

Issues brief on the Regional Dimension in the Post-2015 Agenda

HLPF/ECOSOC 2014

Background

The outcome document of the United Nation General Assembly Special Event on MDGs (September 2013) recognized that sustainable development is at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. Prior to this, In July 2013, the General Assembly decided on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level Political Forum in its resolution 67/290. Through this resolution and others, including the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference (June 2012), Member States continued to acknowledge the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development. They invited the United Nations Regional Commissions to contribute to the work of the Forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders. In response to 67/290, Regional Consultations/Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSD) have been convened in the regions. A detailed account of these consultations and their outcomes is available at <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/?p=481> .

Furthermore, resolution 68/1 on the reform of ECOSOC calls for a bottom up approach from the regions in setting the agenda for the HLPF. ECOSOC also has a mandate to conduct an annual dialogue with the Executive Heads of the Regional Commissions.

Policy Perspectives from the Regions

The Regional Commissions and their partners held a series of broad and inclusive consultations at the sub-regional and regional levels to seek the views of member States and other stakeholders on priorities for the post 2015 development agenda. Participants included governments, civil society, the business community and academia. While some common messages arose across the regions, the consultations identified key priority areas for each region in terms of transformative or urgent actions.

Africa

The consultations in Africa have resulted in the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda which was adopted by African Heads of state and Governments in Addis Ababa in January 2014. The CAP groups Africa's development priorities around six main pillars, which are: Structural Economic Transformation and Inclusive Growth; Promoting Science, Technology and Innovation; a People-centred Development; Environmental Sustainability, Natural Resources Management and Disaster Risk Management; Peace and Security; and Financing and Partnerships. Furthermore, the African Union Commission created the High-Level Committee (HLC)

made up of 10 countries¹ on Post-2015 to provide the political leadership on the CAP with ECA providing technical support to the HLC Secretariat as well as to the office of the Chair of the HLC, the President of Liberia.

In addition, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, organized the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals in November 2013. The main outcome of the meeting was the adoption of a set of 12 SDGs, which informed the formulation of the CAP priority areas. The outcome also underscored the need for Africa's SDGs priorities to inform the debate at the global level on the post-2015 development agenda with sustainable development at its core. There was a concerted effort to ensure that the objectives and outcomes of the consultative meeting were synced with the main pillars of the CAP.

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and the Pacific region has been holding regional and sub-regional consultations on the Post 2015 Development Agenda since 2012. Together with the Asian Development Bank and UNDP, ESCAP held a series of sub-regional and regional consultations that resulted in the publication of the *Asia-Pacific Regional MDG Report 2012/13 Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda*. The government of Thailand, in partnership with ESCAP also convened the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From MDGs to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, in August of 2013. The Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015.

This consultative process culminated in the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) which was held 19-21 May 2014 in Pattaya, Thailand, as the inaugural regional process for HLPF. Through these consultations several overarching priorities and concerns for the Post-2015 Development Agenda have emerged.² These priority areas included eradicating poverty and narrowing inequality; pursuing sustained and inclusive economic growth; gender equality and women's empowerment; responding to population dynamics and urbanization; enhancing resource efficiency and natural resource management and addressing climate change.

The consultations emphasized the need for greater attention to region-specific priorities including, among others, disaster risk reduction and building resilience to multiple shocks, addressing vulnerability of small island developing states, employment generation, particularly for the youth and deepening regional integration and connectivity. It was felt that some of these priorities such as disaster risk reduction and regional integration and connectivity have not sufficiently been reflected in the current global deliberation of the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals. Critical issues related to the Means of Implementation (MOI); including financing for sustainable development; Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI); trade; financing for development, capacity building; partnerships and governance for a transformation towards sustainable development were also highlighted.

¹ Algeria, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia (chair), Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa

² The Asia Pacific Forum on sustainable Development documents are available at <http://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd/>; The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue documents are available at <http://apmd2013.unescap.org/>; the outcomes of the sub regional consultations carried out together with ADB and UNDP are available at <http://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-mdg-report-201213-asia-pacific-aspirations-perspectives-post-2015>

Latin America and the Caribbean

A conference on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean was hosted by Colombia in March 2013 and organized with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The meeting included a Caribbean Forum specifically dedicated to the challenges facing SIDS in addition to the Regional meeting for the Third Conference on SIDS which was held in Jamaica in July 2013. A regional consultation with civil society was organized by the Government of Mexico, also with the support of ECLAC in April 2013. And in 2014, ECLAC hosted the Regional Meeting of the Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing in January, as well as mainstreamed sustainable development into the regular session of the Commission in Peru in May.

