

FOLLOW UP & REVIEW, MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE POST-2015 AGENDA: KEY MESSAGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

This brief draws on relevant literature and consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, and offers proposals and recommendations for Member State consideration in crafting effective follow-up and review, monitoring and accountability systems for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with emphasis on a people-centred, transformative and rights-based approach for eradicating poverty and inequality. Contents include: Key Messages (p.2); National, Regional, Global Mechanisms and Systems (p.4-10); Data Issues (p.11); and Human Rights Standards at national, regional and global levels (p.12).

ACCOUNTABILITY TO WHOM?

At the forefront of follow-up and accountability systems for the fulfillment of commitments under the Post-2015 Development Agenda must be the billions of people worldwide being 'left behind' due to social and economic exclusion, discrimination, insecurity, and limited opportunities and choices:

- The 2.2 billion **people living in poverty**¹ on less than two dollars a day, and the over 800 million who suffer chronic hunger and undernourishment.²
- The 75% of **the world's poor who live in rural areas**,³ and the 863 million **people living in urban slums** without access to basic services.⁴
- **Women and girls** – half of the world's population – many subjected to discrimination and gender-based rights violations, including of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and with 35% of them experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes.⁵
- The billions of **young people** under 30, almost half the world's population, including 1.2 billion **adolescents** – many of whom live in poverty and are out of school, out of work, abused or exploited.⁶
- The 70% of the world's population without adequate **social protection**.⁷
- The over 1 billion **people with disabilities**, constituting 20% of the poor in developing countries.⁸
- The 1 in 7 people in the world who are **migrants**,⁹ many subjected to social exclusion, abuse and exploitation, and who even face death on their journeys.
- The 1 in 3 young women in the developing world who were married as children, with another **280 million girls at risk of becoming brides** before their 18th birthday¹⁰ and **maternal mortality a leading cause of death** for this group.¹¹
- **Older persons** (60 years old and above), projected to reach over 1 billion by 2030.¹²
- The 370 million **indigenous people**¹³ who face poverty, exclusion, violence and displacement.
- The 1.5 billion **people living in conflict-affected areas**,¹⁴ including 230 million children growing up amidst war and violence.¹⁵
- The over 50 million **internally displaced people and refugees**—with half the refugees being children and adolescents under 18.¹⁶
- The 35 million **people living with HIV**,¹⁷ 5 million of them young people—with adolescents aged 15–19 the only age group in which AIDS-related deaths are increasing.¹⁸
- And many others subjected to systematic discrimination, violence and stigma based on various grounds, including because of their race, occupation, political opinions, religious beliefs, or based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, among other factors, who remain largely 'uncounted' and invisible.

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM MONITORING THE MDGs?

As stated by the UN Secretary-General regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), “Shortfalls have occurred not because the goals are unreachable or because time is too short. We are off course because of unmet commitments, inadequate resources and *a lack of focus and accountability*”.¹⁹

The MDGs approach to follow-up was largely limited to monitoring based on country-level data collection aggregated at the global level by the UN Secretariat and the production of UN global reports; with review of progress on the MDGs consisting largely of voluntary reporting by Member States during the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review meetings, with limited impact on national developments and little public awareness of the process. Overall, the MDG follow-up framework was fragmented and lacked ownership, with unclear lines of responsibilities and without a process for multi-stakeholder inputs and independent analysis to provide objective assessments.²⁰

Importantly, in many countries a **lack of adequately disaggregated data** engendered the ‘tyranny of averages’, masking inequalities and inequities, rendering invisible large swaths of populations that have been ‘left behind’. In addition, **data was often collected and analyzed only every few years**, focused on tracking outcomes that take years to signal meaningful change, instead of also tracking process-level indicators to measure governmental effort, with more frequent data collection and analysis which would enable real-time improvements in implementation. Finally, because the MDGs were not always fully integrated into national development plans and strategies, **monitoring was sometimes undertaken separately from reviews of national policies**.

In short, the MDG follow-up process largely evolved in an ad hoc manner, with a key lesson learned being **the need to establish clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks and roles and coordination mechanisms from the outset**²¹ that effectively link the national, regional and global levels of follow-up.

KEY MESSAGES: WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA?

In the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs and **in the context of a universal agenda, all countries must be equally and mutually accountable for fulfilling their respective commitments and responsibilities**. As the Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report states, “The new paradigm of accountability that we seek is not one of conditionality, neither North to South, nor South to North, but rather one of all actors — Governments, international institutions, private sector actors and organizations of civil society — and in all countries, the people themselves. This is the real test of people-centred, planet-sensitive development.”²²

A multilevel, interlinked system should be established to reinforce different layers of review, monitoring and accountability at local, national, regional and global levels, building on existing mechanisms and capacities.²³

Clear lines of responsibility, guidelines and timelines for reporting, as well as for follow-through on findings and recommendations, will be critical to keep implementation on track.

The primary locus of accountability resides at national levels, by Governments to their people, under **country-led and owned processes inclusive of all stakeholders**. Through a bottom-up approach, local to national review processes should feed into regional and global review efforts, which should strive to **build a culture of universal**

participation through constructive engagement and learning among countries to support implementation efforts. Interactive dialogue conducted in an objective and transparent manner that facilitates the sharing of good practices, lessons learned and common challenges at global and regional levels, with concrete recommendations for follow-up, policy solutions and innovations, would render the monitoring and review process more meaningful and effective.

