

I. Institutional responsibilities for follow-up and review

Q1. 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?

Overall there was broad agreement that the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the HLPF should all work together in a coherent manner carrying out their respective and clearly defined roles, taking into account their unique institutional characteristics and inform the work of one another. It is clear that the work of both the General Assembly and ECOSOC should reflect the integrated and universal nature of the 2030 Agenda. One country established that, as of now, the environmental dimension is lagging behind in the General Assembly and ECOSOC, which has been mandated to consider the economic and social dimensions. The outcomes of discussions in ECOSOC and the General Assembly should then feed into the HLPF to ensure this mutually reinforcing relationship. In this vein, the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the HLPF could all be aligned in time and substance with meetings scheduled in a logical cycle.

Several countries felt that it would be important to identify and map out the existing ways in which the work of each body is affected and informed by the other to properly establish the relationships among them. The mapping could focus specifically on their sequential roles and functions with relation to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda in an indirect and direct manner. Such an exercise could help to map which SDG targets are already covered in which existing resolutions. This would also allow for an assessment of the division of labor, especially between the General Assembly and ECOSOC to avoid duplication and enhance their cooperation. A few countries expressed concern about the duplication between the two and noted that negotiating resolutions on the same topic in both the General Assembly and ECOSOC was not productive and reinforced the silo approach. Joint sessions of the main committees and ECOSOC and the clustering of agenda items could be arranged as appropriate to ensure an integrated approach.

Member States reiterated the importance of the General Assembly with its universal body comprising all members of the United Nations and with its norm setting role. The General Assembly should thus provide high-level political and operational guidance, mobilize action at the highest possible level and generate political ownership on the 2030 Agenda and its implementation. Its main role is to keep the level of political ambition high. It should thus have an overarching and coordinating role in the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, especially when the HLPF takes place under the auspices of the General Assembly every four years. Its working methods have to evolve to reflect the new sustainable development priorities while also taking into account that the agenda of the General Assembly is broader than that of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the concrete steps the General Assembly could undertake is to reconsider the number of reviewed resolutions to avoid an overburdening and duplication and to increase the visibility and impact of each. Existing reports and agenda items

could be aligned with the 2030 Agenda so that their main messages can feed into the HLPF. An action-oriented plenary would then also allow more time for substantive decision making and decision-making at the highest level. At the same time, there should also be a clear division of labor between the two in the reporting of funds and programmes to both of them.

Moreover, there is a need to adjust the working methods and agendas of all the Committees, not only the Second or Third Committee, to align with the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up and review. For example, the Fifth Committee could focus on how the human and financial resources of the United Nations will be used to implement the guidance that emerges from the other Committees. Other Committees could review the inputs that emanate from their sessions and filter the most relevant to the HLPF. They should take the four-year cycle of the HLPF into account and could, as one country suggested, focus their work on the themes of the HLPF as appropriate. Since not all of the Committees' agenda items link to the 2030 Agenda these also have to be respected.

Member States focused particularly on the Second Committee which should be more integrated to reflect the 2030 Agenda. Currently, many Second Committee resolutions are similar to ECOSOC resolutions. Some countries felt that this blurring of mandates is not helpful for clarity in relation to policy, process or implementation. They suggested to rebrand the Second Committee in line with the 2030 Agenda, as has already been proposed in the debate on its working methods, to reorganize, revisit intra-Committee clustering avoiding a silo approach and reduce the number of resolutions, for example by consolidating duplicating resolutions at issue or item level, eliminating duplications between General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions and assessing the frequency of resolutions. To reduce the duplication of resolutions one country recommended that ECOSOC resolutions should focus predominantly on procedural aspects to allow it to accomplish its task of coordinating its subsidiary bodies.

ECOSOC was generally considered to have a more technical role in managing and coordinating the work of its Functional Commissions and Regional Commissions to ensure system-wide coherence and maintaining the connection to the key Bretton Woods Institutions. It is involved in policy review and implementation and coordination and has an oversight function which can help to ensure that all its bodies address the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner and foster its implementation. One country said that moreover, ECOSOC can foster dialogue and recommendations for sustainable development. The Council is also home to the Development Cooperation Forum which can add value if it produced more practical outcomes. A few countries felt that ECOSOC can be useful in facilitating detailed discussions of pending issues and collecting various views since it has a more flexible theme and it allows for the participation of various stakeholders.

The HLPF should be the central multi-stakeholder platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, for political guidance on sustainable development and to identify and address emerging issues. Discussions at the HLPF should be based on the inputs from the national and regional reviews as well as those emanating from the ECOSOC system, i.e. its functional commissions, subsidiary bodies and segments. Given the limited number of days allocated to the HLPF, these inputs should play a crucial role. The GSDR would serve as the science-policy interface that informs the overall discussions. Annual meetings to be held under ECOSOC that produce a ministerial declaration will feed into the quadrennial HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly which will

produce a concise political declaration. Both allow for substantive guidance and the high-level meetings provide a further impetus for timely action on sustainable development challenges.

Q2. Given its Charter and other mandates, how can ECOSOC help ensure that global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is coherent?

ECOSOC has a role to play in bringing the various functional committees and regional commissions together. It serves as the focal points for the UN Development System (UNDS). As such, it can help to set the broad UNDS agenda and programme of work around the 2030 Agenda to ensure that its substantive bodies are arranged around the 2030 Agenda and to help avoid duplication within the UNDS. For instance the ECOSOC Coordination and Management and/or its Operational Activities for Development segment could play a more effective coordinating role and review how UNDS is supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and how policy integration can be effectively pursued across the UNDS. In this context, the ongoing discussion on the long-term positioning of the UN development system (which is a first step to the QCPR resolution) is particularly important.

