level Support***

32. The UN Regional Commissions have taken steps to increase integration and to align programs and procedures with the 2030 Agenda, including through the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), which strengthens interagency collaboration and ensures coherence of UN policy and programs at the regional level. Activities to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda have been integrated in Regional Commissions' work programs and are realized through analytical work, capacity building and technical cooperation, and intergovernmental processes.<sup>24</sup> Tangible results have been achieved by organizing regional level work across sectors and by establishing joint inter-governmental groups.<sup>25</sup> In a recent Statement of Collaboration<sup>26</sup>, UNDG and the Regional Commissions emphasized the role of the Regional Commissions in supporting implementation of the Agenda, and the importance of regional institutions as bridges between the global and national levels.
33. In addition, the Regional Fora on Sustainable Development (RFSD) serve as platforms for the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda and

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<sup>23</sup> Summary of UNSPN annual meeting

<sup>24</sup> For instance, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (joint by UNECE and the World Health Organisation).

<sup>25</sup> Examples in the UNECE region include the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings in the ECE region, cross-sectoral reviews in countries (e.g., Environmental Performance Reviews, Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management and Innovation Performance Reviews) and developing cross-sectoral policies and initiatives (e.g., the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy).

<sup>26</sup> Please see at <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/collabundg2016.pdf>

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other related global development agendas. They promote peer learning and exchange of experiences and mobilize coherent regional inputs for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. They also offer space for identification of regional trends, assessment of progress across countries in the adoption of national sustainability strategies, and development of regional programs for the implementation of SDGs. Further, the Regional Commissions produce an annual regional progress report on SDG implementation with inputs from other UN entities, which feeds into the RFSDs.

### ***Support from Global Headquarters***

34. Headquarters-based UN secretariat organizations are likewise offering technical support to Member States in response to their requests, capitalizing on their expertise and knowledge of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on integration and implementation processes. Notably, DESA serves as the Secretariat for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the central platform for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Through reviewing progress, sharing good practices, and encouraging the exchange of ideas, the HLPF aims to advance progress in SDG implementation and address emerging issues, while strengthening the science-policy interface.
35. DESA works closely with the President and Bureau of ECOSOC in supporting the HLPF, including through innovative initiatives in designing a programme that encourages mutual learning. In 2017, HLPF theme is “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world,” and the closely aligned theme of the ECOSOC session is “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges.”
36. Central to the HLPF is the presentation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Member States are invited to undertake VNRs, with a view to advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including by strengthening a country’s institutional arrangements, strategic planning and, ultimately, its capacity for further implementation. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that national reviews will be state-led and will include “developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.” The Agenda also notes that the reviews will provide a “platform for partnerships.”<sup>27</sup>
37. DESA is supporting VNR preparation in a variety of ways, including by organizing a series of workshops where countries share strategies, challenges and early wins. Countries undertaking VNRs are encouraged to take a holistic approach to the reviews and to emphasize the interrelationship among SDGs and the links between the global sustainable development vision and local and national priorities. The

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<sup>27</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

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workshops are designed to maximize communication and exchange of experiences and lessons learned among VNR countries in any given year (as well as facilitate exchange between one year's VNR cohort and the next).

38. DESA and UN Regional Commissions are collaborating to prepare regional level workshops as well, where VNR countries explore region specific challenges and opportunities, including strategies on the best ways to engage major groups and other stakeholders and other non-UN regional partners. Regional workshops give VNR countries and UN system organizations the opportunity for mutual support and learning. The VNRs and the regional level workshops provide important substantive inputs to the HLPF.
39. Member States also mandated the UN system to provide additional substantive inputs through two reports—the Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). The Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report tracks progress on individual SDGs, and is framed to accommodate the integrated nature of the Agenda. Member States envisioned the GSDR as an independent “assessment of assessments” designed to strengthen the science-policy interface for sustainable development. In the Ministerial Declaration of the 2016 HLPF, Member States decided that the GSDR would be prepared by an independent group of 15 scientists, representing all relevant disciplines, with regional and gender balance. The independent group, appointed by the Secretary-General, has begun its work, with the support of a United Nations task team consisting of UNCTAD, UNEP, UNDP, World Bank, UNESCO, and the UN Secretariat. The independent group met for the first time in February 2017, and as part of their meeting, they briefed Member States on their planned approach, stressing the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, and therefore, of the GSDR. The GSDR is due to be published in June of 2019, when the HLPF will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly.
40. Other fora are also advancing 2030 Agenda implementation. In servicing the Development Cooperation Forum, DESA has initiated new analytical work and multi-stakeholder engagement around effective development cooperation to support the profound policy and programme integration required by the SDGs. The Forum will also facilitate inclusive cross-sector partnerships and provide capacity support for policy coherence for sustainable development, including through better linkages between development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and by promoting systematic investment in building the resilience of countries and communities.<sup>28</sup>
41. This work contributed to the strong recommendations emerging from the 2016 high-level meeting of the DCF on how development cooperation can support the changes in mind-set and action needed to

