



16 November 2015

## **Regional Views on 2030 Agenda Follow up and Review Framework<sup>1</sup>**

### ***General***

1. The follow up and review (FUR) framework of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 ASD) should ensure appropriate linkages between various levels (local, national, sub-regional, regional, and global), actors (state and non-state) and sectors. The national, sub-regional, regional and global components of the FUR framework should take into consideration the different roles, assets and mandates of existing institutions and entities.
2. The SDGs should maintain their positive, inspirational and aspirational nature. National ownership as well as creating and promoting a collaborative environment at all levels towards SDG achievement and implementation are critical to their success. SDGs should be used as incentives for people and countries to come together and make a joint effort towards their achievement.
3. A thorough and inclusive process to prepare for the global review is key for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to be able to give relevant high-level policy guidance on implementation and inspire progress in sustainable development. An inclusive, multi-stakeholder process would generate ownership of the forum's outcome from a bottom-up approach.
4. Consequently, the FUR should be hinged on a sound institutional architecture that is woven into existing structures to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure greater coherence at the global, regional and national levels.
5. Furthermore, efforts should be put in place to ensure that the FUR process is well budgeted for.

### ***FUR at National level***

6. The backbone of a FUR framework should be at the national level. It is at this level that all accounts of implementation actions converge to show a pattern and create a picture of performance. The national level is also the most relevant in view of the fact that the majority of commitments are either those of the state or those of development actors established under national laws and regulations.
7. The creation of institutional systems and appropriate incentive mechanisms for countries and other stakeholders to participate in a FUR framework are basic requirements.
8. The focus should be to strengthen capacity for implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national level, including through greater involvement and engagement of civil society and the private sector from the planning to the monitoring phases of the SDGs. Review tools should be state-led, and based on official statistics, although the potential relevance of other sources of information should also be acknowledged.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paper prepared to serve, among others, as inputs by the Regional Commissions to SG upcoming report on FUR, upon the invitation of USG/DESA to the ESs to provide such inputs (re Mr. Wu letter dated 12 October 2015)



- a. The private sector should contribute to review and encourage sustainable production and resource efficiency in strengthened monitoring frameworks. Public policies and legislative frameworks could stimulate corporate social responsibility and encourage corporate business to channel funding for sustainable development.
- b. With respect to civil society, there should be more systematic and institutionalised mechanisms to actively engage and empower them from the planning to the review and evaluation phases of this process. These mechanisms should ensure that particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups including youth, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, are reached and empowered. Public participation and access to information are essential elements of follow-up and review mechanisms, following Rio Declaration principle 10. This is essential to ensure ownership of the Agenda, its implementation and FUR. The principles enshrined in the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) provide a practical example of empowering civil society through access to information.
- c. National and local statistical systems should be strengthened for the generation, processing, analysis and dissemination of data and information in a transparent and enabling manner. This is particularly true for the production of data and information at required levels of disaggregation (sub-national; vulnerable and marginalized populations). This information is necessary to track progress and adopt the necessary initiatives in support of a truly inclusive development agenda.
- d. The production of disaggregated statistics oftentimes requires an increase in human and financial resources as well. Support by the international community through financial and technical assistance would be critical in this regard. Generating and managing distinct data for both implementation and follow up/review is important, and attention should be given in this context to the use of technology in support of data and statistical development.
- e. The SDGs will have to be analyzed in light of the existing national long-term development plans, goals and targets to identify complementarities, inconsistencies and gaps in capacities with a view to integrate the multi-disciplinary nature of the 2030 ASD, including the SDGs, into such plans. This analysis will be country specific and hence unique actions for the follow up will derive from it. While establishing guidelines or “tool-kits” for the FUR at the global level might be helpful, applying them across the board without considering national particularities would be unrealistic. The challenge for the United Nations system will be to provide the catered support that each country will need to follow up on the agenda, while enhancing comparability and enabling global reporting. The regional level can play an important role in this regard.



