

**Critical milestones towards a coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level**

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**COVER NOTE:**

1. In September 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit adopted a new framework to guide development efforts between 2015 and 2030, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”.
2. The 2030 Agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets<sup>1</sup>. The SDGs address, in an integrated manner, the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, their interrelations, aspects related to peaceful societies and effective institutions, as well as means of implementation (finance, technology, capacity development etc.).
3. Heads of State and Government also committed to engage in systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The follow-up and review will be based on regular, voluntary and inclusive country-led reviews of progress at the national level feeding into reviews at the regional and global levels.
4. At the global level, the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) will have the central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes. It is to work coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates, building on their work in order to boost implementation.
5. The HLPF will meet (i) every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the and (ii) every year under the auspices of ECOSOC.
6. The follow-up and review processes at all levels will track progress in implementing the universal goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries, in a manner which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development. These processes will be guided by a number of other principles

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<sup>1</sup> [[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E)]

defined in the 2030 Agenda<sup>2</sup>. For example, they will be voluntary and country-led, support the identification of solutions and best practices, help to mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, as well as be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people.

7. The dedicated follow-up and review for the Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development-and the means of implementation of the SDGs is integrated with the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF will build, inter alia, on the outcome of the annual ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development as well as on the summary of the annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation launched by the 2030 Agenda as part of a Technology Facilitation Mechanism. The HLPF will also take into account the biennial ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum. A General Assembly Dialogue on Financing for Development will be held back-to-back with the HLPF meeting, when it meets under the auspices of the General Assembly.
8. The 2030 Agenda stipulates that the HLPF will conduct:
  - i. Regular reviews of country-level implementation, “including developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector”;
  - i. Thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, building on the work of the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.
9. The follow-up and review by the HLPF will be informed by an annual SDG progress report and a Global Sustainable Development Report, which shall strengthen the science-policy interface and serve as an evidence-based instrument to support policymakers<sup>3</sup>.

### **Mandate for the report by the Secretary-General on global follow-up and review**

10. The 2030 Agenda requested “the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to prepare a report, for consideration at the seventieth session of the General Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the HLPF which outlines critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. The report should:
  11. include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for State-led

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<sup>2</sup> Agenda 2030 para 74

<sup>3</sup> 2030 Agenda, extracts of para 83

- reviews at the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines,
- (i) clarify institutional responsibilities,
  - (ii) provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews, and
  - (iv) [provide guidance] on options for periodic reviews for the HLPF<sup>4</sup>.”
12. The present questionnaire aims to collect views of Member States on milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda at the global level, so as to inform the analysis and proposals to be contained in the report of the Secretary-General.
13. It takes existing mandates as a starting point and aims to determine how these can be operationalized or further clarified or elaborated on if needed.
14. The Secretariat kindly invites all Member States to provide responses to the following questions and submit them to the Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs ([axster@un.org](mailto:axster@un.org), copied to [zubcevic@un.org](mailto:zubcevic@un.org) and [powellj1@un.org](mailto:powellj1@un.org)) **no later than 15 November 2015**.

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<sup>4</sup>2030 Agenda states that this report should “include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for state-led reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines. It should clarify institutional responsibilities and provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews, and on options for periodic reviews for the HLPF” (Paragraph 90, Transforming our world” the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)

## Questionnaire:

*For each item below, please feel free to provide an answer in any format that is convenient to you. If possible, please provide a brief explanation for your responses. You may consider using the elements in italics to frame your answers. Please feel free to leave blanks for questions you feel unprepared to answer.*

### **I. Institutional responsibilities for follow-up and review:**

It has been decided in the 2030 Agenda that the HLPF will have a central role in overseeing the network of follow-up and review processes and ensure coherence and integration. The starting point for the division of work between the GA, the ECOSOC and the HLPF should therefore be GA resolution 67/290 which clearly defines the scope and mandate of the HLPF. Most of the new bodies created in the AAAAA fall under the ECOSOC's scope; the ECOSOC will also remain the UNDS's focal point. All of these and other bodies and mechanisms – existing and new – shall contribute to follow-up and review of the Agenda in a non-duplicative manner in accordance with paragraph 74g of the 2030 Agenda.

1. How can the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the HLPF work coherently in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda? What should be the role of the General Assembly in follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? Do you see a need to adjust the working methods and agenda of the General Assembly, its plenary, second, third committees in particular and their relation to ECOSOC to respond to the 2030 Agenda and ensure coherence, complementarity and efficiency? If so, how?

