



Integrating Three Levels of Accountability for Effective Review & Accountability Mechanism

The crux of the post 2015 development agenda is in leaving no one behind and integrating three pillars of sustainable development. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to create a High Level Political Forum in pursuance of the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference to create a Forum to provide political guidance and review the sustainable development commitments and monitor progress.¹ The SG's synthesis report further said that post 2015 development agenda needs to be supported by a review, monitoring and accountability mechanism at three levels, national, regional and global.² The critical shortfall of the MDGs was a lack of accountability and the HLPF must seek to do away with that by putting in place a mechanism that enhances political ambition and accountability. It must be universal, state led, multi tiered and inclusive mechanism. However, it is equally important that such a global mechanism creates a downward accountability mechanism at regional and national level.

Regional Commissions of the United Nations provide best possible opportunity and space for such a critical reflection, learning, regional collaboration, political ownership and accountability. In the transition phase, the APFSD has shown a willingness to provide leadership in creating an inclusive space at the Asia Pacific level. However, as the actual task of review and monitoring starts with 2016, the regional commissions must look forward to creating a robust and dynamic review and accountability mechanism, which fosters knowledge sharing, reciprocal learning and promote shared accountability for regional challenges and opportunities.

¹ A/Res/67/290

² http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf

Principles:

Universality and Differentiation: The review mechanism must be universal but must acknowledge differentiation based the stage of economic, social and political development a country is. Lack of incentives have been one of the major shortfalls of the monitoring of sustainable development in the AMR irrespective of the fact whether the mechanism is voluntary or mandatory, the review mechanism should have incentives for the countries participating in the process. The countries may be incentivised through assistance in capacity building of institutions and legislative processes, hand on support in organizing reviews, and financial assistance for follow up. For many poor countries, the review and monitoring will be meaningless without assistance and other incentives.

Respect to National Sovereignty: The SDGs and post 2015 development agenda process while being universal supports respect to national circumstances and priorities. The review mechanism should also respect national sovereignty and should aim at enhancing national ownership and accountability of countries.

Focused on Human Rights, Poverty, Inequality and Exclusion: The review on MDGs missed an opportunity to focus on poverty, inequality and exclusion and had very little accountability. The post 2015 must have a human rights based approach against poverty, inequality and exclusion in the integration of three dimensions of sustainable development.

Simplicity, Flexibility, Transparency and Inclusive: The regional review and accountability should adhere to highest standards of simplicity, flexibility and transparency and should have widest participation of MGs at all levels in compliance with the spirit of the HLPF resolution.

Operational aspects

Institutional Structure:

The regional mechanism needs to have a competent institutional structure including human and financial resources to facilitate a meaningful and defective review process.

Objectives & Purposes:

The regional review and accountable mechanism must create a strong downward and upward accountability structures: The SG's synthesis report talks about three levels of monitoring, national, regional and global. A competent and accountable national review and accountability mechanism should be the foundation stone of regional review mechanism as the governments are primarily accountable to people. The regional mechanism should be able to take accountability upward towards the HLPF rather than only reporting to the HLPF.

Methods:

The regional review mechanisms must have a substantive Regional Road Map, which goes beyond mapping progress. It must have a categorical commitment to eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and improving inclusion. Post 2015 development agenda lays down a overarching framework, and review mechanism must also include assessment of impact of trade, technology and investments on the sustainability. The road map must be based on development justice anchored in redistributive justice, economic justice, social and gender justice, environmental justice and accountability.

Stakeholder Participation:

The HLPF Resolution lays down widest possible modalities for stakeholder participation and the SG's synthesis paper takes this spirit forward. The established rules of MGs participation must be given extensive interpretation in the light of global aspirations and HLPF resolution and must be based on the principles of non-regression.

Depth and Breadth of the Discussions:

In the existing HLPF Resolution, regional mechanism provides the best opportunity for going into the depth and breadth of review and assessment through extensive and intensive thematic and country reviews. It also provides an important role for UN entities, regional institutions, universalities' and research institutions and other stakeholders. In addition to this, this review can also include cross-cutting and long term poverty eradication approaches.

Learning from Inter-regional and Other Review Mechanisms:

The UN Regional Commissions have a rich experience of review and assessments on sustainable development. The experience of African Peer Review Mechanism is appreciated for its unique elements for extensive capacity building support to the countries agreeing to be reviewed. In addition to this, other review mechanisms like UPR and OECD-DAC etc. bring interesting insights for strengthening regional review mechanism/APFSD.

Review of the Effectiveness and Harvesting Learning from the Experiences:

The review mechanism should be a dynamic platform incorporating a periodic review of the review and accountability mechanism to harness learning's from the experiences from within and outside the region in order to further strengthen it.