There was some divergence on the specific role ECOSOC should play in the follow-up and review. Some countries felt that it can take a very active role in undertaking studies, producing reports and providing recommendations to collect replicable good practices and explore emerging issues. They suggested that it should inform and enforce General Assembly mandates while preparing and following-up on the HLPF. ECOSOC could also help to ensure that the agendas of the countries in special situations are duly reflected in the review process. One response noted that the high-level segment of ECOSOC and the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC should be held as one meeting to ensure coherent global follow-up. Others saw the Council's role more as that of a coordinator and an interface with platforms inside and outside of the UN-system, bringing them together to solicit relevant information from them and feed them into the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda. The functional commissions in particular should support the thematic reviews. One country suggested conducting a stocktaking of ECOSOC's work to examine the roles of the different segments and platforms to see where the Council can best contribute to the follow-up and review.

The Council will also play a central role in the preparation of the HLPF under its auspices. ECOSOC should conduct a consultative process that includes all member States and relevant other stakeholders in a transparent and predictable manner to prepare for the HLPF, including the definition of sub-themes and the composition of the HLPF's segments, panels and invitees. One member States suggested hosting forums and meetings that are similar to the HLPF in advance of the HLPF to increase coherence of the review processes.

Member States also provided their views on the role of ECOSOC and means of implementation and partnerships. ECOSOC should feed the outcomes of the Financing for Development (FfD) follow-up into the HLPF. The role of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) should be reviewed so that it is consistent with the HLPF and can ensure coherence and integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The DCF can still be used to promote greater coherence among the activities of different development partners, as well as policy integration and review trends in international development cooperation. In

this context it was suggested that the following could be done: (i) review the cycle of the DCF for its main meeting to take place before the HLPF high level meeting; (ii) consider whether the main meeting of the DCF could be integrated in the high level meeting of the HLPF. The role of the Partnership Forum and its relation with regards to the HLPF Partnership Platform needs further clarification and reflection. The Partnership Forum could serve as a platform for the follow-up and review of partnerships, including the contribution and knowledge-sharing of stakeholders. As stated in the Chair's summary of the 2015 HLPF the "HLPF could review the contribution of partnerships, sharing experiences and success conditions; and developing appropriate criteria or frameworks for partnerships".

A number of member States favoured a similar theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF. Some suggested that the Council's annual theme should provide guidance to the work of its entire system. Some countries therefore felt that it would be good that this theme would also inform the HLPF to avoid a silo approach and to follow-up to the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner. One member State felt that ECOSOC may need to align its own agenda and programme of work with other UN bodies engaged in the process of follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Adjustments in its calendar of work might also be needed so that it covers all goals.

Q3. 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)¹?

Due to the focus of the 2030 Agenda, there are already strong linkages between the SDGs and the respective processes and plans of action. Some countries expressed concern that there were currently no provisions for middle-income countries and asked for a specific sessions on them. Overall, countries suggested four main ways in which the follow-up and review arrangements with regards to LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs could be most effectively linked to the HLPF.

First of all, the HLPF should allocate adequate time to discuss the progress achieved and remaining challenges of these countries in special situations, taking into account the reports of progress in the implementation of the plan of action for such categories. This could take the form of dedicated sessions, presentations by the incumbent chairs, interactive dialogues or discussions on the challenges of each grouping allowing for spaces to share good practices. They should also be incorporated in the ministerial declaration. One country felt such dedicated sessions would not be required every year, since the Second Committee already follows-up on these country groups. There was also some concern about avoiding an overburdening of the HLPF agenda. Several SIDS felt that SIDS and follow-up and review of the Samoa Pathway must be a fixed item on the HLPF's annual agenda to transform the HLPF into the Forum that will help achieve the Samoa Pathway. Another suggestion was for the 2016 HLPF to draw on the Mid-Term Review of the Istanbul Plan of Action. Secondly, the thematic reviews could devote a dedicated space to countries in special situations. For example, any commitments or thematic cluster

¹ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 82

contained in the Samoa Pathway that links to the specific theme could be given due consideration.

The third suggestion is that the HLPF's work as well as the FfD Forum and the STI Forum on follow-up to the MoI and partnerships could also be linked to the strategies and programmes of actions which also consider MoI and specifically to the 'MoI including partnerships' section of the Samoa Pathway. Fourth and last, the outcomes of the processes for each plan of action could feed into the preparations for the HLPF, for example through the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). The GSDR could reflect findings from annual reports on the progress made in the implementation of the programmes of action for LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs. Progress towards them should also be reflected in the annual SDG progress report by examining data against the 2030 Agenda indicators for countries in special situations and comparing these to global trends. There is significant scope for collecting one set of data that can be used for measuring progress on both the SDGs and group-specific programmes of action. Harmonizing the reporting for both would also help to reduce the reporting burden of countries in special situations.

Some SIDS said such a broad approach would allow both the mainstreaming of SIDS's perspectives as well as devoted time to the follow-up and review of the Samoa Pathway. But on the other hand, there was also some concern that despite the clear linkages, the Samoa Pathway was distinct from the 2030 Agenda and should not be subsumed under it.

Q4: 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?

