

Discussion Paper on Follow-up and Review of the Post-2015 Development Agenda - 12 May 2015

Introduction

This discussion paper outlines some key elements on follow-up and review which have emerged from the intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda thus far, particularly the Stocktaking session in January. It also presents a number of questions which member states may wish to consider in preparation for the IGN session from 18-22 May. The paper opens with a section on possible general principles for a follow-up and review framework before moving on to options for the levels at which this framework might operate. An illustrative framework for follow-up and review is included in Annex 1.

The paper draws on existing mandates laid down in, amongst others, the Rio+20 outcome document, GA resolution 67/290 on the format and organisational aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development and the Proposal of the OWG on SDGs. It also references proposals on this subject which were included in the Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General. See Annex 2 for more details.

A. General Principles to inform a follow-up and review framework

A robust, effective and transparent follow-up and review framework is critical for ensuring implementation of an ambitious Post-2015 Development agenda. Such a framework could help track progress and identify achievements, challenges and critical factors in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It could support decision makers in making policy choices and help them to prioritise actions and investments. It could also assist with identifying needs, helping to mobilise means of implementation and multistakeholder partnerships.

An overarching set of principles for the framework might include the following:

- It could be anchored in strong national ownership but could also operate at the regional and global levels
- It could reflect the universality of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, taking into account differences in levels and patterns of development, country capacities and national priorities and policies;
- It could ensure follow-up of the SDGs and Means of Implementation commitments, respecting the balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions and the integrated and interrelated nature of the goals;
- It could be inclusive and transparent and encourage the participation of various stakeholders (including the major groups and other stakeholders, parliamentarians, local authorities, academia, private sector, civil society, NGOs and partnerships) as well as accountability between state and citizen.
- It could operate on the basis of a sharing of experiences and best practices, and involve the provision to member states of constructive policy advice drawing on experience from a range of actors;
- It could be informed by data and evidence which is reliable, timely and disaggregated so as to ensure that no one is left behind;

- It could keep to a minimum reporting burdens on countries, making use of existing mechanisms as much as possible and providing the necessary support and tools to ensure that all countries are in a position to carry out reviews.
- It could encourage comparability including through the use of some form of a standardised process and criteria.
- It could include follow-up on progress made by other actors, such as the UN System, multi-stakeholder partnerships and the private sector, in supporting implementation of the SDGs.

Questions for discussion could include:

- What other principles should be considered to guide the follow-up and review framework?
- What incentives might encourage states to participate and engage actively in follow-up and review?
- Could the Summit launch a comprehensive programme of action on data as proposed by the Secretary-General in his synthesis report?

B. National level

At the Stocktaking session, many member states affirmed that the national level will be fundamental when it comes to implementation and accountability. The OWG Proposal on SDGs states that ‘targets are defined as aspirational global targets, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances.’ This would seem to point to the value and importance of a strong process of review at the national and, where appropriate, sub-national level. National reviews of progress and implementation could address trends in countries’ efforts to adjust policies and institutions. They could help to identify which approaches have worked and which have not, and look also at progress on Means of Implementation (MOIs) and partnership initiatives.

During the Stocktaking session, there was a proposal for the follow-up to be phased in gradually, with the first phase allowing member states to describe how they are integrating the SDGs into their national planning processes and a later phase involving reporting on implementation.

It will be recalled also that the SG’s synthesis report proposes that ‘a Government report, a national stakeholder report, with contributions from national non-governmental actors, and a report compiling existing information and data from UN agencies and international financial institutions, all based upon globally harmonised formats, would constitute the main written inputs on individual country progress.’

Questions for discussion could include:

- Should member states consider developing national implementation strategies within a certain time period after the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda?
- How often should countries be encouraged to undertake national level reviews (annually? biennially?)
- How can reviews engage members of the public, civil society, the UN system, private sector and other actors?

- Who should carry out national level reviews? What role could or should national institutions or coordination mechanisms, such as parliaments, councils for sustainable development or other institutions play?

