

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

Please complete

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

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?

The European integration agenda and objective implementation concerning sustainable development are two complementary and indivisible lines of action.

Moldova will translate the SDGs into national quantifiable targets.

The post-2015 agenda becomes the main framework for action and commitment to Moldova's development effort therefore Central Government authorities will review their strategies / plans for their particular sector through the prism of Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and as the relevance of the objectives and targets for Moldova to be provided for the monitoring of achievements for the next 15 years.

Efforts towards sustainable development requires simultaneous progress on three fronts, in a joint and integrated approach to economic issues, social and environmental. Principles of SDGs are becoming more embedded in national development strategies, reforming policies and within the creation of institutions that will be in charge with the implementation of these plans effectively. At the same time, the Government realizes that the change shall be done not only through targeted interventions in specific fields but also through comprehensive programs that shall have multiple effects.

The basis of the Government's Programme for 2016-2018 has been the implementation of the Association Agreement between Moldova - European Union, particularly through the National Action Plan, approved through the Government's Decision no. 808 of October 7, 2014. With joint efforts we will be able to achieve an advance in the implementation of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2020" and other sectoral strategies developed recently.

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?

Undoubtedly some SDGs are more relevant to our country context than others, therefore our Government's approach is to align them to the existing development strategies. At the moment there are 8 areas for improvement which include fair trading, roads' infrastructure, energy sector, agriculture and others, therefore priority would be given to the SDGs that are in line with the aforementioned target areas.

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")?

An effective deployment of SDGs is based on teamwork, both at the expert level and at the institutional level, furthermore a collaboration between has been established in order to maximize results; the following relies not only on a narrow sectoral approach, but on a cross-sectorial approach with the involvement of all sectors and segments of society.

However, in order to ensure success in achieving set objectives, it is necessary to facilitate the active involvement of relevant authorities and institutions both at the central and regional level. Lastly, a development that serves the interests of all people can not be achieved without their active involvement in the transformation process.

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?

Majority of the SDGs are financially planned for and included in the Government Action Plan. The current one for the years 2016-18 is being finalized now. Due to political instability we have been facing lately, the Action Plan and other strategic documents had to be rewritten a few times, hence we are running slightly behind the schedule.

Nevertheless the support of the development partners was and will remain very important, either if we talk in terms of technical assistance or financial contributions. The Government is also looking forward to intensify its cooperation with the civil society by creating a wider and more powerful resource base that would allow achieving desired goals.

The unit which will be overseeing the implementation of SDGs will be the 'Policy Coordination, External Assistance and Central Public Administration Reform' which is part of the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova.

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 of Moldova is planning to set up meetings/workshops for civil society and other stakeholders to meaningfully engage in the review of national strategies and plans to achieve the SDGs, and in the monitoring and evaluation of the progress at national, subnational and local levels. It is paramount that the NGOs/Development Partners/Private Sector and other stakeholders are able to operate freely and effectively in pursuit of the SDGs, by ensuring timely access to up to date information as well as freedom of the press and other forms of media, peaceful assembly and association.

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 should ideally provide Terms of Reference for each of the participating stakeholders, detailing their role and how can they support the planning and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Possibly organize more workshops on monitoring and reviewing the new indicators. Create Online Community Space to which all stakeholders will have access to where all presentations, relevant information etc would be stored, as well as an online helpdesk.

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?

We have an online platform for budgeting, reporting, monitoring and implementation of the National Strategies and Action Plans www.monitorizare.gov.md.
The best solution would be to create a separate section for SDGs, where all line ministries and involved stakeholders can report on the indicators and provide relevant data. The Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the State Chancellery is responsible for coordination of all External Assistance and is acting as a focal point in different development programs and cooperation, therefore would assure that the data inputted is qualitative and complements national monitoring.
It is paramount to track progress in the implementation of SDGs, hence the monitoring should be open, inclusive participatory and transparent. The submitted data should be rigorous and evidence-based.

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.

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?

Firstly, monitoring should be done at national, regional and global levels. It is important to outline a setup of reporting and identify areas of statistics where indicators need to be developed. Additionally, a strategy should be developed in order to reinforce communication with data providers and users, and solution/s on how to deal with required disaggregation of data.

Secondly, there should be a plan in place for capacity building, hence international agencies should always collaborate and develop an indicator list for the UNECE region as well as baselines for targets.

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?

Implementation of SDGs requires efforts of multiple stakeholders at different governance levels. Priorities at the country level should be set based on available resources and have realistic agenda considering national funding and potential private funding. The overview of existing policies that track SDG-related areas should avoid double monitoring and build on existing mechanisms (like aforementioned online platform www.monitorizare.gov.md). Also, it is very important to base implementation and monitoring framework on the MDGs experience.

Subsequently, there should be links between national, regional and global level monitoring, and there should be a national focal point appointed for monitoring of SDG implementation. The tasks should be distributed between the stakeholders evenly, and they should be responsible for the quality of data, which will be really helpful in establishing data flows and data provision.

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?

Our Government would need support in accelerating progress on SDG targets, mainly using the gained experience from MDG Acceleration Framework. Statistic support and analysis as well as thematic reviews would also be extremely useful.

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 SDGs, along with their targets (as well as indicators to be developed in 2016) will be binding on member states of the United Nations. Our Government acknowledges

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.

that the levels of poverty, environmental degradation and climate change as well as inequality of various dimensions, among others, are unacceptable and must be tackled as a matter of urgency in concerted global and national efforts. The SDGs in many tackle the “unfinished business” of the MDGs, in addition to new issues in development. Therefore, every country’s progress should be presented at the annual meetings, where we could compare the approach of different Governments to implement the SDGs and identify areas for improvement.
