

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.

General comment: many of the questions concern complex issues, with no simple answers. It would be helpful if the SG in his report could provide an analysis of available options and their respective consequences, to facilitate the discussion among MS and other stakeholders on how to move forward towards a robust follow-up and review framework.

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?

The work of UNGA committees and ECOSOC should reflect the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, as the universally adopted framework for eradicating extreme poverty through sustainable development, and feed into the HLPF sessions in a coherent, efficient and complementary way.

There is a need to define a good division of labour, based on their respective mandates, between GA, ECOSOC and the HLPF in the follow-up to Agenda 2030, aiming at coherence, efficiency and avoiding duplication.

We agree with the clear need to adjust the agenda and working methods of the GA to enable it to respond to Agenda 2030 and better reflect its integrated manner. (ref our inputs on revitalization of 2C).

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

Like the GA, the ECOSOC may need to review its agenda and calendar in order to ensure a coherent and efficient system of global follow-up and review. Need to clarify the roles and contributions of the different segments

of ECOSOC in providing inputs to and facilitate the HLPF's role in overseeing follow-up and review at the global level. Also a need to closely coordinate the High Level Segment of ECOSOC with the HLPF sessions under its auspices to avoid duplication of discussions. ECOSOC will host the annual HLPF-discussions on SDG-progress.

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?

Progress reports and mid-term reviews of these conferences and processes should feed into the HLPF discussions, and can also inform the GSDR and the SDG progress reports.

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?

Guidance to functional commissions and other ECOSOC subsidiary bodies should be given by ECOSOC. However, the GA has a responsibility to ensure that the overall review architecture enables the HLPF to fulfil its central role in overseeing follow-up and review of Agenda 2030 at the global level. Close coordination between the PGA and the President of ECOSOC is important to facilitate this. The work of ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums should contribute to the follow-up and review of the SDGs, within existing mandates and structures.

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?

It will be important that the format of both the said forums and their respective outcomes are designed in a manner that can feed into and inform the HLPF and enable it to fulfil its central role in overseeing follow-up and review of Agenda 2030 at the global level. We would be pleased to see options for how to do this in the SG report.

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

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

[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?

We see pros and cons of all three options, in particular (i) and (ii), and think we will need some further analysis and reflection on how this could be applied in practice before we state a clear preference. A combination of options i) and ii) could be considered, taking into account the diversity of the goals and targets as well as their integrated nature. We hope the SG report can provide such an analysis.

A few principles we think should guide us are:

- *All goals should be reviewed in the course of a four year cycle.*
- *The reviews should take into account the integrated and indivisible nature of the agenda.*
- *The reviews should reflect the principles set out in para 74 of the Agenda 2030.*
- *While a certain degree of predictability would be useful, we should also allow for some flexibility, in order i.a. to enable HLPF to respond to emerging trends and challenges.*

Whatever option(s) we choose for organizing the thematic reviews, we should allow ourselves to revisit this question at the end of the first four year cycle in light of experience and lessons learned thus far

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

«Clustering» could be done for example by examining progress on health from the perspective also of other relevant goal areas and how they impact on the health targets. Another way would be to cluster across themes, for example the environmental and the economic/industry goals together. A third way would be to take the environmental and poverty etc goals separately but through thematic review also consider other dimensions.

Both qualitative and quantitative reporting is important, and should be reflected in the annual progress SDG report as well as the GSDR and national reports. While qualitative reporting is important for policy coherence and political focus, the UN system could draw on quantitative statistics from national statistical offices. The annual SDG report could also have a thematic focus. The “five Ps” could be one way to cluster themes. Reporting should show the best practices and positive experiences which could be scaled up and replicated elsewhere. UN statistics office should be involved here.

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?

We assume that the reports discussed in the functional commissions with relevance for assessing the progress in achieving the respective goals and targets will feed into the SDG progress report and the GSDR, which will inform the HLPF’s discussions. The outcomes of the functional commissions could feed into discussions on the HLPF. One must ensure, however, that the information received by the HLPF is manageable and focusing on progress in achieving the SDGs.

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?

The overarching annual theme for the HLPF when it meets under the auspices of ECOSOC should be closely related to that of ECOSOC. It should also be closely related to the thematic reviews of the progress on 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?

Please see answer to question 6 and 8 above. Review of a limited number each year implies that one would register scant progress for themes reviewed at the beginning of the period and more for those reviewed closer to 2030. The HLPF must learn from the experience of CSD 10-year programs, which led to some important themes in reality blocked from discussions. Ensuring a review of all goals within a four-year cycle could reduce such a risk, and would ensure at least three rounds of reviews in the 15 years until 2030.

