An Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda:

Regional Consultations

Issues Note

I. Objective

To seek regional perspectives from a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the regions, including Member States, civil society, private sector, regional organizations, on elements for an accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda and the potential for a regional framework for accountability anchored at the national level and feeding to the global level.

II. 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. It also underlined the need for a coherent approach that integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development.

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. Paragraph 8 of 67/290 “Decides that the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.” The reviews shall be voluntary, state-led and provide a platform for partnerships.

Recognizing that a transformative, people-centred and universal post-2015 agenda requires an accountability framework at all levels, the President of the General Assembly convened an interactive dialogue on 1 May 2014, to address the "Elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda." The dialogue reaffirmed the importance of an accountability framework at the regional level as countries in the same region shared similar challenges and were likely to make greater progress by collectively addressing them. The background note prepared to that event elaborated on a number of experiences with accountability mechanisms, including through peer reviews at the regional level (http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/letters/04252014.Interactive%20Dialogue%20-%20Accountability%20Framework%20-%2025%20April%202014.pdf).

The main messages that emerged from the dialogue were:

(a) a universal and transformative agenda would require a strengthened accountability framework that is inclusive, participatory and engages people at all levels; (b) a decentralized system of accountability would ensure that all stakeholders take ownership and are incentivized to share, evaluate and adjust their policies; (c) national and regional accountability frameworks need to be anchored in a global accountability framework that is simple, focused and provide clarity on the roles of different actors; and (d) a multi-layered approach could work with parliaments at the
national level, peer review mechanisms at the regional level, and with HLPF and ECOSOC at the global level.

This Issues Note builds on the background and summary of discussions at the global level (http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/5202014Accountability_Framework_Dialogue_PGA_Summary.pdf). It aims to facilitate regional consultations on accountability by initiating discussion and seeking regional perspectives on a number of elements that may constitute an accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda and a potential framework at the regional level, with national and global links. Without prejudging any of the ongoing processes, the elements in this Note are also kept broad enough to allow each region to formulate their respective regional consultations.

III. Suggested Elements for an Accountability Framework in the Regions

Commitments

As noted above, the GA decided that, as of 2016, the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, shall conduct reviews on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. In addition to any commitments to be undertaken in the post 2015 agenda, the agreed SDGs would clearly fall under this type of commitments to be monitored and accountable for.

What would be the scope of commitments to be included in a regional accountability framework? What areas could be included in such a framework in the region? How to achieve complementarity within such a framework, between global and regional commitments?

Building on/Drawing from existing Mechanisms

Some examples of accountability mechanisms already exist at regional level. The African Peer Review Mechanism in particular is a voluntary, self-monitoring tool widely accepted by the members of the African Union. Every 2 to 4 years, policies and practices of the Member States are reviewed in eight priority areas; the information is collated through broad stake-holder participation, and lessons learnt shared with other countries in the region. The Environmental Performance Review in Europe is another voluntary mechanism where again policies and practices of countries in environment-related areas are conducted periodically. Both mechanisms are technically supported by ECA and ECE, respectively. Another example is Pacific Island peer reviews where islands in the region review each other, make recommendations and share their experiences and lessons learned.

Is it possible to build on existing regional mechanisms to contribute to an accountability framework for post-2015 agenda? If so, how? What other mechanisms could be established for accountability in the respective regions? What modalities could be used to gather data and information required for such a mechanism? What are the ways to ensure follow-up to the
reviews to see what has been achieved? What role is there for various stakeholders, including civil society and private sector, in such modalities and mechanisms?

Platform(s) for Accountability and the role of Regional Commissions

It is necessary to identify the forums where stakeholders, including governments, would be held accountable to each other and to other stakeholders. The discussions at such forum should be based on agreed metrics to determine whether the various actors are fulfilling their commitments, and whether the policies and programmes to meet those commitments were in place.

The UN Regional Commissions already have a strong convening power within each region. In addition, they already have a mandate to conduct preparatory meetings for the HLPF and the regional high-level forums on sustainable development have been already established in some regions.

Could Regional Commissions preparatory meetings or RFSDs be expanded to include a comprehensive monitoring and accountability framework? If so, how can they be adapted to perform this function? What alternative platforms may be considered?

Architecture

The architecture for accountability will have to be built from the grassroots level, where most of the impacts of development will be felt; through the regions to the global level where commitments are made and overseen. There needs to be a review and feedback loop from bottom to top, and vice versa.

How can an accountability architecture be construed in order to adhere to the principles of simplicity, efficiency, flexibility and transparency? How could the regional framework be anchored at the national level? How should the UN system be mobilized at the regional level? What could be the role for various stakeholders, including governments, regional organizations, civil society and private sector actors, in such a mechanism, to both hold and be held accountable? How should the regional mechanisms feed into the current global platforms, notably the strengthened ECOSOC and the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC? What would be the most useful feedback or guidance from the national to the regional to the global level and vice versa?

IV. Expected Outcome

A summary of the Chair of the respective regional consultations to inform the Stocktaking Event of the President of the General Assembly in early September, as possible, and to be transmitted to the Secretary-General by mid-October 2014 to help inform his Synthesis Report in preparation of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.