



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

Perspectives from the UNECE region

Questionnaire

Please complete

COUNTRY: Montenegro

AUTHORITY: Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism

NAME OF FOCAL POINT: Jelena Knezevic

FUNCTION: Head of the Division for the support to the National Council for Sustainable Development

TELEPHONE: +382 20 446 225

E-MAIL: jelena.knezevic@mrt.gov.me

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.

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?

Overall accountability mechanism is necessary in order to ensure approachable mechanism for the monitoring of the government performance in each country.

Since each country is obliged to submit reports on the progress of implementation on the global level, regional meetings should be organized as part of the process of preparing the global reports. These regional meetings should be also organised on the high political level and these meetings would serve as a venue for receiving qualitative explanations of the national situation, i.e. the context for the quantitative statistics gathered via the online system. HLPF could have coordinating role in this process.

It would be of the utmost importance to organize regular global debates/meetings at the highest political level (not less than once every two years).

Therefore creation of the regional platform would highly contribute to fostering sound regional consultations based on the national needs with the aim to provide appropriate proposals for further consideration under HLPF. In that regard, national contribution should be based on the consultative process among relevant national stakeholders, which is irreplaceable, in order to support both regional and global consultations.

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?

CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability has been proven as helpful mechanisms for following the progress of implementation of sustainable development policy.

One of the most important contributions of CSD mechanism is the fact that CSD facilitated discussion both on professional as well as on political level, structured around thematically two-year reports cycle.

However, it can be stated that it lacked a mechanism that would enable the obligatory implementation of the decisions adopted on political level and related technical and professional decisions on local level.

One of the main lessons that need to be implemented in a future regards to improving the availability of and access to data and statistics (disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity and other characteristics relevant in national context to support findings of the annual reports).

Having the above mentioned in mind, we believe that mechanisms that are going to be established within HLPF should enable implementation of decisions on national level. New mechanisms should also provide technical and financial support for implementation of SDGs and Post 2015 agenda.

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?

All the countries responsible for the implementation of SDGs should be obliged to review progress towards all SDGs on national level on regular basis.

On global level, all member states could be reviewed over a multi-year cycle.

Data could be submitted via online system. Review should be external and independent, done by prominent experts under supervision of HLPF bodies. The review should be done for SDGs implementation in compatibility with the process of reviewing the Post 2015 Agenda.

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?

In order to ensure applicability and implementation of universally applicable and globally accepted values in each country, each member state should be allowed to define sub-goals and target values for itself. In that context, each country should, in addition to reporting on the aggregate national statistics, monitor and report on the implementation of the goals at the level of internal regions as well (not only the statistical regions, but using nationally defined regional borders). This is particularly important as, in most countries, there are great differences in terms of the levels of development and overall capacities between the regions.

In this regard, it is necessary to establish/design an online system, to which each country would directly upload the data from the national level. The system could, in turn, transform the data easily understandable graphs and trends of development for the wide group of users. Various options of sorting and accessing the information could be allowed for. The entire system should, in addition to the secured access to databases for a limited number of users, have an option of free access to all citizens for selected publicly available information. The statistics collected in this way could become the basis for making periodic global reports (annually). To ensure efficiency and readability of the reports, the reports could contain a general global overview of the implementation for all the goals, with a detailed analysis for one or few of them for each Report. The Review should provide also the overview of the obstacles in implementation and proposals to direct solutions, including identification of technical needs, as well as the needs for human and institutional capacities strengthening.

UN system, through HLPF Secretariat, should have coordinating role in this process.

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?

Role of reviews on regional level could help achieve two important objectives:

- 1) to serve as mechanisms that would bring about a greater consolidation of national inputs to the global deliberations, and
- 2) to enable continuous monitoring of the progress member states are making in achieving sustainability.

Having in mind more or less similar backgrounds and level of development of countries from one region, regional meetings could also help finding the best solution or model for overcoming the obstacles in implementing the sustainable development policies through discussion and exchange of best practices in implementation of some common topic.

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?

All citizens, after national consultative process among relevant national stakeholders, would have access to selected publicly available information - general global overview of the implementation for all the goals on national level, with a detailed analysis for one or few of them for each report as well as overview of the obstacles in implementation and proposals to direct solutions. This data,

aggregated through online system, would be basis for regional reports. UN Country Teams and the UNDG agencies could support drafting the regional reports in a way that would ensure solving of common topic or a problem through enabling exchange of best case examples and experiences that could serve as a model to other countries from the region.

Regional reports would be further presented on global meetings.

Since both the regional and global meetings, will be organized on high political level, they could have a great influence on defining the national policies and most importantly, national budget allocations, which are critical for the successful implementation of the sustainable development policy.
