



Towards an Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda:

Perspectives from the UNECE region

Questionnaire

Please complete

ORGANIZATION: Center for Reproductive Rights

NAME OF FOCAL POINT: Amanda McRae

FUNCTION: Global Advocacy Adviser

TELEPHONE: +1 917 637 3786

E-MAIL: amcrae@reprorights.org

Please return the completed questionnaire by **FRIDAY, 8 AUGUST 2014** to:

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Development Policies and Cross-Sectoral Coordination Unit

E-Mail: dpccu@unece.org

The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:

www.unece.org/post-2015/regionalministerialconsultation2014.html

For questions or assistance, please contact Mr. Michael KUNZ at the UNECE secretariat

(michael.kunz@unece.org; phone +41-22 917 24 45)

I. Objective

This questionnaire is meant to collect regional perspectives from a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the UNECE region, including member States, civil society, private sector, and other regional organizations on elements for an accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda and the potential for a regional framework for accountability anchored at the national level and feeding into the global level.

The UNECE Secretariat will compile and synthesize the responses received. The synthesis report will be submitted as an input from the region to inform the Stocktaking Event of the President of the General Assembly (New York, 11-12 September 2014) on the elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda. The synthesis report will also serve as a background document for the Regional Ministerial Consultation on “*Monitoring and Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – The Regional Dimension*”, to be held on

15 and 16 (a.m.) September 2014 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva that will be convened upon the request of the Secretary-General.

“Accountability for a universal agenda can be understood as the joint commitment of the global community to monitor, evaluate, share and discuss progress towards the implementation of the agreed goals. An accountability framework could allow each Government and development actor to contribute to and benefit from a better global understanding of challenges and effective strategies. The concept of accountability extends beyond Government, and applies to all stakeholders being held accountable for their role in implementing a universal development agenda, within their respective governance frameworks and scope of responsibility.”

Source: Background note for the interactive dialogue on elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, convened by the President of the General Assembly on 1 May 2014

II. Background

In July 2013, the General Assembly decided on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in its resolution 67/290. Paragraph 8 of 67/290 “Decides that the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, 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.” The reviews shall be voluntary, state-led and provide a platform for partnerships.

Recognizing that a transformative, people-centred and universal post-2015 agenda requires an accountability framework at all levels, the President of the General Assembly convened an interactive dialogue on 1 May 2014, to address the “Elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda.” The dialogue reaffirmed the importance of an accountability framework at the regional level as countries in the same region shared similar challenges and were likely to make greater progress by collectively addressing them. The [background note](#) prepared to that event elaborated on a number of experiences with accountability mechanisms, including through peer reviews at the regional level.

The [main messages](#) that emerged from the dialogue were:

(a) a universal and transformative agenda would require a strengthened accountability framework that is inclusive, participatory and engages people at all levels; (b) a decentralized system of accountability would ensure that all stakeholders take ownership and are incentivized to share, evaluate and adjust their policies; (c) national and regional accountability frameworks need to be anchored in a global accountability framework that is simple, focused and provide clarity on the roles of different actors; and (d) a multi-layered approach could work with parliaments at the national level, peer review mechanisms at the regional level, and with HLPF and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the global level.

III. Questionnaire on Elements for an Accountability Framework at the Regional Level

A) Overall accountability mechanism

As noted above, there is an emerging view that the accountability mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda should be multi-layered.

Question 1: In general terms, what should an overall accountability mechanism involving the national, regional and global level look like and what could be the role of the regional level in this mechanism?

Human rights obligations should be at the center of development, as development policies and practices are often used as a means of implementing those obligations and ensuring human dignity. As such, human rights should serve as the basis for the Post-2015 Agenda, not only in the formulation of goals, targets, and indicators related to substantive issues but also in methods for accountability.

In order to ensure positive development outcomes that comply with states' human rights obligations, it is critical that the Post-2015 Agenda include accessible and effective accountability mechanisms. By employing the specific guidance on accountability developed by the international human rights system, the Post-2015 Agenda can ensure that local populations and the global community are provided with the requisite tools and resources to hold states accountable for their development commitments. All mechanisms should be guided by the following principles:

