



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 April, 2014

Excellency,

Further to my letter of 10 April, 2014 wherein I informed that I would be convening an interactive dialogue on Thursday, 1 May, 2014 to address “Elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the Background Note for the dialogue. This document can also be accessed on my website <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/events/> under the Calendar tab.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John W. Ashe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John W. Ashe

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

## Background Note

### **The President of the General Assembly**

#### **Interactive Dialogue**

#### **“Elements for a Monitoring and Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda”**

**1 May 2014**

#### **Background**

1. The post-2015 development agenda, to be launched by world leaders in September 2015, will have as overarching objectives the eradication of extreme poverty and a global pathway to sustainable development. One of the main experiences from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals agenda has been that implementing a transformative agenda will require, among others, not only a renewed global partnership for development, but also a robust, inclusive and transparent monitoring and accountability framework.

#### **Context**

2. Accountability for a universal agenda can be understood as the joint commitment of the global community to monitor, evaluate, share and discuss progress towards the implementation of the agreed goals. An accountability framework could allow each Government and development actor to contribute to and benefit from a better global understanding of challenges and effective strategies. The concept of accountability extends beyond Government, and applies to all stakeholders being held accountable for their role in implementing a universal development agenda, within their respective governance frameworks and scope of responsibility.

3. Member States have reaffirmed ECOSOC's leadership role within its Charter mandate in promoting a coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of UN conferences in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and strengthened its capacity to provide global review, monitoring and accountability in the post-2015 era.<sup>1</sup> However, at Rio+20, Member States created the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), which, while meeting under the auspices of the Council, will conduct regular reviews of implementation, starting in 2016. The General Assembly decided that those reviews should be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and should include developed and developing countries, as well as relevant United Nations entities. These reviews will be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants; should provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders; and will replace the national voluntary

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/68/1.

presentations held in the context of the annual ministerial review of the ECOSOC as of 2016.<sup>2</sup> Numerous intergovernmental bodies and committees, including the subsidiary bodies of the ECOSOC system, also work to ensure accountability in specific areas.

4. A post-2015 global monitoring and accountability framework or frameworks would therefore promote implementation of the agenda through several main functions: monitoring and incentivizing voluntary compliance with development commitments, including notably development cooperation; reviewing impact of interventions in terms of supporting achievement of sustainable development results; and promoting mutual learning and exchange of lessons learned. Identification of the necessary means of implementation would also be an important purpose of an accountability framework.

5. In the area of development cooperation specifically, recent research on mutual accountability between countries<sup>3</sup> suggests that, conceptually, mutual accountability involves monitoring compliance, which implies ensuring answerability and a clear delineation of responsibilities.

6. Possible accountability architecture for development could consist of an overarching global framework with a number of specific national or regional level mechanisms. Such a shared global framework could be complemented by various mechanisms for the different purposes, reflecting their differentiated capabilities. Accountability efforts in the post-2015 agenda should reinforce existing accountability mechanisms at the global, regional, national and local levels and vice versa, in a multi-layered architecture. At the national level parliaments, together with national audit institutions among others, should play a critical role in ensuring effective oversight for aligning international commitments to national development objectives.

7. By drawing from a wide range of mechanisms, and by incorporating information from official and selected non-official sources, a global accountability architecture could enable a much more comprehensive and authoritative overview of progress in ensuring that the goals of the development agenda are being met, and that development cooperation is providing the needed support to achieve results. It could be useful to undertake more structured mappings of existing mechanisms and assess how they contribute to evidence-based decision making by policy makers. Also important is the need to reflect on the kind of support required by accountability mechanisms in order to be more efficient, such as adequate data and evidence based analysis.

8. Several experiences in monitoring, review and accountability provide important lessons that could be drawn from. At the intergovernmental level, the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forum have been the primary locus for monitoring and reviewing progress in the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Other non-UN experiences are also instructive.

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<sup>2</sup> A/RES/67/290, para. 8.

<sup>3</sup> José Antonio Ocampo and Natalie Gómez Arteaga. "Accountable and effective development cooperation in a post-2015 era." Paper presented at DCF Germany High-Level Symposium, 23 March 2014.  
[http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf13/dcf\\_germany\\_bkgd\\_study\\_3\\_global\\_accountability.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf13/dcf_germany_bkgd_study_3_global_accountability.pdf)

9. An existing mechanism that could provide valuable insights on how accountability can be organized is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The African Union established the APRM as a self-monitoring tool integrated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While participation remains voluntary, it has been widely accepted by the members of the African Union. Every 2 to 4 years, policies and practices of the Member States are reviewed in the following eight priority areas: political, economic and corporate governance, agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, science and technology, market access and tourism and environment. Information from a variety of national and international sources is collected by the Secretariat before a review is submitted to the APR Forum.