Monitoring and review systems should be based on **objective assessments that draw on research, qualitative and quantitative data and scientific evidence and analysis**, with a focus on enabling **timely improvements and remedial actions in implementation.**

At all levels, review and monitoring processes must be **guided by principles of human rights and equality—covering the spectrum of social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights, including the right to development—and principles of empowerment, inclusive participation and transparency, ensuring meaningful engagement of civil society, including women’s, youth and other organizations representative of diverse constituencies and excluded groups.** Particular attention must be paid to **the fulfillment of the human rights and empowerment of women and girls** and the achievement of gender equality at all levels of reporting, monitoring, follow-up and accountability.

Review and monitoring processes must strive to ensure that **all Governments are accountable for fulfilling their commitments across all the goals, targets and indicators, including financing and other means of implementation.**²⁴ This includes monitoring countries’ effective and efficient mobilization and utilization of the **maximum available domestic resources, as well as donors’ fulfillment of their ODA commitments**, in a manner that prioritizes the central imperative of poverty eradication as a matter of urgency,²⁵ and emphasizes development cooperation and capacity-building in countries especially in need of support (e.g. least developed countries, sub-Saharan Africa, Small Island Developing States, developing land-locked countries and lower-middle income countries). This will involve ongoing tracking of whether implementation efforts and resource flows are effectively reaching population groups living in poverty or otherwise discriminated against and excluded. The application of **gender-responsive approaches to public financial management**,²⁶ as well as **adolescent- and youth-responsive budgeting**, should be encouraged.

Global, regional and national reviews of implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda should **build on the roles, findings and recommendations of other leading existing formal processes** conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, including **reviews of major international conferences, in line with the mandate of the High-Level Political Forum.** There are already several established follow-up and monitoring bodies and mechanisms directly related to various aspects of the new Post-2015 Development Agenda, and global monitoring reports regularly produced by the UN System, as well as by independent expert groups and other stakeholders (i.e. UNESCO’s global education monitoring reports, the Universal Periodic Review reports, among many others). It is important to guarantee, however, that **the roles and contributions of these UN bodies under their existing mandates are not a substitute for the formal review of all the Post-2015 Development Agenda goals, targets and indicators under the auspices of the HLPF**, in order to avoid a ‘siloed’ approach or marginalization of any particular goal, sector or theme. It will thus be both an opportunity and a challenge to ensure these at-times-dispersed processes can be **fully leveraged and integrated as part of a comprehensive global monitoring and accountability framework** in the post-2015 era, building on existing efforts while exploiting opportunities for streamlining (e.g. to reduce overlap and duplication, reporting burdens, etc.).

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

I. National-Level Follow-up, Review, Monitoring & Accountability Systems

As a first step, **develop national, subnational and local action plans and budgets for implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda as the foundational instruments for follow-up and accountability, through inclusive, participatory processes.** Such plans should build on existing national strategies and mechanisms, aligned as needed to meet the level of ambition of the post-2015 agenda, with benchmarks and indicators tailored to national circumstances and starting points. Review, monitoring and accountability systems should be identified from the outset, with clear institutional responsibilities, and involve all government sectors, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, civil society, statisticians and development partners, among other stakeholders. In **countries affected by conflict, humanitarian and environmental crises**, special efforts must be made to ensure strategies and plans are aligned and supported, and critical gaps addressed, with a view to ‘leaving nobody behind’ and fostering peace, stability and development under the new agenda.

Monitoring and accountability processes should pay particular attention to ensuring that action plans and their implementation have strong equity and equality perspectives and prioritize areas and groups of the population living in poverty and at particular disadvantage, including by developing appropriate target benchmarks and indicators tailored to specific groups and sub-national areas. Particular attention should be paid to the **human rights and empowerment of women and girls and achieving gender equality**, and to the **rights and needs of children, adolescents and youth**.

Monitoring and review processes should **assess whether policy and legal frameworks are coherent with the commitments and aspirations of the new global agenda** or whether they pose obstacles to its achievement, and identify areas where reforms may be needed to harmonize national legislation and policies with the requirements of the post-2015 agenda. Particular attention must be paid to ensuring non-discrimination and equal access to opportunities, services and resources for all population groups.

The process of national-to-global level reporting would be based on a ‘bottom-up’ approach, beginning with country reports and national-level findings, analyzed and synthesized in regional reports facilitated by the Economic Commissions with inputs from UN System entities, which would then feed into the global assessments. **National reporting** should consist of a Government report and reporting by other stakeholders, utilizing various sources of available qualitative and quantitative information and data, and based on globally-harmonized formats. The Government reports should be developed through a collaborative and consultative process with all relevant stakeholders, prepared with inputs from ministries and sub-national levels of administration, as well as from civil society, academia and the United Nations.²⁷

Establishing a **dedicated high-level governmental focal point/department for monitoring and accountability of the Post-2015 Development Agenda** responsible for overall coordination and mobilization of all stakeholders in the process – across sectors and ministries, and between the government and civil society and other stakeholders – could facilitate a comprehensive review process, including by helping to establish clear assignment of follow-up responsibilities across government ministries and fostering effective inter-departmental coordination. Review and monitoring processes should include assessment of enhanced policy coherence and strengthened multi-sectoral approaches as important elements of effective implementation

and follow-up, and ensure a balanced approach across sustainable development dimensions. They should also assess progress on commitments made by governments in response to recommendations of the international human rights system that are specific to goals, targets and indicators agreed in the Post-2015 Development Agenda – a role in follow-up on human rights commitments that should be an integral part of government sectoral responsibilities.

