

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

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 targets¹. 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

¹ [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E]

defined in the 2030 Agenda². 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 policymakers³.

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

² Agenda 2030 para 74

³ 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 HLPF⁴.”
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, copied to zubcevic@un.org and powellj1@un.org) **no later than 15 November 2015**.

⁴2030 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:

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?

New Zealand supports alignment of the HLPF and ECOSOC with Agenda 2030, which we see as the overarching policy framework for sustainable development.

We propose the following:

- *Working methods across ECOSOC, the GA (in particular C2) and the HLPF should be carefully formulated and streamlined to avoid duplication and enhance coherence across these processes.*

GA and Second Committee (C2)

- *The GA (including C2) should work to progress and update policy on key development issues, in line with Agenda 2030 and the AAAA.*
- *We note the C2 revitalisation and reform process currently underway and hope that this will streamline and focus the C2 agenda, rationalising the agenda to issues that are high priority and universally applicable.*

HLPF

- *The HLPF should respond at a high level to identified gaps in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and in particular to those parts of Agenda 2030 which are clearly off-track or at risk.*
- *The HLPF should be provided with analysis and information to enable it to drive increased political attention to the gaps and issues that arise.*

- *The HLPF Heads of Government meeting should focus on the high level gaps in implementation of Agenda 2030 and drive political level attention and timely action to these.*

One of the biggest risks to achieving Agenda 2030 is that the breadth of issues and corresponding reporting requirements could lead to a lack of focus on the actions that are most critical to global, regional and national level sustainable development.

ECOSOC and the HLPF must find ways to prompt action on aspects that are most at risk or most critical.

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

ECOSOC has a role to play in bringing the work of various bodies together (e.g. the regional commissions, functional committees). ECOSOC is a critical actor in ensuring that ‘no-one is left behind’ and in tracking how groups of countries in special circumstances – LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS - are progressing in implementing Agenda 2030. ECOSOC should draw out critical issues from the three agendas - Vienna Programme of Action, Istanbul Programme of Action and SAMOA Pathway - and relate them to Agenda 2030. It should also seek to ensure broad consistency of approach across the three agendas and with Agenda 2030, and help frame the key issues for the HLPF to consider.

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)⁵?

*There is a lot of overlap between the three agendas above and Agenda 2030. Timing and sequencing of respective follow-up and re review arrangements will be important – the three are clearly referenced in Agenda 2030 as facing particular challenges and requiring particular attention. Review of the three agendas should occur prior to the review of Agenda 2030 **as a whole** so that issues for each can be fed in effectively to the Global SD Report that the HLPF will consider.*

4. Should the General Assembly provide some guidance to ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums on how they

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

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?

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?

Once again, the role of the HLPF should be focused on the gaps and issues. The ECOSOC Forum on FfD should oversee the analysis of how the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is being implemented, including in the key groups of countries with particular needs. This will enable the HLPF to consider financing issues in the context of overall progress on the implementation of Agenda 2030 and then seek to drive political attention and action to areas or issues that are lagging or absent.

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 ECOSOC⁶ and “other intergovernmental bodies and forums”⁷. 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”⁸. 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”⁹. 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.¹⁰]

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?

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

⁷ Examples would include the World Health Assembly, International Labour Conference etc.

⁸ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 85

⁹ General Assembly resolution 67/290, op 7c

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

*New Zealand favours (i) which encourages an integrated approach by identifying issues across a group of interrelated areas or where there are trade-offs to be considered. We suggest using the high level thematic structure provided by the five “P”s that are laid out in the pre-amble and which bring together ‘like’ goals dealing with **People, Planet, Prosperity Peace, and Partnerships**. These could be progressed in turn: Year one: People; Year two: Planet; Year three: Prosperity; Year four: Peace, together with the relevant Partnership targets in Goal 17 related to the annual theme). The fifth year might look at a transversal theme.*

This would provide a strong coherent focus for each annual review and would allow GA to focus on each area in a timely way. We think this focus would improve the accessibility and the thematic coherence of the follow up process to a wide range of actors.

Thematic reviews must allow for a focus on the needs of countries in special situations which may otherwise be subsumed, e.g. the small size of some SIDS means that they don’t appear in UN statistics.

