

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?

UNGA, ECOSOC and HLPF should rely more on the governing bodies of specialized agencies in their respective fields of mandate and expertise. This would allow UNGA, ECOSOC and HLPF to focus on global-level and coordination functions of the agenda follow-up and review mechanism. There should be clear delineation of responsibilities between UNGA, ECOSOC and HLPF in order to avoid overlaps and duplications.

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

See 1

ECOSOC should devise a mechanism that captures the outcome of the reviews at national, regional and thematic levels in accordance with the guidance given in the 2030 Agenda on functions and relations. The mechanism should capture all the subtleties and ramifications of the implementation, including its universal, integrated and interrelated nature. ECOSOC should also provide and disseminate guidelines on the methodology for the reviews to ensure a consistent outcome.

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?

Since most of the issues of these conferences are already covered in the SDGs, the follow up and review of these conferences could be subsumed in the main SDG reviews except for unique part of conferences that are not covered by the SDGs which could be captured separately including through periodic reports on thematic follow-up and progress in these countries. .

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?

Yes, UNGA should provide early guidance on the work programme and sessions of the HLPF in order to allow intergovernmental bodies, in particular those outside of NYC, to adequately cover the related themes and issues and report timely to HLPF. Such guidance should be given for the entirety of the four-year cycle at once to improve planning of review activities and technical debate. This should also include the organization of the GSDR as one channel of information to HLPF. Guidance should also be provided on format and how they should reflect their contributions. The format should be such that facilitates the work of HLPF. A major decision should be taken on what kind of synthesis the HLPF will be dealing with. The discussions should be as much substantive as political.

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?

Financing for Development as well as STI need to be addressed by the specialized and thematic reviews on a regular basis, as part of their review of SDG-17. The two forums will be able to benefit from related reports and inputs, based on thematic intergovernmental consultations. (also see 1.)

These two reports could be reviewed as a segment of the HLPF review. They should not be delinked with the SDG review as they form part of the process.

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

⁵ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

[The 2030 Agenda decided the thematic reviews of the HLPF will be supported by the reviews conducted by the functional commissions of ECOSOC⁶ and “other intergovernmental bodies and forums”⁷. These various bodies and forums are mandated to “reflect the integrated nature of the Goals as well as the interlinkages among them”. They “will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into, and be aligned with, the cycle of the HLPF”⁸. The HLPF, when meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC, “shall have a thematic focus reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the activities of the Council and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda”⁹. The thematic focus of the HLPF should allow the HLPF to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The GA decided that ECOSOC will base its annual programme of work on a main theme and defined the characteristics of this annual theme.¹⁰]

6. Should the HLPF thematic reviews of the progress on the SDGs (i) focus on clusters of closely related SDGs or (ii) examine progress in all SDGs based upon on a transversal theme such as gender, health or education or (iii) address four SDGs every year, taken in a numerical order, along with SDG17? If option (ii) is preferred, when and how should the transversal theme be decided upon?

In order to avoid debates on process-related issues, and to avoid misunderstandings as to what exactly should be covered when addressing a “transversal theme”, we would prefer option (ii) or (iii).

Danger with numerical order approach would be that it may be too late to rectify cases of SDGs that are not being well implemented or funded.

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?

These intergovernmental bodies will report on thematic follow-up and review processes on progress towards SDGs. As their governance structure varies widely (and some of them are yet to be fully functional), it would be advisable not to be too prescriptive on the type of input provided to the HLPF during the first few years. It might, however, be advisable to provide a list of guiding principles and “must have” items as well as a template that will make compilation easier for consolidation and synthesis at later stage. After the first

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

full cycle (in 2019), best practices may have emerged and additional guidance may be given on this basis. Input should be presented by the highest representative (chairperson, president or other representative as appropriate in the specific governance structure) of the intergovernmental body, to allow for State-led high-level political exchange at 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?

As one of many possible overarching themes, we propose to address the “role of industry in achieving the 2030 Agenda” or “structural transformation, value addition and economic diversification in achieving the 2030 agenda.