Member States had different views on this question. On one hand, some countries felt that the General Assembly should clearly provide guidance to ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums to consider the compliance of member countries to the 2030 Agenda in extending their future assistance. They felt that the UN should be guiding the work of the UN system in institutionalizing the SDGs as decided by member States. On the other hand, a set of countries did not support this proposal. They felt that ECOSOC should provide guidance to its own functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies. The General Assembly and ECOSOC are two main organs of the UN with independent mandates, meaning that the General Assembly should not overreach its mandate and interfere with the Council. Moreover, a few countries added that there are on-going dedicated processes in the functional commissions to reflect on their own methods of work in order to identify the best ways to contribute to the HLPF. Similarly, some also felt that functional commissions should not modify their core business to adapt to the SDGs but should rather find positive synergies and interfaces.

Between these two views, some countries suggested compromises or different ways in which the General Assembly could provide guidance to ECOSOC. The General Assembly could set broad guiding criteria to determine global architecture for organizational purpose on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

and provide political guidance. It could give recommendations to ECOSOC and its commissions and bodies to integrate the SDGs into their work programmes and identify priorities but would not need to provide detailed guidance. ECOSOC would define the technical details on functional matters, shared responsibilities, alignment and coordination, and organization of work and cycle. Alternatively, the guidance could take the form of manuals, guidebooks, workshops and seminars and the General Assembly could run an experience exchange program to create a platform where agencies will share their best practices. In its resolution, the General Assembly could provide periodic guidance to ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums on the broad parameters of ensuring a coherent, efficient and inclusive review of the SDGs to inform and support the HLPF. This guidance would have to be defined on a case by case basis though. Another country noted that such guidance would only be necessary if the current mandates were not clear in relation to the link of the functional commissions to the 2030 Agenda.

With a specific focus on the HLPF, one member State felt that the General Assembly still had a crucial role in shaping the architecture of the overall integrated review and should ensure that the HLPF is clearly mandated to fulfill the central role in overseeing follow-up and review covering the full thematic breadth of the SDGs. Hence the President of ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly should work closely together on this. More specifically, another Member State suggested that the General Assembly could encourage intergovernmental bodies and forums to align their working cycle with the HLPF preparatory process. One country suggested that guidance on the reviews should actually come directly from the HLPF rather than the General Assembly.

Q5. 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?

To ensure coherence, the FfD Forum should draw from the indicators for SDG 17 and the MoI targets which can then be complemented with specific AAAA indicators. It could also develop specific action points on financing with respect to the implementation of the SDGs. Both the FfD Forum and the STI Forum should be designed in a way that can generate useful outputs for the HLPF. Based on these, the HLPF could then consider financing issues in the context of overall progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF should include a discussion of how financial and non-financial MoI are supporting progress and where improvements could be made.

In a practical sense, member States provided several options. Findings and recommendations from the STI and the FfD Forum could feed into the HLPF by either inviting relevant persons to speak or by including them in one of the reports to the HLPF, especially the GSDR. One option would also be to include them into the thematic reviews. They could also both be reflected as specific agenda items that include presentations from the incumbent Co-Chairs (and in the case of the STI Forum also from members of the 10-member multi-stakeholder group) as well as an assessment of progress, challenges and lessons learned to allow for interactive discussions with high-level national representatives. The results of the Forum could also be presented the day before the HLPF

meets so that the HLPF can offer recommendations and guidance on next steps. Other relevant fora such as the DCF and the Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank should also contribute to this discussion based on their respective mandates. Either way, the HLPF should reflect the outcomes of both fora in its ministerial declaration. Furthermore, all of these proposals require close cooperation, complementarity and work between and within the respective Secretariats. Member States should be made aware of how they can interact with the HLPF in relation to these two For a.

With respect to the specific case of SIDS, their participation in the agenda setting of the FfD Forum should be ensured since many of them are not represented in ECOSOC. Moreover, the FfD Forum and the STI Forum should both include a specific focus on SIDS.

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

Q6. 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 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?

Different countries favored different options or a combination of different approaches. Overall a consensus on some key aspects of the thematic reviews emerged as well as a discussion of the pros and cons of each approach.

One of the major general recommendations was the need to avoid a silo approach in thematic reviews. This could be done in many ways. For example, themes should not be approached through a single SDG but also through related targets under other SDGs. The selection of themes should reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development. Moreover, it should also not prioritize one goal over others.

There was also broad agreement that not all the SDGs would have to be reviewed every year since that was virtually impossible and would not allow sufficient time to discuss each goal in detail. Rather, it should just be ensured that all SDGs are reviewed as a whole over the course of the HLPF cycle. A well-planned program of work can ensure that every theme/subject is covered in a comprehensive manner. Only one country suggested that all SDGs and crosscutting issues should be reviewed annually to avoid any prejudices towards one specific area. Another country noted that every goal must be reviewed in its own right as well as in its relation to other goals and also with a focus on its Mol targets.

When deciding on the theme, some countries felt that it must not be limited to one per year. Several countries also expressed support for aligning the thematic reviews and the theme with that of ECOSOC. A specific focus for the thematic reviews should be decided at least two years in advance to ensure proper preparation of the review.

Among the general comments, some countries also expressed a need for thematic reviews to focus on the needs of countries in special situations and also include different regional perspectives. Some of the themes that should be integrated into all of the thematic reviews are human rights, gender, governance, population dynamics and/or means of implementation. Factors to be considered when designing the thematic reviews are how they can fit into the overall follow-up and review process without causing duplication and how they can be flexible enough to consider priority and emerging issues. Given that the HLPF itself has no specific expertise, the contributions of dedicated intergovernmental fora and bodies are essential. However, the thematic reviews should not simply repeat their work.

