

Towards an Accountability Framework for the Post 2015 Development Agenda: Perspectives from the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) region

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?

For the post-2015 development agenda to be effective, truly transformational and people-centred, we need a strong monitoring and accountability framework. This new framework should incorporate lessons learned and best practice from existing monitoring and accountability mechanisms – from the CSD (Commission on Sustainable Development), RIMS (Regional Implementation Meetings), the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and beyond. High level political involvement as well as periodic and inclusive global and national reviews of progress on specific goals, targets and indicators is essential. Such reviews should notably increase the ability of people to participate in policy choices that affect them and to hold governments and other actors accountable. This should also ensure that national governments and, as appropriate, other actors, including the private sector, are accountable to the global community. Civil society, local authorities and the private sector should play a key role in advancing transparency and accountability. Any accountability framework should be of an intergovernmental and voluntary nature and be based on mutual accountability. It should build on existing national, regional and global levels.

Question 2: What are the major lessons from CSD (Commission on Sustainable Development) progress reviews and MDG (Millennium Development Goals) 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 (Sustainable Development Goals)?

The international community, building on the Millennium Development Goals monitoring framework and in close cooperation with the statistical community, is urged to develop a limited number of well-defined, objectively measurable and relevant indicators to track progress of achievement under the post-2015 development agenda. The international community is further invited to develop and maintain strong momentum in delivering on commitments to support development goals at the national, regional and global levels that are additional to other efforts and have a clear timeline. This should be accompanied by reliable and transparent data for measuring progress and effective mechanisms for review, monitoring and accountability. The United Nations, and in particular the Economic and Social Council, should build on existing mechanisms and strengthen the monitoring and accountability platforms for development commitments. The biggest challenge in monitoring and ensuring accountability at the global level has been the absence of binding obligations and commitments, especially in the economic and social development arena. In the light of this situation, it is important to explore other alternatives that build on existing mechanisms. The most feasible approach could be built on a more credible system of broad mutual accountability for universally applicable goals and commitments, with a strengthened institutional framework.

Governments, working with all relevant stakeholders, are encouraged to close measurement gaps by generating reliable, accessible and user-friendly data, disaggregated by gender, age, ethnic group and

rural/urban setting, among others, with clearly defined baselines. The statistical community should support the development of post-2015 monitoring frameworks, taking into account the lessons from monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, to ensure that goals, targets and indicators are measurable at the national, regional and global levels.

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

Governments have taken a leading role in steering the implementation of consistent policies at the local, national, regional and global levels. Many other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and philanthropic organizations, have greatly increased their role and play a major part in the delivery of development goals. Their contribution is vital in the coming years.

The GSDR (Global Sustainable Development Report) can serve as an important monitoring and accountability function in the work of the HLPF (High Level Political Forum) on sustainable development and in the post-2015 development agenda. While being science and evidence based, the main target audience of the report would consist of policy makers and key stakeholders. Beyond global challenges the Report could also include issues that will have to be omitted from the new set of goals including the SDGs but which are still important. In addition it could have a thematic focus linked to the thematic focus of the HLPF (High Level Political Forum).

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?

Clearly the review as reflected in the GSDR can have a role in identifying new and emerging issues. How these issues will be identified and followed up in the UN processes and structures for sustainable development will have to be defined once the post-2015 follow-up and review mechanism is agreed, keeping in mind the role of the sectorial UN structures associated to the post 2015 process and the HLPF. The report could usefully highlight barriers to progress in delivering the post-2015 development goals. The identification of these issues should be based on sound scientific evidence. Thematic focus should be related to the thematic priorities decided in the proceedings of the HLPF (which is itself closely related to the ECOSOC annual cycle) and the outcome of the post 2015 summit. The Chief Scientists (or equivalent) of relevant UN Agencies, such as UNDESA (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs), UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), UNDP, ILO, WHO, FAO, CBD, UNFCCC, UNESCO, UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification) and UNIDO should collaborate in the preparation process. UNDESA could play a prominent role.

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?

In terms of the post-2015 accountability framework, goals, targets and indicators need to be established, including the goals and targets of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. There is a need to identify effective accountability mechanisms to monitor progress towards the defined goals. Accountability mechanisms can be political, administrative, social or judicial in nature.

Their roles include public reporting, reviewing and monitoring progress and establishing forums for dialogue. Multiple accountability mechanisms exist at the global level, even within the United Nations system. Lessons can be drawn from the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review.

The independent nature of the reporting process must be ensured. In any system, the global architecture, including the different layers of international governance, must start at the local level and bring on board national parliaments in meeting international targets. Research had shown that the best form of peer reviews will be at the regional level. At the international level, the full ECOSOC system should be included to amplify the scope of the goals. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women should play a strong monitoring role in any gender-related SDG (Sustainable Development Goal).

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

An accountability system should be guided by national ownership and leadership, and also involve all stakeholders. Building institutional capacity and skill sets for data monitoring at the national level is of critical importance. National and regional accountability frameworks need to be anchored in a global accountability framework that is simple and focused, and provides clarity on the roles of the different actors. There is a need to encourage accountability, including peer reviews, at the regional level. Countries in the same region share similar challenges and are likely to make greater progress by collectively addressing them. There is also a need to strengthen existing regional mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism. Country level monitoring should be at the centre, since country ownership was the best way to ensure accountability.