### ***National-Regional Nexus and FUR at Regional Level***

9. Building on the existing regional institutional architecture, the regional level should support national processes, while facilitating the exchange of best practices. The inputs and perspectives from the national level should be considered and analysed at the regional level and feed into the global process.
10. The regional follow up and review framework should support countries' efforts to deliver on development commitments. This framework could lessen the burden of global-level requirements and enhance coordination among regional organizations and actors to strengthen the link between global commitments and national efforts.
11. Regional FUR could contribute to building trust among countries by encouraging countries to share information, knowledge and experiences, strengthen their respective capabilities and define coherent regional policies and approaches.
12. Peer learning and voluntary assessments of progress and policies within the framework of regional reviews will create transparency and promote mutual learning among Member States. It will also help to identify whether the right policies and actions are being pursued and, if not, points to the alternative directions to follow. A "remedy" function should complement the regional FUR. Once the review indicates a gap in progress, there should be an additional process that engages stakeholders in defining appropriate responses to boost progress.
13. The regional level will also address regional or transboundary issues, which have an important role in sustainable development, and develop related follow-up and review mechanisms, as needed and appropriate. This level can also help countries to translate global goals into policies, norms, standards, and guidelines that can be implemented at the national level, as well as mobilize partnerships and South-South cooperation, notably regional cooperation, which will be key for the remedy function advocated above.
14. The UN Regional Commissions were called upon to support the development of effective regional follow up and review frameworks to review regional progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In accordance with para 90 of the 2030 Agenda, member states would have to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage for following up and reviewing the implementation of the Agenda, building on existing mechanisms and successful experiences.
15. While it would be up to each region to ultimately decide on such forum, important progress has been already achieved in various regions on the architecture of such follow up and review, including in recognizing the critical role of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSDs) in such architecture. For instance:
  - a.) i. In Africa, the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals held in November 2013 reaffirmed the role of ECA in promoting a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in Africa, and called on the Commission and partners to continue facilitating consultative meetings and processes to monitor progress and scale up the implementation of sustainable development commitments by African countries.



ii. In 2015, the Joint Conference of Ministers of ECA and the AU approved the convening of the African Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD). That could pave the way for the thematic reviews for Africa, if and when agreed as part of the HLPF review system, to be undertaken under the auspices of the AFSD with the inputs provided by the ECA Statutory Committees that provide oversight for the Commission's various sub-programmes, the joint meetings of the ECA Conference of ministers of planning, finance, economy and the AU specialized technical committee on finance, monetary affairs, economic planning and integration.

iii. Other relevant AU specialized technical committees to that purpose include, among others: the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD), the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), the Conference of African Ministers on Industry (CAMI), and AU Conferences of Ministers of Health, Education, Mineral Resources Development.

iv. The FUR in Africa will also incorporate the African Development Goals (ADGs), which will be based on African priorities as well as the African regional indicators developed by ECA in collaboration with the UN Statistics Commission. The AFSD will also integrate existing institutional mechanisms that have been used for the MDGs, noting and correcting for identified weaknesses.

b.) i. In the Asia-Pacific, The Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD), inaugurated in 2014, is the most inclusive regional platform for follow up and review on the 2030 ASD and the SDGs. The outcomes of the APFSD feed into the HLPF at the global level, and also into the annual commission sessions of ESCAP. At its second meeting in 2015, the APFSD agreed to initiate formulating a regional road map for implementing the post-2015 development agenda [2030 ASD] at its 2016 session.

ii. The subsidiary bodies of ESCAP, such as the sectoral committees, would also serve as FUR platforms for specific SDGs and their outcomes would feed into the APFSD as well as the Commission sessions. For example, ESCAP has long standing and established regional review processes which address key areas covered by the SDGs such as the Asia-Pacific Gender Conference and the Asia-Pacific Population Conference as well as annual regional consultations on financing for development. These regional platforms are often attended at ministerial level and above and would continue to serve as important platforms for review of the sectoral SDGs. The outcomes would be appropriately reflected in the APFSD.



- iii. Subregional bodies including ASEAN and SAARC have comprehensive frameworks which seek to address issues which are closely related to the SDGs. Efforts would be to support the respective secretariats in the process of follow up and review and integrate the reporting process within the APFSD.
  - iv. National level reviews and reports could feed into regional platforms as well as the APFSD. This would establish the desired FUR nexus of national-regional-global levels. Regional SDG reporting is being planned.
- c.) In Latin America and the Caribbean, the region is currently engaged in a consultation process aiming at defining the modalities, scope, and composition of the LAC-RFSD. A broad regional consultation open to member states, UN regional agencies, academia and civil society representatives, will be organised in the first quarter of 2016 and a final proposal will be submitted for consideration and approval during ECLAC's Biennial Session in Mexico (May 2016). It is expected that regional reporting mechanisms, institutional arrangements and agenda setting will be agreed upon during this process.
- d.)
- i. In the Arab region, ESCWA will continue to convene annually the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (ArFSD) inaugurated in 2014. The ArFSD will be a key platform for FUR consultations and voluntary reviews of progress by Member States (MS). The multi-stakeholder Forum will continue to address integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development as well as integration among other spheres affecting sustainable development in the region. The Forum will be organized in coordination with the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM).
  - ii. Inputs from ESCWA's ten inter-governmental subsidiary bodies and other technical committees will feed into the Forum, including their inputs on sectoral or thematic reviews. Peer reviews, undertaken between MS and providing a review of progress, good practices, common challenges and joint solutions, will be presented at the Forum. Regional thematic reviews will focus on regional priorities and emerging issues with an integrated/nexus approach, and will also be considered at the ArFSD. Inputs and reporting from the national level will also be solicited in this regard. All FUR activities will be designed to the extent possible in synergy with on-going global and regional reviews (i.e., ICPD, Beijing+20, etc.) with a view to feed into ECOSOC forums and reviews and the HLPF.
  - iii. The Arab Sustainable Development Report (forthcoming 2015), led by ESCWA with RCM and LAS contributions, will be the



regional flagship on Agenda 2030 achievements and trends. Additional regional monitoring reports, produced as needed, will be prepared by ESCWA with RCM members and LAS, and will build on ESCWA's experience in regional MDG reports.

