



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

Perspectives from the UNECE region

Questionnaire

Preliminary

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

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Development Policies and Cross-Sectoral Coordination Unit**

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The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:

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

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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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

In order to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable development in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda the international development community should ensure that its commitments will be followed by comprehensive monitoring actions and accountability efforts. Most importantly, accountability efforts are expected to strengthen political commitment. Furthermore, such efforts should, on the one hand, be linked to the renewed global partnership for development and on the other, be part of a multilayered structure with parliaments at the national level, peer review mechanisms at the regional level and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) together with ECOSOC and its related bodies at the global level. At the regional level, peer review mechanisms could be put into service, which have already been applied in various areas. These mechanisms could be based on already existing methodologies of approved quality in order to promote mutual learning and thus achieve best practices.

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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

It could be argued that a problematic area of the MDGs was a rather weak monitoring and accountability framework which should be strengthened in the process of formulating the post-2015 development agenda. The new framework should be a powerful instrument for achieving goals and delivering results. It should ensure transparency and mutual accountability, monitor progress and promote sound policies. In this regard it will be important to learn from recent experiences and pay special attention to: statistical data quality, accessibility and use of technology, involvement of diverse stakeholders, recognition that international cooperation needs to be universal and the need to avoid a heavy burden of reporting.

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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

Reviews could periodically monitor progress towards the SDGs and possibly some other elements of development cooperation not incorporated in the SDGs and involve stakeholders competent for achieving the SDGs. Institutional capacity building might be needed at national level for some stakeholders.

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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

Reviews should be flexible and could take the form of basic monitoring having some capacity to provide support, in the form of recommendations, to stakeholders as regards the best possible path towards achieving the SDGs. Reviews to track progress could be based on qualitative assessments based on available comprehensive data collected from different stakeholders. The accountability efforts could be subject to some scrutiny from intergovernmental bodies such as parts of the UN system.

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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

Experience advises that monitoring works best among peer countries and mostly at regional level since such decentralized accountability systems ensure stakeholders' ownership while incentivize them to share, evaluate and adjust their policies. The international development community could make full use of the potential of the existing regional peer review mechanisms. Relevant models include the OECD Peer Reviews.

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?

Some preliminary thoughts:

National SDG reviews prepared by governments and supported by Intergovernmental Organisations could play an important role in the review process and provide important inputs to regional reviews which could in turn feed into the global level by providing a regional synthesis to the global picture. All reviews should share and promote dialogue and best practices. Moreover existing accountability mechanisms could be integrated by ensuring fulfilment of past and present commitments.
