

Integrating Human Rights into the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Follow-up and Review: Ensuring Accountability for the SDGs

Summary: Delivering on the post-2015 agenda through monitoring and accountability

Achieving the effective implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda will depend on the creation of a strong ‘follow-up and review’ framework to ensure that SDG commitments are met. The follow up and review architecture, at national, regional and global levels should be universal, participatory, and transparent. It must ensure accountability of all relevant actors including the private sector, and track that ‘no one is being left behind’ by monitoring progress with data fully disaggregated by population groups. All Member States should participate in universal, multi-stakeholder periodic reviews at the global level, and build strong national review processes. Monitoring and review should be evidence based, on the basis of a data revolution underpinned by human rights.

An effective accountability architecture will be critical for the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As proposed in the UN Secretary General’s Synthesis Report, there should be a universal review process built on “*national ownership, broad participation and full transparency*.”¹ The universal review process should function in close relationship with national and regional review processes.

The global High Level Political Forum (HLPF) has already been mandated by Member States to build on existing reviews and existing reporting mechanisms¹, and this should include systematically integrating existing reports and recommendations generated by international human rights mechanisms that are relevant to the SDGs. This should include incorporating reports and recommendations from the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the human rights treaty bodies, and Special Procedures.

General principles to guide the follow-up and review of the SDGs

For a truly transformative human rights-based development agenda, the general principles guiding the follow-up and review processes at global, regional and national levels should be based on the human rights principles of *universality, participation, accountability, and non-discrimination and equality*:

Universality: The Post-2015 Development Agenda is a *universal* agenda, applicable to all States. While participation in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be ‘voluntary, while encouraging reporting’², the widest possible participation should be encouraged, leading towards the norm of universal participation of all countries in a global review process. The UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review process can serve as inspiration in this regard.

Universality also implies that all goals will be applicable to all States, but this does not preclude differentiation to take account of States’ different capacities and responsibilities. However there should also be clear and transparent criteria for national adaptation, and this should be validated by a participatory process to adapt global targets to the national level.

¹ See Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General [A/69/700](#), *The Road to Dignity by 2030*, 4 December 2014

² See Resolution [A/RES/67/290](#), *Format and organizational aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*

Participation: The follow up and review architecture at global, regional and national levels should be *participatory* and facilitate the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including civil society. This should include the commitment to making information publicly available, facilitating multi-stakeholder inputs into the monitoring and reporting process, and ensuring an enabling environment in which all stakeholders are free to engage without exception. Broad-based consultation with a range of stakeholders should help in identifying relevant priorities and in setting the appropriate levels of national ambition.

Accountability, including of the private sector: All actors involved in SDG financing and implementation, including the private sector, should be accountable under the global and national follow up and review processes. While the SDGs themselves are not legally binding, many of the targets link directly to States' existing binding human rights obligations and there is a need to establish prompt and effective mechanisms of redress for cases where these obligations are not met.

States are not only accountable for meeting their own human rights commitments in relation to the SDGs, but must also ensure that all those involved in implementing and financing the SDGs act in accordance with international human rights standards. The reporting of progress at all levels should therefore include an analysis of the alignment of the national regulatory framework, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and private sector activities with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Equality and non-discrimination: If the SDGs are to avoid the MDG trap of focusing on aggregates and national averages, and to meet the central imperative of 'leaving no one behind' and challenging inequalities and non-discrimination, the follow up and review should aim to monitor progress for all, with the aim of reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination. This will require investing in the disaggregation of data that goes well beyond gender and geography.

Data should be fully disaggregated by population group, in line with the grounds of discrimination and related categories identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *race/ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status*. In addition, since "other status" is not exhaustive, the grounds should also include those specified by the international human rights mechanisms including inter alia. *age, nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation*. Other relevant categories of disaggregation in each country context should be determined in an inclusive, participatory process at the national and sub-national levels, with the direct involvement of the relevant population groups themselves.

GLOBAL LEVEL: A participatory, universal global review

At the global level, the follow up and review process should include a universal review under the HLPF, with all States participating in at least five-year cycles. This should be a participatory, multi-stakeholder, universal periodic review for all countries, organised under the auspices of the HLPF. The objectives of the reviews should be to assess progress and constraints in implementation on the basis of constructive dialogue among peers. The global country review process will also be important in providing a unique opportunity to discuss global "means of implementation" commitments.

As the HLPF is already mandated to build on existing review mechanisms, relevant reports and recommendations coming from the international human rights mechanisms should be systematically integrated into the review process. This should include making use of reports and recommendations from Human Rights Council's UPR monitoring process, as well as reports and recommendations from

the *human rights treaty bodies* and *Special Procedures*, as many recommendations from these mechanisms will be directly relevant to the SDG issues under review at the HLPF. For example, in advance of UPR country reviews, ‘*compilation reports*’ are already produced for each participating country, and these reports could be submitted directly to the HLPF for country reviews. (In addition, it could be possible to produce ‘*compilation reports*’ on specific thematic human rights issues relevant to specific goals, which could similarly be submitted for any thematic reviews).

For reasons of efficiency as well as effectiveness, the cycles for the HLPF reviews could be harmonised with the existing UPR cycles. Building on the modalities and experience of the UPR, in each subsequent cycle of the global country reviews, the HLPF should follow-up on recommendations made to States at previous reviews. In addition, the main inputs for the review of country progress could also follow UPR-style modalities as proposed in the SG’s synthesis report, including ‘*a Government report, a national stakeholder report, with contributions from national non-governmental actors, and a report compiling existing information and data from UN agencies and international financial institutions, all based upon globally harmonised formats*’.

The global HLPF review should be participatory and based on interactive dialogues, open to all relevant stakeholders, including civil society. It should be accessible to the public through live webcasts and an online knowledge platform in multiple languages, and its Secretariat should be adequately resourced with funding to facilitate broad participation.

NATIONAL LEVEL: A participatory national process for accountability

At the national level, all States should establish a participatory national follow up and review process, to review progress at least every two years. The national review process should be the most important part of the follow up and review architecture, based on the relationship between governments and the people. As proposed in the synthesis report of the Secretary-General, the country-led component for accountability should be built on existing national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad, multi-stakeholder participation. It would establish benchmarks, review the national policy framework, chart progress, learn lessons, consider solutions and ensure that policies and programmes are on the right track for meeting the SDG goals and targets.

The national reviews of SDG progress should also integrate reports and recommendations from the existing human rights review processes in which States already participate. They should incorporate information from existing national mechanisms for oversight and review on matters related to the SDGs, including the parliament or other legitimate decision-making body, local government authorities, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and ombudsmen’s offices, and standing national reporting and coordination mechanisms for human rights.

REGIONAL LEVEL: sharing of experiences

At the regional level, regional reviews will primarily be an opportunity for countries to share and learn from best practices and to discuss common regional challenges. The regional process should help to prepare countries for their participation in the global HLPF review, supporting rather than replacing the direct feedback of the national reviews into the global level reviews process. All regional review mechanisms should also allow for multi-stakeholder participation, to ensure the legitimacy, independence and transparency of the regional review process.

¹ In line with Resolution [A/RES/67/290](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 9 July 2013