

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?

- The GA, ECOSOC, HLPF, and other platforms in the UN system need to efficiently divide their respective roles, taking into account their unique institutional and systematic characteristics. In particular, the bodies and platforms should review their agenda and sessions in relation to the 2030 Agenda for a mutually reinforcing and coherent follow-up and review framework.
 - Considering the universal participation of Member States in the GA, its discussions can focus on general agenda items to accommodate intergovernmental considerations.
 - ECOSOC can be useful in facilitating detailed discussions of pending issues and collecting various views, as the selection of a theme for ECOSOC is more flexible, and the Council can better incorporate participation of various stakeholders. ECOSOC's own discussion mechanism can be utilized in facilitating such inclusive conversations, or the Council can convene special meetings or forums on particular themes as well.
 - Despite the differences in roles between the GA and ECOSOC, as mentioned above, the outcomes of the discussions in the GA and ECOSOC need to effectively feed into the HLPF to ensure that the GA, ECOSOC and the HLPF are mutually reinforcing.

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

- As ECOSOC will play a central role in the follow-up and review with the annual HLPF under its auspices, the Council will require working methods and systems that will enable effective review processes.
 - Considering ECOSOC's comparative flexibility in its ability to convene meetings, hold forums, and invite the participation of multi-stakeholders, informal negotiations and retreats in relation to the HLPF preparations should be utilized accordingly to prepare ample and practical inputs. In particular, we could consider hosting forums and meetings that are similar to the HLPF in nature in advance of the HLPF to increase the coherence of the review processes.
 - We could also consider linking the annual ECOSOC theme with the theme of HLPF
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 apparent consensus on the need for special considerations for the countries in special situations in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
 - However, the request for a separate and devoted session by a specific group, for example by SIDS for the SAMOA Pathway, should be carefully considered with the whole programme of the HLPF in mind.
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?
- The GA should provide guidance to the functional commissions of ECOSOC as well as other intergovernmental bodies and forums to align their working cycle and the way in which they provide outcome documents to the HLPF preparatory process, considering that the annual HLPF occurs under the auspices of ECOSOC.
 - For working cycles in particular, the cycles should be aligned based on the timing of the submission of various outcomes to the HLPF, so that the outcomes from subsidiary bodies and functional commissions of ECOSOC can contribute to the HLPF.

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

- However, the review of the programme of work and working sessions of the subsidiary bodies and functional commissions is currently ongoing within ECOSOC. The GA should consider the outcome of this process and cooperate closely with ECOSOC on this matter.
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 link with major groups and stakeholders, such as the BWIs and the scientific community, should be strengthened by creating a separate session to discuss the outcomes of the FfD Forum and the STI Forum under ECOSOC. This can further encourage stakeholder participation from the financial sector and scientific community in HLPF as well.

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

- Options 1 and 2 both can be considered; further discussion among Member States will be needed, taking into account the pros and cons of both options.
 - Option 1 would allow for detailed review of all 17 SDGs over a set period of time by selecting a few SDGs that are closely linked to one another, meeting the fundamental objective of reviewing the implementation of the SDGs. However it will be crucial for the criteria for clustering the SDGs to be clear and agreeable, and for the review to be aligned with a coherent thematic review as well.
 - Option 2 would allow various UN agencies and applicable platforms to actively participate based on the overarching theme, as well as the review of policy implementation by Member States and intergovernmental bodies. However reviewing all the SDGs every year will be difficult, and some targets and themes may be omitted.
 - Option 3 would not align with the initiative of thematic reviews, and thus would not be appropriate.
 - While the options above must be carefully considered, option 1 would be most appropriate, taking into account the priority for the thematic review to promote implementation of SDGs, as it will be the most effective and practical in reviewing the implementation progress of a certain theme.
 - The 5Ps, as presented in the 2030 Agenda can be considered as an option for overarching themes or concepts under which various SDGs can be clustered.
 - Regardless of the options chosen, it will be important to collect the views of Member States and come to an early decision in order to prepare the bodies that will undertake the thematic reviews. Furthermore the modalities for theme selection must also move forward based on an agreement among Member States.
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?
- Functional commissions related to a given theme, such as CSW and CFS, can represent a given platform to gather the activities of related international organizations to report to the HLPF.
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?

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?

- Rather than selecting a theme every year, it is more appropriate to select themes for every four year cycle, or for a longer period of time.
 - Considering that thematic review address all 17 SDGs, the review must be conducted in a balanced manner. This would be best achieved by having a multi-year program, which should be flexible in order to adapt to and address emerging issues of the international community.

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 Statistical Commission must work to ensure that the global indicators function as effective guidance for the follow-up and review, and continue to fine tune them accordingly. After finalizing the global indicators in March 2016, the Commission should continue an annual technical review of the suitability of the indicators, considering the 15-year timeframe of the 2030 Agenda. The results of these annual technical reviews should be reported to the ECOSOC, GA, HLPF and other related bodies to contribute to the suitable review of implementation.