The role of the General Assembly has also been defined in GA resolution 67/290 to the extent that the HLPF shall take place under the auspices of the GA every four years to ensure the highest political level of participation. With regards to the role of the GA and its committees, it is important to continue and not pre-empt the discussion that has been started in the second committee on its revitalization and role in light of the 2030 Agenda. Given that the Agenda covers vast areas of work of the second committee and other committees as well, all committees concerned need to follow the principle of non-duplication of work with regards to the follow-up and review. This could be done, for example, by ensuring that the reports requested in their resolutions are penned in a manner that contributes to the overall follow-up and review of the SDGs and targets of the Agenda. Several delegations have put forward constructive ideas on restructuring the work of the second committee to bring it in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. We note in particular the idea of restructuring its agenda in three broad items, namely organizational and operational activities, thematic considerations, and follow-up to UN conferences.

2. Given its Charter and other mandates, how can ECOSOC help ensure that global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is coherent?

System-wide coherence and complementarity is key in ensuring a successful follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF needs to draw on the overall work of the ECOSOC, at the same time the ECOSOC needs to align its own agenda and programme of work with other UN bodies engaged in the process. In order to do so, the ECOSOC would need to concentrate on its supervision mandates, provide clearer guidance and support to specialized agencies, funds and programmes, functional and regional commission to ensure better alignment and meaningful inputs for reviews at all levels.

3. How can the HLPF most effectively make linkages with the follow-up and review arrangements of United Nations conferences and processes on (1) least developed countries (LDCs), (2) small island developing States (SIDS), and (3) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)<sup>5</sup>?

Many of these conferences and processes have shaped the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF could ensure effective linkages for example by including specific debates on the sustainable development challenges faced by these country groups, including on Means of Implementation.

4. Should the General Assembly provide some guidance to ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums on how they should best reflect their contribution to the review of SDGs, and to the HLPF generally, in their work programmes and sessions? And what would it be?

see answer to question 2

5. How can the HLPF best build on the outcome of ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development and the summary by the Co-Chairs of the multi-stakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation?

The AAAA is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda; in consequence, the ECOSOC forum on FfD is as well and should be integrated into the follow-up and review framework to the farthest extent possible. The ECOSOC Forum on FfD should include monitoring of SDG 17 and the so-called lettered targets, qualitatively as well as quantitatively through the indicators to be developed by the UN Statistical Commission. Any parallel or duplicative reporting processes need to be avoided. The result of this monitoring as well as the agreed conclusions and recommendations, foreseen in paragraph 132 of the AAAA, shall feed into the HLPF discussions. In order to ensure coherence between the ECOSOC Forum on FfD and the HLPF it is of utmost importance that the respective Secretariats closely cooperate in the elaboration of the formats of both fora as well as in their organization.

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<sup>5</sup> 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

## II. Overarching annual theme of the HLPF vs thematic reviews of progress of the SDGs to be carried out by the HLPF:

*[The 2030 Agenda decided the thematic reviews of the HLPF will be supported by the reviews conducted by the functional commissions of ECOSOC<sup>6</sup> and “other intergovernmental bodies and forums”<sup>7</sup>. These various bodies and forums are mandated to “reflect the integrated nature of the Goals as well as the interlinkages among them”. They “will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into, and be aligned with, the cycle of the HLPF”<sup>8</sup>. The HLPF, when meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC, “shall 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”<sup>9</sup>. The thematic focus of the HLPF should allow the HLPF to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The GA decided that ECOSOC will base its annual programme of work on a main theme and defined the characteristics of this annual theme.<sup>10</sup>]*

6. Should the HLPF thematic reviews of the progress on the SDGs (i) focus on clusters of closely related SDGs or (ii) examine progress in all SDGs based upon on a transversal theme such as gender, health or education or (iii) address four SDGs every year, taken in a numerical order, along with SDG17? If option (ii) is preferred, when and how should the transversal theme be decided upon?

The thematic reviews should be overarching, i.e. across as many goals and targets as possible, and a silo approach should be avoided at all costs. They should allow for a discussion on all dimensions of sustainable development and all aspects of the 2030 Agenda, including its means of implementation. Given that the HLPF is to take place under the auspices of the GA every four years, the reviews in the three years between should in sum cover all goals and targets so that a complete picture of the progress of implementation can be presented to the high-level participants in the fourth year. Guidance on themes – at the least for the years until the first HLPF under the auspices of the GA – should be provided by the SG in his report, as requested in paragraph 90 of the 2030 Agenda. Guidance for subsequent themes should be known in advance of every four year cycle to allow for sufficient planning.

7. What kind of inputs should functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums provide to the HLPF (e.g. negotiated outcomes, summary of discussions and analysis or other)? And how should

<sup>6</sup> For example, the Commission on Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Population and Development etc....

<sup>7</sup> Examples would include the World Health Assembly, International Labour Conference etc.