Approach 1 was considered to foster an integrated approach by identifying issues across a group of interrelated areas or where there are trade-offs to be considered. For this approach, some countries suggested that the five P's could be selected as the overarching themes. Alternatively, clusters could be based on one goal and then look at its mutual relationship with all other goals. Clusters should be decided upon after consulting all member States based on a predetermined set of criteria for clustering the goals. The clustering could also take place around existing UN conferences and processes. Some countries however also felt that this option might lead to a silo approach.

With approach 2 a few countries felt that it would be difficult to determine the transversal theme. One country suggested that the themes could be decided by the ECOSOC bureau in consultation with regional groups. On the other hand, having a transversal theme might allow for an easier identification of new and emerging issues. Potential transversal themes should be cross-cutting, for example data or leaving no one behind. However, there was also some concern that it would be too cumbersome to manage given the different dimensions and cross-cutting themes. This option might also make it difficult to clearly review all SDGs.

Most countries expressed concern about approach 3 saying it would reinforce the silo approach. However, one country felt that approach 3 would allow for a less cumbersome selection of thematic reviews to avoid complex negotiations. This could be done by either going in a numerical order or by random selection to avoid possible silos. If this approach is chosen, goals should not be looked at goal by goal but an integrated approach should be applied. A mapping exercise could help to identify the interlinkages between them.

An alternative option presented by countries was clustering the SDGs into the three dimensions which could then be supported by thematic reviews. However, this might lead to a loss of the strong interlinkages between the SDGs. One country suggested to first come up with clusters for themes covering all three dimensions of sustainable development and to then choose at least one goal from within a cluster for annual review. Annual reviews should be disaggregated by population dynamics, gender and other cross-cutting issues.

Either way, several member States suggested assessing the approach they chose after the first cycle to make any needed improvements in light of the

lessons learned and experiences so far.

Q7. 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?

Follow-up and review should be based on existing structures and mechanisms which could produce technical, analytical or political inputs. The inputs produced for deliberations in these bodies should feed into the GSDR and the SDG progress report as well as the thematic reviews. Political discussions conducted in these spaces could also provide political guidance that the HLPF could reflect in its ministerial declaration.

To this end, most member States believe that functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies have to make provisions in their work for the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, there were also some that expressed concern about creating an unnecessary and additional burden for these bodies and therefore calling on the bodies to avoid coming up with separate inputs to the HLPF. They should just focus on their specific mandates. Instead, the HLPF could be called upon to align its work with existing processes. As an in-between option, the starting point should be existing mechanisms and reporting lines to avoid creating new reporting structures. The submitted inputs could be submitted to ECOSOC and then referred to the HLPF. To avoid an overburdening, functional commissions should also only be called upon when their work is directly related to the specific theme of the HLPF. One country suggested that the specialized agencies liaise directly with the respective line ministries.

In practice, there are several options for including these inputs. For example, the authors or co-chairs could be invited to participate in specific sessions at the HLPF. Their reports could include dedicated chapters on how progress made relates to specific SDGs and targets. They could also provide short and concise briefs outlining any relevant negotiated outcomes or any major analytical findings. The two-pagers prepared for each chapter of the 2015 GSDR were a good example. General guidelines on some common criteria like the maximum page number and the need for succinct key lessons could be designed. These would leave sufficient room for flexibility to relay main messages and recommendations as appropriate, while following a basic common format for reporting. UN bodies could also compile their inputs into a UN-system report to the HLPF on that specific matter. Keeping inputs concise and avoiding overburdening the HLPF and its participants with information is a major concern.

Any inputs to the HLPF should be made available in time to ensure their full inclusion. A roadmap and a timeline for all inputs to be issues would be helpful in this regard.

Q8. 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?

Member States outlined several options for potential themes. Themes could for example focus on priority areas for developing countries, including LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs. They could also be based on the 5 P's or be based on the prioritized clusters for example. Themes could also be cross-cutting with a broad focus such as health, gender, economic growth or the environment – always with the intention of seeking to highlight the interlinkages. All of the themes should integrate considerations of the MoI. Either way, the theme must have universal relevance so that all countries can engage.

The agenda for each meeting of the HLPF should include a segment to allow for discussions on 'new and emerging issues', the focus of which could be decided via a decision during the previous session. This would allow for a greater degree of flexibility to be built into the agenda.

Overall, there was broad agreement that the HLPF meetings under the auspices of ECOSOC should have either the same or similar theme as ECOSOC and should also be linked to the thematic reviews. A proliferation of different themes may only be confusing. While the HLPF theme should focus on substantive issues, the ECOSOC theme could focus on the corresponding operational arrangements for the UNDS. As such, the ECOSOC President may have an important role in establishing the annual theme. Beyond a similar theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF, the themes could also inform the themes of the entire UNDS, including the work carried out by the Executive Boards of UN specialized agencies. This would ensure greater consistency throughout the entire UN system.

Themes for the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly should be more political and globally relevant. Alternatively, when meeting under the auspices of the General Assembly, the HLPF should not have a theme but rather focus on reviews of progress at a more global, strategic and political level, including emerging global issues that would be most appropriate for world leaders. The Hos and HoG would then be in a position to give political impetus for the next cycle.

Q9. 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?

There were different views on how long in advance the themes should be known. Each of these has different consequences in terms of how much flexibility should be maintained by keeping the theme broader or narrowing it down. They also would have to be decided in different UN fora, i.e. some options would mean that themes are decided at the HLPF or alternatively in ECOSOC or the General Assembly.

