**Measuring and accounting the Ambition: Recommendations from Beyond 2015 on the Accountability, Monitoring and Review framework for the Post-2015 Agenda**

**DRAFT Position Paper from Beyond 2015**

**NOT FOR CIRCULATION – PAPER UNDER REVIEW**

***About this draft paper***

*This* ***draft*** *paper is the outcome of around four months of discussions within the Beyond 2015 Accountability Task Force. The Task Force was established in November 2014, after an open call to the whole Campaign. It counts now with more than 50 members from all regions of the world.*

*The Task Force had opportunities of submitting inputs in a series of open documents as well as through direct discussions with Graham Long, from Newcastle University, who facilitates this work.*

*This is intended to be an* ***advocacy tool*** *with concrete proposals for the post-2015 accountability, monitoring and review and that is why it focus on* ***recommendations****, presented in a* ***short*** *and* ***concise*** *way.*

*This paper is now submitted for final comments by Beyond 2015 Campaign. Divergent points are also highlighted in the text as footnotes.*

**Background**

A comprehensive set of robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms will be a key element of the post-2015 framework, incorporating commitments to report on and evaluate progress, and to share knowledge. The ambition for this framework must remain high in three key respects:

The universal nature of the post-2015 agenda demands global action, coordination, and accountability. To be adequate, any review mechanism must be based on the accountability of member states inwards, towards their own citizens. And it must extend its scope upwards and outwards, beyond the realisation of goals within each country, to assess how effectively countries, the UN system and other stakeholders are cooperating to achieve the SDGs.

An adequate review framework, then, must involve the public in the follow-up and accountability mechanisms at all levels. The monitoring framework for the post-2015 agenda must be more than narrowly intergovernmental. Notably, it must incorporate inclusive mechanisms at the local and national level that allow people, particularly those experiencing poverty and marginalisation, to participate effectively and without discrimination in the accountability process. This means provision of a broader enabling environment for the participation of all people and their organisations.

There must be rigorous efforts to strengthen the interlinkages in implementation and accountability between the post-2015 framework and other global processes and mechanisms aiming at a sustainable and equitable world, such as the UNFCCC, the outcome of the FfD process, and existing human rights and environmental agreements. There must be close consideration to how the SDGs can best reinforce such mechanisms. It is important to recognize that the post-2015 agenda will only be realised through the achievement of existing commitments on human rights and environmental justice.

Beyond 2015 offers some specific recommendations to the post-2015 monitoring and accountability framework, which we regard as voluntary, state-led, and multi-tiered in nature:

**National and Local Levels**

*Overview*

We recommend that every Member State adopt a **national sustainable development strategy** through a participatory process which is inclusive of people experiencing poverty and marginalisation. This strategy should make meaningful, measurable commitments on the progressive realisation of all the SDGs. It should address not only the achievement of the post-2015 commitments within that country, but also each country's equitable contribution to *global* achievement of the goals.

Member States should agree to a public, inclusive and participatory **national review mechanism**, led by a national review body, outlined below. The process must include members of the public - especially from the poorest and most marginalized groups - and their legitimate representatives, notably members of national legislatures.

National and local review can only function within an **open society that protects civil and political freedoms.** Goal 16 should be taken as a baseline for ambition in this respect. An equal right to participate in domestic processes of accountability must be guaranteed and realised through concrete steps, including financial support for the most marginalised to enable their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Given the forward-looking nature of these goals, the voices of youth must be heard and the interests of future generations represented.

**Innovative use of the internet and mobile technology** can be a key enabler of people's ability to access information and evaluate change. For example, deliberative polling on key issues of sustainability can foster public discussion, awareness and provide a source of further representative data; mobile technology can allow for public feedback on the provision of local services. Nevertheless, efforts must be taken to ensure that inclusivity is not damaged by a ‘digital divide’ within society.

*Composition and role of the national review body*

* We consider it essential that this mechanism be built around a broadly representative body, led by the national government and effectively linked to existing domestic systems of governance. Where possible, it would draw many of its participants from existing democratic legislatures or equivalents. It would meet annually, in a public and fully transparent manner, to discuss progress; be advised by a **national panel of independent experts**[[1]](#footnote-1); and facilitate the widest possible participation of that state's population in the review process. This national review body should have an appropriate form for each country context.
* This body – potentially a national commission or committee - would receive as formal inputs disaggregated statistical reports from national statistical agencies and UN bodies; reports, statements and assessments from organised civil society groups; and the findings of local and regional monitoring mechanisms, including the findings of *participatory monitoring* by the poorest and most marginalised groups. We welcome and support the UN Secretary General’s suggestion of three separate reports, including a national stakeholder report, as inputs.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* This body would lead **assessment of progress against the benchmarks** of the national strategy in a series of public hearings and sessions organised around focal *areas and themes.* It would review *policy coherence* in support of sustainable development, and the realism and ambition of the nationally set benchmarks. All material considered would be readily accessible to all, and its proceedings would be available to view and interact with via the internet.
* This national review body should have the capacity to invite relevant **extra-territorial actors -** notably international institutions, civil society actors, transnational private sector actors, and multi-stakeholder partnerships - to share their country-level contribution to the achievement of SDGs in the public discussion[[3]](#footnote-3).
* Lastly, the body would prepare an **evaluative report** on progress against the SDGs with recommendations for the improvement of policies, plans and programmes, and a narrative of the hearings. This report would itself be disseminated widely to the public in regional public meetings with opportunities for further deliberation. The results would be fed upwards to regional and global levels of review, and back into the following year's process.

