

The Global Sustainable Development Report as a bridge between the SDGs and the scientific communities

How can the GSDR best support the HLPF in its function to guide the implementation of the post 2015 agenda? Should it focus on reviewing progress in specific areas or across the agenda? Should it help in identifying new issues?

The Global Sustainable Development Report should support the HLPF in fulfilling its role and facilitate evidence-based decision-making at all levels. The report should be a comprehensive, authoritative, evidence-based, integrated assessment of global trends in sustainable development, drawing on as many peer reviewed sources of information from all regions and levels. The EU wishes to underline the importance of the timely preparation of the report in order to ensure relevant quality assurance as well as the inclusion of solid and relevant background materials. The report should fulfil the requirements of scientific credibility, policy relevance and legitimacy, in order to be fully accepted by the countries. The report should focus on the SDGs rather than try to cover all commitments and issues relating to sustainable development. However it should also include an analysis of emerging issues and potential global challenges to achievement of the goals. The Report should be produced every 4 years in time for the meeting of the HLPF at the level of Heads of State and Government.

The Global Sustainable Development Report should provide added value and not duplicate existing thematic assessments or reports such as the Human Development Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Reports, the World Ocean Assessment or the Global Environmental Outlook, while at the same time building on existing relevant assessments. The EU favours an approach whereby all goals and targets are covered, although specific issues may be explored in more detail, for example emerging issues or off-track goals. We propose the GSDR should be an integrated assessment of assessments, providing a cross-sectorial analysis reflecting progress, obstacles and discussing options for integrated policy action from the perspective of the three dimensions of sustainable development, including intergenerational equity. Therefore, the GSDR should balance its assessment across the three pillars of sustainable development, and should have a global scope, including all countries. The GSDR should highlight inter-linkages between different elements of the agenda, challenges to progress, gaps in implementation, and other issues for consideration by the HLPF. The HLPF could then use the report, as well as other inputs, to make decisions on recommended policy action.

Looking at the GSDR 2015, we welcome that it is designed as an assessment of assessments rather than seeking to pioneer new knowledge. Nevertheless, the EU is somewhat surprised to see some assessments missing, for example the Education Global Monitoring Report despite the fact that it is seen as a model of assessments and review mechanisms composed by fulfilment of goals and targets, based on research and monitoring means of implementation. There is a need to have close dialogue with the responsible agencies to ensure that material in the report is sufficiently quality assured. We also welcome that chapter 7 reviews current approaches to identifying emerging issues in sustainable development and the proposals for criteria for defining emerging issues, and the approach to determining the significance of scientific trends and emerging issues and their meaning for the SDGs. This will help make it clear why it is important for the HLPF to take note of such issues.

We welcome the efforts in this report to present complex information in visually interesting and meaningful ways as well as the chapter setting out the advantages and some recent ways of using new and large data sets to provide information on sustainable development and poverty eradication. We

recommend that this section is considered by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDGs in their work to develop an indicator framework and to select types of indicators for the SDGs. Future editions of the report may also consider drawing on the contribution of global environmental observing systems, such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems.

We note the thematic chapters (3, 4 and 5) and think it will be important in future editions of the report that they are aligned with the work programme of the HLPF, so that issues can be presented at a four-yearly HLPF in line with previous discussions of the annual HLPF.

We consider this draft a solid basis on which to build, including after September assessments of progress towards the SDGs, analysis of interlinkages, and recommendations for further action to enhance progress at all levels.