

ECESA Plus Meeting of Principals
United Nations Headquarters New York
19 July 2016

Agenda items

- I. Follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- II. Follow-up to Addis Ababa Action Agenda
- III. Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators
- IV. Any Other Business

Key recommendations

- ECESA Plus entities are encouraged to participate in and contribute to the regional forums on sustainable development.
- The 2017 report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on FfD should be analytical and begin to capture progress at national and global levels.
- The Regional Commissions, UNDESA and UNDG could sign a Memorandum of Understanding to clarify and agree on their respective support role to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to avoid duplication and strengthen coordination in supporting Member States.
- A retreat of ECESA Plus Principals should be convened to discuss substantive issues related to implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Introduction

The Convener briefed participants on the progress made under each agenda item since the last meeting of ECESA Plus Principals in November 2015.

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

- Draft GA resolution on Follow-up and review

The Convener noted that consultations on draft GA resolution on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is still pending, with one particular political issue. However, Member States reached consensus on a number of specific decisions, including (i) the themes to be considered at the 2017, 2018 and 2019 sessions of HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC; (ii) the specific SDGs that will be reviewed in-depth during these sessions; (iii) the update of the voluntary common reporting guidelines by the Secretary-General; and (iv) the joint meeting of the high-level segment of ECOSOC and the three ministerial days of the HLPF.

- Voluntary national reviews

22 countries have agreed to present voluntary national reviews at the 2016 session of the HLPF. Preparations for these reviews benefited from regional expert group meetings in Bangkok, Cairo and Geneva, with the support of the regional commissions covering these regions.

- Regional inputs

The Convener thanked the Regional Commissions for their support to the HLPF, especially through the regional forums on sustainable development which have enriched the discussion on regional experiences.

- Technology Facilitation Mechanism and STI Forum

The Convener noted the significant contributions from the ECESA entities to the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the STI Forum held in June 2016. The Forum will help facilitate development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the SDGs.

- Secretary-General's report on progress towards the SDGs

The 2016 HLPF featured the launch of the Secretary-General's first report on progress towards the SDGs. As mandated by Member States, the report informs the follow-up and review of the SDGs in the context of the HLPF.

- Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2016

The Convener expressed appreciation for the contributions from the ECESA entities to the GSDR 2016. As for the future GSDRs, Member States have decided that the report will be prepared once every four years for the meetings of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly. Member States have designed a three-tier mechanism for the preparation of the report, including 15 eminent expert scientists to write the report, supported by a task team co-led by several parts of the UN system, and the scientific community.

II. Follow-up to Addis Ababa Action Agenda

The Convener thanked all members of ECESA Plus for their support and engagement in the inaugural ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up (FfD Forum) in April 2016, and in the Inter-Agency Task Force on FfD.

- ECOSOC Forum on FfD follow-up

Consultations on the outcome document of the FfD Forum revealed a deep divide between developed and developing countries regarding the scope and priorities of financing for development follow-up. The preparations for the next FfD Forum will provide opportunities for Member States to improve mutual understanding and build trust on these issues.

- Inter-Agency Task Force on FfD

At the FfD Forum, Member States formally welcomed the monitoring approach of the Task Force. The Task Force has begun its work for the 2017 cycle. Members are preparing Issue Briefs in areas they contributed to for the 2016 report.

III. Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators

- Global indicator framework

The Convener noted that the Statistical Commission of ECOSOC, at its 47th session, agreed on a global indicator framework for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs at global level. The framework includes 230 global indicators. The proposal was prepared by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The framework is a practical starting point that will be reviewed and refined along the way.

- Data disaggregation

The Convener highlighted the importance of disaggregated data to ensure that the principle of “no one left behind” is fully reflected in the global SDG indicators. He underlined that the implementation of the indicator framework presents a challenge to the statistical community, especially in developing countries, and called on UN agencies and related organizations to work together closely to support countries to strengthen national statistical capacities.

- High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda

The Convener informed participants that the High-level Group, established by the Statistical Commission, is developing a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. This Global Action Plan will provide a roadmap for the modernization of statistical systems, including plans to strengthen national statistical capacities. The High-level Group is also overseeing the organization of the UN World Forum on Sustainable Development Data, to be held in January 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa.

IV. Any Other Business

The Convener informed participants that the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system concluded on the 7th of July. As part of the Dialogue, the Independent Team of Advisers (ITA) established by the ECOSOC Bureau has presented proposals to enhance system-wide coherence, effectiveness and efficiency. The general view among Member States is to strike a balance between ambition and feasibility. The Convener added that the preparation of the update to the Secretary-General’s report on the QCPR is underway. He encouraged UN development system entities to provide inputs.

To conclude, the Convener underscored three important upcoming events, namely the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants (19 September 2016, New York), the Global Sustainable Transport Conference (26-27 November 2016, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan), and the High-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 (June 2017, Fiji).

The Convener then opened the floor for discussions.

Discussion

UNDP worked with 14 countries to help them prepare for their national voluntary reviews, and engaged with marginalized groups in these countries. A new UNDG publication entitled “The SDGs are coming to life” looks at the early efforts of 16 countries and the role of

UNCTs. A total of 95 UNCTs were already formally requested to provide support to implementation of Agenda 2030.

UNDP is working on some Issue Briefs for the 2017 IATF report on several topics, such as inclusive business and aid effectiveness. UNDP suggested that the IATF reports should be analytical and accessible to a broad audience. To that end, it should use case studies and examples from the ground.

On the IAEGs, UNDP also agreed on the importance of data disaggregation, especially to identify those who are left behind. UNCTs are receiving several requests for support in the area of data and statistics. A lot of work remains. Forty per cent of the global SDG indicators are classified as tier three which means that not only is data not available, but methodologies to get the data are yet to be developed.