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

- As indicated in paragraph 87 of the 2030 Agenda, emerging global issues should generally be addressed in the HLPF under the auspices of the GA every 4 years in a separate session.

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?

- HLPF should utilize platforms and processes outside of the UN, such as the OECD and GPEDC.
 - OECD has expertise in many areas of the SDGs, especially in measurement and analysis of implementation which would be a significant contribution to the implementation and follow-up and review of the SDGs by the UN.
 - GPEDC has the participation of over 160 countries and 30 international organizations, and has significant capacity in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation. This can be a meaningful contribution to the review of the means of implementation.

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?

- Regular participation by Member States in national reviews, and establishing a minimum number of reviews to be undertaken for each State over 15 years would be ideal, but considering the state-led, voluntary nature of the review process, any approach beyond a recommendation would be difficult.
 - Nevertheless, national reports should be submitted regularly by all Member States. To take account different national capacities and realities, allowing Member States to announce a suitable timeframe for their own regular national submissions can also be considered.

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?

- For countries volunteering to participate in national reviews, it would be useful to organize an orientation or preparatory meeting in advance to increase effectiveness.

- In the preparatory process, the involvement of interested Member States, regional commissions, intergovernmental bodies and other related platforms should be arranged in advance, as well as the central issue to be reviewed at the HLPF.
- The presentation by the Member States should be followed by an interactive dialogue with major groups and other stakeholders, and Member States and stakeholders should focus on recommendations on implementation and sharing of experiences.
- Using the national report in conjunction with shadow reports and objective reports by the UN as the basis for discussion can be considered.

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 elements to be included in the national report and presentation are: 1) Progress made in implementation and assessment of results of the 2030 Agenda including the MOIs, 2) lessons learned and challenges faced in the implementation process, 3) best partnerships, etc
- To encourage active discussion, information exchange to promote implementation by each country should be the main base for discussion, while also addressing the obstacles, challenges, and possible solutions to overcome them.

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?

- Given that the guidelines to be provided by the Secretary-General are intended for voluntary and common reporting standards, ensuring both flexibility and comparability is important.
- In this regard, the proposal of a 'core set of issues' (with agreement by Member States) may contribute to establishing minimum comparability.

- However, the proposal of a core set of issues should take into account the differences in areas of focus among Member States, so as to avoid creating a discussion on the prioritization of certain SDGs over others.

Presentation of national reviews to the HLPF:

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?
 - The national review process should incentivize Member States to discuss MOIs by creating a space and opportunity to encourage MOI support by multi-stakeholders, and include elements such as evaluation of the demand of MOIs, evaluation of the need for financing and capacity building, and sharing of best practices in financing.
 - National reviews should also function as a platform for matchmaking for desired partnerships to encourage voluntary participation.
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?
 - The national reviews should result in a summary of discussion by the Chair, with guaranteed participation of the presenting states in the writing process.
 - Obstacles and recommendations mentioned in the national reviews should have a follow-up after a set period of time (4 years considering the HLPF cycle) to ensure effectiveness of the national reviews.

IV. Regional reviews and processes

21. How should the outcome of regional review processes be considered at HLPF?
 - Regional reviews using peer reviews should be actively encouraged. Exchange of knowledge and experience within a region as well as in-depth review of regional issues can increase regional cooperation and achieve a common solution in the 2030 Agenda implementation.

- While utilizing existing review mechanisms as much as possible, the Regional forum on sustainable development should be utilized a link to HLPF as well.

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

(addressing both questions 22 and 23)

- The preparatory process for HLPF can be actively used as a means to encourage participation by the UN system and stakeholders. The interactive discussion should go beyond the forums directly linked to the HLPF (such as the FfD Forum and STI Forum) and include other review-related forums in the GA/ECOSOC/subsidiary bodies. These recommendations should be made through the report of the Secretary-General and through the GA.
- In order to support the participation of the major groups and other stakeholders, their participation should become institutionalized.
 - We could consider institutionalizing the submission of shadow reports and reports by stakeholders, guaranteeing participation in the national, regional, and global review processes, as well as preparing a separate session at the HLPF.

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

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.”

reviewed?

- UN bodies, including the regional commissions, should utilize their own existing mechanisms for review through various thematic platforms, ECOSOC functional commissions, and other international organizations to contribute to global reviews at the HLPF.
 - While the UN bodies should report on their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda using existing review mechanisms, the representative body of a given platform can be used to provide an overarching report rather than submitting individual reports.

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

- By aligning the review cycle of the 2030 Agenda with the 4-year cycle of the QCPR, the HLPF can provide practical guidance and orientation to the UN development system regarding the contribution of the UN to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

VI. Other views and ideas

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