

Planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals



Regional survey by UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia

Geneva and New York, 2 December 2015

Purpose

At the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York (25-27 September 2015), the Heads of State and Government adopted the 2030 Agenda, including the ambitious and far-reaching 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Entering into force on 1 January 2016, they will guide sustainable development efforts in all countries in the 15-year period until 2030.

In this context, this survey is sent to the Governments of 56 UNECE member States¹ to collect inputs on three crucial topics:

- The plans and approaches of governments to integrate the SDGs and targets in their national strategies and to implement them in their countries.
- The plans of governments to build and conduct monitoring and review at the national level for the SDGs and targets.
- The expectations of governments towards the regional UN system in view of SDG implementation and follow-up.

The survey is jointly conducted by UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia. The information received will be summarized and shared by their secretariats. It will serve to share experiences and to provide a practical overview of the first steps on the path to achieving the SDGs. Once the results are available, it is further envisaged to organize dialogues with and among member States in Geneva and New York in early 2016 to discuss and take forward the results.

¹ The 56 UNECE member States are listed as follows. They include 17 countries in which the Regional UNDG (R-UNDG) works (marked with *). In addition, the R-UNDG is active in Kosovo (under UN Security Council resolution 1244). Albania*, Andorra, Armenia*, Austria, Azerbaijan*, Belarus*, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia*, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan*, Kyrgyzstan*, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova*, Monaco, Montenegro*, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia*, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Turkey*, Turkmenistan*, Ukraine*, United Kingdom, United States and Uzbekistan*.

Questionnaire

Please complete

COUNTRY:	Azerbaijan
AUTHORITY:	Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
NAME OF FOCAL POINT:	To be provided
FUNCTION:	Ibid
TELEPHONE:	Ibid
E-MAIL:	Ibid
REMARKS:*	The details will follow as soon as a national dialogue on the SDGs is launched by the Government, with support from the United Nations System in Azerbaijan and in consultation with the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders.

Please return the completed questionnaire by **MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2016** to:

UNECE, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit (SDGU)
E-Mail: sdgu@unece.org

*The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:
www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/sustainable-development/Regional_SDG_survey_final.docx*

*The completed questionnaires will be posted on the websites of UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia (ECA R-UNDG). Please indicate under "Remarks" above if you prefer your reply not to be posted.

For questions or assistance, please contact:
Mr. Michael KUNZ, UNECE secretariat, Geneva
(michael.kunz@unece.org; +41-22 917 24 45)

Ms. Liudmila BARCARI, R-UNDG secretariat, New York
(liudmila.barcari@undp.org; +1-212 906 5440)

Note: At the current stage and shortly after the adoption of the SDGs, there may be no consolidated government position yet on many issues raised in the questionnaire. You are therefore kindly encouraged to share any preliminary thinking or tentative considerations you may have that will help provide an informal insight into the state of planning and debate in your Government.

Overall planning

Planning is a key step to embark on the path of SDG implementation. This includes the formulation of national (sustainable) development strategies and the integration of the SDGs in policy measures.

Question 1:

What are the overall plans of your Government to translate the SDGs and targets into action and measures at the national and subnational level and integrate them in national strategies and other policy interventions? In addition, will new planning tools or processes be developed in support of the SDGs or will existing structures be used?

“Azerbaijan: Vision 2020” Development Concept was approved by the Decree issued by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 29 December 2012. Development of human capital and effective social protection system in the country is among the top priorities pursued by the strategic plan. This Concept and stemming from it strategies, state programmes, national action plans, which were approved to cover specific priority sectors, will be used for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, along with introducing other mechanisms, if required.

Prioritization

One distinctive feature of the SDGs is their universality, i.e. the entire SDG agenda should be implemented by all countries of the world. Nevertheless, particular topics and targets will be of higher priority than others given a country’s specific circumstances.

Question 2:

What is your Government’s approach to identify SDGs and targets that have priority for your particular country context?

Improvement of social protection, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, environmental protection, counteracting adverse impacts of the fuel and energy complex on environment, and transition to ‘green economy’ are considered a priority.

Adaptation

When devising national and local policies, experience suggests that global goals and targets may be adapted to national circumstances and that objectives, targets and indicators are developed and chosen that are in addition or complementary to the global agenda.

Question 3:

How does your Government foresee to transform global SDGs and targets into local objectives, targets and indicators (“localization” or “nationalization”)?

The Government is going to adapt the global SDGs to local goals through “contextualization” (considering the current social and economic contexts). Since environment has no boundaries, addressing such issues as regional environmental problems, forced migration of people caused by conflicts, protection of historical architectural monuments and cultural heritage, jointly with the respective international organisations and neighbouring countries, is considered important.

Governance and budgeting

The SDGs are widely seen as an integrated agenda that encourages holistic policy-making and cross-sectoral cooperation. As such, they may have an impact on institutional and governance structures as well as on processes for resource allocation.

Question 4:

Does your Government envisage any changes in the budgeting processes and governance structures due to the SDGs, and which institution in your Government will oversee SDG implementation in your country?

While formulating the state budget, it is planned to systematically increase the amount allocated for improving areas that are of paramount importance for achieving sustainable development, especially such sectors as education, healthcare and environmental protection.

The Ministry of Economy and other concerned institutions will oversee the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Stakeholder involvement

SDG implementation will require forging partnerships and collaboration between a range of actors. This will also have a bearing on the work of governments with other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia.