C. Regional level

GA Resolution 67/290 acknowledges the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development. It invites the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the work of the HLPF, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.

During the Stocktaking session, some member states also felt that countries should inform each other at regional level on progress and challenges in meeting the SDGs. The HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC is mandated to meet for only eight days annually; and the countries of some regions face similar challenges. It was proposed that existing regional institutions and review mechanisms could be used. Other member states, however, raised concerns about the appropriateness of regional reviews.

Questions for discussion could include:

- Would a regional-level review involve (a) a discussion of the aggregate findings of national reviews, (b) a peer review of the national reviews or (c) something else?
- Given differing regional circumstances and characteristics, how can comparability be achieved across regions?
- How can existing regional review mechanisms contribute to follow-up and review of the SDGs? Would it be useful to conduct a mapping exercise of existing reporting mechanisms at a regional level or to request regional bodies to make proposals in this regard?
- How would regional review mechanisms be funded?

D. Global level

During the Stocktaking meeting, member states touched on a series of issues relating to follow-up and review at the global level and pointed to a number of existing UN mandates in this area.

As per Res 67/290, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is mandated to play a central role in follow-up and review at the global level. When meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC, the HLPF is mandated to conduct “regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”. These reviews will be “voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries, as well as relevant UN entities; be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants; provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders”. These reviews will replace the national voluntary presentations of ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Reviews from 2016.

Res 67/290 also states that the HLPF will have a thematic focus ‘reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the activities of the

[Economic and Social] Council and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda'. The synthesis report of the Secretary-General proposes that thematic reviews could be carried out in the HLPF, and that these would be informed by the work of existing coordination and review 'platforms' such as UN or other multilateral specialised agencies or functional commissions etc. dealing with each thematic area. Existing partnerships could also be linked to such platforms.

Some member states suggested that the HLPF, meeting under the auspices of the General Assembly every four years, could serve to ensure high-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation. Some member states pointed to the important role which other UN organs will play in follow-up and review such as ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Other issues raised include the role of the Global Sustainable Development Report in strengthening the science-policy interface; how best to ensure that processes at the HLPF are inclusive; how to ensure follow-up on the effectiveness of development cooperation; and how to follow up on commitments by other actors including the private sector and the UN System. In relation to the latter, some member states drew attention to the role of the QCPR.

During the last IGN in April, member states proposed options in relation to follow-up on the Means of Implementation commitments and those which will arise from the prospective Addis Ababa agreement. Some suggested that these be reviewed under one overarching framework while others preferred to see separate processes.

Questions for discussion could include:

- How might global level reviews be more systematic and rigorous than past reviews, yet maintain flexibility? Should the aim be to have all member states submit reports to the HLPF within its four year cycle?
- Would the HLPF's review work build on possible regional and national reviews, bring together reports by States and other reports on the SDGs, and feed lessons learned back to the national level? Is sufficient time allocated to the HLPF to carry out its review mandate?
- How might the Global Sustainable Development Report and other relevant reports feed into the HLPF?
- What should the relationship be between the work of the HLPF and the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators?
- How should Means of Implementation commitments be reviewed?
- What steps can be taken to support coherence and complementarity across the UN follow-up and review architecture?

