ECESA Plus Meeting of Principals
United Nations Headquarters
New York
17 November 2015

Conclusions and action

- Participants were encouraged to continue ECESA Plus working level meetings at Director level including to share information on key work supporting the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

- ECESA Plus should also continue to support the intergovernmental processes related to the 2030 Agenda, including the SAMOA Pathway implementation.

- ECESA Plus entities were invited to review the matrix on “Intergovernmental work to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda” and submit additions and revisions to DESA.

- ECESA Plus entities were invited to provide written comments on how they will be working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda to DESA.

Summary of Discussions

Agenda Item I. Follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

a. Briefing on mandates emanating from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

b. Discussion on supporting the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Convener briefed participants on Agenda Item I. He noted the excellent cooperation and support that ECESA Plus Principals had provided to the intergovernmental negotiations of the 2030 Agenda. He underscored that much work was ongoing in the UN system to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda and outlined critical ongoing processes at the UN: (1) Preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on Global Follow-up and Review; (2) Progress on the indicator proposal by the IAEG on SDG Indicators; (3) Organization of the Financing for Development Forum in April 2016; (4) Preparation of the first Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs; (5) Preparation of the Global Sustainable Development Report; and (6) Supporting the responsibility of the High-level Political Forum as the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

1. SG Report on Global Follow-up and Review-January

The 2030 Agenda requests the Secretary General to prepare a report on global follow-up and review of implementation. The report will include proposals on the organizational arrangements for State-led reviews at HLPF and recommendations on possible reporting guidelines. It will also clarify institutional responsibilities (e.g., between GA, ECOSOC and HLPF) and provide guidance on annual HLFP themes.
He mentioned that DESA was leading the preparations with inputs from all ECESA Plus/UNTT Members. The Report will be ready by January next year. Next, the General Assembly is expected to conduct a consultation process on this basis.

2. SDGs Indicators Development-March
The IAEG on SDG Indicators, supported by DESA, has made significant progress on the indicators proposal. They are going to be reviewed by the Statistical Commission at its next session in March 2016.

The Convener stressed that quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be key to decision-making. This will require strengthened statistical capacities including enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries.

3. Financing for Development Forum-April
The ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum was created to follow-up on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The President of ECOSOC intends to convene the first forum in April and is considering its modalities.

4. Technology Facilitation Mechanism-Spring
The 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda called for the establishment of a Technology Facilitation Mechanism. One component is a Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs. With the support of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on STI for SDGs (IATT), DESA is supporting the initial preparations of the first STI Forum, which is likely to be held in spring 2016.

5. Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)
DESA will coordinate the preparations of the 2016 GSDR, which will be a key input into the work of the HLPF. The GSDR will also inform the 2016 HLPF, building on the many ideas we received from ECESA Plus Members.

6. High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF)-July
The HLPF has the crucial responsibility to serve as the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

There will be the need to work together to help mobilize respective intergovernmental bodies of the ECESA Plus membership, both the normative and operational sides, at global, regional and national levels, so that they integrate the SDGs in their work, and contribute to the forum’s thematic reviews of implementation. He noted that ECESA Plus can and should take on this task.

On these major mandates, but also in all areas related to follow-up and review, DESA will continue to engage with and inform the members of ECESA Plus. The regional fora will provide opportunities for sharing best practices and lessons learned within the regional context, relying on the regional commissions and other existing platforms.

Finally, DESA was also committed to supporting a General Assembly comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (QCPR).

The Convener called upon ECESA Plus Principals to reflect on how to adapt the various mechanisms, including ECESA Plus, to support the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda.
Existing mechanisms should be best used and adapted in a spirit of creativity and collaboration. ECESA Plus should continue to support the intergovernmental processes related to the 2030 Agenda, including the SAMOA Pathway implementation. UNTT’s work to support the elaboration of 2030 Agenda was a good example showing that the UN can work together as one to support the Member States. Effective platforms such as these would continue to work towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

He emphasized that business as usual will no longer be relevant. He noted that an integrated agenda requires integrated support to Member States, breaking silos and delivering as one. Implementation is owned by national Governments, which the UN should fully respect. He suggested strengthening communication and sharing experiences at all levels and also proposed continuing the ECESA Plus meeting at Director level. ECESA Plus should concentrate more on normative and analytical work and implementation of the 2030 Agenda should be an inclusive process with contributions by all stakeholders. No entity should be left behind.

The Convener then opened the floor for discussions.

**UNDP** noted that UN country teams (UNCTs) were currently providing support to governments to reflect the 2030 Agenda in national development plans and policies. UNCTs received an interim reference guide developed by UNDG to support countries to mainstream the 2030 Agenda. UNDP explained that it utilized the MAPS approach (mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support) to support implementation. UNDP stressed that there was no exclusive goal for any organization and that it was working collaboratively at country level across the set of 17 goals to accelerate progress. UNDP also stressed the need to align the work of the various mechanisms, such as UNDG, UNTT and others, to support the implementation process. All partners can support communication of the 2030 Agenda, strengthening partnerships for implementation and filling in the gaps in available data for monitoring and review. UNDG looked forward to the continued engagement of the WB and that IMF and IOM are also key partners.

**The Convener** emphasized that country teams were eager to support implementation and noted the importance of providing guidelines on implementation to country teams. Capacity-building was important as streamlining goals and targets in national development plans required expertise. A key focus should be on statistical capacity as timely implementation depended on data for monitoring and review.