Longer-term planning on the themes would make it easier for countries with fewer capacities to plan ahead and to participate in the HLPF sessions. It would

also allow for sufficient planning for all stakeholders and give functional commissions and other bodies enough time to prepare their inputs and plan their respective sessions. However, this might not allow enough flexibility to include emerging issues. Putting aside one agenda item for emerging issues would help to overcome this issue.

Some Member States favored knowing the themes in advance for each cycle and to decide on them through a General Assembly resolution. This would allow for sufficient planning, reduce the cost and time of deciding on them and could also be aligned with the QCPR cycle. Maintaining a high level of flexibility would allow for the inclusion of emerging issues.

One country said that the suggested themes appear to be broad enough so that they can be prepared and sequenced for the full 15 years of the agenda. That means they can be known and planned for at the outset which will maximize the opportunity for scheduling/sequencing/prioritization of analysis and input by other platforms and actors to best effect. Emerging issues could still be included in light of the broad thematic focus.

An alternative option would be to determine the themes for every two/three years so that functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies, forums and segments can align their work and substantive focus. There was concern that more than two year in advance could hamper the capacity of the ECOSOC system and HLPF under its auspices to respond to emerging trends and challenges.

If the HLPF theme should be decided annually, this could be done through the Ministerial Declaration. However this also brings with it the danger of spending too much time to decide on the theme. On the other hand, it will allow the HLPF review process to remain highly flexible.

The shortest proposed time-frame was to know the theme at least six months in advance.

Member States put forward a variety of options of how the themes should be decided upon. Ideally, they would be linked to high-level events taking place in that specific year. The Secretary-General could make recommendations on the themes for this current first cycle. The process of determining the themes must be open, accessible, transparent and take into account the needs of small missions.

Q10. Should the multi-stakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation address the same theme as the HLPF?

There were some differing views on the need and feasibility for this.

Some felt that, in line with their previous answers, all relevant fora and actors should follow the same theme for overall coherence. Since the STI Forum will

feed into the HLPF, having an aligned theme would allow for greater coherence and synergies between the two so that the discussions at the STI Forum are more relevant for the HLPF. Even if the same theme is chosen, this should not restrain the STI Forum to discussions only under this theme.

On the other hand, some said that the STI Forum will focus on more technical issues than the HLPF. As such the themes do not need to – and may not even be able to – be aligned. Having a different theme would also ensure that the STI Forum is treated separately and generates enough visibility for STI. Instead, the ECOSOC Functional Commission on Science and Technology for Development could have the same theme.

It might also be too early to answer this question yet, since the missions of the STI Forum are not yet fully defined.

Q11. How should the United Nations Statistical Commission best contribute to the work of HLPF?

Member States outlined three major responsibilities for the Statistical Commission. First of all, the Statistical Commission, either directly or through the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators, should maintain oversight of indicators and the monitoring process and should be actively looking for harmonization, rationalization and simplification across the various monitoring processes and the statistical work of the UN. It could also assist with the development of appropriate reporting and dissemination tools and to support the central role of the national statistical offices in. In this sense, it could also review indicators periodically to update them as new data becomes available or better methodologies are developed. Its chair could present an annual assessment of the global indicators framework.

Secondly, the Statistical Commission will have a role to play in generating the data and providing technical guidance on inputs for the annual SDG report and other reporting. Its work can also inform the GSDR. Specifically the UN Statistical Commission has a role to play in reporting on issues such as assessing the quality of the available data, the establishment of baselines and highlighting data gaps. Qualitative assessments and special surveys might also be used for monitoring as well. This process should be designed at all levels in a coherent way so that global, regional and national monitoring and evaluation processes would nourish each other. One country suggested that the UN Statistical Commission could operate as a coordination body that received and elaborates regional and national statistical inputs.

As a third contribution, the Statistical Commission could identify, mobilize and direct capacity building efforts for countries and regions which are struggling to meet Agenda 2030 data and reporting expectations. In this sense, the UNSC could also serve as a coordination unit to inform on statistical capacity building activities directed to developing countries (to gather information on what partners, donors, agencies or other stakeholders are doing on statistical capacity building, and assure that every country is well covered). An annual report by the Commission may report on capacity building efforts.

The inputs from the Statistical Commission could be included in a specific slot on the HLPF agenda. Such an exchange would give member States the opportunity to engage with the Commission on new developments, what is working or not in terms of data collection and receive updates on and quality assessments of the Indicator Framework and the list of the global indicators, among others.

Q12. What arrangements would be needed to allow the HLPF to identify and consider new and emerging issues?

Member States outlined several ways in which the HLPF can identify and consider new and emerging issues. To be considered, an issue must be time-sensitive and urgent.

Many countries felt that the GSDR should help to identify emerging issues which can then be discussed at the HLPF. The scientific community will be critical in identifying emerging issues. The thematic reviews might also point to particular emerging issues through the specific committees or fora. Alternatively, the Regional reviews might help to unearth global and region-specific emerging challenges. Working closely with other stakeholders will enable them to bring specific emerging issues to the HLPF. One option would also be to have member States, especially LDCs, SIDS and LDCs, suggest emerging issues. The overall indicator framework and its baseline will also help to quickly see emerging issues or the SDG progress report which will be based on the global indicator framework.

The ECOSOC President could then decide – after inclusive consultations – which emerging issue(s) should be dealt with at the HLPF. The President of the General Assembly may do the same when the HLPF meets under the auspices of the General Assembly. Coordination meetings of ECOSOC provide good opportunities for taking decisions on adding new and emergency issues to the agenda of the HLPF. During the HLPF, a stand-alone agenda item on emerging issues would allow for a reflection on them.