Question 5:

How does your Government envisage to strengthen existing and build new partnerships with other stakeholders for the purpose of SDG implementation?

The Government plans to hold bilateral, multilateral meetings, roundtables, seminars etc. to initiate discussions with all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, etc., and to generate recommendations and stimulate deliberative decision-making to implement the SDGs.

UN role in planning and implementation

As recognized in inter-governmental fora, the UN will play a critical role in support of SDG planning and implementation. Some key UN functions and services include providing fora for policy dialogue and exchange; international legal instruments, norms, regulations and standards; policy advice and expertise; capacity-building and technical cooperation. Based on the feedback from its member States, the UN system at the regional level will work towards strengthening and improving regional UN structures and processes and inter-agency cooperation to provide the most 'fit for purpose' SDG-related services.

Question 6:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role of the UN system in the region² in assisting with SDG planning and implementation? Please highlight possible areas of improvement as well as any suggestions you may have.

The Government expects any impactful assistance (e.g. holding discussions, facilitation of deliberative decisions and ensuring their implementation) from the UN regional structures in the implementation of the SDGs, especially in addressing such issues as serious regional environmental problems; assessment of and recovery from the damage to environment, cultural monuments and social infrastructure caused by conflicts; protection of rights of refugees and internally displaced people; protection of historical architectural monuments and cultural

² UNECE, R-UNDG, regional or subregional offices or units of UN entities, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, UN Country Teams active in the region.

heritage. At the same time, it would be useful if any guidance on the development of qualitative reports on the implementation of SDGs and their publication is made available on the UN websites.

Data and Monitoring

While the development of statistical indicators for the SDGs is ongoing, there are many calls for a “data revolution” to ensure that high-quality data will be available to monitor progress under the SDGs. This may involve more and better data, disaggregated data, new data sources, and building and strengthening statistical capacities on the ground.

Question 7:

How does your Government envisage to address the need for data, to strengthen statistical capacities and to monitor SDG progress?

The Government plans to improve statistical data, bring the national statistics system to conformity with international standards, and ensure development of a single information system of the state statistics agencies, including e-statistics.

It is envisaged to include data on sustainable development in the relevant national statistical indicators that are published annually; as well as conduct nation-wide surveys of various social sectors (e.g. education, healthcare, social protection, environmental protection, etc.) to inform the policy-makers.

Assessment of progress

Based on a solid data foundation, it will be crucial to identify the reasons for SDG progress and shortcomings as well as to derive appropriate policy interventions and corrections.

Question 8:

How does your Government envisage to identify the drivers of satisfactory or unsatisfactory SDG progress and to draw the related policy conclusions?

To monitor the implementation of the SDGs, the Government plans to use international approaches and methods in holding nation-wide surveys of poverty, unemployment and environmental protection (including water resources, emissions, state of utilization and neutralization of hazardous industrial waste), assessment of

and recovery from the damages to natural and historical resources caused by the conflict. At the same time, the recommendations and suggestions made by the international and regional organizations will be considered to ensure the implementation of the SDGs

Reporting

National reports are recognized as important cornerstones in the future SDG follow-up process. Typically, they will be government-led and involve a range of other stakeholders. The format and content of national reports is expected to depend on data availability and other constraints. Sharing national reports for discussion and mutual learning could be beneficial for all stakeholders, including at the subregional and regional levels.

Question 9:

What is the current (even preliminary) thinking of your Government regarding possible modalities for reporting on SDG progress at the national level in your country, what are the constraints, and what should be the channels used to share these national reports internationally?

The Government plans to involve the relevant ministries, committees, non-governmental organizations, concerned international and other organizations in the process of preparation of the progress reports on the SDGs by benefitting from the best practices (and mechanisms being used internationally) and ensuring wider public engagement. The national progress reports will be published in different languages through the relevant open electronic resources that are available in the country. At the same time, the reports will be submitted to UN Agencies operating at the country level.

UN role in follow-up and review

In addition to providing a possible regional platform (see question 11), the role of the UN in SDG follow-up and review could include statistical support, synthesis of national reports, preparation of thematic reports and other services.

Question 10:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role and services of the UN system in the region² in SDG follow-up and review?

While preparing national progress reports, there will be a need for assistance from the United Nations regional structures in providing access to statistics (global, regional, and specific sectors related data, etc.), to learn from the different country experiences in evaluation on SDGs, and help conduct analysis and compare country-specific indicators. The Government plans to engage the leading experts to benefit from the best international practices in the area of sustainable development.

Regional platform

The 2030 Agenda highlights the opportunities of follow-up and review at the regional level for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. Regional reviews should draw on national-level reviews and build on existing review mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage, supported by the Regional Commissions.³ Earlier, the General Assembly had invited the Regional Commissions to hold annual meetings in preparation of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).⁴

Question 11:

How could a regional platform for follow-up and review be designed that integrates national experiences and existing review mechanisms and channels the findings to the global level in a coherent manner?

The UN regional structures could share via various UN websites the recommendations for achieving the SDGs, which could be generated by meetings/discussions convened within the existing regional organizations, inter-governmental (or regional) programmes, inter-governmental commissions, etc., in order to (i) provide a venue for deliberations on SDGs in general, as well as consultations on specific goals, (ii) encourage deliberative decision-making, and (iii) ensure the SDGs' implementation.

³ See outcome document of UN Sustainable Development Summit "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", paras 80 and 81.

⁴ A/RES/67/290, para 13.