10. The WTO *Trade Policy Review Mechanism* (TPRM) is obligatory for all WTO Member States. National trade policies are reviewed every 2 to 6 years, depending on the Member State's share of world trade. The Trade Policy Review Body (PRB), consisting of WTO Member States, conducts the assessment based on a policy statement by the Member State under review. The TPRB is further supported by an independent report of the Secretariat. Both general trade policies and practices and the Member State's trade environment are reviewed in this mechanism. Peer pressure is the main enforcement instrument in this mechanism.

11. The *Universal Periodic Review* (UPR) is a mechanism for periodic review of all United Nations Member States, monitoring actions taken and challenges overcome to promote human rights. Reviews are guided by the UPR Working Group which consists of all forty-seven (47) members of the Council, but every United Nations Member State can participate in the discussion session. Reviews are based on information from the State under review, reports of independent human rights experts and UN entities, as well as other stakeholders. Each State review is assisted by a troika of three States from the Council, who serve as rapporteurs and draft the report after the discussion session. The outcome report is then adopted by the entire Human Rights Council. The reviewed State is primarily responsible for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome report. During the second review, the State is expected to provide an update on the implementation.

12. As another example, the OECD *Environmental Performance Review* monitors progress towards sustainable development, reviewing both common standards and country specific aspects. Countries are reviewed every 4 to 6 years. The review is based on research findings of a review team of experts from three Member States. Information is drawn from the country reviewed, including from non-government stakeholders, OECD country desks and international and national data. The peer review element takes the format of a discussion on the draft report at biannual meetings of the ECD Working Party on Environmental Performance. The objective is to share good practices and to identify upcoming challenges. Countries are encouraged to submit progress reports on the implementation of recommendation at mid-term between two cycles.

13. Existing and more recently established regional and global mechanisms have made considerable efforts to close identified knowledge gaps, such as balanced data sourcing, representation of different

actors, frequency of assessments. The ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review has been a valuable global platform to review progress on MDGs. The High-Level Political Forum is expected to 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. There may also be substantial benefits in considering a complementary framework of decentralized accountability. This could be pursued at the regional level, where many synergies and similarities of development situations exist, and where there may be greater benefit from peer review or peer support among countries. Ultimately, global and regional mechanisms should be designed to share and promote best practices as well as to promote and support national dialogues. They must provide incentives for Governments and other development actors to undertake regular reporting in an intergovernmental setting.

### **Objectives of the Interactive Dialogue**

14. The main objectives of the Interactive Dialogue are to: (1) initiate discussions among UN Member States on possible approaches to monitoring, review and accountability, and; (2) articulate ideas for a way forward with respect to developing a framework or frameworks for monitoring the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda.

### **Questions for discussion**

15. Based on the above considerations, the event will be guided by the following preliminary questions for discussion:

1. *What incentives can be built into monitoring and review mechanisms that will make implementation reviews attractive for all stakeholders?*
2. *What should be the scope of reviews of the post-2015 development agenda and at what level will they best be carried out? How can national reviews at regional level be optimized to link with global deliberations?*
3. *How could the UN system and other existing intergovernmental mechanisms be mobilized at various levels?*
4. *How much capacity building is required for designing and implementing an effective monitoring and accountability framework? What are the lessons learned from monitoring the MDGs?*
5. *How can accountability be ensured in the context of the growing role of multi-stakeholder partnerships?*

### **Format and outcome of the Interactive Dialogue**

16. The interactive debate will take place on Thursday, 1 May 2014, and will feature two consecutive, interactive, multi-stakeholder panel discussions. The first session will review concepts and general policies for developing a new accountability framework within the post-2015 development

agenda. The second session will review concrete examples of existing mechanisms. A President's summary will be issued at its conclusion and will subsequently be made available.

17. The format will be designed to maximise participation by Member States in the interactive discussions during the meeting. Expert panel presentations will be short and focused, guided by the questions mentioned above.

#### **Participants**

18. Member States are invited to participate at the highest possible level. Representatives of United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, including representatives from the private sector, civil society organizations and academic institutions, are also invited to attend.

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