

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 UN Development Group (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

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REMARKS:*	

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:
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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?

Government of Georgia has prioritized SDGs taking into account the country development context and started working on adjusting and integrating SDG targets into national policy framework. Instead of creating separate new structures and processes in support of SDGs, the Government will make sure that the existing ones are supporting national implementation of SDGs in a meaningful way.

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?

SDGs and SDG targets were analysed in a multi-stakeholder consultative environment within the Government against existing development agenda, policies and priorities determined by national strategic papers and government action plans. Administration of the Government in collaboration with the line ministries identified 12 SDGs with 76 targets that have priority given the Georgian context.

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”)?

Government of Georgia established a Joint Task Force for the nationalization of SDGs and identified priority SDGs and targets. As mentioned above, global targets were compared to the national agenda and were subsequently transformed given the local reality. They are reflected in the Annual Work Plan of the Government, which encompasses all sectorial and cross-sectorial objectives and targets. The development of benchmarks through which the respective targets will be measured is still work in progress and will be introduced as soon as the final piece of the SDG package – SDG Indicators are developed by IAEG-SDGs and adopted in the UN. Once these indicators are in place, the Government of Georgia will analyze those against national ones to achieve greater efficiency and avoid duplication, and will come up with the final set of indicators.

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?

Changes in the budgeting processes and governance structures are not envisaged due to SDGs. However, since Georgia has been advancing its PFM system towards the program budgeting, greater linkage between the national priorities and respective policies and the State Budget will be established. Given the fact that SDGs are integral part of the government agenda, the above-mentioned effort will in turn, support linking SDGs to the national budget and furthermore, identify gaps for potential intervention of donors. SDG implementation oversight will be conducted by the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department of the Government Administration.

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?

Administration of the Government will use various discussion platforms with donor community, private sector and CSOs to mobilize support for the actions and initiatives launched to achieve national development objectives and nationalized SDG targets. For instance, in the course of February-March/2016, Administration of the Government, with the support of UN Resident Coordinator's Office and a local CSO, plans to conduct 5 regional meetings dedicated to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and nationalized SDGs. This practice will continue and expand so that all stakeholders are informed and involved in this process.

As for donor community, the Government of Georgia will use existing platform of regular Thematic Coordination Group meetings to involve foreign partners in the SDG implementation. Each policy or reform presented will be linked to each SDG.

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.

UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes are actively engaged with the Government of Georgia on issues related to SDG advocacy, planning and implementation. Government and UN country team identified 5 focus areas for the 2016-2020 partnership framework. UN system can most effectively respond to the SDG-related priorities and development challenges of Georgia through the attainment of expected results and resource mobilization targets of this framework. However, UN system can further support Georgia's implementation agenda through assistance in

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.

information-sharing with other countries in the region or through South-to-South cooperation to learn how SDGs are implemented; support to strengthening the national statistics systems, including those in line ministries, as well as the development of “big data”; assistance in raising awareness about SDGs and their progress and establishing respective platforms for partnering different stakeholders.

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?

Administration of the Government leads the Policy Planning System Reform process which will gradually introduce Government policy implementation M&E mechanisms. Given the convergence and inter-linkages of SDG targets with the national policies and priorities, SDG monitoring will be also covered by the new M&E system. In this context, strengthening national statistical capacities (National Statistics Office, Analytical Departments of Line Ministries, Big Data-producing public and private sector stakeholders) is a priority.

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?

Based on government policy implementation and performance monitoring.

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?

Government of Georgia plans to prepare and share National SDG Progress Report through public and diplomatic channels at least once in every 4 years.

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?

In addition to the support mentioned in Question 6, UN system can add value through its statistical support, support in the preparation of national reports, preparation of periodic SDG-related thematic reports and support regional as well as in-country knowledge and experience sharing events.

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?

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.

Regional platform for follow-up and review should be oriented towards addressing challenges in national implementation, be of an inclusive nature encouraging government focal points, field experts, private sector, CSOs, bi/multilateral donors and UN system entities to share lessons learned. Periodicity of such gatherings should be determined well in advance.
