

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:

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 General Assembly is the **chief policy making organ** and representative of all UN members. It also provides a unique **forum for discussions on the full spectrum of international issues covering all pillars of the Charter, development, peace and security and human rights**. The GA Second and Third Committees are where economic, social, financial, humanitarian and cultural issues are discussed, and their working methods can be further improved to promote better integration of these issues and less duplication, and ensuring alignment with the 2030 Agenda (SDGs). Linkages with other committees dealing with peace and security can also be further strengthened. **(From the urban perspective, the governing body of UN-Habitat , the Governing Council (GC), reports to the GA, and there is an agenda item at the Second Committee, under which UN-Habitat reports on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the meetings/resolutions of the GC – which should now encompass the urban components of the 2030 Agenda, including SDG11.**

ECOSOC “is a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and for making recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major UN conferences”. (UN-Habitat currently reports on the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda - this could be aligned with the 2030 Agenda, SDG 11 specifically, as well as the “new urban agenda “ that will be adopted at Habitat III conference next year, in line with the ECOSOC’s main role as following-up on the main conferences).

Unfortunately, there are no real discussions at the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting where these agenda items are considered, and reports, (including governing bodies' reports - such as the GC report) are generally just taken note of and transmitted through a procedural resolution to the General Assembly (GA). **ECOSOC should regain its role of a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and making recommendations on the agenda items before it for consideration, involving all relevant partners and governments at all levels.**

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) has been established, and meets every year under the auspices of ECOSOC and every four years under the GA, and as per GA resolution A/RES/67/290, would conduct reviews “on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda”. **While recognizing Member State leadership and ownership of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, since the HLPF is also an inclusive, multi-stakeholder forum, it will be important to ensure that its modalities are as open as possible to meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, perhaps using such models as the “issues-based coalition”.**

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

Given the strengthened integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and the call for greater coherence and multi-sectoral approaches, ECOSOC should regain its role of **a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and making recommendations on the agenda items before its consideration**, involving all relevant partners and governments at all levels, such as organizing policy dialogues among different sectors of government, **as well as dialogues between central government and local governments.**

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?

With the principle of “leave no one behind” at its core, the HLPF will pay particular attention to vulnerable groups and countries in special situations. It is important that reporting from these follow-up and reviews on progress, constraints and recommendations for follow-up are also considered by the HLPF.

4. Should the General Assembly provide some guidance to ECOSOC functional

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

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?

Given the focus of the HLPF on integrated follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, including national and thematic reviews (to be further elaborated) and focus on supporting implementation of the SDGs, governing bodies could be put in charge of the thematic reviews of SDGs, within their respective mandates, and report directly to the HLPF when it meets under the auspices of ECOSOC and /or under the auspices of the GA.

In the case of Governing Council of UN-Habitat, the GA could mandate the GC to be in charge of the review of SDG 11, including possibly inter-linkages with other SDGs from the urban perspective, and have this thematic review as a standing item at each session of the Governing Council. As the GC currently meets every two years, this might have to be adjusted and aligned with the 2030 Agenda reporting cycle.

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

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

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?

HLPF thematic reviews of the progress on the SDGs should focus on clusters of closely related SDGs (option i) this will contribute to the creation of more synergy and better interaction of teams working on the indicators. Option (ii), transversal themes, should be a normal *modus operandi* in the review and monitoring of indicators, and, in a certain manner, it will create redundancy in the process. Finally, addressing four SDGs every year is a bit of a random process that is left to a numeric order.

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?

Inputs can take different forms. The HLPF can benefit from inputs at the following levels:

A. Political and institutional level –

- a. Assist in the definition of national targets, connecting to global targets, including specific benchmarks and standards at country level.
- b. Assist in the strengthening and alignment of institutions and policies to respond to SDGs with guidelines and handbooks.
- c. Assist in the definition and reinforcement of ‘means of implementation’, supporting the creation of country implementation plans.
- d. Advise on the mechanisms to integrate national and local planning processes to the SDGs both for implementation and monitoring.
- e. Provide technical advisory services on implementation strategies and the localization of indicators at city/urban level.

B. At the technical and statistical level

- a. Reinforce national statistical systems to produce country reports with coherent mechanisms to integrate disaggregated data.
- b. Assist countries in improving periodicity in the national/local review process

C. At the training and capacity development level

- a. Identify capacity gaps of relevant institutions, partners and stakeholders at national and local levels to monitor SDG indicators.
- b. Assist in the development of strategies of dissemination, including the development of portals and online webpage and systems and the visualization of data and information.

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?

Overarching themes can help to define a long-term vision and to bind together different strands of interest.

1. Some overarching themes can be related to the implementation and monitoring process, for instance, looking for comparability and connecting data to policy formulation or how the international community is learning from the process.
 2. Other overarching themes can be related to means of implementation, for instance:
 - Finance – how goals/indicators are funded in the field of implementation and monitoring. Which are new levels of funding sources?, etc.
 - Integration and participation – how the design of policies and actions and the implementation of indicators is integrating local actions and stakeholders? What is the right level of involvement of other actors, such as academia or private sector?
 - Human rights – to which real extent are human rights integrated?
 3. Other overarching themes can be related to the political situation that is unfolding at different times. Some examples could be forced migration.
 4. Finally, overarching themes could be more conceptual in nature, for instance, the role of the public and the private sectors in the SDGs; the role of the State and enabling policies of implementation; the role of the media.
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?