Parliaments, which have a key role to play in holding governments to account, could have their oversight function for implementation of the post-2015 agenda formally mandated, such as by parliamentary decisions that require the tabling of reports and convening of ministerial public hearings on country progress, based on reports submitted by the executive branch and other stakeholders, including civil society. Parliamentarians should also hold consultations with diverse constituencies and help ensure outreach and engagement in the process by excluded groups.

National human rights institutes and ombudsman’s offices should have their role in monitoring and accountability functions for the post-2015 agenda integrated into their work.²⁸ This includes consulting civil society and communities, analyzing equity and equality gaps, issuing independent reports, working to protect human rights defenders, and importantly, creating or strengthening **effective complaint and remedial mechanisms** for the protection of human rights, with particular attention to the rights of women and girls and groups at particular disadvantage. Such oversight entities can go beyond reacting to complaints, to playing a proactive role: Brazil’s Active Ombudsman for the Health System, for example, undertook a survey to ascertain women’s satisfaction with the quality of care received at maternity facilities, revealing problems such as neglectful, disrespectful or abusive treatment during childbirth.²⁹ This type of proactive monitoring offers decision-makers real-time information to take corrective action.

National joint monitoring mechanisms of issue- or sector-specific implementation based on a common review and accountability platform, led by Governments and involving all relevant stakeholders, should be established to maximize coordination, efficiencies and synergies. An example could be in the area of women’s and children’s health,³⁰ building on efforts underway, and which could also be relevant for tracking progress on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Multi-sectoral, inter-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanisms to jointly monitor progress on gender equality would also be especially relevant.

Internal administrative accountability processes should ensure that the performance of the judiciary, security, health, education and other sectors is aligned with international human rights and professional standards, with emphasis on non-discrimination and gender justice. Of particular importance to gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, for example, is ensuring that judges, lawyers and police personnel operate with impartiality and under clear rights-based protocols, including where customary law is in effect. Monitoring compliance with human rights, ethical and professional standards and codes of conduct specific to each sector (e.g. applicable to doctors, teachers and so forth) is essential to ensuring the quality of and equitable access to services. For example, reviews of whether the “AAAQ” framework in the context of the right to health—availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality³¹—is being applied to service delivery is especially critical, including in efforts to improve maternal health.³²

Independent oversight mechanisms or expert committees for review and monitoring of specific goals and respective targets and indicators could be established to objectively assess achievements and gaps, as well as the role of other government sectors and stakeholders in implementation. For example, the creation of national health commissions as independent oversight mechanisms for follow-up on the MDG goals on women's and children's health was recommended by the Commission of Information and Accountability.³³

Social accountability, including through independent reviews, social audits and citizen monitoring of national, sub-national and local plans and budgets should be supported to inform decision-making, improve accountability, assess the equity and qualitative dimensions of resource utilization and distribution, and enable remedial actions. The creation or strengthening of formal accountability mechanisms and processes should be accompanied by public and community awareness-raising about government commitments, and the relevant laws, policies and mechanisms for participation. In order to be most effective, social accountability should be enabled by **formal policy instruments** that recognize these processes (e.g. the case of Peru),³⁴ **guarantee rights to access information, to freedom of expression and of the media**, including by ensuring transparency in access to official data. Efforts to make budgets accessible and translate them into simplified user-friendly formats can enable public understanding of government budgets, building on pioneering national efforts such as the 'budgIT' initiative in Nigeria, among others in Ethiopia, Kenya, India and elsewhere.³⁵ Member States, donors, UN System entities and other development partners should strengthen the capacity of the social accountability and budget advocacy functions of civil society and public interest groups to ensure a diversity of constituencies is enabled to participate in national as well as regional and international monitoring and review processes.³⁶

Involve community-based and grassroots organizations in monitoring of local plans, service delivery and budgeting for enhanced accountability. Localized implementation and accountability mechanisms, developed with direct community participation working with municipal authorities, can improve the efficiency of resource use, the quality of services, and tamp corruption, as shown by World Bank and others.³⁷ In the context of decentralization, inclusive and participatory monitoring and review processes at sub-national and local levels can help ensure service delivery is aligned with actual needs and demands, thereby helping to make investments most relevant, equitable and effective, and allowing for real-time remedial action.³⁸ Various experiences of participatory monitoring and accountability are available from around the world: from raising awareness of rights and entitlements to generate community demand and engagement (India),³⁹ improving health and education (Zambia), grassroots participatory budgeting (Philippines), to innovations of young auditors in monitoring schools (Peru), social observatories on sexual and reproductive rights (Guatemala), and Thailand's "iMonitor+" app to assess public HIV services, among many others.⁴⁰

II. Regional Follow-up & Review

Regional follow-up processes should build on the mandates and functions of regional and sub-regional intergovernmental bodies, the regional economic commissions, statistical bodies, development banks and human rights monitoring mechanisms.

Learning from and Building on Existing Mechanisms: Regional review mechanisms could build on the experiences and lessons learned from existing mechanisms under the regional economic commissions, and peer review processes such as the Africa Peer Review Mechanism, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, and reviews of the Economic Commission for Europe on environmental performance and of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee.⁴¹

Role of the Economic Commissions: The regional economic commissions in coordination with other UN System entities could play a key role in country capacity-building and regional harmonization in the post-2015 agenda follow-up processes. This includes facilitating the development of regional monitoring and indicators frameworks, the production of regional progress reports, undertaking data collection and regional trends analysis, strengthening national statistical systems, offering technical guidance and standard-setting, and fostering policy coherence, knowledge-sharing and overall intra- and inter-regional coordination to standardize and improve the review processes. The regional commissions can also serve as a valuable interface between the national and global levels of review, including by communicating shared regional priorities and challenges to the global level as well as by providing guidance and synthesizing global-level findings and recommendations for national-level consumption by policy-makers and stakeholders.

