



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

**Perspectives from the UNECE region**

**Questionnaire**

*Please complete*

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*The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:*

[www.unece.org/post-2015/regionalministerialconsultation2014.html](http://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, 8-9 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?**

The UN and particularly the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) with its intergovernmental universal character, as mandated by GA resolution 67/290, should play a key role to ensure the overall accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda. The HLPF accountability mechanism starting in 2016 should be based on existing monitoring and accountability mechanisms at all levels. It should also be based on an interactive dialogue with the full involvement of the country concerned, civil society, the private sector, statisticians and other relevant stakeholders. The mechanism should give guidance and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development commitments of the reviewed state by exchanging best practices and experiences in the implementation of the SDGs.

The regional level could focus on collecting reports and analysis to feed in the global HLPF accountability mechanism. The regional level could also support countries in preparing their data and presentations at the global level with regards to their national commitments and their respective implementation for achieving the SDGs. The quality of data is essential for an effective accountability mechanism. Capitalizing on technological innovation to make data collection more efficient will be important.

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?**

Major lessons learned from CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability are that they were weak and needed to be strengthened (see for example the UN SG Report on lessons learned from the CSD 2013; UN Task Team Report on a renewed global partnership 2013; UN OHCHR Report Who will be accountable? 2013; DESA, ECOSOC AMR Expert Workshop Report 2013). The design of the HLPF accountability mechanism should take these lessons into account.

## 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?**

The progress in implementing all SDGs and targets, as well as other sustainable development commitments including those related to means of implementation should be reviewed on a global objective. Countries should therefore monitor their SDG commitments as well as the respective implementation achievements. A process of “commit and review” could be considered. In a first cycle, member states could make commitments on the level of national contribution to the global targets e.g. in a national sustainable development strategy, national development plans. In the following cycles, implementation of these commitments could be reviewed. As mandated in GA resolution 67/290, member states as well as UN entities should be reviewed.

### *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?**

The HLPF provides a strong institutional accountability framework, and GA resolution 67/290 has established the main parameters for such a review. The HLPF allows not only for universal intergovernmental dialogue, but also for broader and more inclusive participation by all relevant stakeholders. This should lead to higher political relevance and help consolidate the efforts undertaken within the UN system. The development of a state led and robust SDG review mechanism starting in 2016 should be considered as a key priority. The review should also be based on an inclusive, interactive and constructive dialogue with the full involvement of the country concerned, civil society, the private sector, statisticians and other relevant stakeholders. The information under discussion should be based on national reporting on progress on SDG implementation incl. national sustainable development strategies, development plans etc. Countries with assistance needs in gathering information could be supported by the UN system. At the regional level, relevant UN entities could have a role in providing respective information and inputs. The UN system should have an important role in providing information and inputs.

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?**

Multiple accountability mechanisms at the global level often exist in the same or overlapping policy fields. It is therefore critical that these mechanisms draw on each other more systematically to ensure synergies, reduce duplication and ease the reporting burden. All UN member states report for example to several international human rights mechanisms – including the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). A cycle of information should therefore be created that systematically feeds results from the UPR and other human rights bodies into the HLPF accountability framework. The UPR offers some useful lessons on structuring a successful global peer review mechanism. One key aspect of the UPR is the approach of having a high-level overall review without duplicating the sectorial treaty-body monitoring mechanism.

*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?**

To avoid duplications the data collected should be coherent and reviews should be aligned in order to feed the information in the HLPF accountability framework. The UPR provides for example a high-level overall policy review and does not aim at duplicating the detailed work undertaken by the different issue-specific treaty-monitoring bodies. Of course, information from existing sectorial accountability mechanisms should also flow into the global HLPF.

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