The main message emerging from the consultations was the urgent need to continue addressing social and economic inequalities that have become so large and unsustainable that they contribute to social instability. A new global development agenda should be the result of transparent intergovernmental negotiation to strengthen the international community's commitment to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development as well as universal but based on countries' levels of development with support from the private sector and civil society in order to identify allies that can help implement it. Compacts are necessary for the labour market, the financial system, infrastructure, productivity, energy, climate change, trade, improved provision of public goods and services, enhanced natural resource governance and higher and more diversified investment, among others. These compacts will help tackle poverty eradication.

The Arab region

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) led a process of stakeholder consultations on post-2015 and SDGs in cooperation with the League of Arab States and other regional and subregional partners. Key events included the Arab Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda in Beirut (March 2013), the Arab Consultative Meeting on SDGs in Tunis (November 2013), and the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development in Amman (April 2014).

Three key conceptual issues were identified that will shape a transformative development framework for the Arab region: (i) achieving a universal agenda that is owned by all national governments – i.e. universal goals that cater for national diversity; (ii) effectively integrating environmental, social and economic considerations into a balanced, coherent framework; and (iii) establishing a new global partnership which embeds the Sustainable Development Goals(SDG) in an effective governance framework that will include adequate means of implementation and a robust accountability mechanisms.

Key messages that emerged include: Sustainable development can never be achieved without the prevalence of peace , stability and ending of occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories ; SDGs must be rooted in a solid narrative that provides a holistic conceptual framework addressing governance, peace and security and culture; the environment must be fully integrated in all the

goals and issues of gender and youth should be fully mainstreamed; a universal social protection floor that includes all social groups, including persons with disabilities will be an important step towards achieving equal opportunity for all and promoting social justice and good governance and for sustaining development gains in the future; any future monitoring framework for economic development should be able to capture sub-national inequalities and allow the targeting of the poorest segment of the population.

Europe and Central Asia

The ECE region includes high, middle and low-income countries that capture many of the global challenges in building inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies. National consultations took place in 15 countries of the region involving some 250,000 citizens through town hall meetings, on-line discussions and the “MY World Survey”. In addition, a regional consultation on the post-2015 agenda was held in Turkey in November 2013.

Key messages include a call for a new development paradigm involving radical changes in how societies are built, how economies produce goods and services and how they generate inclusive and sustainable growth and jobs. This includes a deep transformation of the current production and consumption patterns and calls for equality and inclusion to be at the centre of the development agenda. Eradicating poverty is an overarching goal of the SDGs and can only be reached if its main drivers are jointly addressed, namely creating decent jobs for all, reducing inequalities of income and providing access for all to a wide range of public services, notably health, education, transport, energy and water. Gender equality and women’s empowerment need to be promoted. Governance should be both a goal in itself and mainstreamed in all other SDGs. An integrated, cross-sectoral approach to policy-making, public participation and ‘honest and responsive government’ are seen as key components. Strengthening statistical, information and observation capacities for ensuring reliable data, fostering new sources of data, and using these various sources for policy debate and transparent decision-making are essential parts of the data revolution that is being called for to track progress on the post-2015 agenda.

Objective of the Dialogue

The overall objective is for member States and other stakeholders at the global level to have a better appreciation of the paramount importance and significance of the regional dimension in shaping and implementing the post 2015 development agenda. A better understanding of regional perspectives, policy challenges and solutions in meeting sustainable development challenges is expected in this context.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the key priorities that emerged from the regional consultations on post 2015 that can have a truly transformative effect in the respective regions? What are the priority areas that are not adequately addressed through the OWG/SDGs global process?
2. What are the key policies that should be put in place to address these priorities?

3. How can the regions mobilise the necessary means of implementation to support the implementation of such policies?
4. What role can the Regional Commissions play, in collaboration with the UN and non-UN actors, in supporting the sustainable development post 2015 agenda in their regions? How can the gap between the global processes and country-level implementation of the post 2015 development agenda be better bridged through regional and sub-regional initiatives?
5. What role is there for the global partnership in supporting the regions in implementing the post 2015 development agenda and the envisaged SDGs?