

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

GA should encourage the functional commissions to contribute, and encourage them to make the implementation of the SDGs an integral and coherent part of their work. GA should also encourage the functional commissions to approach the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in the spirit with which they were crafted – namely that they apply to all countries, that they are interlinked and of an integrated nature, and that commissions should consider them holistically and as mutually reinforcing. While

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

commissions could be expected to deal with the SDGs in a targeted manner according to their mandates, addressing the SDGs in a silo approach should be prevented. All those that contribute to their follow-up and review should also contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women across all SDGs, with the guiding principles for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda guiding all contributions. Commissions have different mandates and terms of reference, and also different working methods. This provides opportunities for commissions to develop their contributions in an innovative manner. HLPF should provide opportunity for the functional commissions to learn from each other's approaches.

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?

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

Thematic reviews should focus on issues that are applicable to many or all of the Goals. Examples would be: creating conducive policy and legal environments; building institutions and institutional networks that can effectively support integrated action; overcoming inequalities and the data needed to guide policy action; participation of stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the SDGs; resources to accelerate progress, and keeping track of investments into the goals; monitoring progress – linking up existing national systems and closing gaps, and enhancing accountability for progress. Any thematic review needs to be based on gender analysis.

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?

Uniformity of format may be neither necessary nor desirable. The main aim should be that functional commissions integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, as well as cross-cutting themes, into their working methods and organization of work. Functional commissions should connect the 2030 Agenda to their own agenda items, build the linkages between the SDGs and their sectoral mandates, raise awareness of how progress, gaps and challenges in their sectoral (main areas of) responsibilities either contribute to or hinder progress towards the SDGs, and propose solutions for overcoming challenges. The SDGs themselves do not provide the *how* of policy and action, but those are provided in the outcomes of global conferences and other frameworks that guide the work of the functional commissions. The *how* of further policy and action also derives from the deliberations of functional commissions, and the related negotiations and outcomes. All of these need to be infused by the existence of the SDGs. It will be essential that preparatory work for the sessions of functional commissions, and especially reports of the Secretary-General, have a clear link to the SDGs so as to provide a solid basis for such purpose-driven discussion. Functional commissions will need to continue to work beyond the SDGs as those notwithstanding their comprehensiveness do not cover the entirety of respective agendas.

Outcomes of functional commissions should be transmitted through the reports of the commissions. Presentations by Chairs of functional commissions at HLPF can highlight key messages from commissions.

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 annual theme – as different from the thematic review of progress – should be

based on the SG's progress report on the SDGs. Its focus could be on a limited (say 10) number of targets and indicators where there is the least progress, and 10 where there is the most progress. The discussion could focus on the causes of such progress on the one hand, and lack of progress on the other with the aim of identifying good practices/lessons learned as well as bottlenecks, gaps and challenges that impede progress. Each year, a different set of targets should be selected. If there is persistent lack of progress in certain targets, they would require particular attention.

The theme in ECOSOC and the HLPF should be the same and only one discussion should take place.

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 annual theme would be determined annually, and should be the prerogative of the HLPF. On the other hand, the thematic review themes should be determined for 4 years in advance so as to enable all the other bodies to build the thematic reviews into their work plans and contribute within their work plans and working methods. Once the first four-year cycle is determined, one additional theme should be added every year so as to maintain the four-year planning cycle.

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

Yes, the multi-stakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation should address the same theme as the annual theme (nota bene: not the same as the thematic review).

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

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

Criteria that would help determine the need for a new or emerging issue should be proposed by the Bureau, and the need for considering a new and emerging issue in any one year could be discussed inter-sessionally in the Bureau, and then shared with Member States.

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?

Such organizations should be encouraged to contribute, but there may be no need to formalize such contributions. To the extent that such entities provide inputs, those could be posted online. They could be presented (informally) in the margins of the HLPF (morning meetings, or an informal day prior to the opening of 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?

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?

HLPF needs to systematically address how implementation of the SDGs contributes to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women based on the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The HLPF should also address: the process for preparing the national review (in particular consultations with stakeholders, especially civil society organizations); whether and how different levels and sectors of Government contributed to the national review; whether parliamentary discussion took place; whether a costing exercise for realizing the SDGs has taken place and its results; and what sources of information, including those submitted to other intergovernmental and expert bodies, have been used in preparing the national review.

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?

All countries should at all times be expected to address the status of gender equality and the empowerment of women, through analysis, and data disaggregated by sex and the participation of civil society, particularly women's organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Agenda. (See 2030 Agenda, para 74 which calls for a gender-sensitive approach in the follow-up and review)

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?
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?

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

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

The HLPF should build on the good practices established by the OWG and the negotiations of the post-2015 development agenda which encouraged participation of and consultation with major groups. A specific amount of time should be dedicated to interactions with major groups at each session of the HLPF.

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

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

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.

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.”