

Follow-up to major intergovernmental processes

Background Note for the ECESA Plus Principals Meeting 10 July 2017, UN Headquarters, New York

1. High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and Voluntary National Reviews

The High-level political forum on sustainable development will take place from 10 to 19 July 2017. As decided in General Assembly resolution 70/299, the theme of 2017 HLPF will be “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”. Among other mandates, it will conduct annual review on means of implementation (SDG17); it will also conduct in-depth reviews of the following SDGs and their interlinkages, including, if appropriate, with other goals:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The first week will discuss all 6 SDGs (1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) as well as SDG17. In addition, sessions on regional and sub-regional implementation, science-policy interface, MOIs and countries in special situations as well as a multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held.

During the ministerial segment, the following 44 countries will be presenting their VNRs: Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

Seventeen countries have already expressed their interest to present VNRs in 2018.

2. The Ocean Conference

Following the decisions of the General Assembly in resolutions 70/226 and 70/303, the *high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development* took place on 5-9 June 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York. Thousands of participants attended the Conference, including Heads of State and Government, other high-level representatives from Governments, the United Nations system, Intergovernmental Organizations, as well as the full participation of civil society, the scientific community, the business sector and other relevant stakeholders.

The Conference raised global awareness of the ocean issues, and produced strong outcomes, including an intergovernmentally agreed political declaration “*Our ocean, our future: call for action*”, the co-chairs’ summaries of seven partnership dialogues, and 1,380 voluntary commitments from

Governments, the UN system, IGOs, the Major Groups and other stakeholders - individually or in partnership – to advance the implementation of SDG 14 and related targets.

In the Conference, many delegations stressed that effective follow-up to the Ocean Conference will be critical to ensuring that all nations are working together to meet their SDG14 implementation obligations, inclusive of science, business and civil society.

Under the guidance of the President of General Assembly the Co-Presidents of the Ocean Conference (Fiji and Sweden), the Secretariat has started an analysis of the voluntary commitments and the way forward on their follow-up, monitoring and implementation.

3. UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism

The 2030 Agenda launched the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to support the achievement of the SDGs. It is comprised of: (a) UN inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs (IATT) (currently 35 member organizations including the World Bank) and an instituted group of 10 high-level representatives of civil society, the private sector and the scientific community (“10-Member group”); (b) on-line platform to be developed to facilitate the matching of technology supply and demand; and (c) the UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum). The TFM process is currently coordinated and co-chaired by DESA/DSD and UNEP New York office.

The engagement of ECESA Plus members in the mandated Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) has continuously been strengthened through the IATT. Membership has increased to 35 active members. The IATT has worked closely together in successfully organizing the 2nd Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (“STI Forum”) from 15 to 16 May 2017.

The online platform is one of the key components of the TFM. Following the recent completion of the independent assessment of the online platform by the ODI (UK), CASS (China), and DNV GL (Netherlands), joint work by IATT and the 10-Member Group has now started on the actual development of the TFM platform.

Recently, TFM members have also started cooperating on a joint capacity building pilot project initiated by UNIDO, and on an assessment of the impacts of automation and artificial intelligence on the SDGs which was originally initiated by DESA and ECLAC and moved forward through the AI for Good Summit organized by ITU in June 2017.

4. Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)

The Global Sustainable Development Report is now a quadrennial publication, with the first one due for publication in 2019. This is one of the only two mandated publications for the HLPF in that year, the other being the (annual) report of the Secretary General on the quantitative assessment of progress towards the individual goals and targets that constitute the SDGs.

As mandated, a fifteen member independent group of scientists was appointed by the Secretary General to draft the report. The co-chairs of the group are Mr Peter Messerli (Switzerland) and Ms Endah Murninigtayas (Indonesia). The other members represent various thematic areas and come from a range of countries.

The group is supported by a task team consisting of UNDESA (as the Secretariat), along with UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO and the World Bank.

The group held its first face-to-face meeting in February 2017, and will meet again over 14-19 July in NY. The second meeting will include a drafting workshop for developing detailed outlines of various sections of the report, as well as opportunities for dialogue between the scientists and the Member

States. The meeting will also identify priority outreach opportunities for the group to connect to scientists and experts in other fora or meetings.

5. Financing for Development

ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up

The second ECOSOC FfD Forum was held on 22-25 May 2017. The Forum included: a one-day special high-level meeting of ECOSOC with the World Bank, IMF, WTO and UNCTAD; ministerial round tables, which provided a high-level platform for sharing national experiences in mainstreaming the Addis Agenda into national development strategies; a series of thematic expert discussions; updates from other relevant fora; and a stakeholder dialogue.

The 2017 Forum was considered a success both in terms of its outcome and proceedings. The annual report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (IATF) provided the major substantive input to the Forum, and served as a basis for the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. The 26- paragraph outcome document, which was agreed in a timely manner, reaffirms key elements of the Addis Agenda and contains commitments on policies and actions. It also mandated the IATF to carry out substantive work in eight focus areas, and to include findings of this work in its 2018 report. The Forum's intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations serve as an important input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The FfD Forum is establishing itself as an inclusive platform for discussion on a broad range of issues in Financing for Development. Participants at the 2017 Forum looked forward to future meetings, and called for utilizing the Forum as a platform for sustained dialogue on concrete national experiences in implementing the Addis Agenda.

Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on FfD

The Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (IATF) published its first substantive report in April 2017, in advance of the second ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up. The report was well received by all stakeholders, in particular by Member States. It identified progress in all seven action areas of the Addis Agenda. However, a difficult global environment has impeded individual and collective efforts, and many implementation gaps remain. Both economic factors – such as low commodity prices and low trade growth, and volatile capital flows – and political and environmental factors – including large-scale humanitarian crises– impacted national implementation efforts.