- 1) **Guaranteeing Meaningful Participation at All Levels:** Meaningful participation requires that groups who are affected by development practices, particularly marginalized groups, are involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of development programs and policies.
- 2) **Monitoring and Evaluating Progress:** States should routinely collect disaggregated data, including data based on gender and other statuses, on issues raised in targets and indicators developed in the Post-2015 Agenda, as well as data needed to assess implementation of other human rights obligations. States should make this data public and devise a method by which to distribute it widely so that individuals have meaningful access. They should also consistently provide this data to bodies formally charged with overseeing and assessing their progress on implementing the Post-2015 Agenda and the human rights obligations and commitments it reflects.
- 3) **Providing Remedy and Redress:** States should ensure that individuals can seek administrative or judicial remedies for violations of their human rights as reflected in the Post-2015 Agenda and in human rights treaties. This requires states to develop functional, independent systems of justice at the national and local levels, based on the rule of law and international human rights standards. They must also comply with rulings from these systems and from courts and other human rights bodies at the regional and international levels. States should collect data on the rate of implementation of decisions and recommendations related to meeting the Post-2015 Agenda and human rights obligations and disseminate this data as part of their monitoring and evaluation commitments.

At the national level, accountability should include ensuring that the public, including civil society, can participate in decision-making about implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda. States should also collect data on implementation and make that data available and transparent. Finally, individuals should have access to effective justice systems to seek remedy and redress when their rights are violated, including those rights reflected in development commitments.

If there is an accountability mechanism at **the regional level,** it could reflect the peer review mechanism created at the global level (described below) and include recommendations from and

information-sharing among states that have close historical, social, and political ties. The regional review mechanisms could be integrated into existing regional political bodies, such as the Council of Europe, the African Commission, the Organization of American States, or the regional UN ECOSOC bodies, to build off the expertise and resources of these bodies.

It is essential to have an effective accountability mechanism at **the global level**. All states should be required to report periodically to an intergovernmental body, like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council, or a newly-established expert body explicitly mandated to review Post-2015 commitments, to have other states assess their progress on meeting global goals. Civil society should be invited to participate, and these reviews should take into account the work of the regional mechanisms as well other monitoring bodies, such as the UPR, the work of the UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies, reports from UN agencies, and results from regional level reviews. The global-level review should result in recommendations for further implementation.

In the past, review of progress on sustainable development was carried out under the auspices of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). In the area of development, monitoring and accountability under the MDG framework has been carried out through various mechanism and procedures.

Question 2: What are the major lessons from CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability that can inform and help improve the post-2015 accountability framework? Have CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability been adequate and if not how should this be different for the SDGs?

Through the Human Rights Council, the UN system has shown that it is possible to create an intergovernmental body that can function as both a platform for discussing important issues related to human rights and a platform for intergovernmental assessment of state compliance with human rights obligations. This intergovernmental assessment—the UPR—is mandatory for all states, and the political pressure to participate provides an incentive for states to report and follow up on the review. The UPR also provides an opportunity for states to share experiences in implementation via recommendations and to show improvement in implementation over a period of time following specific recommendations. Furthermore, the UPR draws on the work of other human rights monitoring bodies—including the UN treaty monitoring bodies, regional courts and institutions, UN agencies, and civil society—as an essential part of the intergovernmental assessment, which is open and transparent.

B) Nature of possible review at the regional level

Scope of the review

In terms of the substantive scope of the review, there are a number of options. For instance, the progress towards all SDGs could be reviewed in one review cycle. Alternatively, the review could be limited to certain selected SDGs or themes. It might also involve other existing commitments that are not directly part of, but nevertheless relevant to the SDGs. There are also different possibilities in terms of the country coverage. For instance, all member States could be reviewed over a multi-year cycle. Alternatively, only governments volunteering to be reviewed could be included. In addition,

the reviews could also cover other stakeholders that have responsibilities for achieving the SDGs (e.g., private sector).

Question 3: What should be reviewed and who should be reviewed?

A number of actors could be reviewed as part of the accountability mechanisms for the Post-2015 Agenda. For instance, large donors and other non-state actors such as corporations have significant impacts on areas such as health, education, climate change, and other environmental and social issues. However, states themselves have the primary responsibility to implement the Post-2015 Agenda and should also be the primary subjects of review.

Accountability mechanisms at the global and regional level can assess progress on the goals and targets under the Post-2015 Agenda for the states under review, based on indicators developed during that process. The mechanisms could also comment on the national-level targets that states have created for the Post-2015 Agenda to ensure that these targets and indicators are in line with human rights obligations. Finally, these mechanisms should consult with civil society groups on implementation while also assessing how states have engaged civil society actors in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Post-2015 Agenda at the national level.