With regards to the ECOSOC Dialogue and QCPR, UNDP stressed the need to transform the UN development system and to make it increasingly relevant to middle-income countries.

The Convener added that the ITA on issues related to QCPR came up with very ambitious recommendations, which raised the expectations of Member States. In this context, he cautioned against a business-as-usual approach and called for new ideas for coordination and coherence.

OHRLLS expressed satisfaction with the dedicated session on countries in vulnerable situations during the HLPF. Countries in special situations are asking for support. 5 out of the 22 countries presenting national voluntary reviews are in special situations. The theme of the 2017 HLPF will be very relevant to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. OHRLLS recommended that the 2017 IATF Report should be aligned with the theme of the HLPF. OHRLLS also emphasized the serious challenge of statistical capacities and expressed readiness to collaborate with the other members of the UN Development system in preparation of upcoming conferences.

ESCWA stressed that 2016-2017 are foundation years when countries must choose the optimum paths for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA is already working on finding the optimum path through a modelling exercise bearing in mind resource constraints. ESCWA is also looking at interlinkages in specifically three nexuses in the SDGs/sectors, such as poverty eradication-decent jobs-sustainable growth, water-energy-food security and equality-inclusion-justice. ESCWA underscored the significant role the regional forums on sustainable development and the RCM can play to strengthen regional coordination. It is crucial to develop strategic partnership with other regional organisations beyond the UN system, such as the League of Arab States for the Arab region. ESCWA also re-organized its work internally, through the establishment of a dedicated 2030 Unit and the reassignment of resources. The Regional Commissions, UNDESA and UNDG could sign a Memorandum of Understanding in order to avoid duplication and strengthen coordination in supporting Member States.

The Convener said that Member States would need to prioritize their work. In this respect, the 2016 session of HLPF will provide some interesting insights, notably the national voluntary presentations. Regarding data, cooperation among UN development system entities should build on the Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data that is under preparation.

UN Women praised the 2030 Agenda as a gender equality compact. Gender equality is not only recognized through SDG5 but also mainstreamed through the entire Agenda. The Commission on the Status of Women has already provided guidance on the gender-responsive implementation of the Agenda through its negotiated agreed conclusions adopted in March 2016.¹ UN Women has been working with partner countries to help them reflect the gender dimension in their national voluntary reviews at the HLPF. UN Women welcomed the strong collaboration with the IAEG-SDGs and expressed appreciation for the 50 indicators dedicated to gender within the global statistical framework. Indicators must be adapted to regional, national and local contexts. As a cross-cutting issue, gender perspectives should be addressed across the IATF report. The 2017 edition of the IATF report should begin to capture progress at national and global levels. UN Women will support the QCPR process to ensure it captures the ability of the system to respond to the requirements of the 2030 Agenda.

ECE appreciated the efforts of coordination and collaboration among UN development system entities and stressed the need to do better at all fronts. ECE noted that the level of participation, as well as the representation from civil society and the business sector, were lower than expected. On the one hand, Member States made late decisions on the preparations for the HLPF. On the other hand, the UN system did not provide enough entry points at different levels. On statistics ECE felt the need to do better particularly with the IMF, the World Bank and others. ECE encouraged ECESA Plus entities to use the regional forums on sustainable development as a platform to have open and frank conversations and to bring together the various initiatives and activities led within the region.

The Convener agreed that the late decisions by Member States had a negative impact on the participation of some high-level participants. He added that the functional commissions and other bodies may have to adjust their work plan in order to support HLPF.

UNIDO noted that its Industrial Development Board provided written inputs to the HLPF. Developing countries, especially those in special situations, face enormous challenges and require coordinated support from the UN in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UNIDO emphasized the need to listen to countries particularly least developed countries and small-island developing states and their priorities in order to provide adequate support. To that end UNIDO emphasised the need to think innovatively bearing in mind country circumstances. Case studies could help document approaches that facilitate implementation.

¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/8/driving-the-gender-responsive-implementation-of-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development>

ECLAC underlined that regional forums on sustainable development complement national initiatives by bringing the regional perspectives to the global level. For example, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, for middle-income countries, financing is a serious challenge such as tax evasion and base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS). She informed participants that the regional forum for Latin America and Caribbean, on sustainable development was established by a resolution of ECLAC Member States. The regional forum will be informed by several subsidiary bodies of the Commission and its outcomes will feed into the HLPF. ECLAC called for an integrated approach to address issues related to the implementation of the SDGs. In the area of statistics, a big data revolution is needed. ECLAC also suggested convening a retreat of ECESA Plus Principals as soon as possible to discuss substantive issues.

EOSG pointed out three key recommendations coming from several country visits: (i) the need to disseminate information about the 2030 Agenda to the general public; (ii) engage the business sector; (iii) support the changes in the ways that public and private stakeholders work.

ESCAP noted that good progress was being made in coordinating the UN system towards the implementation of Agenda 2030, but that there needed to be a more rigorous examination of the lessons learned from experiences to date, with a crisp analysis fed into the QCPR process. Allowing additional time for internal consultation on the SG Report on QCPR, especially with the regional commissions, would help to strike a better balance between the top-down and bottom-up approaches and a better understanding for the interaction of these approaches. The importance of the institutionalization of the regional forums on sustainable development, along with the recognition of the stronger role of the regional commissions in implementing the agenda was highlighted. Also stressed was the need to reduce/avoid duplication across the UN system, particularly for statistics, where it was suggested that a coordinating mechanism is needed to avoid duplication and to develop common methodologies for capacity building so as to avoid confusing Member States and to aid the comparability of statistics. It was also suggested that areas where DESA has institutional frameworks could be extended to the regional commissions. For example, in tax cooperation, given that DESA has a centre dealing with this, services could be delivered through regional hubs on tax cooperation.