Q13. 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?

The HLPF modalities are among the most inclusive ones, therefore, the participation of other actors and international institutions outside the UN should be ensured. They can provide meaningful additional inputs and help to create a global network of experts that can foster achievement of the goals. Different options of how to do so are put forward by Member States.

Representatives from these platforms could be invited to participate as speakers and panellists in the HLPF sessions.

The platforms could also submit reports to the HLPF. For example, the HLPF could set up a website for reports, summaries and analyses from other platforms. These could be organised by organisation, theme, year and/or goal area to allow easy access for all. Another way is through the GSDR which should draw on technical, scientific and academic inputs.

At the same time, these platforms and processes should also be committed to the 2030 Agenda and the HLPF. They should integrate the SDGs into their strategies, planning and budgets. They could consider the adoption of specific mechanisms for streamlined contribution to the HLPF. Platforms should also foster communication and cooperation among themselves to provide more concise contributions. For these various stakeholders too, a common format for reporting could be envisaged. Possibly, their reports could be brought together in a single report compiling stakeholder input (with length restrictions) to be discussed at the HLPF.

II. HLPF National Reviews of implementation

Preparation and conduct of national reviews

Q14. 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?

While member States agreed that all countries should aim to contribute to the national reviews at the HLPF, their opinions differed widely regarding the periodicity of such reviews. Some member States noted that given the voluntary nature of the national reviews, no minimum number of reviews should be set. Other member States wished to see a certain number of national reviews take place and their opinion ranged from at least once or twice to three times, four times or five times during the 15 years. One country even suggested that follow-up reviews should be conducted every two years. The need for equal geographic representation was mentioned. Concerns were raised, among others, about how to achieve a useful presentation of national reviews at the HLPF and about the possible overburdening of and necessary support required by developing countries.

Q15. 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?

Several member States noted that the preparatory process should take place at the regional level through which a consolidated summary of national reviews

would be channelled to the HLPF. The use of regional fora organized by the regional commissions was hereby cited as an option. One country mentioned that national reviews should at the same time represent an input to the Global Sustainable Development Report. Other member States merely mentioned the need for a preparatory meeting prior to the HLPF in order to identify lessons learned, challenges and gaps. One country underscored that recommendations should not be prescriptive but rather aim at assisting countries in their pursuit of sustainable development in line with their national strategies and plans.

Some Member States mentioned the need for guidelines to support the structuring of the actual presentation at the HLPF. Bilateral cooperation mechanisms and the UN system, including the UN country teams and regional commissions, could support countries in preparing their national reviews for presentation at the HLPF. Existing mechanisms should be used as much as possible to avoid an overburdening. The need for financial support for developing countries to participate in meetings of the HLPF was also raised.

Voluntary common reporting guidelines

Q16. 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?

Member States enumerated a number of issues they would want the HLPF to address systematically when it examines national implementation reviews – some were of a broader nature such as poverty and hunger and leaving no one behind and some of a more cross-cutting nature such as gender equality, human rights and means of implementation. Other issues mentioned were progress made with regard to all SDGs, successes and best practices, gaps and challenges, areas requiring support and emerging trends. One country suggested that the HLPF would focus on the most transformative issue that could yield significant impact in the respective country.

Some member States also listed the possible follow-up to HLPF recommendations. The importance of transparency and the inclusion of non-State actors in the review process were highlighted. A few countries mentioned the need to link national reviews to reporting on the SAMOA Pathway. One member State cautioned that some countries might only be able to report on some issues to a certain extent (e.g. landlocked countries on ocean-related goals).

Several member States noted that the guidelines should not entice prioritization or reinterpretation of the substantive balance of the SDGs. Numerous countries mentioned the role of national indicators for national reviews.

Q17. 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?

Many member States mentioned that the guidelines should not be too prescriptive or go into too much detail, since the national reviews were voluntary. National reviews were to take into consideration national priorities and capacities. Other Member States noted that a core set of issues was necessary to ensure comparability. Some elements in the guidelines were however to remain optional. Several countries mentioned that the guidelines should be established in consultation with member States.

Q18. How should the country reviews be featured and discussed at the formal HLPF meeting?

Several member States noted that discussions on national reviews at the HLPF should have an action-oriented agenda, be interactive and dynamic and encourage the sharing of knowledge and best practices as well as the identification of resource needs and cooperation opportunities. Many member States highlighted that the national reviews at the HLPF should not consist of a list of countries elaborating on their experience in implementing the Agenda, but that they should rather focus on identifying lessons learned and best practices, challenges, emerging trends and areas requiring support to enable peer learning. The outcome of the national reviews was to be presented at the HLPF in an aggregated manner (e.g. by region or group of countries).

Several member States mentioned the need to identify countries with the most compelling stories to tell in this regard, which could then be invited to make a presentation at the HLPF. Interventions from major groups and other stakeholders were seen as being important.

Q19. How can national reviews give adequate attention to the means of implementation? How can they help to mobilize new support and partnerships?

Many member States indicated that national reviews could on the one hand elaborate on (successful) national MoI strategies, including the amount of national and international resources made available for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but should also enable the identification of gaps and challenges and areas requiring support, which would gain visibility by being presented at the HLPF thus enabling the possible mobilization of new support and partnerships. Some member States mentioned that the HLPF could act as “matchmaking platform” for partnerships and other forms of support. The link to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Forum on Financing For Development was underlined.