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 for long enough to secure orderly preparation, but without jeopardizing flexibility in addressing fast changing world.

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

Yes, it should be aligned so as to provide a scientific and technology evidence to support policy recommendations that may arise from the thematic reviews

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

The UNSC may wish to consider reviewing the solidity and robustness of the overall indicator framework for the SDGs every four years, for the HLPF session under the auspices of the UNGA. This will allow the review activities to stay in tune with latest data sources, innovative data solutions, and possible new analytical findings.

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

It could be considered to have a dedicated session on emerging issues at each HLPF, covering some recent developments of high immediate relevance. This may particularly include political affairs or scientific breakthroughs that impact negatively (or positively) on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and similar issues.

DESA could be tasked to confer with MS and propose emerging issues every year

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?

Based on established due diligence processes and participation modalities, including in resolution 67/209, non-state actors should feed into the established thematic review mechanisms around the HLPF – also see I. Non-UN international and regional bodies should also feed into the regional and global thematic review activities, based on their specific mandate and expertise. Regional bodies, such as the LAS or ASEAN, may co-sponsor regional review activities, and co-publish related reports.

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?

There should be an interim review after two years. This could be a light review just to ensure that there is a good take off. The system can then identify very quickly fledging problems.

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?

See I. Specialized agencies can support countries within their combined fields of expertise and mandate, covering all SDGs.

Regional commissions should be involved in helping countries within their regions carry out the reviews. This presupposes the existence of some guidelines for review at country and regional 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?

Progress on all SDGs and targets.

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?

We would not advise to create a “two-tier” approach on issues (“core set” vs. “non-core set”) as it may lead to misunderstandings and unnecessary confusion regarding what is core and non-core, which could be seen as “prioritizing the SDGs” (which should not be done as they are an interrelated unity). Guidelines should be provided to ensure comparability of statistical and analytical inputs.

Countries could be encouraged to report consistently on the overarching mandate of poverty eradication

Countries could also be requested to report on 4 goals each year while ensuring that all goals will be reported on within 4 years.

Presentation of national reviews to the HLPF:

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

Reviews could be featured through a dedicated report and an official presentation/debate at the meeting.

Should be consolidated at regional level by Regional Commissions.

19. How can national reviews give adequate attention to the means of

implementation? How can they help to mobilize new support and partnerships?

Reporting on SDG-17 on an annual basis will provide information on the state of the MoIs in a respective country, region, and globally. Based on this information, more resources and partnerships may be mobilized and imbalances may be addressed.

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?

Reviews should address implementation and investment gaps, and result in high-level political decisions to address such gaps.

IV. Regional reviews and processes

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

Reviews could be featured through a dedicated report and an official presentation/debate at the meeting.

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)?

Thematic reviews should follow the UNGA modalities for the participation of major groups in their specialized review activities. As specialized agencies have a natural network of related multi-stakeholders, their involvement in the overall mechanism is highly advisable. See 1.

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

See 22.

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

As part of the decentralized review mechanism of the HLPF, intergovernmental bodies should consider the effectiveness of the UN system in supporting Member States in achieving the SDGs. In this context, gaps and shortcomings may be detected, which can be addressed in a systematic manner at the level of these bodies. Based on these reports, an annual report on mapping UN system efforts to support SDGs may be produced (by UNDESA) and presented at each year's HLPF, in conjunction with the global progress report on the SDGs.

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

The UN system should do every effort in supporting a clearly State-led, intergovernmental follow-up and review mechanism, based on a decentralized and flexible architecture, building on specialized bodies and their natural multi-stakeholder settings. By proposing tools, mechanism, platforms that help track progress in achieving SDGs, monitor gaps in implementation, identify successful and evidence based practices that could be replicated.

The UN system should also be tracking the overarching goal of poverty eradication as well as the issue of inequality

The UN system should also play a convening role in ensuring all multi stakeholders stay engaged and for bringing in new partners.

By doing so, Member States will be able to ensure full coherence and effectiveness at all levels, based on the specific inputs and reports received.

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.”