Annual Regional Review Meetings: The annual regional review meetings should be convened before the annual HLPF sessions,⁴² with the resulting key findings and recommendations feeding into the global reviews by the HLPF.

The Role of Parliamentarians: Regional parliamentary bodies should be actively engaged in the review processes, given their role in enhancing accountability from national to global levels, serving as spokespersons for public interests and realities in their countries, and their linkages to and functions in holding regional bodies to account (for example, the case of the European Parliament within the European Union).

The Role of Other Inter-Governmental Bodies: Existing mechanisms at regional (e.g. African Union, European Union, League of Arab States, Organization of American States, etc.) and sub-regional levels (e.g. CARICOM, SADC, ASEAN, Pacific Island Group, etc.) should also build follow-up to the post-2015 agenda into their regular meetings and reviews of existing agreements, with their key findings and recommendations feeding into the regional review processes and reports on the post-2015 agenda.

III. Global Mechanisms & Systems for Follow-Up and Review

Global-level Review & the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) - As the body charged by the General Assembly⁴³ to conduct regular reviews of progress starting in 2016, the High-Level Political Forum should consider the lessons learned and promising practices and proposals at its disposal in order to ensure the establishment of an effective, participatory, evidence-based and meaningful follow-up process.

- **Lessons Learned from the CSD:** As identified in the Secretary-General’s report,⁴⁴ there are key lessons learned to take into account from the now-defunct Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), predecessor to the HLPF. While the CSD was acknowledged for its facilitation of sharing of best practices and lessons learned, key shortcomings included: participation mostly limited to representatives from one dimension of sustainable development (with the CSD known as the ‘environmental commission’); weak linkages of global reviews to national and regional follow-up processes; limited time dedicated to systematic review of national sustainable development strategies and limited impact of national processes on the global reviews; lack of attention to assessing gaps in implementation and whether CSD decisions were followed up on; and weak links between the CSD and the operational side of the UN System.
- **A Comprehensive, Balanced, Integrated and Multi-Sectoral Approach to Follow-up and Review Across the Pillars of Sustainable Development:** In undertaking its work both under the auspices of ECOSOC and the General Assembly, the HLPF, as well as the contributions and reports of Member States, the UN System and other stakeholders, must **avoid a ‘siloed’ and fragmented approach** to sustainable development that characterized aspects of the MDGs.
- **Inclusive, Meaningful Participation:** Clear channels and opportunities should be delineated for the participation and independent inputs of Major Groups and other civil society and stakeholder representatives, building on the HLPF’s modalities,⁴⁵ including through the submission of written statements and reports, both thematic and on a country and regional basis. Possibilities for ongoing engagement could include the creation of an Advisory Board to the HLPF,⁴⁶ as recommended by the Expert Group Meeting on the HLPF, inclusive of the Major Groups and other stakeholders, for more meaningful engagement beyond the annual meetings, and importantly, to provide a space for feedback loops from all key stakeholders for ongoing enhancement of the follow-up and review processes.
- **Integration of Findings and Recommendations of Other Formal Reviews and UN Bodies, including the Major UN Conferences and the Human Rights System:** In line with the HLPF’s mandate⁴⁷ to “follow up and review progress in the implementation of all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields”, monitoring and accountability of the Post-2015 Development Agenda should take into account and integrate the findings and recommendations of the outcomes of those reviews, including of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. The **ECOSOC functional commissions**, such as the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) and the Commission on Status of Women (CSW), as the inter-governmental mechanisms responsible for follow-up on UN conferences, have an important role to play in contributing to and reinforcing the new global agenda’s follow-up and review framework. This includes providing substantive guidance and recommendations on thematic and cross-cutting priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. education, health, gender equality, population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health and rights)--recalling for instance, the role of the CSW in contributing to the follow-up of the post-2015 agenda and to the work of the HLPF.⁴⁸ Various other standing intergovernmental bodies, such as the World Health Assembly, also have key and specialized contributions to make. As mentioned earlier, it will be important to ensure that the existing review processes undertaken by UN bodies in line with their mandates not be considered a substitute for the formal review by the HLPF of all the Post-2015 Development Agenda commitments and goals.

Similarly, in addition to integrating the key findings of the international human rights bodies in the global reporting and follow-up process, **human rights mechanisms and systems should form part of the broader review framework** by integrating follow-up on the post-2015 agenda into their own work (e.g. the international human rights treaty bodies and regional human rights mechanisms).

- **Global Reporting:** The global reports to be submitted for the HLPF's deliberations should be comprehensive and analytical, summarizing main achievements, challenges and critical gaps in **implementation across all elements of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, balanced across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, with clear conclusions and recommendations for the way forward**. While it should be noted that the scope and nature of the Global Sustainable Development Report as well as of any additional reports remain to be determined, a comprehensive, integrated approach should characterize the parameters and content of the main, authoritative global monitoring report that would serve as the basis of the HLPF reviews. Reporting should also succinctly highlight major emerging evidence of good practices from scientific developments and evaluation findings, in line with strengthening the science-policy interface called for in the HLPF's work. Importantly, consideration should be given for including focused assessments on progress towards **global minimum standards**⁴⁹ that should be achieved by all countries for all individuals under the overarching aims of a people-centred agenda to eradicate poverty and inequalities, as reflected in relevant SDG targets and called for by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel Report. The global reports should be based on structured inputs, syntheses and analyses from all key stakeholders: with reports from Member States, Major Groups and other non-state actors, and the UN System, based on individual entities' expert inputs.⁵⁰

The global reports could be complemented by more in-depth **thematic reports** produced by the UN System, summarizing achievements, trends, gaps and challenges, and key recommendations for the way forward,⁵¹ drawing on the various global monitoring reports and processes currently developed for various aspects of the new agenda. A report tracking progress on commitments related to the **global partnership and financing for development**, covering domestic and international resource mobilization, could continue to serve as input to the review process, building on the lessons learned from the MDG Gap Task Force reports (on MDG 8).

