

Lessons for post-2015 from the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

Integrated review and follow-up

ECOSOC has advanced an integrated, coordinated and unified approach to review and follow-up of the UN conferences and summits. The adoption by the Millennium Summit of a set of ambitious yet achievable time-bound quantitative targets, later collated into the MDGs, marked an important element towards a unified development agenda.

At the 2005 World Summit, heads of State and Government committed themselves to the timely and full realization of the MDGs as well as the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits. ECOSOC was entrusted with a number of new tools to pursue integrated review and follow-up, including the Annual Ministerial Review. In its resolution 61/16, the General Assembly furthered the review and follow-up by ECOSOC of an integrated UN development agenda, providing a roadmap towards substantive unification of the UN development agenda and coordinated follow-up.

This spirit was carried forward by the Rio+20 outcome and General Assembly resolutions 67/290 and 68/1, which consolidated the ECOSOC system as a unifying platform for action on sustainable development follow-up and review.

The current strengthened ECOSOC system follow-up and review architecture involves an annual theme and reviews by the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), containing national, regional and global components. Both are informed by the Integration Segment and the linking of the operational and normative aspects of the UN system through the Operational Activities Segment and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) process.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will bring a renewed focus on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

Lessons from the Annual Ministerial Review

Important lessons can be drawn from the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Reviews (AMRs). By embracing a broad vision of development, the AMRs have deepened the integration of development issues, approaches and thematic coherence.

The AMR has drawn on a combination of global and regional reviews, thematic assessments, and national voluntary presentations (NVPs) to deliver on the UN development agenda. The global reviews have resulted in an in-depth analysis of progress towards the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The regional meetings have reviewed regional progress and injected regional perspectives into the global discussions and review. The NVPs have exhibited best practices, lessons learned and the challenges in implementing national development strategies and achieving the United Nations development agenda.

The NVP process has helped countries to conduct comprehensive national reviews of their development strategies, in some cases for the first time. The voluntary and open nature of the presentations has been conducive to sharing development experiences.

The AMRs at the global, regional and national levels have enabled the international community to focus on a number of cross-sectoral areas, capturing critical issues for action emphasized in the outcomes of conferences and summits and have served to develop an integrated policy framework for action at the national, regional and international levels.

The AMRs have given renewed political and substantive significance to the integrated follow-up of conferences. They have served to offer a comprehensive review process that provides a full picture of overall progress in implementing the UN Development Agenda and to provide the basis for the formulation of multifaceted policies that effectively cover inter-linkages between the different conference goals.

Guidance from the AMR and NVP experience

- By promoting thematic coherence in reviewing the MDGs, the AMRs optimized the impact of implementation processes by ensuring that they built upon each other, were mutually reinforcing and supported the adoption of multisectoral approaches that took into account the inter-linkages between different conference outcomes.
- The AMRs mobilized the ECOSOC system, including the functional commissions and the Committee on Development Policy, as well as the UN system to contribute analytically to and facilitate an integrated, coherent and unified implementation of the UN development agenda.
- The role of the Regional Commissions as regional focal points for the AMR was instrumental in supporting regional reviews of the UN development agenda and reporting regional priorities to ECOSOC. The Regional Commissions embraced the themes of the AMR and offered fresh insights on regional challenges and obstacles as well as lessons and policy recommendations.

The AMR and NVPs offer the following specific insights for the post-2015 development agenda:

- Inclusive approaches need to be ensured across all sectors and levels of actors and partnerships and built upon common understanding and transparency;
- Global commitments must be translated into country-level commitments and actions, with specific targets to which all development partners can commit through an inclusive and participatory process;
- Targets are crucial for measuring development achievement if they are well formulated and have credible timescales;
- Follow-up and review of implementation should deliver results for people at the country level, and should be tailored to country level needs, while tracking progress globally;
- Collecting good and reliable information and data is important – monitoring and reviews rely on robust and high quality data, which should be made available publicly, along with broad and inclusive information.
- Follow-up: There could be a systematic process in place to support follow-up of the policy recommendations into national planning documents and the impact of their implementation on national development.
- Comparability of reports: A common template could be suggested to render reports from different countries comparable.
- Review: Reviewers take the role of friendly questioners during the interactive discussion; the engagement of Reviewers in the preparatory dialogue and follow-up could be strengthened.
- Participatory approach: The role of civil society, the private sector and the UN development system could be systematic in the presentations.
- Participants: The number of countries could be perhaps four or five per year to make the reporting and the number of presentations to ECOSOC manageable, and the reviews could seek to bring out systemic issues that are relatively common across countries and as well as common obstacles to meeting the post-2015 development agenda.

Building on the AMR post-2015

The AMR experience can be built upon for the follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda. Lessons can be drawn for the ECOSOC system and the High-level Political Forum for structuring comprehensive yet focused follow-up and review and guiding further actions required to accelerate and deepen progress at all levels.

The universality of the post-2015 development agenda signifies that the new agenda will have a global reach, applicable to all countries. All countries will be developing nationally-specific goals and targets that are guided by the global aspirations of the new agenda.

Review and follow-up for development results will be an essential part of the emerging post-2015 development agenda. This demands that the work of the ECOSOC system – functional and regional commissions and expert bodies – as well as the UN funds and programmes, is geared towards a unified follow-up and review after 2015.

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