<sup>8</sup> 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 85

<sup>9</sup> General Assembly resolution 67/290, op 7c

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/1, paras 7-9

the inputs of various platforms be presented to the HLPF so as to best support its review and political leadership, guidance and recommendations?

see answer to question 2

8. What would be good overarching annual themes for the HLPF to address (when it meets under the auspices of ECOSOC) and how can they be aligned to that the theme of ECOSOC? Please give several examples?

see answer to question 6

9. How long in advance should HLPF themes be known? For example, (i) should there be a programme of work for the four years in between two meetings of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly or for a longer time period or (ii) should themes be determined every year and if so how could other intergovernmental platforms and other relevant actors contribute to the HLPF review?

see answer to question 6

10. Should the multi-stakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation address the same theme as the HLPF?

see answer to question 2

11. How should the United Nations Statistical Commission best contribute to the work of HLPF?.

The UNSC can best contribute to the HLPF by providing, in a timely and concise way, inputs to its progress report on the monitoring of indicators per target and goal. Specifically the UNSC has a role to play in reporting on issues such as the establishment of baselines; highlighting data gaps; the future development and improvement of adequate indicators; the use and development of relevant conceptual frameworks and methodologies for data and appropriate reporting and dissemination tools; and to support the central role of the national statistical offices in their coordination function for data collection.

The UNSC should be responsible for assessing the quality of the indicators and should include the further development of the indicators into its work programme. The UNSC therefore should also keep the HLPF informed about the existence of bottlenecks or other obstacles to the development of indicators, baselines and to the collection of data.

12. What arrangements would be needed to allow the HLPF to identify and consider new and emerging issues?

In order to avoid duplication of efforts and replication of activities, the HLPF should build and link with already existing mechanisms. New and emerging issues should be highlighted by the functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in their input to the HLPF. Meetings at regional level could also contribute identifying new and emerging regional issues with a global impact.

The final choice could be integrated in the final HLPF meeting outcome document. Moreover, new and emerging issues should be identified, including but not exclusively, in the Global Sustainable Development Report, which would draw on a wide range of independent and credible evidence and assessments.

13. How can platforms and processes outside the UN system, including those run by other international or regional organizations and by non-state actors, contribute to thematic reviews at the HLPF?

The HLPF should draw on the many sources of evidence and analysis available. Several platforms and processes run by other international or regional organisations outside the UN system are already addressing the implementation of 2030 Agenda. Those organisations should be allowed to participate at main meetings and present their inputs while their reports/outcomes could be considered when drafting thematic reviews, summary and synthesis reports by the UN secretariat. Further specifications can be found in paragraphs 14-19 of GA resolution 67/290. In particular the identification of potential emerging issues, for example by academic institutions, could be presented to the HLPF. These other organisations could also be encouraged to align their discussions with the annual HLPF theme.

### **III. HLPF National Reviews of implementation:**

The national review reports should include assessment of progress, achievements and challenges identified in the national implementation of 2030 Agenda, including its means of implementation. The reporting should be participatory and include the contributions of the private sector, civil society, the scientific community, philanthropic organizations and foundations in line with national laws and regulations. The submission of these reports should be done by all states on a regular basis by taking into account the four year cycle of the HLPF as well as different national realities, capacities and levels of development. While we see a clear benefit in having one review per four year cycle by each Member State we also see difficulties in accommodating the presentation of these reviews in the limited time allocated to the HLPF. One suggestion could be to have one review to be presented during one of the HLPF sessions under the auspices of the ECOSOC and a final report to be presented by every State by 2030 to recapitulate the progress, successes and



challenges experienced during the 15 year timeframe. In order to support countries in their elaboration of national reports, specialized agencies, programmes, funds and any other organizations or mechanisms that could provide input should be given guidance by the ECOSOC to ensure better alignment and meaningful inputs for reviews at all levels.

*Preparation and conduct of national reviews:*

14. How often would countries be expected to participate in regular state-led reviews in order to allow for a meaningful exchange of experiences and feedback at the HLPF? Should there be a minimum number of reviews within 15 years to be presented at the HLPF?
  
15. How can the HLPF discussions on the reviews be best prepared in order to facilitate a sharing of experiences and the provision of political leadership, guidance and recommendations at the HLPF? How would countries like to be supported in preparing the review process at global level?

*Voluntary common reporting guidelines:*

Voluntary common reporting guidelines should take into account the areas in which countries can and should produce reports – i.e. landlocked countries can only report on ocean-related goals to a certain extent. Issues that require mainstreaming, such as gender or the rule of law, should be addressed systematically. We welcome a standardized format for national reports, to ensure consistency and comparability.

16. In order to help elaborate voluntary common reporting guidelines for State-led reviews at the HLPF, kindly indicate what issues you would want the HLPF to address systematically when it examines national implementation reviews?
  