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

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?

Note our answer to Question 6 above. Rotate through themes of People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace each, together with an analysis of how Partnerships and Financing are operating to support the implementation of the SDGs.

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?

The above themes are broad enough to be planned and sequenced for the full 15 years of the Agenda. That means they can be known and planned for at the outset which will maximise the opportunity for scheduling/sequencing/prioritisation of analysis and input by other platforms and actors to best effect.

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

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

The Commission is currently playing a critical role in overseeing the development of indicators. There are likely to be ongoing issues relating to these indicators and the ability of countries and regions to report against them. The Commission should maintain an oversight of the indicators and monitoring process and should be actively looking for harmonisation, rationalisation and simplification across the various monitoring processes and statistical work of the UN.

UN Stats should also look to review indicators periodically to update them as new data becomes available or better methodologies are developed. It can also help direct capacity building efforts to countries and regions which are struggling to meet Agenda 2030 data and reporting expectations.

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

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?

III. HLPF National Reviews of implementation:

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?

Given countries will be reporting as best they can against Agenda 2030 the added value of national reviews needs to be carefully considered. We would suggest that they be encouraged (perhaps every 4-5 years) but leave this to the discretion of member States. Reviews are resource intensive and will compete with other processes at domestic level; countries may have existing ways of reviewing their progress against the domestic sustainable development agenda/national plans and the Agenda 2030 reviews need to work with, reinforce and align with these national processes rather than the other way around.

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?

We believe it would be preferable that the HLPF is not too involved in national level findings. It would be better for this to be mediated through regional and global follow-up and review processes. National level findings could provide useful case-study examples of good practice or pressing issues that need responses at a global political level.

Voluntary common reporting guidelines:

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?

The HLPF should take responsibility for systematically following the larger issues within Agenda 2030 that sit above individual goals. This could include:

- *poverty and hunger (given these are over-arching);*
- *the issues of leaving no-one behind;*
- *how countries are balancing competing parts of Agenda 2030;*
- *participation and transparency in implementation and monitoring*
- *partnerships*
- *policy coherence for development*
- *financing for development*

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?

The idea of identifying a core set of issues for national reviews is sensible. This could focus on the issues that are most at risk within Agenda 2030 or most critical to success.

Presentation of national reviews to the HLPF:

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

We suggest that the outcome of national level reviews be analysed and considered by the HLPF in a collective and aggregate manner. This could include for example clustering and summarising the findings for relevant groups of countries: OECD, SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. Case studies from national reviews could be used to provide concrete examples to better contextualise the larger thematic annual reports.

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?

Global level reporting should allow the HLPF to identify regions that are off track or facing particular issues. Our view is that regional reviews are of most direct relevance to regional fora and the countries concerned and should focus on strengthening the action of members through producing a richer understanding of local issues and progress.

The HLPF would be better to focus on the situation of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS which are specifically prioritised under the Declaration.

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)?
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?¹¹

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation with its existing reporting framework could be drawn on and developed further to provide coordinated multi-actor reporting on partnership dimensions. This whole area requires considerable thought as to how the UN and non-UN processes fit together and how best to reduce duplicative reporting, rationalise the reporting and review burden on all, while maximising coherence.

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

Reviews should be designed and undertaken in a way which maximises the opportunity for greater coherence, reform and UN system cross-agency collaboration. Reporting could perhaps align to the annual “5 Ps” focus proposed above, incentivising such system wide collaboration around goals or across goals.

There needs to be strong thought not just about how to add a strand of 2030 Agenda reporting alongside everything else, but how 2030 Agenda reporting might subsume or replace existing reporting streams, particularly agency specific reporting. One issue to consider is whether some agendas are now redundant as they are picked up in Agenda 2030.

¹¹ 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.”

Critically, the UN system contribution and review of such needs to consider the core role and comparative advantage of the System vis-à-vis the role of member states and regions. The ongoing dialogue in the ECOSOC on the longer term positioning of the UN development system as supported under Agenda 2030 (para 46) is critical to ensure that UN capacities are deployed to best effect.

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

VI. Other views and ideas

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