Q20. What kind of outcome should result from the HLPF national reviews of implementation, and how could there be a follow-up to these reviews?

Several member States emphasized that given the voluntary nature of national reviews no outcome and/or follow-up process were required and that it was up to countries to determine how to take into account the discussions on the national reviews. Other member States indicated that the discussions on national reviews, including recommendations, should be captured in an outcome document (e.g. chair's summary or ministerial declaration) and highlighted the need for a follow-up process (e.g. addressing of past HLPF recommendations in future national reviews).

III. Regional reviews and processes

Q21. How should the outcome of regional review processes be considered at HLPF?

There was overall agreement that the regional level can add value to the HLPF as a complement to national and global reviews. One way of doing so is by allowing countries to discuss regional priorities and issues in more detail in order to develop a richer understanding of regional progress that would help to strengthen and target action. Regional reviews are also essential to tackle transboundary issues such as water. Lastly, they offer a space for peer reviews among countries in one region to exchange best practices.

Regional reviews could be fed into the HLPF in several ways, either by dedicating special sessions at the HLPF to a regional exchange and dialogue or by reflecting on the regional inputs in the annual SDG progress report and the GSDR. The thematic reviews could engage key regional experts and showcase regional examples. One country suggested that the HLPF should provide a synthesis of the general trends and needs in one region.

In practice, an overburdening has to be avoided and the HLPF should consider existing platforms inside and outside of the UN-system and build on what exists. It is also important to respect the different nature of the regions which would make it difficult to achieve a common form of reporting or allow for comparisons. Neither should be expected.

One country felt that the HLPF should not spend too much time on the regional level but rather focus more on countries in special situations.

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

Q22. 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 has already been mandated to include other stakeholders and major groups in the follow-up and review process and it must now fulfill these stipulations. In doing so, the HLPF should be inspired by the inclusive post-2015 negotiations and the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD). Some outlined a need to inform all stakeholders of the opportunities to engage with the review process and to ensure that local actors are also included, for example micro, small and medium and enterprises. A survey could be conducted among all other stakeholders to see where they feel they can engage.

At the national level, all relevant stakeholders and major groups should be able to contribute to the national reporting efforts. Countries should encourage them to engage with them in the consultations for national and regional reviews. At the same time, governments are encouraged to publish short-term, medium-term and long-term development plans to which all other actors can align their work.

Inspired by the CSD, representatives from major groups and all other relevant stakeholders should be invited to speak at the HLPF when they have conducted analysis of the specific thematic focus. Representatives should be invited to attend meetings, have access to information and documents, intervene in official meetings, submit documents, make oral contributions and organize side events. A civil society forum could be held during the HLPF for example. The SDG progress report and, especially, the GSDR should also include their views.

Q23. 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? 2

Major groups and other stakeholders can participate in the HLPF in various ways. Some countries want them to be engaged throughout the entire process of national, regional and global reviews. At the national level, major groups and other stakeholders should liaise with national governments and inter-ministerial committees on a regular basis. To avoid an overburdening, groups and stakeholders in each country should be identified to facilitate their contributions and channel their ideas through relevant institutions.

² 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.”

Representatives from major groups and other actors could be invited to participate in the HLPF either during the national and regional review sessions to enable them to present their reports and allow for exchange or more specifically, a half-day meeting during the main programme could be devoted to their work or morning sessions similar to those during the post-2015 negotiations could be organized. They could also be invited to participate in the partnerships dialogues or during thematic review. Their reports could be posted on the HLPF website as inputs to the HLPF and this online platform could also consolidate the contributions and inputs from all. A standardized reporting template allows them to report on their work related to the implementation of the agenda and analysis of these reports. Existing processes for all of these options should be used as much as possible, for example sustainability reporting by the private sector.

One member State voiced concern that the existing major groups modalities are not broad enough.

Q24. How should UN system contribution to the implementation of 2030 Agenda be reviewed?

Member States made it clear that every UN entity should make every effort possible to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. No agency should have sole ownership of one goal or a set of goals and they should also focus on the cross-cutting issues to ensure coherent and integrated implementation and follow-up and review to the SDGs. The UN system might start with an assessment of its work and design a clear roadmap or strategic plan for the UN development system outlining the work of different agencies and their mandates to redefine them as needed. Such a roadmap or strategic plan could be four years long and be reviewed in each meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly. This will help to make the UN fit for purpose and design a reinforced and well-coordinated UN development system.

There were different views on how the contribution of the UN system could be reviewed. One option is for it to be part of the annual oversight. Another option would be that the UN system contribution is reflected in the reports informing national, regional and thematic reviews as well as those looking at the global level. Respective senior-officials could then present the contribution of their agencies, funds and programs at the corresponding sessions in the HLPF. These reports could be combined in an overarching report by the representative body of a given platform. In addition, member States and potentially even UN country teams could submit their assessments to the review of UN contributions. The HLPF could also be linked to inter-agency coordination processes within the UN system. Alternatively, the HLPF should not focus on reviewing the UN system's support. Existing mechanisms should be used for this, such as the QCPR or OIOS and the individual strategic plans and frameworks of all agencies, funds and programmes as well as their annual reports. The reports could include an assessment of the respective contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Q25. What steps can the UN system, including the Secretariat take to best support follow-up and review in a coherent and effective manner?