17. How can the guidelines leave enough flexibility to Member States while ensuring sufficient comparability between HLPF reviews to facilitate cross-country comparisons and to help track global progress? Could guidelines identify a core set of issues, in addition to the status of all SDGs and Targets, which all countries would be encouraged to address in their reviews and, in addition, a number of issues which countries might consider addressing if feasible?

*Presentation of national reviews to the HLPF:*

Country report presentations should be conducted in a manner ensuring that all MS can be present and can engage in a constructive dialogue. In consequence, presentations should not be held in parallel sessions to other presentations or to plenary meetings, also, space should be provided for all stakeholders to engage constructively in the ensuing discussions on the presentations. Means of implementation should be an integral part of the presentations, both with regards to the provision of means of implementation and the need for those means. Presentations by similar countries could be grouped in order to encourage discussions on common successes, experiences and challenges.

18. How should the country reviews be featured and discussed at the formal HLPF meeting?

19. How can national reviews give adequate attention to the means of implementation? How can they help to mobilize new support and partnerships?

20. What kind of outcome should result from the HLPF national reviews of implementation, and how could there be a follow-up to these reviews?

#### **IV. Regional reviews and processes**

21. How should the outcome of regional review processes be considered at HLPF?

Regional level reviews should highlight trans-boundary trends and challenges in the respective regions. In order to ensure comparability, regional reviews should also follow certain guidelines for reporting. Where regions present similar circumstances, the role of regional reviews in presenting peer learning and experiences becomes particularly important. As with national and global reviews, regional reviews must also be inclusive and allow all stakeholders to participate in the review process.

#### **V. Inclusion of UN system and other stakeholders in global follow-up and review**

22. How can the HLPF support the participation by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the follow-up and review processes conducted at the global level including the thematic and country reviews? What are possible options to seek their contributions to the reviews at the HLPF, (building on the modalities for the participation of major groups defined by General Assembly resolution 67/290 and the practices of the General Assembly open working group on SDGs)?

The agenda is based on a multi-stakeholder approach, therefore it will be crucial to ensure that all stakeholders can participate in all levels of the follow-up and review process. In accordance with RES/67/290 (par 14-17), the work of the HLPF is open to all UN MS, as well as to major groups, NGOs, other relevant stakeholders and regional organisations. National implementation reports along with reports at all levels should take into account the views of non-state stakeholders, including the civil society, private sector, academia and media and should be publicly available to ensure the full transparency of the review-process and broad public engagement in the 2030 process. National stakeholders should be invited to submit evidence and reports within the formal review process. Subnational and local authorities and their associations are important channels for the views and opinions of their members on local and national progress against the SDGs.

23. The 2030 Agenda calls on major groups and other stakeholders to report on their contribution to the implementation of 2030 Agenda. How can such reviews be prepared and conducted at the HLPF? How can these actors be encouraged to engage in such reviews?<sup>11</sup>

see answer to question 22

24. How should UN system contribution to the implementation of 2030 Agenda be reviewed?

see answer to question 2

25. What steps can the UN system, including the Secretariat take to best support follow-up and review in a coherent and effective manner?

see answers to question 2 and 5

## VI. Other views and ideas

We suggest that following **driving principles** should inform this exercise:

- The implementation will first and foremost take place at the country level and the main responsibility for its implementation lies with the UN Member States.
- The UN will have an important supporting role to play, which is why we should ensure it is “fit for purpose” to deliver on the Agenda.

<sup>11</sup> Agenda 2030 states in para 89 that “the high-level political forum will support participation in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290. We call on those actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda.”

- That being said, the regular budget of the UN should not be the main vehicle for implementing the agenda. Each UN body should play to their institutional strengths.
- In some specific cases, new resources might be warranted. But the main effort within every entity and across the system should be one of reprioritization and redeployment based on comparative advantages, avoiding duplication and stepping up system-wide coherence.

#### **FfD follow-up (division of labour, methods of work, interlinkages)**

We would have expected better coverage of the FfD angle in this questionnaire.

We should bear in mind that the AAAA (along with the SDGs) sets-out the means of implementation for the whole 2030 Agenda. This means that the follow-up of the two agendas cannot be separated, and the need for policy coherence between the two processes will require more than just this institutional linkage between the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the HLPF. Conceptually, we need to view the AAAA as an integral part of the 2030 agenda. The bringing together of the 'means and ends' in this way is what is so progressive about the new agenda, and is a 'value-added' which must be supported through a well-integrated implementation and review mechanism.

#### **Outcomes of the HLPF**

- Further distinction between the operations and outcomes of the HLPF in ECOSOC and GA years would be welcomed.
- Further specification on the outcome of the HLPF would be welcomed, including how recommendations and Ministerial Declarations will be followed up.

26. Please add any other points you would like to raise.