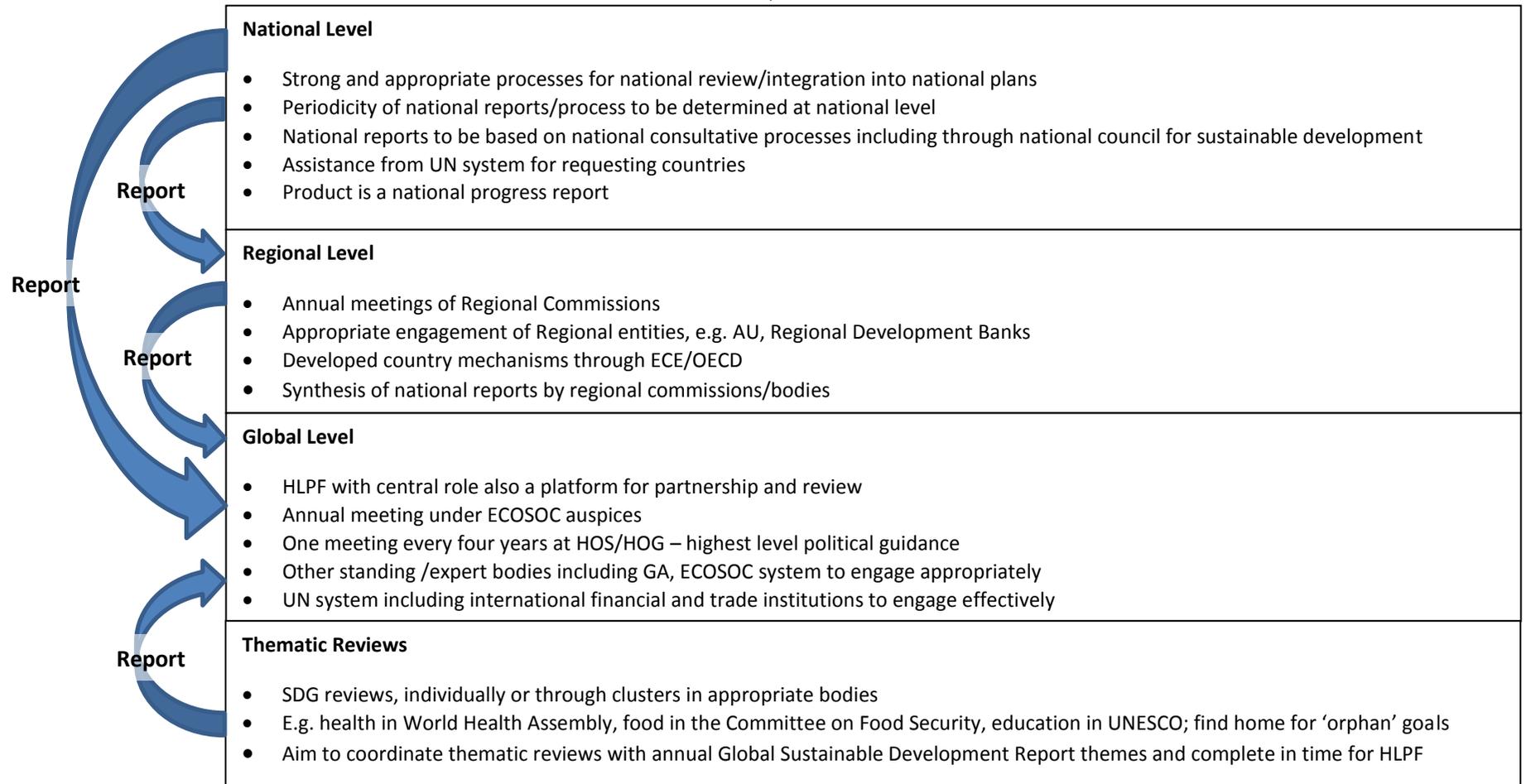
ANNEX 1: Illustrative Framework for Follow-up and Review

Principles

1. National ownership
2. Universal coverage
3. Cover all SDGs including MOI
4. Voluntary
5. Minimum reporting burden
6. Use agreed upon goal/target, indicator structure adapted to national circumstances
7. Flexible, phased approach

Characteristics

1. Data driven
2. Government led with appropriate multi-stakeholder involvement
3. Non-intrusive, solutions based approaches
4. Support to requesting countries for capacity building in data areas
5. Integrated approaches



ANNEX 2: Follow-up and review: Selected mandates and Secretary-General's synthesis reports

Principles

1. **The Report of the GA Open Working Group on SDGs (A/68/970)**¹, in its introduction, underlines that “a robust mechanism to review implementation will be essential for the success of the goals. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum will play a key role in this regard”.
2. **The GA, in its resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)**², decided that the HLPF would conduct “regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda”. These reviews will need to be “voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries, as well as relevant UN entities; be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants; provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders”. They will replace the national voluntary presentations of ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Reviews.
3. **The 2015 Ministerial Declaration of ECOSOC and the HLPF (A/69/3)**³ specified that the HLPF “reviews shall take into account the lessons learned from and the experiences of relevant existing review mechanisms, including the national voluntary presentations held in the context of the annual ministerial reviews”.