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<sup>28</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on “Trends and progress in international development cooperation,” <http://undocs.org/E/2016/65>

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achieve the SDGs: from sectoral to integrated approaches; from governmental to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; from measuring development in terms of income or growth to considering the multiple dimensions of poverty, sustainability and inclusivity; and from financing to the broader partnership dimension and effective engagement of all stakeholders.<sup>29</sup>

42. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda mandated a number of fora and mechanisms to advance the implementation of sustainable development. The ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up is designed to assess progress, identify obstacles and challenges and share lessons learned on the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on follow up and review of the financing for development outcomes. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also created the Global Infrastructure Forum, to address the critical importance of bridging the infrastructure gap as a prerequisite to achieving the SDGs. In addition, both the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda called for a “Technology Facilitation Mechanism” (TFM) to support implementation of the SDGs through multi-stakeholder partnerships and joint work, involving Member States, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. Integral to the TFM is an annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation (STI) for the sustainable development goals. In all of these fora, deliberations are predicated on the principle that an integrated approach, encompassing all three dimensions of sustainable development, will be essential.

#### ***Integrating sustainable development into UN operations and facilities management***

43. In resolution 71/228, the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to submit an action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into UN Secretariat operations and facilities with the specific goal of a United Nations that does not have a negative impact on the climate by 2020, if practicable. The Secretariat has developed the requested action plan which will be submitted to the General Assembly by the end of its 71<sup>st</sup> session.
44. The Environment Management Group continues to support enhancing and integrating sustainability across management and operations of the UN system. The Group is advancing the Inter-agency Consultative Process for enhancing environmental and social sustainability of the United Nations system (ESS Process), to raise awareness and exchange knowledge on the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and the sustainability of UN operations. The Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System was piloted in seven agencies, resulting in a synthesis report and recommendations for how the implementation of the Framework could be further supported. Lessons learned in the pilot phase will be used to produce a

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/dcf/2016-dcf-official-summary.pdf>

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revised Implementation Guide<sup>30</sup> and to communicate the links between the Framework and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

45. The UN system has also achieved progress in the integration of sustainable development considerations in the management of facilities and operations.<sup>31</sup> In 2015, a roadmap towards climate neutrality by 2020 was agreed by the Chief Executives Board. The roadmap commits all UN system organisations to continue to measure, reduce and offset GHG emission and integrate environmental considerations in the planning for facilities and operations. Within the EMG, the Sustainable United Nations facility leads these efforts.
46. The system-wide progress on these goals was made public in November 2016 via the annual ‘Greening the Blue’ Report, which provided data on greenhouse gas emissions from 66 UN entities and released for the first time data on waste management efforts from 44 UN entities.<sup>32</sup> The Report highlighted a positive growth in systematic approaches to environmental management: more than 25 UN entities have an emissions reductions strategy or are implementing an environment management system for facilities and operations. Energy efficiency, waste management, travel and staff awareness are the most commonly addressed topics in these strategies. Only a few agencies have clear and quantifiable emission reduction targets, but 32 UN entities offset their remaining emissions via the purchase of Certified Emissions Reduction credits under the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).
47. Integration of sustainable development considerations is not only restricted to internal operations and facilities, but also extends to programming. Partnerships, for example the Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and OCHA, strengthen the integration of sustainability considerations in humanitarian programming and operations.

## V. Conclusion

48. The 2030 Agenda is unprecedented in its integrated approach and level of ambition on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, and the Member States and the UN system have rallied behind it as the driving force behind all development activities and plans. While the United Nations development system entities are individually taking important steps to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into their work and programmatic instruments, a system-wide approach to the SDGs needs to be strengthened, in line with the QCPR resolution. While mandates and projects can be relatively easily aligned to the SDGs on paper,

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<sup>30</sup> <https://unemg.org/consultative-processes/environmental-and-social-sustainability>

<sup>31</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/288 and resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system called upon the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts and promoting cost effectiveness, and in accordance with legislative frameworks, including financial rules and regulations, while maintaining accountability to Member States

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/what-the-un-is-doing/united-nations-system>

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ensuring true impact, and developing ways to measure system-wide impact, remains a challenge.<sup>33</sup> The way forward begins with committing ourselves to keep a relentless focus on the follow-up and review of the SDGs, the quality of our partnerships and the results achieved for sustainable development.

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<sup>33</sup> Annual meeting of UNSPN