In response, the Task Force proposed a combination of national and international actions to change the trajectory of the global economy and support countries in achieving the SDGs, including through long-term and quality investments in sustainable development. Recognizing that growth alone will not suffice, the report also put forward a number of options to directly ameliorate living conditions of the poor and vulnerable, including by addressing financing challenges related to social protection floors.

In assessing progress in the action areas, the Task Force found that many countries have started to bring their implementation efforts together into coherent financing frameworks. Noting that national efforts alone will not suffice, it also called on the international community to meet its commitments on multilateral cooperation and support, including on ODA.

The IATF was convened by the Secretary-General in December 2015, as mandated by the Addis Agenda. It comprises over 50 UN agencies, programmes and offices, the regional commissions and other relevant international institutions such as the OECD and the FSB.

Platform for Collaboration on Tax

The IMF, OECD, UN and World Bank established the Platform for Collaboration on Tax in April 2016. The Platform aims to better support governments by providing a structured and transparent framework for (i) producing concrete joint outputs and deliverables under an agreed work plan; (ii) strengthening dynamic interactions between standard setting, capacity building and technical assistance; and (iii) sharing information on activities more systematically.

At the request of the G20, the Platform prepared, in 2016, a joint report on “Enhancing the Effectiveness of External Support in Building Tax Capacity in Developing Countries” and an update on its activities in 2017. The Platform is currently working on a series of toolkits to address selected tax issues of particular relevance to developing countries.

The Platform is also working on organizing its first global conference, to be held at UNHQ in New York on 14-16 February 2018, under the theme “Taxation and the SDGs”. Discussions will be structured around five thematic areas: 1) domestic resource mobilization and the State; 2) the role of taxation in supporting sustainable economic growth, investment and trade; 3) tax and the social dimension: addressing poverty, inequality and health; 4) tax capacity development; and 5) international tax cooperation.

6. Statistics

IAEG follow up

The Statistical Commission of ECOSOC, at its 48th session in March 2017, adopted the global SDG indicator framework for the follow-up and review of progress towards achieving the SDGs. The global indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) through an open and transparent process involving all stakeholders. The group, established by the Statistical Commission in 2015 with the task of developing the indicator framework and addressing related methodological issues, is composed of 27 members.

The Economic and Social Council, on 7 June 2017, adopted the Statistical Commission’s resolution on data and statistics for the 2030 Agenda, which contains the global indicator framework. The resolution will be forwarded to the General Assembly for adoption in early July.

The agreed global indicator framework contains 232 indicators, addressing each and every one of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Commission also recognized that the development of a robust and high-quality indicator framework is a technical process that will need to continue over time and emphasized that the global indicators are intended for global follow-up and review and are not necessarily applicable in all national contexts.

SDG Progress Report

The 2017 annual report of the Secretary-General: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66) was made available on 8 June 2017 as an input into the deliberations of Member States for the HLPF (as mandated by 2030 Agenda, para 83). The report is prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the United Nations system and is based on the global indicator framework developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 will be launched by the Secretary-General on 17 July 2017 during the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF. The report presents data and analysis on SDGs for a wider audience with charts, infographics and analysis on selected indicators for which data are already available.

The two progress reports on the Sustainable Development Goals provide an overview of progress made towards the 17 Goals in the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda highlighting the most

significant gaps, challenges and progress made.

The UN World Data Forum

The first United Nations World Data Forum took place in Cape Town, South Africa, on 15-18 January 2017, hosted by the Government of South Africa and Statistics South Africa, with support from UNSD acting as Secretariat. The UN World Data Forum was agreed by the UN Statistical Commission based on a recommendation by the UN Secretary General's Independent Expert and Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

The programme included more than 80 sessions and 300 speakers. More than 1,400 participants from more than 100 countries from national statistical offices, international organizations, and civil society groups, private sector and academia, as well as political leaders and sustainable development advocates attended the Forum. The event was a unique opportunity for major producers and users of data and statistics to collaborate in launching new initiatives and innovative solutions that will deliver better data on all aspects of sustainable development.

The Forum concluded with the launch of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for better data to improve people's lives, and the presentation of new ideas and solutions to boost the collaboration, resources and policies needed to put the plan into action. The second Forum, as announced in Cape Town, will be held by the United Arab Emirates in October 2018.

7. World Economic and Social Survey 2017

The World Economic and Social Survey 2017 will be launched on July 13th. It reviews 70 years of the flagship publication and draws on the most pertinent lessons for the pursuit of sustainable development in the years to come. WESS 2017 argues that development progress requires robust global economic growth, solid expansion of trade, and steady access to financial resources for development. In this light, the Survey emphatically contends that the current growth trajectory in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis does not provide the enabling environment for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key lessons include: (1) The global economy needs strong institutions and coordinated international action; (2) Stability in the international monetary and trade systems underpins development; (3) Countries need adequate policy space to accelerate development; (4) International solidarity is the foundation for development and rebuilding the global economy; (5) Development is multidimensional, context-specific and about transformations, underpinned by strategic development planning and strengthened State capacity.

The past seven decades have shown the world how ineffective international policy coordination could have grave development consequences. Furthermore, the intensification of global economic integration has clearly outpaced the development of effective mechanisms for global economic governance. Against this backdrop, implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would require greater and deeper international coordination in the areas of fiscal, monetary and trade, as well as other areas that bring about structural and institutional changes.