



Concept Note

“Managing the transition to the SDGs: what will it take at the regional level”

Dialogue of the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions with the ECOSOC

9 July 2015, New York

(3:00 -4: 30 p.m.)

Objective of the Dialogue:

For Member States and other stakeholders to gain a better understanding of how the regional dimension in general, and the UN Regional Commissions in particular, can play a critical role in assisting them in meeting the aspirations of an ambitious and transformative sustainable development agenda, notably in terms of transitioning to the SDGs .

Expected Outcomes:

Member States and other stakeholders will have a better appreciation of how the regional dimension can be leveraged to and how the UN Regional Commissions can effectively support countries in the implementation of the new post-2015 development agenda, with emphasis on the SDGs.

In this regard, the dialogue will demonstrate regional initiatives and efforts in support of:

1. A balanced integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development and a synergistic implementation of the SDGs;
2. Mobilizing the means of implementation including through: a) the promotion of enabling economic environments for development both domestically and internationally; b) the follow up on the delivery in the regions of global commitments on the means of implementation including on technology transfer and ODA; c) catalysing South-South cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships;
3. The effective follow-up and review of the new development agenda including through: a) the strengthening of countries’ data and statistical capabilities; b) the development of national and regional indicators and; c) the establishment of an adequate and effective vertical nexus between the national and global levels, including through meaningful links between the regional forums on sustainable development and the HLPF.

Background:

The Rio + 20 outcome recognized that the UN Regional Commissions have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in the respective regions. The UN Regional Commissions were called upon to prioritize sustainable development through, *inter alia*, more efficient and effective capacity-



building, development and implementation of regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned.

The outcome document of the Open Working Group on the SDGs recognized that the goals and targets should take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and should respect national policies and priorities. – The document also acknowledges that the goals and targets integrate economic, social and environmental aspects and recognize their interlinkages in achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions.

Resolution A/RES/68/1 recognized the importance of a “bottom-up approach” in strengthening the Economic and Social Council. It confirmed the value of the long established practice of the annual Dialogue of the Council with the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions and established that the ECOSOC must enhance its lead role in identifying emerging challenges and promoting reflection, debate and innovative thinking, as well as achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Additionally, resolution A/RES/67/290, which created the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), recognizes the importance of the regional dimension in sustainable development “and invites the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through regional annual meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate. “

This mandate was reiterated in a more recent resolution, A/RES/69/214 in which the GA asks the Regional Commissions to make contributions to the work of the HLPF on the issue of monitoring and review of the new agenda.

The UN Regional Commissions are well positioned to effectively support their member countries in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Their multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral capacity, analysis and platforms, and their proximity to national contexts and realities in the respective regions, are valuable assets in this regard. The 2015 Dialogue of the Council with the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions will provide an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to have a better understanding of how such assets are being leveraged and engage further on the critical value addition of the regional dimension of development.

Format and structure of the dialogue:

The dialogue will be chaired by the President of the ECOSOC. Mr. Juan Somavia, in his capacity as the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Interregional Policy Cooperation, will moderate the dialogue. The Executive Secretaries will address in opening remarks key elements of the post-2015 development agenda as well as several aspects of the contributions of the Regional Commissions and the regional dimension at large in support of implementing the new development agenda. These will be further enriched through an inter-active dialogue with Member States and other participants in the dialogue.



Guiding questions for the dialogue:

On integration:

- 1) Integration implies action at different levels. What are the experiences from the regions in acting at these various levels? What are the lessons learnt from such experiences>
- 2) What array of experience and existing assets can the UN Regional Commissions draw upon to effectively support Member States in achieving a balanced integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development, in supporting integration of SDGs in national development plans and in addressing integration at other levels?

On facilitating the means of implementation:

- 1) The means of implementation will be key to the success of the post-2015 development agenda. All the Regional Commissions carried out regional consultations that fed into the Financing for Development process. What would be the key issues -one or two issues- to be addressed with consequential effects on mobilizing financing for development in your respective regions and supporting the implementation of the SDGs? How your Commission is contributing to address this issue?
- 2) Given the magnitude of development challenges, promoting partnerships will be critical to implement the SDGs. What experiences of partnerships that the Regional Commission have joined or leveraged with beneficial lessons for carrying out the SDGs?

On follow-up and review:

- 1) Most Commissions have established regional forums for sustainable development as a follow up to the Rio+20 Outcome. Key messages have been reported from these regional forums last week in the HLPF. What role do you see for these forums in a follow up and review architecture for post 2015? How can the vertical linkages between the national and global levels be enhanced through the regional dimension? How can regional inputs be meaningfully considered at the global level by the ECOSOC and the HLPF?
- 2) The lack of sufficient and disaggregated data for supporting evidence-based decision-making is a real challenge in many countries in all regions. What are the specific efforts and actions taking place in your respective regions to address this challenge and what are the Regional Commissions doing to support these efforts? How the comparability challenge of indicators for SDGs at various levels could be addressed? How can the regional level contribute to addressing this challenge?