Review process

Accountability can take different forms and modalities, ranging from more basic monitoring to more comprehensive reviews and, accordingly, with a different capacity to assist, support and advise governments and other stakeholders in achieving the SDGs:

- Monitoring of data on SDG performance which highlights where progress is and is not on track.
- Analytical reports on SDG implementation in the region which would provide an analysis of best practices and make policy recommendations where progress has been poor.
- Discussions and exchange of experiences and best practices at regional meetings, for instance Regional Forums on Sustainable Development convened by UNECE.
- Review of progress of members States by other member States (peer reviews).

Monitoring of data and tracking progress against the agreed goals will be the basis of any further analysis or review process. Different information and inputs will be needed for the various types of reviews, e.g. quantitative data or qualitative assessments and policy analysis. Different parts of the UN system (Regional Commission, the inter-agency Regional Coordination Mechanism and the regional UNDG, specialized agencies on specific SDGs) could play a role in the various reviews. While the review process will be state-led, it will also benefit from the contributions of other stakeholders (civil society, the private sector, academia).

Question 4: What type(s) of review should be conducted and what kind of information should it be based on? What should be the role of the UN system and other stakeholders in the process?

Although information from governments will be the bulk of inputs for reviews of the Post-2015 Agenda, the mechanisms should also seek and include information from the UN system as well as civil society organizations to ensure there is a complete picture of a country's adherence to its

commitments. For instance, in the UPR at the Human Rights Council, civil society organizations are invited to contribute 5-page reports to the process, which are summarized and synthesized by OHCHR for states to use in their questioning and recommendations process. OHCHR also compiles a report based on information provided by a variety of UN agencies operating within the country. Both of these reports provide additional information which states can use to assess each other's progress. Reviews should also be open and transparent, and the UN system should ensure that civil society can meaningfully participate beyond providing written submissions.

Peer review mechanisms are considered to be an effective instrument to strengthen accountability in a multilateral context with strong ownership by participating governments. Some examples are the [Universal Periodic Review](#) conducted under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, the [OECD Peer Reviews](#), ECOSOC's [Annual Ministerial Review](#), the WTO [Trade Policy Review Mechanism](#) and the [UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews](#).

[Question 5: If you favour peer reviews, what could such reviews at the regional level look like and what existing models do you consider relevant?](#)

A peer review mechanism at the regional level could be similar to that at the global level but perhaps take a more thematic approach to assessing state progress of implementing the Post-2015 Agenda commitments. In this review, states may periodically report on their progress towards meeting a subset of interrelated goals and targets, with the opportunity for other states to ask questions, make recommendations, and share experiences. Inclusion of experts in these specific fields, including human rights groups and other civil society organizations, should be considered an essential part of any regional peer review.

Linkage with global and national reviews and other mechanisms

A regional accountability mechanism needs to be part of a multi-layered structure with a strong national and global dimension. This requires regional reviews to be anchored at the national level and to feed into the global level. Reviews at the global level will be carried out by the High-level Political Forum. For example, the regional level could therefore provide a regional synthesis to the global deliberations and align its theme with the global review. It could also go beyond merely complementing the HLPF and be more systematic and ongoing, taking into account the regional priorities and particularly transboundary issues. A key pillar of the overall system will be national accountability. National SDG reports, prepared by governments and supported by the UN Country Teams and the UNDG agencies as appropriate, could play a key role in the review process and provide important inputs into the regional review. National parliaments could also be involved. In addition, it will be critical to build on and integrate existing accountability mechanisms in the post-2015 follow-up process, for example those under relevant existing legal instruments or programme activities or carried out in other fora.

[Question 6: How should the reviews at national, regional and global level be linked? And how can existing accountability mechanisms be integrated?](#)

Any accountability mechanisms at the national, regional, and global levels should look to the work of other monitoring bodies, particularly human rights monitoring bodies, as an indicator of state progress in implementing development commitments. In order for development to be consistent with human rights, states must ensure that they are adhering to pre-existing human rights obligations—which touch on almost every issue likely to be included in the Post-2015 Agenda—as a first step towards implementation of development commitments. As such, the work of the UN treaty monitoring bodies, the Human Rights Council’s UPR process, and regional-level human rights mechanisms are likely to contain important feedback on whether states have adequately addressed development issues.

For instance, in Europe, accountability mechanisms for the Post-2015 Agenda at the national, regional, and global levels may look to whether states in Europe have provided effective remedy and redress for judgments against them at the European Court of Human Rights. These mechanisms may also look to whether the states have addressed the recommendations provided to them in concluding observations from the UN treaty monitoring bodies and through the UPR.