**Regional Level**

Theregional level is an appropriate point for countries to exchange experience, review and evaluate each others' progress, and address cross-border challenges and opportunities for cooperation.

* Each region should establish **mechanisms for peer review**, drawing on existing structures. These reviews should be comprehensive in their coverage of the post-2015 agenda - encompassing all SDGs and their accompanying targets - and transparent.
* The effective **participation of people and their organisations** should be guaranteed, with modalities comparable to those of national and global levels. In particular, we recommend that national and regional stakeholders are permitted to submit evidence within the formal review process and present written and oral contributions, and that all official information and documents are easily accessible to all.
* **Participatory and inclusive multi-stakeholder committees** at regional level would be tasked with facilitating the participation of national and regional stakeholders during the peer review process, and with monitoring the process.
* The regional level would also be the appropriate forum for the discussion of particular regional challenges, policies and strategies and the development of regional cooperation.
* The UN Regional Commissions must be tasked to support Member States in developing regional processes of monitoring and review.

**Global Level and the role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)**

*The role and responsibilities of the HLPF:*

* We recommend that the HLPF should receive country reports (along with regional reviews) and discuss them individually in public session, with the modalities already adopted for civil society participation (A/RES/67/290), on a five-yearly cycle[[4]](#footnote-4).
* Given the presence of two prior levels of review, however, the focus of the HLPF should be on the ***global picture* of attainment and global *enablers of*, and *obstacles to*, sustainable development**.
* The mandate and concern of the HLPF, then, would be focused on overarching and underpinning issues of implementation, including global finance, trade, technology, popular participation and governance. The HLPF would also be tasked with assessing cross-border issues and impacts not easily captured at local, state and regional levels. As the basis for evidence-based policy-making, the HLPF would undertake an assessment of the impact of existing global institutions on the realisation of the post-2015 agenda.
* The HLPF should have the lead role in galvanising coherent global policy-making for sustainable development, including evaluation of the "global partnership for sustainable development". The global partnership for sustainable development should be the subject of a substantial annual review with the full participation of all stakeholders.
* We note that partnerships are founded on the equal inclusion of all partners and mutual accountability between them, supporting the need for an effective global system of monitoring and review. People and communities must be acknowledged as key partners, and this, in turn, reinforces the need for their participation at every level.
* The HLPF would also commission and consider thematic reviews of progress and challenges, on the basis of linkages between relevant international initiatives and organisations and the expert advisory groups established alongside it.
* Ahead of its four-yearly meetings under the auspices of the General Assembly, the HLPF should assess the overall review and accountability mechanism for the post-2015 agenda, to see whether it is working adequately and consider how it might be improved.

*The organisation and structure of the HLPF*

* To deliver on its role in the global review and follow up of the post-2015 agenda, Member States should agree to provide the HLPF with a dedicated, permanent and independent Secretariat. This must be sufficient to enable the HLPF to effectively coordinate the HLPF sessions and reviews, to support states in their efforts, to coordinate the assessment of global progress, to facilitate the engagement of stakeholders and to manage an agenda of thematic and institutional assessment.
* We recommend that the HLPF is accompanied by rapporteurs and expert, inclusive and participatory advisory groups, to be established on key thematic components of the framework. Such groups would review, and offer policy advice on, progress in specific areas.
* To ensure the recognition of interlinkages, these thematic strands must constitute a *network*, linked at multiple levels - formally by regular meetings between them, informally via a series of contact groups on cross-cutting issues.
* The process of making the UN 'fit for purpose' must support system-wide coherence, consolidation and coordination and should be done in an inclusive and transparent way.

**Conclusion:**

These recommendations focus on state-led processes of review, but recognise the importance and benefits of an inclusive and participatory approach. The increased role envisioned for multi-stakeholder partnerships in delivering the post-2015 agenda means that they, too, must meet the same levels of accountability within the global framework. Such partnerships should be held to agreed UN standards in respect of human rights, environmental impact, transparency and effectiveness. The private sector, too, has an important role to play. To ensure that it contributes towards - rather than undermines - efforts to achieve the post-2015 agenda, voluntary principles and reporting mechanisms must be strengthened to provide meaningful consequences for non-compliance in respect of environmental and human rights obligations.

The proposal above sets out the key elements of an accountability framework. The greater the levels of critical scrutiny, capacity, cooperation and coordination in this framework, the more effective the post-2015 agenda will prove to be. At the same time, the basic purpose of this agenda must not be forgotten. The post-2015 sustainable development agenda represents a commitment to current and future generations of the world's people, particularly the poorest and most marginalised. The monitoring and accountability mechanism is the test by which people will judge whether that commitment is being met.

1. **Comment from TF facilitator – For discussion:** Points that our trust in experts should be limited, and that the selection of experts is problematic, have been well made. Of course, the same can be said of the civil society component of this too. The idea here is to balance the power of policy makers and of advocates with a body operating on a different footing. It is not to presume that such a body will be any less imperfect than the other components. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A/69/700, para 149.i [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Comment from TF Facilitator:** This was thought problematic, but I take it is in one of the few concrete ways that this brings accountability from the global to the national: the public, and their representatives, directly questioning external actors - so I kept it, for now. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Note from the TF Facilitator:** I changed this to 5-yearly, but I know there are a range of different ideas. Beyond feasibility, and the desirablity of more regular reviews, what other considerations should bear on this? [↑](#footnote-ref-4)