**ESCWA** as Coordinator of the Regional Commissions underlined the role of the regional commissions in supporting Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and highlighted the significance of the regional dimension in the implementation. ESCWA stressed the need to (i) integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development; (ii) provide technical support to implementation; and (iii) facilitate effective follow-up and review. ESCWA stressed that all regional commissions have been closely working with other regional and sub-regional organizations through long standing strategic partnerships in their respective regions. For example, ESCWA has already been working with the League of Arab States, ECA with the AU, ESCAP with ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and ECLAC with CELAC, among others, to help countries in the implementation of the new Agenda, including to integrate the SDGs into their national planning and fiscal frameworks. The regional commissions had collectively developed an action plan comprising 7 key focus areas and have shared their vision and plan with the CEB, including UNDG. The regional commissions are committed to partnerships in this regard. ESCWA emphasized the specialization within integration and how important it is to work together with DESA on the capacity building of developing countries in the area of data and statistics.
ESCWA also referred to the inputs provided by the Regional Commissions to the SG report on follow-up and review and stressed the critical role of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development in this regard.

The Convener acknowledged the 7-point paper prepared by the regional commissions and welcomed cooperation with the regional commissions on ongoing key work such as the report of the Secretary-General on global follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

UN WOMEN noted that it stands ready to support the work on the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda. Paragraph 20 of the 2030 Agenda calls for the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda. UN Women stressed that follow-up and review had to be gender sensitive and referred to goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls as well as to gender sensitive targets in 11 other SDGs. UN Women noted that the Commission on the Status of Women will be able to play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective. Cross-cutting thematic reviews should address issues such as conducive policy environment; building institutions that can support integrated actions; focus on data; tracking investments. All thematic reviews should be based on gender analysis.

The Convener assured UN WOMEN that gender issues featured high in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

UNIDO noted the importance of partnerships to achieve the SDGs and referred to its role, together with other entities, in the implementation of goal 9 on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation. UNIDO confirmed its commitment to contribute to facilitating the implementation of the SDGs and to work together with peer agencies and learn from their experiences.

The Convener referred to the upcoming 16th session of the UNIDO general conference and acknowledged UNIDO’s responsibility in the area of inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

OHRLLS indicated that implementation of the 2030 Agenda was not business as usual and required new ways and means of working together. While all goals and targets were equally important, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states had expectations regarding specific targets. OHRLLS also mentioned the role of partnerships and the significance of creating awareness at global level. At the regional and national levels, South-South cooperation was important and noted that regional cooperation was crucial for effective implementation and referred, in particular, to the role of regional development banks.

The Convener acknowledged the concerns of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states and agreed that good cooperation was indispensable for successful implementation.

WFP emphasized that UN agencies shared responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Technology should be made available to support cost-effective implementation as technological support was crucial for monitoring progress. Monitoring was challenging, even for countries with technological capacity. Capacity-building at country level was crucial to overcome these challenges. WFP requested that the Committee on World Food Security be added to the matrix on “Intergovernmental work to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”.

The Convener noted that the importance of data for monitoring could not be overemphasized. He invited ECESA Plus entities to review the matrix on intergovernmental work and submit revisions to his office.
UNCCD said that discussions at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-12) in Ankara in October 2015 had been dominated by the 2030 Agenda. UNCCD stressed the importance of taking into account the decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties to the three Rio Conventions to ensure the national ownership of the Agenda and noted that coordination among the UN development system would contribute to providing effective integrated support to strengthen national capacity to achieve the SDGs.

ILO conveyed that the governing body at its recent session had an extensive discussion on the implementation of the SDGs. ILO had also been deliberating on how best to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. While no SDG is owned by any organization, ILO’s specialized expertise would contribute, in particular, to certain goals and targets.

UNOPS indicated that as a service provider, undertaking transactional, managerial and implementational services, it could help closing capacity gaps that required rapid responses. UNOPS said it was looking forward to working with ECESA Plus and other UN entities.

IMF discussed, in particular, the need for domestic revenue mobilization and enhancing support for developing countries in building capacity in tax policy and administration, including international tax issues. The IMF has already taken the steps to define its role in support of the SDGs and the financing for development commitments under the AAAA with broad support by its membership at the recent IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings in Lima. This relates to its main activities: Surveillance, access to Fund resources, in particular increased access to concessional lending facilities for low-income countries, as well as capacity building technical assistance in the areas of IMF expertise. As countries are expected to take the lead in defining their respective priorities under the 2030 Agenda, the Fund’s support is designed to help them strengthen the policy tools and enhance domestic resource mobilization and management to put them in a better position to implement their priority goals.

UNITAR summarized the challenges in achieving the SDGs as follows: (i) implement; (ii) finance; (iii) measure; (iv) engage; and (v) integrate. Based on its experience in designing and delivering training for national policy-makers and other stakeholders, UNITAR had produced a first set of 6 training modules to give basic guidance to countries to facilitate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

UNHCR noted that the explicit recognition in the 2030 Agenda that refugees and internally displaced people are among the most vulnerable is a key entry point for ensuring their inclusion in country level strategies. Cautioning that this will not be without difficulty, UNHCR will identify a number of countries where refugees and stateless are a statistically relevant portion of the population and work with partners to ensure that the SDGs reach all population groups.

WB acknowledged that the engagement of the UN system and other stakeholders was crucial for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Clarity on stakeholder engagement and early implementation were important. World Bank informed participants that the SDGs were already being integrated into its work programme. It stressed that more countries needed to reflect SDGs in national plans. The World Bank would submit revisions to the matrix on intergovernmental work.

Agenda Item II. Any other business: No issues were raised under this agenda item

The Convener reiterated that he strongly encouraged the ECESA Plus communication at Directors' level. He invited participants who did not have an opportunity to speak at the meeting, due to time constraints, to provide written comments to DESA on how they will be working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Convener thanked ECESA Plus members for their active participation and then adjourned the meeting.