- **Thematic Sessions & Reviews:** The thematic sessions to be conducted under the HLPF⁵² offer the opportunity for more in-depth reviews of specific aspects of the agenda. In addition to integrating all three dimensions of sustainable development, **criteria for the selection of themes** could consider closely interrelated goals and targets (e.g. essential services and social protection), or specific goals or issues that are not only important ends in and of themselves, but are also key cross-cutting priorities and prerequisites for making progress on the agenda as a whole (e.g. inequalities, gender equality, health, adolescents and youth, etc.). Such an approach could also serve to reinforce the integrated approach that the Post-2015 agenda calls for, especially for goals or themes requiring responses from multiple sectors for effective implementation.

- **Learning from Other Global Review Processes:** The Forum’s proceedings may be inspired by and draw from existing leading practices, such as the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, a peer-review mechanism based on Member State reporting alongside independent assessments, and with Member State-led interactive dialogue and recommendations issued to fellow countries under review. This process, rooted in the principle of universality and conducive to universal participation by all Member States, is also reported to facilitate the exchange of good practices and lessons learned, and also foster bilateral cooperation.⁵³
- **Independent Expert Review Groups:** Issue- or goal-specific global independent expert review and accountability mechanisms should be considered to feed into the HLPF review process. An example with lessons learned to build on is the Independent Expert Review Group (IERG) of the Global Strategy on Women’s and Children’s Health, reporting directly to the Secretary-General, established at the recommendation of the Commission on Information and Accountability (formerly co-chaired by the heads of Canada and Tanzania). As encapsulated in its annual reports, the IERG’s task has been to accelerate achievement of related MDGs by creating a system to track results and the timely delivery and transparent use of financial resources.⁵⁴ At national levels, these processes are also reported to have catalyzed the creation of national oversight mechanisms and Country Accountability Frameworks, and efforts to strengthen data collection and monitoring.⁵⁵ A similar mechanism could be considered for the Secretary-General’s new Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health, which will serve as an important means of implementation for the related SDG targets, and thus a natural global independent report to feed into the post-2015 agenda review processes. Such independent review mechanisms should include inter-disciplinary expertise and integrate the conclusions of related follow-up processes specific to the SDG targets in their purview, including the recommendations of the international human rights system.
- **Thematic Global Coordination and Follow-Up Platforms:** Global thematic coordination platforms involving partnerships of multiple stakeholders, facilitated by UN specialized agencies and entities, could also serve the functions of contributing independent participatory assessments for follow-up and review—as is being proposed, for example, in the areas of education (under the UNESCO-led Education 2030 agenda), and for adolescents (a priority pillar for the new Secretary-General’s Global Strategy in the area of health).⁵⁶
- **Accountability of the UN System:** Existing mechanisms and governing bodies of Member States to monitor and hold accountable the UN System as a whole (‘delivering as one’) and its individual entities and agencies should be utilized to assess their role in supporting countries’ implementation of the Post-2015 agenda, including in the area of capacity-building.⁵⁷ Under the development pillar, for example, this includes the General Assembly’s Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the UN’s System’s support to developing countries’ efforts, and the role of the Executive Boards overseeing individual UN entities. At country level, consideration should be given to establishing or strengthening mechanisms for participation of civil society, especially of women’s, youth and representatives of excluded groups, in assessing and providing feedback on the work of UN Country Teams and individual entities. In addition, the UN System could reinforce contributions to the follow-up processes by considering how best to align its multi-year evaluation plans to inform evidence-based policy development and implementation, as reflected in the Report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services on evaluating the Millennium Development Goals.⁵⁸

IV. Data Collection, Disaggregation, Analysis, Dissemination and Statistical Capacities

High-quality, timely, relevant data is the “raw material for accountability”.⁵⁹ As such, the Post-2015 Development Agenda should rely on **both existing data and the development of new indicators reflective of a truly transformative agenda, as well as on both qualitative and quantitative measures of progress**—including to track equality and equity in outcomes, legal reforms, public satisfaction, perceptions and trust with governance and services, and public attitudes towards fundamental human rights and discrimination. In selecting indicators to monitor implementation, outcome level indicators (e.g. prevalence of violence against women and girls) should be complemented by adequate **process indicators** (e.g. coverage of multi-sectoral services for survivors), especially relevant at country levels to be able to demonstrate efforts undertaken and to ensure real-time, annual data collection and analysis can inform policy-making and point to actions needed for improvements. ‘Counting what matters’ will require policy-driven priority-setting in line with the aspirations of a people-centred agenda and the “data revolution”, with the subsequent **selection of national indicator frameworks rooted in a rights-based approach and focused on addressing inequalities**.