Themes should be determined every year to allow redefining strategic areas of work, as the implementation process unfolds. This will permit more flexibility and capacity to react to possible constraints and setbacks. This will permit as well more innovation and creativity in the selection of the themes.

Other platforms and actors should make contributions for the definition of these themes to have an open participatory mechanism.

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

They should be complementary.

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

The work of the UNSC should be both at technical and institutional level through training and capacity development programmes. Some areas of interest could be:

- a. Identify capacity gaps of relevant institutions, partners and stakeholders at national and local levels to monitor SDGs indicators.
- b. Provide specialized training and capacity development, including the creation of tools, guidelines and handbooks on data and methods.
- c. Assist in the definition of national targets, connecting to global targets, including specific benchmarks and standards at country level.

Collaboration could also be at the partnership level:

- d. Support national and local governments in the coordination of national/local actors and stakeholders to ensure the process is inclusive and transparent.
- e. Coordinate with the UN system and external partners on leveraging existing statistical programmes and forge partnerships in support of government initiatives.

At the global level, the UNSC could assist in various areas:

1. Coordinate the aggregation of data and information for the global monitoring of SDGs
2. Assist in the preparation of the “Global Sustainable Development Report” and the “Global Thematic Reports” with data and information.
3. Prepare recommendations for data and the use of data and information for policy formulation.

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

- To work with organizations that conduct some forms of prospective analysis and foresight.
- Create *ad hoc* commissions and specific working groups that analyse emerging issues
- Work with group of experts at regional level to consider the inclusions and analysis of new and emerging issues of regional relevance
- Work with communities and local actors to identify emerging issues in real time and with capacities of immediate responses.

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?

There is a need to connect to existing networks and platforms that are working in various thematic areas and integrate them since the beginning of the process. This could include risk analysis organizations, evaluation and monitoring institutions, the use of spatial technology firms, etc.

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?

Strengthened collaboration with ministerial conferences and governing bodies within the inter-agency context has the potential to provide a good channel for exchange of experiences which should feed back into HLPF discussions. The review process may be undertaken on a biennial basis, also taking into account the established practices.

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?

Through regular consultations within peer-review mechanisms and governing bodies such as the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. That should allow for taking account of national priorities that are so crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

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 issues of political dialogue and capacity building at the national (and even local) level, coupled with the lack of funding to impact on the delivery of priority projects and programmes of development by poor countries should always be addressed in national implementation reviews, with a view to strengthening innovative models of cooperation, including South-south and triangular cooperation.

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?

By definition, Guidelines provide a flexible tool to partners to act upon their commitments. They can be adapted to changing situations, and should in no way be binding for them to be attractive. In the context of the SDGs and their related Targets, countries should be encouraged to address country specific issues depending on their priorities for success outcomes and a strong impact.

Presentation of national reviews to the HLPF:

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

Issues specific and thematic reviews should provide building blocks towards developing a global approach to the implementation of the SDGs clustered and regrouped and aligned with national priorities.

19. How can national reviews give adequate attention to the means of implementation? How can they help to mobilize new support and partnerships?

National reviews should always be undertaken in a dynamic approach aligning key components of national strategic plans with their tangible goals, including financing and innovative 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?

Policy recommendations and advisory guidelines that should be followed-up through national reporting and peer-review mechanisms.

IV. Regional reviews and processes

21. How should the outcome of regional review processes be considered at HLPF?

Yes, that should facilitate increasing synergy in the collaboration with regional integration mechanisms, which should finally trickle down to the national level.

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

Through its periodic reports to the HLPF, the UN system should be qualitatively reviewed by the extent to which its coordination ensures policy coherence in the implementation of the SDGs. In the case of UN-Habitat, this primarily means SDG-11, particularly the targets for which it has a clear institutional comparative advantage (e.g., urban and territorial planning, housing and slum upgrading, urban design and public space, and urban basic services and transport) and of which it would be in a strong position to lead coordination. UN-Habitat will also continue to engage in localizing the 2030 Agenda so as to address issues of poverty, inequality, economic growth, climate change and resilience, and ensure implementation of all SDGs at the local level. And it will support the development of urban finance systems as an endogenous source of finance and as part of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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

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.”

First, by supporting the collection of data and testing of new metrics for selected indicators. For UN-Habitat, this will undoubtedly mean geospatial indicators based on satellite imagery (particularly for land use efficiency and proportion of public space) and innovative citizen-driven and crowdsourced data. Second, by submitting periodic reports to the HLPF. In such reports UN entities should go beyond helping coordinate the follow-up and review of the goal(s) and targets for which they have a clear comparative advantage and help cross-coordinate other relevant targets (e.g. environmental impact, DRR, resilience, in the case of UN-Habitat), including those under other goals (e.g. water, energy, employment and infrastructure, for UN-Habitat), and contribute to the monitoring of key cross-cutting areas (e.g. the human settlements-related human rights dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including issues related to forced evictions, tenure security and access to housing for migrants and displaced persons).

VI. Other views and ideas

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