

Expert group meeting in preparation for HLPF 2017
Readying institutions and policies for integrated approaches to implementation of the
2030 Agenda

Concept note

Objective

The 2016 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) showed that many countries are already well advanced in setting in motion the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the United Nations in September 2015. They are grappling with the challenge of developing policies that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and build on the synergies between the various goals and targets. While the importance of such integrated policies for achieving sustainable development was affirmed at the first Rio Conference on environment and development in 1992, it is yet to be fully translated into effective institutional arrangements and policies. The expert group meeting aims to reflect on how Governments can be best organized and work so as to develop and implement such integrated policies to realize the SDGs.

Integrated policies are also of utmost necessity because the areas covered by the SDGs are closely interrelated. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that some targets refer to multiple goals. Recognizing the synergies and possible trade-offs between goals and targets will make it much easier to realize the SDGs. It will avoid unwanted side effects of progress towards one target on the realization of others today or for future generations.

For this to happen, it is important to rethink the way institutions are organized, work, make, deliver and review policies. An increasing number of countries have been putting in place inter-ministerial structures and other arrangements to ensure integrated implementation of the SDGs across the Government and with various actors.¹ These are sometimes chaired by the highest level of Government.

It is also important to find ways to ensure cooperation and integrated approaches among institutions dealing with closely interrelated targets under the SDGs. This may entail mapping the interrelations among targets as well as putting in place adequate institutional arrangements, public administration practices, mechanisms, capacities, budgetary arrangements and resources to ensure that sectoral policies are informed by the possible impact of actions on related areas. Given the importance of a “whole of society” approach to realizing the SDGs, it is also critical to engage various stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in decision-making so that they have ownership of SDG-related policies and strategies, and understand linkages. This will also help to leverage synergies and determine how to resolve trade-offs.

Adapting or creating new policy, institutional and regulatory frameworks to support sustainable development is a challenge for many countries, especially in Africa and in countries in special

¹ UNDESA, 2016, *Overview of institutional arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda at national level*, <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Final%20-%20Policy%20brief%20on%20instiitutional%20arrangements%20including%20cover%20note%20rev1.docx.pdf>

situations. These frameworks will need to be country-specific and dynamic while reflecting the complexities of the SDGs. Efforts to create and strengthen policies, institutions and regulations are often complicated by lack of capacity, particularly in terms of the human, technological and financial resources required to implement such changes. It is thus necessary to assess the needs and propose concrete ways to fill gaps, building on the existing frameworks and creating new ones where necessary.

The meeting thus aims to explore how far we have gone in ensuring that institutions are organized and equipped to deliver integrated plans and policies. It will focus on the group of SDGs to be reviewed by the HLPF in July 2017, namely the SDGs on eradicating poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, achieving gender equality, building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and protecting oceans (Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) as well as SDG 17 on means of Implementation. Attention will be given to the interrelations among these goals and targets, as well as between them and the other SDGs. The meeting will focus on important interrelations where joint action would bring the greatest benefits, acknowledging that these vary across and within countries.

Participants will exchange experiences on how institutional arrangements, plans, policies and means of implementation can best build on these interlinkages and achieve integrated approaches. They will identify what has worked and reflect on solutions for the future. The focus will be not only on sectoral ministries, but also on the various kinds of institutions that may exist in an area and how they relate with one another. International cooperation and the impact of policies and actors beyond the country level may also be addressed.

The report of the meeting will serve as a contribution to the thematic review to be conducted at the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development in 2017. It will also be reflected in flagship publications of UNDESA such as the World Public Sector Report, and inform the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration. Collaborating agencies may also choose to reflect the findings in their own flagship reports.

Programme of the meeting

The meeting will take place over the course of two and a half days and consist of a series of panels involving representatives of governments, international organizations, academia and other non-State actors. Each panel presentation will engage in an interactive dialogue with Member States and other stakeholders.

The event will comprise seven sessions. The first session will provide an introductory discussion of significant interactions among the SDGs based on recent research findings. Each of the following six sessions will focus on one SDG (1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) and its key interrelations with all other SDGs. The sessions will explore how the relevant institutions, policies, actions, mechanisms and means of implementation can build on these interrelations at the national and local levels. The provisional programme is thus as follows:

1. Understanding important interactions among the SDGs
2. Eradicating poverty as a cross cutting objective of institutions and SDG policies
3. Ending hunger and promoting food security: what can we learn from the key linkages with other SDGs?

4. What do the SDGs tell us about the determinants of health and their policy implications?
5. Can the SDGs accelerate progress towards gender equality?
6. Maximizing the impact of infrastructure and industry on other SDGs
7. Integrated actions for oceans

Documents

In advance of the event, UNDESA and UNIDO may contribute a study(ies) as background for the sessions. UN system agencies may provide issue briefs for the meeting. Ahead of the meeting, Member States will be invited to share good practices, challenges and areas where they need support or advice. This will help identify issues that could be further discussed or advanced at the meeting.

Participation

- The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Director General of UNIDO will deliver opening remarks.
- The President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC will be invited.
- All Member States will be invited, with funding made available for one representative from each developing country from the capital. Member States will be encouraged to come with representatives of several ministries (e.g., entities spearheading SDG implementation, planning, finance and sectoral ministries).
- Representatives of international organizations, academia and major groups and other stakeholders will also participate.
- The event is being organized jointly by UNDESA and UNIDO.

Format of the meeting

- The style of the meeting will be informal discussions and reflection. The expectation is that participants will not read statements, but, instead, will engage in an informal interactive discussion. There will be the possibility to share longer written documents before, during or after the meeting for posting on the event website.

Venue and dates

UNIDO Headquarters, Vienna, 14 to 16 December 2016

Legislative background

The meeting is being organized in support of the implementation of activities mandated by the General Assembly in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The legislative mandate for the meeting is provided by General Assembly resolution 70/248 C and funded under A/70/589, para. 101 (a).