Data must be disaggregated by sex, age, race, income and educational levels, location and other key characteristics, as well as according to other key factors such as marital, HIV or migrant status, disability, ethnicity, language, religion, class or caste, occupation, sexual orientation and gender identity, with protections of the **rights to privacy and confidentiality** in place. Emphasis must be on collecting data from the lower-income quintiles, with particular attention to the most excluded and ‘uncounted’ communities and neglected issues. A forward-looking agenda must seek to capture key population groups largely omitted from official data collection efforts to date, namely, adolescents 10-14 years old, and the age groups above 50 years.⁶⁰

Investments in strengthening national capacities, especially of developing countries, to collect, analyze, utilize, store and disseminate data will be required, including by ensuring autonomous, transparent and well-equipped national statistical offices and systems. Making use of data already collected should also be a priority, since much relevant information is generated but not utilized. Data should be packaged and presented in a user-friendly manner that enables public access, participation and social accountability. Data collected by civil society research and expert organizations can provide valuable and complementary information to official data, especially to fill critical information gaps on the situation of women, adolescents and marginalized groups and issues otherwise neglected. A **gender statistics coordinating body**, with a dedicated budget line, should be established or strengthened, with specific regulations or legislation in place governing the production and dissemination of gender statistics and indicators.⁶¹

V. Accountability to Human Rights Obligations and Standards

Follow-up and review of the new development agenda at all levels must be **guided by and in conformity with international human rights treaty obligations, principles and standards**. The core international human rights conventions¹ must be reaffirmed as overarching accountability instruments, including those specific to discrimination against women, children and adolescents, and other especially excluded groups, such as migrants and people with disabilities. As mentioned, review processes should be guided by the **recommendations of human rights treaty bodies at the international and regional levels**, the commitments and **standards established under UN international and regional conference agreements and declarations**, as well as under other conventions, such as those established under ILO to protect the rights of groups especially at risk of discrimination, abuse and exploitation (e.g. ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers). All Member States should be **encouraged to ratify conventions and optional protocols** that they have not already joined and withdraw reservations.

Particular attention should be paid to **achieving gender equality and fulfilling the human rights and empowerment of women and girls throughout the review, monitoring and accountability processes at all levels**, both in assessing progress on the stand-alone goal as well as across all others goals and targets, and **incorporating a gender perspective across all reporting and analyses of implementation**. This should include assessing whether national implementation is **aligned with existing conventions** and human rights standards, such as the **recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and of other treaty monitoring bodies**, as well as of **human rights bodies at regional levels**--for example, those responsible for reviewing the implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; or more specific to the targets on ending violence against women and girls, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women ('Belem do Para') and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, among others.

In reviewing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, **emphasis should be placed on fulfillment of targets and indicators that constitute minimum core obligations under international human rights standards for all sectors of a country's population, including the right to development**, in line with State obligations to commit the "maximum available resources" for progressive realization of social, economic and cultural rights. As **immediate actions, States should be accountable for undertaking legislative and policy reforms to ensure equality for all under the law**, and the respect for **all human rights and fundamental freedoms in terms of civil and political rights, as well as essential social, economic and cultural rights, including non-discriminatory access to basic services** such as education, free legal aid, health (including essential sexual and reproductive health), food and nutrition.⁶² **Interim, short-term benchmarks before the year 2030 could be encouraged to**

¹ The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Rights of the Child; International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families.

satisfy immediate State obligations and to help ensure programmes and financing prioritize the poorest communities and areas.

The **principle of non-retrogression for safeguarding essential services** such as from budgetary cuts in times of austerity and economic uncertainties should be reaffirmed,⁶³ with emphasis on averting the deepening of inequalities which especially affect lower-income groups and women.

Follow-up and review systems should adopt a **human rights-based approach**,⁶⁴ including through the development of appropriate indicators. Member States and partners should avail themselves of UN technical guidelines on a human-rights based approach, such as those issued on reducing maternal mortality and morbidity⁶⁵, as well as child mortality and morbidity,⁶⁶ and on sexual and reproductive health (produced by the World Health Organization)⁶⁷ – which provide standards against which to monitor interventions and strengthen accountability at national levels.

Governments and all implementing partners should be held accountable for respecting and protecting human rights, gender equality, labour, health, and environmental standards, including the UN System, donors, development banks, international financial institutions and the private sector. For example, **human rights and environmental impact assessments** should be integrated for informed decision-making at the planning stages, as well as the follow up and review processes, of multilateral institutions, development banks, the private sector, and of donors as part of ODA policy-making, as well as consideration of establishing and strengthening complaint and redress mechanisms.⁶⁸

New guidelines and regulations for public-private partnerships and businesses should be developed, taking into account existing international guidelines.⁶⁹ Voluntary self-reporting by businesses, while a welcome step, is inadequate in the absence of independent oversight mechanisms. Regulation of private sector involvement is especially important in light of privatization of basic services such as health and education, exploitation of children and workers, and the need to hold businesses and multinational companies accountable for human rights violations wherever they operate—including gender-based violence and violations of the rights of women, indigenous peoples, migrants, low-income workers and of other groups who face particular risks and encroachments in this regard. At a minimum, **standards and remedial mechanisms should be in place to enforce the ‘do no harm’ principle** with regard to human rights violations. Undertaking human rights impact assessments, as called for in the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, can assess the potential and actual negative effects of enterprises’ interventions in order to take timely corrective measures where contrary to the principles and aims of the new Post-2015 Development Agenda.⁷⁰

Essential to effective participatory monitoring and accountability systems is ensuring **protections of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, organization and assembly, of speech, of the media and rights to access public information**, including government data and on public financing.