National level

4. **The Report of the Open Working Group on SDGs (A/68/970)**⁴ states that targets are defined as aspirational global targets, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances.
5. **The GA resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)**⁵ stipulated the characteristics of the regular voluntary reviews on sustainable development commitments to be conducted by the HLPF as of 2016 (See above).

¹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E

² <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/496/00/pdf/N1249600.pdf?OpenElement>

³ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/510/05/pdf/N1451005.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E

⁵ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290&Lang=E

6. **The synthesis report of the Secretary-General (A/69/700)**⁶ talks about a “country-led, national component for accountability”. This national segment would be built on existing national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad, multi-stakeholder participation. It would establish benchmarks, review the national policy framework, chart progress, learn lessons, consider solutions, follow up and report thereon. To that end, a Government report, a national stakeholder report, with contributions from national non-governmental actors, and a report compiling existing information and data from UN agencies and international financial institutions, all based upon globally harmonized formats, would constitute the main written inputs on individual country progress”.

Regional level

7. **The GA resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)**⁷ acknowledged the importance for the HLPF to benefit from regional preparatory processes and invited regional commissions to contribute through annual regional meetings with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders.
8. **The General Assembly resolution on strengthening ECOSOC (A/RES/68/1)**⁸ stipulated that ECOSOC should conduct an annual dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions as well as promote interaction with relevant international and regional forums, organizations and groupings that make policy decisions with global implications.
9. **The regional consultations organized by UN Regional Commissions on follow-up and review**⁹ underlined that the regional dimension could play a critical role in follow-up and review, since countries within regions share common experiences and challenges. It can encourage countries to share information, knowledge and experiences, strengthen their respective capabilities and define coherent regional policies and approaches including on transboundary challenges. This level can also help countries to translate global goals into policies, guidelines, recommendations and standards that can be implemented at the national level, as well as mobilize partnerships and South-South cooperation. Each region would use its own existing mechanisms such as regional fora on sustainable development, regional commissions’ intergovernmental subsidiary bodies and existing mechanisms for monitoring socio-economic development and environmental sustainability.
10. **The High-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the ECE region (E/ECE/1475)**¹⁰ as the outcome of the 66th session of UNECE states that the “ECE environmental performance reviews are a valuable and well

⁶ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/670/01/pdf/N1467001.pdf?OpenElement>

⁷ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290&Lang=E

⁸ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/1

⁹ <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/finalsynthreportoct14.pdf>

¹⁰ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/2015/E_ECE_1475_en.pdf

recognized monitoring mechanism. This experience can contribute toward an effective framework for monitoring and accountability”.

11. **The Addis Ababa Accord Zero draft**¹¹ encourages the UN regional commissions, in cooperation with regional banks and other organizations, to strengthen platforms for peer review and learning on priority thematic aspects of the global partnership reflected in the Accord. It invites countries and Regional Commissions to report regularly on their progress and to share lessons learned with the global community.
12. **The synthesis report of the Secretary-General (A/69/700)**¹² proposes a regional component for the review process. It would include “peer reviewing, tailored to regional and subregional needs, undertaken by existing mechanisms in a participatory, multi-stakeholder process, to consider national reports, identify regional trends, obstacles, commonalities, best practices and lessons learned” and to generate solutions and mutual support. Regional reviews would build on the experiences of existing mechanisms.

