



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

Perspectives from the UNECE region

Questionnaire

Please complete

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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

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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

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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?

Accountability and stocktaking are crucial for the success of the post2015 framework. The progress of the post2015 agenda has to be monitored and reviewed through using and strengthening the already existing statistics systems of UN, WB, OECD etc. For example, the systems should be broadened to NGOs and multi-lateral organisations and the new development players, e.g., private sector and philanthropy. Data should be gathered on the basis of the SDG commitments, the accompanying SMART indicators. This also stresses the vital role of existing accountability experts and data systems in developing and incorporating existing data. Moreover, accountability should be recognized in the separate data gathering target and fostered through the Global Partnership.

Regional level mechanism could have a particular role to play in addressing and measuring progress, fostering cooperation and best practice implementation for targets that require regional solutions. This would especially apply to the management of global public goods, environmental and climate issues and cross-border issues (trade, infrastructure, migration etc.).

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?

The post2015 framework should try as much as possible to pool all the data in one system and eradicate double accountability procedures (especially overlapping donor-recipient questionnaires).

Progress reports should be based on reliable, comparable data, which are gathered at the national level using the same methodology. Ideally the UN system should be the one responsible for doing the progress reviews to foster unbiased data gathering.

Moreover, progress reviews should not only compare quantitatively data, but serve as a mechanism for best practice exchange and, more importantly, alert on emerging issues – policy should be proactive not reactive, especially in the area of sustainability.

To strengthen the accountability, a separate goal in the post2015 framework has to focus on strengthening effective and capable institutions and rule of law, especially open government data and freedom of information and press, ICT development.

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?

Reviews should represent the current development system – thus cover all stakeholders that have responsibilities for achieving the SDGs, but particular focus should be on national and local governments. Data should be gathered on an annual or bi-annual basis, but the reviews should be limited to certain selected SDGs or themes, which most topical issues reappearing every 3-5 years. This would allow for better data gathering, analysis and best practice testing, thus make the report more valuable for tracking progress over time. Moreover, sustainability is not an issue that shows immediate success or failure.

The reports have to address the wider audience - publishing purely scientific research would overlap with the content of professional academic journals. The report should address a wider audience, raise awareness among policy communities and inform decision making process. International organizations and think tanks already produce forecasts and analysis – thus current tools could be used to choose the most urgent ones.

The reviews should cover all SDG targets and be based on SMART indicators, with high quality and timely data gathered, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Such areas as inequality, governance and institutions, rule of law should be assessed at all governance levels.

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?

Reviews should be done with the core aim to track progress on all the targets in the post2015 framework and provide analytical information on best practices and case studies. The system should promote implementation of the post2015 agenda, especially through incentivising voluntary compliance with development commitments.

Accompanying the review should be the best practice exchange mechanism – updated more frequently than the reports. The exchange of best practice, policy initiatives based on the reviews could be one of the core tasks for the Global (and regional) Partnership. It has to be noted, that also the global and regional forums today are more parallel than connected – synthesis and broad based knowledge sharing should be widely fostered.

The UN system should take the lead in conducting the reviews and analysing the data – being the main oversight, alongside other actors. Methodology and data quality review should be monitored by the UN as a neutral party. A central role should be assigned to non-state actors, especially academia and civil society to ‘translate’ the quantitative data in qualitative ways and provide the country contexts for the progress or lack thereof.

The data sets to be gathered for monitoring should be established on a global level and implemented on a country level – through universal, but decentralised accountability systems. The data mechanism should gather as much data sets as possible – to gather information and foster best

practice exchange also in areas which have not been covered by the MDGs and will not be covered by the SDGs.

Open and unbiased data availability on all policy levels to everyone should be the main goal and should be fostered on national and global level. The global partnership along with UN, WB and OECD should play a central role in fostering and strengthening reliable data systems across the world.

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?

Latvia considers peer review mechanisms very effective, i.e. the OECD DAC review, but review mechanisms work if they have a strong accountability and follow up mechanisms to monitor the application of the review data and policy suggestions.

Moreover, the 'peer' coupling should not only be based on regional groupings, but take into account the policy relevance and applicability.

Capacity building to foster institutional and policy change should be in place or even a step before the peer reviews.

Joining peer reviews should be a voluntary process, but it should be strongly encouraged in developed and developing countries, as well as multinational entities and new actors.

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?

Latvia agrees with the view that each level reviews should feed into each other – especially the regional reviews should be anchored in the national ones and feed into the global level. To foster the quality of national reports – availability of public data and a strong role of national parliaments, experts, civil society and other actors should be fostered.

EU reports on, for example, Policy coherence for development, serve as a good example – case studies come from the national reports and have been picked by experts as the best national case studies to disseminate further.

But the wide difference between regional report quality in data and, subsequently, their analysis is definitely an issue that will need urgent attention.

Existing accountability mechanisms should be pooled together and serve as multistakeholder, linked and coordinated bench making mechanism for tracking the achievement of commitments. To foster the compliance with the commitments – regional level would be especially beneficial.