-
- ¹ World Bank (2015) [Poverty Overview](#).
- ² UN (2014) [Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#); FAO (2014) [The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition](#).
- ³ World Bank, IMF (2013) [Global Monitoring Report 2013: Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals](#).
- ⁴ UN-Habitat (2013) [State of the World's Cities 2012/2013](#).
- ⁵ World Health Organization (2013) [Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence](#).
- ⁶ UNFPA (2014) [State of World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion](#).
- ⁷ ILO (2014) [World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice](#).
- ⁸ United Nations Enable (n/d) [Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities](#).
- ⁹ World Bank (2014) [Migration and Development Brief: Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook](#).
- ¹⁰ UNICEF (2014) [Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects](#).
- ¹¹ UNFPA (2013) [State of World Population: Motherhood in Childhood, Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy](#) <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>
- ¹² ECOSOC (2014) [Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\) Beyond 2014](#), Report of the Secretary-General.
- ¹³ United Nations (2009) [State of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#).
- ¹⁴ UNDP (2014) [Human Development Report: Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience](#).
- ¹⁵ UNICEF (2014) [Children and emergencies in 2014; Facts & Figures](#).
- ¹⁶ UNHCR (2014) [Global Trends 2013: War's Human Cost](#).
- ¹⁷ UNAIDS (2012) [World AIDS Day Report](#).
- ¹⁸ UNAIDS (2014) [For young activists and youth organizations - Making the money work for young people: a participation tool for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#).
- ¹⁹ United Nations OHCHR (2013) [Who Will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#).
- ²⁰ See UN Task Team (2013) [Review of the contributions of the MDG Agenda to foster development: Lessons for the post-2015 UN development Agenda](#); and German Development Institute (2014) [Post-2015: Setting Up a Coherent Accountability Framework](#), Briefing paper 13/2014.
- ²¹ See for example, para. 33 of UN ECOSOC (2015) [Thematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned for the post-2015 era, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services](#); E/AC.51/2015/3*
- ²² See various sources, including: United Nations (2014) [The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda](#), A/69/700.
- ²³ For a discussion on establishing the follow-up system, see [Briefing Note on the Workshop on Building an Effective Review Mechanism for the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#) of April 30, 2015, <http://www.iisd.ca/sdgs/arf/brief/crsvol221num3e.pdf>.
- ²⁴ As per the [Ministerial Declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), E/HLPF/2014/L.3 of July 9, 2014, para. 27.
- ²⁵ As per the [Ministerial Declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), E/HLPF/2014/L.3 of July 9, 2014, para. 16
- ²⁶ As called for in the Joint Statement on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Financing for Development Zero Draft delivered by Switzerland during the Second Drafting Session on Financing for Development for the Zero Draft, 13-17 April 2015.
- ²⁷ Note para. 149 of the Secretary-General's Post-2015 Synthesis report similarly calls for "a Government report, a national stakeholder report, with contributions from national non-governmental actors, and a report compiling existing information and data from United Nations agencies and international financial institutions, all based upon globally harmonized formats, would constitute the main written inputs on individual country progress."
- ²⁸ Center for Economic and Social Rights (2013) [Accountability in the post-2015 development framework: what role for National Human Rights Institutions?](#) 15 August 2013.
- ²⁹ Independent Expert Group (2014). [Every Woman, Every Child: A Post-2015 Vision – The Third Report of the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health](#).
- ³⁰ For instance, note the efforts to improve joint monitoring of progress based on 'one information and accountability platform', as also agreed to by World Bank and UN agency leaders—see Independent Expert Group (2014) [Every Woman, Every Child: A Post-2015 Vision – The Third Report of the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health](#).
- ³¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council (2000). [General Comment No. 14 The right to the highest attainable standard of health](#) (article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), para 12. See also WHO (2007) [Fact Sheet: The Right to Health](#).
- ³² See WHO statement (2014) [Prevention and elimination of disrespect and abuse during childbirth](#).
- ³³ The recommendations of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health can be read [here](#). COIA was created in 2010 by the WHO at the request of the United Nations Secretary General to arbitrate the "most effective international institutional arrangements for global reporting, oversight and accountability on women's and children's health."
- ³⁴ For example, the Government of Peru promulgated a series of legislative and policy provisions related to citizen monitoring in the area of health, including the 2011 Ministerial resolution on the same, described [here](#), and cited in [The Third Report of the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, Every Woman, Every Child: A Post-2015 Vision](#) (2014).
- ³⁵ See, for example: Nigeria's civil society-led initiative Budgit at <http://www.yourbudgit.com/>; Ethiopia's Protection of Basic Services project, which publicizes local budget information to citizens and provides budget literacy training; Kenya's Secondary Education Project, under which schools are required to display information on budgets; India's Accountability Initiative by a nongovernmental organization, which tracks grants to government schools. These and other examples are found in Ringold, D. et al (2012) [Citizens and Service Delivery: Assessing the Use of Social Accountability Approaches in the Human Development Sectors](#), The World Bank.