International level

13. **Rio+20: The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)**¹³ called on the General Assembly to “integrate sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for UN activities and adequately address sustainable development in its agenda-setting ...”. It also stressed the role of ECOSOC for the coordinated follow up to all major UN Conferences and Summits and ensuring the overall coordination of the work of the UN system “as well as its key role in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development”. Rio+20 also established a universal, intergovernmental high level political forum to follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments as well as their respective means of implementation.
14. **The GA resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development**¹⁴ (A/RES/67/290)¹⁵ stipulated that the HLPF would conduct reviews “on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda”. (See above).
15. **The General Assembly resolution on strengthening ECOSOC (A/RES/68/1)**¹⁶ reaffirmed ECOSOC “as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major UN conferences

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/1ds-zero-draft-outcome.pdf>

¹² <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/670/01/pdf/N1467001.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/pdf/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290&Lang=E

¹⁵ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/496/00/pdf/N1249600.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁶ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/1

and summits”. ECOSOC should further strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the UN system, and supervision of subsidiary bodies. An annual integration segment should consolidate the inputs of Member states, subsidiary bodies, UN system and stakeholders on the main theme of the Council for the year. The Council should continue to strengthen dialogue on and implementation of the financing for development agenda, inter alia, “by strengthening existing arrangements, including the special high-level meeting with the WB, the IMF, WTO and UNCTAD”.

16. **The GA Resolution on modalities for the third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/68/279)**¹⁷ affirmed that the outcome of the third International Conference on FfD “should constitute an important contribution to and support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.”
17. **The 69th GA Resolution on sustainable development (A/RES/69/214)**¹⁸ affirmed that the HLPF, at its 2015 meeting, to be held under the auspices of the Council, shall discuss its role and ways to implement its functions in following up on and reviewing the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda. The 2015 theme of the HLPF will be: “Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the HLPF after 2015”.
18. **The United Nations Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai Framework 2015-2030) (A/CONF.224/CRP.1)** called on the General Assembly to include in its 70th session the review of the global progress in the implementation of this framework for disaster risk reduction as part of its integrated and coordinated follow-up processes to UN conferences and summits, aligned with ECOSOC, HLPF and the GA Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities (QCPR) cycles, taking into account the work of the regional and global platforms for disaster risk reduction and the “Hyogo Framework for Action Monitor”. The Conference recommended that the GA 69th session establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group... for the development of a set of possible indicators to measure global progress in the implementation of the [Sendai] framework in conjunction with the work of the inter-agency expert group on sustainable development indicators.
19. **The Addis Ababa Accord Zero draft**¹⁹ requests Secretary-General to convene an interagency Task Force, including the major institutional stakeholders, to report annually on progress in implementing the outcome and to advise on critical implementation gaps and recommendations for corrective action. This report would also be considered by the HLPF, as part of the review mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the sustainable development goals and their means of implementation.
20. **The synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/700)**²⁰ proposes a “global component for knowledge-sharing”. It would be convened

¹⁷ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/456/19/pdf/N1345619.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁸ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/712/22/pdf/N1471222.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁹ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/1ds-zero-draft-outcome.pdf>

²⁰ <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/670/01/pdf/N1467001.pdf?OpenElement>

annually under the HLPF as a forum for “participatory, multi-stakeholder and, importantly, universal review”, starting at the launch of the new agenda. It would provide a periodic occasion for individual countries to voluntarily present national reviews of progress and to discuss lessons learned in each country’s implementation of the agenda and the opportunity to review both short-term outputs and long-term outcomes related to attaining the goals. Member states should consider multi-annual reviews under the high-level political forum in a five-year cycle. This would be complemented by a component to review the global partnership for sustainable development, which is expected to be further detailed as Member states prepare for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

Thematic Reviews

21. **The GA resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)**²¹ affirms the role of the HLPF in reviewing sustainable development commitments and stipulates that the HLPF will have a thematic focus “reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the activities of the Council and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda”.

22. **The General Assembly resolution on strengthening ECOSOC (A/RES/68/1)** stated that ECOSOC should continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the UN system and its specialized agencies and supervision of subsidiary bodies in the economic, social, environmental and related fields. It should provide “overall guidance and coordination to the UN development system and promote a coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major international conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields”. The GA also has a mandated to coordinate conference follow-up.

²¹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290&Lang=E