



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?

As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon puts it in March 2010, “the shortfalls have occurred not because the goals are unreachable or because time is too short but because a lack of focus and accountability”. MDG commitments failed to prompt any form of accountability on the part of those responsible. The absence of clearly delineated responsibilities among the broad range of actors involved in the development process has made easier for each to attribute blame elsewhere for lack of progress.

Accountability is central to democratic governance and fulfilment of human rights and should principally refer to policy-makers and power-holders, which should be held to transparent performance standards.

In this respect, Post 2015 Development Consensus should be grounded in Human Rights Standards stressing that meeting development commitments is not a matter of good will but of legal obligation. Post 2015 framework can't become another set of failed global promises.

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?

One of the most important lessons learnt from the CSD work is the need for a science-policy interface. That's why the 67/290 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly establishes that one of the goals of the High Level Political Forum must be to strengthen the science-policy interface enhancing evidence-based decision-making at all levels.

The science-policy interface should be built on the CSD experience, which means that **Scientific findings must inform policy decisions**. The best way to achieve this is by creating a platform that enables scientists the opportunity to interact with policy makers.

In the field of climate change, this platform already exists as we can count with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), but in the very important field of addressing inequality and poverty eradication we still lack of any Platform of this kind.

The Spanish Alliance against Poverty is promoting the creation of an Intergovernmental Panel on Inequality and Poverty Eradication as a global science-policy interface for progress review and implementation on this matter.

We consider that this Panel should be allocated within the HLPF in order to accomplish its mandate of strengthening the science-policy interface.

However, this science-policy interface should not be limited to the elaboration of the Global Sustainable Development Report that the so-called 67-290 resolution enforces. It should also become a learning and best practices-sharing platform.

The science policy interface must also foster learning processes about cause-effect relationships of policy choices and instruments by the building of accessible databases and knowledge platforms, including social scientific analyzes of policy tools and interventions, linking means of implementation such as public services, fiscal, financial, trade or immigration policies with making progress on sustainable development.

On this matter we would like to highlight the International Meeting that will take place in Madrid on the 16th and 17th of October of 2014 entitled "STRATEGIES AGAINST POVERTY. A meeting about the creation of an international experts panel for poverty eradication and inequality reduction".

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?

Who should be reviewed?

All the stakeholders should be reviewed according to their own responsibility and capacity: States, International Financial and Trade Institutions, Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations. Special emphasize should be put on new powerful actors such as BRICs, Powerful Financial Institutions and Multinationals.

What should be reviewed?

The Post 2015 framework should be better aligned with the binding obligations under international human rights standards. Decision-makers should not answer only for the results achieved but for the reasonableness of their policy efforts, including the use of resources available domestically and internationally.

Policy coherence should be reinforced with reference to states obligations to respect and protect human rights within and beyond their own borders.

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 of the answers to this question are based on the report: "The Role and Place of the High-Level Political Forum in Strengthening the Global Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development" by Steven Bernstein, September 2013.

Reviews should not focus only on indicators, but also on drivers of change and their interactions with socio-economic-governance factors. Drivers such as production and consumption patterns must be subject to specific assessments to determine policy coherence with the three pillars of sustainable development.

The reporting and monitoring must have a focus on socio-economic-governance interactions, non-linearities or tipping points and leverage points in the system in order to assess interventions and transformative policies.

A global sustainable development report should also include the point of view of other stakeholders, apart from governments, such as sustainable development action networks, academia, etc... This fits with the mandate of the report to base its findings on “information and assessments”. These summaries could appear as a supplement to the report.

Third-party reviews are especially important for legitimacy and credibility as they provide an independent accountability mechanism rather than relying solely on self-reporting or politically mediated mechanisms (Sustainable Development in Action 2013: 31). However, active encouragement, technical support and financial resources for such independent reviews might be necessary to institutionalize this practice over time, especially if such reviews are to include representation from developing country stakeholders and perspectives from the more marginalized major groups.

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?

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?

We see the IPCC as a model to be followed. Every country should have, for every area, its own differentiated goals in accordance to its capacity and responsibility, in such a way that all contribute to a unique global goal that must be achieved.

All the different assessments done for every area and for every country should be integrated in a Global Sustainable Development Report that should include not only data, but also specific assessments to determine policy coherence with the three pillars of sustainable development.

We consider that to deal with this complexity in the area of poverty and inequality it is mandatory to reinforce the science-policy interface by creating an Intergovernmental Panel on Inequality and Poverty Eradication, similar to the IPCC on Climate Change.