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

To the extent possible, they should strive to address the same overarching theme as the HLPF (and ECOSOC).

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

The initial SDG global indicators framework to be agreed by the UN StatCom in March 2016 should be seen as “work-in-progress” and be updated as knowledge evolves and data systems are improved. A plan for how this can happen should be developed in close cooperation with the UN-statistical commission and include contributions from the World Bank, the OECD and other bodies who collect data and develop methodology. UN StatCom should otherwise give advice where needed.

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

Some flexibility in the agenda and work plan, cf. answer to 6 above.

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 SDG Progress report and the GSDR should draw on all sources of information, both from within and outside the UN, focusing on high-quality input of relevance for progress in a given thematic area.

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?

The state-led reviews are voluntary and there should not be set any minimum number. All member states should aim to contribute to review global progress in following up the SDGs and Agenda 2030 in the most meaningful way possible within each four-year cycle of meeting at HOS/HOG level at UNGA, and should strive to participate in the voluntary, national review process at the global level to present their implementation efforts.

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:

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:

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

Given the limited time available and the need to ensure high political relevance, HLPF could rather focus on the global progress and discuss selected good practices and challenges identified at national and regional level within a thematic area that may contribute to learning and policy

recommendations for Member States.

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?

See answer to 18.

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)?

Apply the provisions of Res 67/290 and ensure involvement of stakeholders in the agenda-setting process of the HLPF through broad and transparent consultations.

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 HLPF should include presentations by stakeholders and groups that are engaged in cutting edge work that contributes to SDG achievement and

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.”

ensure their interactive participation in discussions related to their contributions.

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

The entities of the UN Development System should highlight in their existing results reporting how they contribute to the SDGs, including how they contribute to integrated and coherent support to the implementation of the new agenda, making the system deliver as one. This information should be consolidated into one report to the HLPF, possibly as part of the SG's report on the follow-up of the QCPR. How to ensure this should be considered in the QCPR 2016 and when elaborating the next strategic plans of the entities.

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

Ensure a UN system-wide approach to follow-up and review at country level in close coordination with the host government.

Ensure a more integrated, systemic approach to planning the HLPF meetings, where the different divisions of DESA and the UNDG work together as one UN, employing their capacities and resources wisely.

By contributing to thematic reviews in their area of competence.

VI. Other views and ideas

Norway believes that the follow up and review process must be meaningful and manageable, also for member states with more limited institutional capacity, including LDCs, SIDS and others, and does not duplicate or complicate reporting but builds on the work already underway and ongoing within existing processes, agreements, instruments and conventions, including environmental conventions and –protocols. Reporting mechanisms must be simple and clear. Capacity in developing countries to engage in UN matters – including various obligations to report - are often very limited. It is important to build on existing mechanism for monitoring progress. There should be clear links and coherence between these different reports in order to make sure that the process does not become too demanding and burdensome on Member States. It should be true to the principles as stated in the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda. "The interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized. If we realize our ambitions across the full extent of the Agenda, the lives of all will be profoundly improved and our world will be transformed for the better." Making the process interesting is important to secure political participation and ownership.

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

Norway is satisfied with the current UNGA plenary processes, modalities and structures relating to Oceans and the Law of the Sea including the relevant resolutions. For Norway it is a priority that SDG 14 and other ocean related goals are implemented in the HLPF in a manner that would not risk complicating or fragmenting the current work, taking into account the fact that the ongoing UNGA processes and SG reporting serves the UN member states and the UN system well and includes the relevant components of the UN system.

Voluntary peer-reviews can be useful for the countries that are reviewed and the peer. It can be an important capacity building exercise. Such a system should be based on existing peer review-mechanisms, for instance OECD, NEPAD or the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), without creating new structures. Reporting guidelines should be aligned with the work within the OECD, various multilateral international conventions and other relevant entities that states report to, in order to ensure coherence and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. Flexible and simple processes for participation by civil society, private sector and other stakeholders could be done through one-day thematic dialogue between member states and major groups, with the possibility to comment on the country reviews.

To ensure that HLPF fulfills its function as the main arena for follow up and review of the SDGs, high-level participation is important. UNGA and ECOSOC should facilitate high-level political participation at HLPF, by aligning the timing of the annual ECOSOC and HLPF ministerial reviews, and ensuring that the quadrennial HLPF at HOS/HOG level is aligned with the UNGA high-level week starting in 2019.