- ³⁶ For example, the development of social accountability guidelines by the Ministry of Health of Kenya as discussed in WHO (2014) [A Review of Progress in Implementation of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health](#).
- ³⁷ Wong, Susan (2012) [What have been the impacts of World Bank community-driven development programs](#): World Bank; McGee, Rosemary and John Gaventa (2012) [Review of impact and effectiveness of transparency and accountability initiatives: synthesis report](#).
- ³⁸ For example, see the Brazilian legislative reforms, Statute of the City, instituted in many cities improve quality of life in slum areas, as cited in ECOSOC (2012) [Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\) Beyond 2014](#). Report of the Secretary-General. p. 189.
- ³⁹ Kindornay, S. and Sarah Twigg (2015) [Establishing a workable follow-up and review process for the Sustainable Development Goals: Overseas Development Institute](#) (ODI)
- ⁴⁰ See [Participatory Monitoring for Accountability: Critical Enablers for the Successful Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Participatory](#) (2015) draft paper from the UN Development Group Post-2015 Consultation on Means of Implementation, Co-facilitated by UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP and Co-sponsored by the Governments of Canada, Peru and Republic of Korea. See also the Global Partnership for Social Accountability chaired by the World Bank here: <http://www.thegpsa.org/sa/>.
- ⁴¹ United Nations (2014) [The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda](#), A/69/700; See also United Nations Regional Commissions (2014) [Towards an effective monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda: perspectives from the regions](#), A Synthesis Report based on 2014 regional consultations. See more information about the regional consultations and outcomes here <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/regional-commissions-and-post-2015/>.
- ⁴² As per UN General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), A/RES/67/290, the regional commissions are invited to convene annual regional meetings, para. 13.
- ⁴³ UN General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), A/RES/67/290.
- ⁴⁴ United Nations Secretary-General (2013) [Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development](#), A/67/757.
- ⁴⁵ UN General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), A/RES/67/290, paragraph 15d states that representatives of major groups or other relevant stakeholders shall be allowed to "submit documents and present written and oral contributions".
- ⁴⁶ As recommended in the [Key Messages](#) from the Expert Group Meeting on the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in post-2015 development framework, May 2014.
- ⁴⁷ UN General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), A/RES/67/290, para. 7(d).
- ⁴⁸ UN General Assembly (2015) Resolution (draft) [Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Status of Women](#), E/CN.6/2015/L5, see in particular paras. 2 and 25, as well as para. 7 and 29.
- ⁴⁹ Kindornay, S. and Sarah Twigg (2015) [Establishing a workable follow-up and review process for the Sustainable Development Goals: Overseas Development Institute](#) (ODI).
- ⁵⁰ Center for Reproductive Rights, Amnesty International, Center for Economic and Social Rights, Human Rights Watch (2015) [Accountability for the Post-2015 Agenda: A Proposal for a Robust Global Review Mechanism](#).
- ⁵¹ As suggested in United Nations (2014) [The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda](#) A/69/700.
- ⁵² As per UN General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#), A/RES/67/290, para. 7(c), "... Shall have a thematic focus reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the activities of the Council and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda".
- ⁵³ United Nations OHCHR (2013) [Who Will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#).
- ⁵⁴ See the reports of the Independent Expert Group Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health here: http://www.who.int/woman_child_accountability/ierng/reports/en/.
- ⁵⁵ WHO (2014) [Accountability for Women's and Children's Health](#), 2014 Progress Report.
- ⁵⁶ UNESCO Draft Framework for Action Education 2030: Towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, 23 April 2015. Secretary-General's Global Strategy on Women's, Children's and Adolescent Health 2.0 draft strategy paper [Realizing the health and wellbeing of adolescents](#), March 2015.
- ⁵⁷ German Development Institute (2014) [Post 2015: Setting Up a Coherent accountability Framework](#), Briefing Paper 13/2014.
- ⁵⁸ See for example para. 68 in UN ECOSOC (2015) [Thematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned for the post-2015 era, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services](#); E/AC.51/2015/3*
- ⁵⁹ As stated by the UN Deputy Secretary-General at the opening of the 46th session of the UN Statistical Committee, 3 March 2015.
- ⁶⁰ HelpAge International (2014) [Global Age Watch Brief 5: A post-2015 framework for all ages: Transforming the future for youth and older people](#).
- ⁶¹ A global review of national gender statistics programmes, undertaken by the UN DESA's Statistics Division in collaboration with the UN regional commissions in 2012, found that out of 126 responding countries only 13% had a specific budget allocated to gender statistics within the overall national budget for statistics, 47% relied on ad-hoc/project funds, and the remaining 39% had no funds allocated – see UN DESA (2014) [Using data to measure gender equality](#).
- ⁶² United Nations OHCHR (1990). [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 3: The Nature of States Parties' Obligation](#) (Art. 2, Para.1 of the Covenant).
- ⁶³ For a discussion on the principle of non-retrogression, see among others, Human Rights Council (2013) [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque](#), A/HRC/24/44, Twenty fourth session, Agenda item 3, [Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development](#).
- ⁶⁴ "Human-rights based" approach is a term adopted in intergovernmental agreements, including the Human Rights Council (2014) [Resolution on Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights](#), A/HRC/27/L.19, paras 2 and 4; United Nations General Assembly (2013)

[Resolution on The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation](#), A/RES/68/157, para. 10; General Assembly (2013) [Resolution on Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities](#), A/RES/68/172, para.

⁶⁵ UN Human Rights Council (2012) [Technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal morbidity and mortality](#), A/HRC/21/22.

⁶⁶ UN Human Rights Council (2014) [Technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce and eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 years of age](#); and United Nations (2013) [Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health](#) (art. 24).

⁶⁷ WHO (2014). [Reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health and human rights: A toolbox for examining Laws, regulations and policies](#).

⁶⁸ See examples and case studies in UN OHCHR (2013) [Who will be accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#): Geneva – including the World Bank's Inspection Panel (an independent complaint mechanism) and donor governments in relation to development cooperation activities.

⁶⁹ For example, see Human Rights Council (2008) [Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development - Protect, Respect and Remedy: a Framework for Business and Human Rights](#); United Nations Global Compact, [The Ten Principles](#); UN Women (2010) [Women's Empowerment Principles, Equality Means Business](#).

⁷⁰ See UNDP's Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM), launched in 2014:
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/accountability/secu-srm/>