- e.) i. In the UNECE region, based on the outcome of sustainable development discussions at the 66<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission in April 2015, the UNECE secretariat has initiated a consultative process with member States, the regional UN system, other international and regional organizations and civil society with a view to determine the most effective modalities for regional follow-up and review of the SDGs.
- ii. One possible way forward is to build a regional platform for follow-up and review that is designed as a “docking station” that connects multiple levels and processes and that meets a number of critical requirements. First and foremost, it should be based on national reviews conducted in the UNECE region and provide a forum to voluntarily present, discuss and analyze the different experiences among regional peers. It should also integrate other regional and subregional actors (e.g., EU, OECD, Eurasian Economic Union, regional offices of UN entities, SPECA, regional development banks) and create a space that brings together existing review mechanisms. The latter comprise both mechanisms that are carried out within UNECE, including its Sectoral Committees, governing bodies of legal instruments and policy reviews (Environmental Performance Reviews, Innovation Performance Reviews, Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade, Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management), as well as mechanisms by other actors within and outside the UN.
- iii. The regional review platform is expected to be of an inclusive, multi-stakeholder nature with participation and broad involvement of civil society, the private sector and academia. Its outcome should eventually feed into the global level in a way that is consistent with the themes and requirements of the HLPF.

16. In conclusion, the RFSDs, convened by the Regional Commissions with regional and other partners, and with multi-stakeholder participation (civil society, private sector, academia, etc.) have demonstrated their potential to be inclusive regional platforms for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda in the regions, while complementing national efforts and supporting regular assessment at the global level. The RFSDs ensure integration, coherence and linkage to the national and global levels. They could also ensure harmonized reporting to the global level, notably once clearer guidelines towards certain harmonization of reporting are made available by Member States to facilitate FUR at the global level. In the meantime, regional FUR reporting could build, among others, on:



- (i) national assessments;
- (ii) the outcome of other various relevant review processes and mechanisms at the subregional and regional levels;
- (iii) the outcome of relevant assessments and reviews emanating from the subsidiary bodies of the Regional Commissions and other intergovernmental fora and;
- (iv) the experience of reporting on MDGs by the Regional Commissions.

### ***Regional-Global Nexus and FUR at Global Level***

17. The ECOSOC and the HLPF, with inputs from the regional level, will ensure the coherence of the overall FUR framework and bringing together the main findings and messages on the implementation of the Agenda 2030.
18. The HLPF should dedicate regional sessions to the review of regional outcomes and analysis, in addition to an interregional overview session, so that regional inputs are taken into account in progress assessment and decision making at the global level. In addition to the full reports emanating from the RFSDs, a Secretary-General report synthesizing the outcomes of the regional reviews emanating from the regional forums for FUR could guide and facilitate the discussions. The current annual SG report on regional cooperation could be partly adapted to provide such synthesis to the HLPF.
19. To further strengthen the regional-global nexus on FUR, the ECOSOC President and/or the respective ECOSOC Vice-Presidents could also participate in the sessions of the RFSDs.
20. HLPF should also provide high-level policy guidance and accountability to the UN system, including on system-wide coherence and coordination. DESA will continue to fully serve and support the HLPF. In order to backup DESA in serving the HLPF and ensure an effective national-regional-global nexus, including in the implementation of the Agenda and acting systemically and coherently on the outcomes of the HLPF by the UN system, a Secretariat Board composed of DESA, UNDP and the Regional Commissions as core members could be considered. Such Board will build on the roles and comparative advantages of its members at the national, regional and global levels. Other members from the UN system could join the Board on an ad hoc basis depending on the issues under consideration in support of any thematic review sessions under HLPF.
21. One last consideration on the regional-global nexus and the design of the FUR framework for the 2030 ASD relates to its indivisible linkage with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). More specifically, it remains to be defined how the FUR framework at the regional level will take into consideration the progress towards the commitments of the AAAA and which indicators will be used to measure such progress. Clearer guidance on how this will be approached at the global level could be useful taking into account paragraph 130 of the AAAA on FUR which “[...] encourage the United Nations regional commissions, in cooperation with regional banks and organizations, to mobilize their expertise and existing mechanisms, which could focus on thematic aspects of the present Action Agenda”.