The responses by member States for this answer can be divided into a number of different categories covering various aspects of the work of the UN system and the Secretariat. Crucial to all the steps that the UN system takes will be the need to avoid a silo approach and any competition within the system. The UN has to deliver as one, especially at the country level. To create a coherent system, the fit for purpose discussions could be opened up to member States and be aligned with the mid-term reviews of strategic plans of the funds and programmes and the ECOSOC dialogues on the longer term positioning of the UN development system which are held to inform the 2016 QCPR. Standardized reporting or templates would allow for a comparison of how each element of the UN system is supporting implementation efforts and to allow for a smarter distribution of labor. In this sense, the UN Secretary-General could be invited to prepare an assessment of the current organizational set-up. The UN development system is also invited to conduct a thorough reflection on how it can best contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a coherent, effective and efficient way. DESA and UNDG should work closer together.

One country suggested that the strategic plan of three to five years of each UN body, regional commission and specialized agencies should prioritize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The UN should support national reviews by assisting the review process directly where needed, providing capacity building and engaging in outreach activities at the national level. It can also help to define the roles of different actors in the review system. Regional commissions may have an advantage here as well since they have the specific regional knowledge needed.

In terms of the HLPF, member States called for effective and coherent Secretariat support to the Forum. This should include closer linkages between the support teams for the organization of the HLPF and the High-level Segment, for example by combining them into one team or by having them work closer together. Some member States in particular pointed to the need for the HLPF to have an effective relationship with ECOSOC and the Development Cooperation Forum as well as the relevant sector- and theme-specific intergovernmental bodies and fora. These should be coordinated in time with meetings scheduled in a logical cycle and coordinated in substance to have mutually reinforcing agendas rather than a duplication of discussions.

During the sessions, more innovative formats such as presentations similar to TED talks and more room for engaging the ministers through interactive discussions rather than a panel format would help the HLPF to attract more high-level representatives. It will also be important to invite a diverse range of panelists from different countries to ensure a country and regional balance among presenters. The HLPF also provides an opportunity to reduce the number of processes and documents and consolidate the inputs from the follow-up and review processes by reducing layers and focusing really on implementation and results rather than complex or onerous monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Member States should also be frequently engaged throughout the review process.

V. Other views and ideas

Q26. Please add any other points you would like to raise.

Responses to this question sought to recap the overarching mandates and principles of the 2030 Agenda in relation to follow up and implementation. A number of countries recalled that the follow-up and review should build upon the approach of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and its outcome document “The Future We Want”, which defines the social, economic and environmental pillars as the three dimensions of sustainable development. These three dimensions served as a fundamental basis for catalysing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and some stated they should thus provide a foundation for its follow-up and review.

To ensure development that is truly transformational, progressive and sustainable, and that leaves no one behind, all three dimensions should be addressed in an integrated and balanced manner. This means that the follow-up and review of the SDGs must treat all goals equally, as well as to ensure that all the SDGs are on equal footing within the supporting mechanisms for follow-up and review.

Yet capacities in developing countries to engage in UN matters—including various obligations to report—are often very limited. The follow up and review process must be meaningful and manageable, simple and clear, particularly for member States with more limited institutional capacity, including LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, and others. It should not duplicate or complicate reporting, but would ideally build on the work already underway and on-going within existing processes, agreements, instruments and conventions, including environmental conventions and protocols. One respondent proposed analysing the complementarity of the SDGs with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a sensitive and important issue in some countries and regions.

Some countries suggested that certain driving principles should inform this follow up and review exercise. As agreed in GA Resolution 67/290, the follow-up and review process of the implementation of 2030 Agenda is voluntary and state-led. Implementation will first and foremost take place at the country level, and the main responsibility lies with the UN Member States. The UN will have an important supporting role to play, and must ensure it is “fit for purpose” to deliver on the Agenda. One country elaborated on the need for development partners to increase their commitment to internationally agreed principles of aid effectiveness as fundamental to sustainably building capacity of national governments in LDCs and achieving the SDGs.

A number of countries provided additional views on the AAAA and its link to the 2030 Agenda and said that the AAAA, along with the SDGs, sets out the means of implementation for the entire 2030 Agenda. Some noted that the follow-up of the two agendas cannot be separated, and the need for policy coherence between the two processes will require more than institutional linkage between the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the HLPF. Conceptually, they view the AAAA as an integral part of the 2030 agenda.

Other respondents noted that most of the new bodies created in the AAAA fall under ECOSOC's scope, and that ECOSOC will also remain the UNDS's focal point. All of these and other bodies and mechanisms—existing and new—shall contribute to follow-up and review of the Agenda in a non-duplicative manner in accordance with paragraph 74g of the 2030 Agenda.

Several countries stressed that implications of the 2030 Agenda and the AAAA for the regular budget of the UN must be thoroughly assessed and approached holistically. The regular budget of the UN should not be the main vehicle for implementing the agenda, and each UN body should play to its institutional strengths. In some specific cases, new resources might be warranted, but the main effort within every entity and across the system should be one of reprioritization and redeployment based on comparative advantages, avoiding duplication and stepping up system-wide coherence. Overall, there was agreement that the HLPF should become an attractive platform in which member States and all stakeholders renew their commitment to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Making the process interesting is important to secure political participation and ownership. Its sessions and activities must be innovative. It must become an effective platform to support member States to achieve sustainable development. It could become the best tool of the UN to ensure coherence and to draw from all the relevant work that is conducted in the GA and the ECOSOC system.

Several respondents called for a communication strategy to be launched to communicate the content of the 2030 Agenda in national parliaments and Civil Society Organisations (academia and non-development NGOs, for example) in order to raise awareness on the importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda at national level and change the general perception that sustainable development applies only to the environmental dimension.