

## UNECE Executive Committee

### Informal Consultations on Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

Wednesday, 2 November 2016, 15:00-17:00, Room S4

*Note by the secretariat (27 October)*

#### **Background**

1. UNECE member States held **informal consultations** on the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on **23 September 2016**. The discussion focused on the general features of follow-up and review at the regional level and possible arrangements for the Regional Forum in 2017. Member States requested the secretariat to prepare **more detailed proposals** for concrete modalities of the Regional Forum.

2. In follow-up to this request, the secretariat developed a **proposed structure of the Regional Forum**, taking into account the views and preferences expressed by delegations, in particular:

- Focus on practical value added and peer learning within a lean and cost-efficient set-up
- Create a space for countries to share policy experiences
- Provide a regional and subregional overview of SDG progress
- Align the discussion with the respective HLPF theme and the SDGs under in-depth review, but focus on those that are particularly relevant to the region
- Work with the regional UN system to organize the Regional Forum and bring in their expertise. At the same time, two countries suggested that the Regional Forum mainly be based on UNECE core competencies.
- Involve civil society in a well-coordinated manner. Civil society should self-organize and select speakers that share coordinated statements.
- Non-UN regional and other international organizations could be involved within a clearly defined and limited role, for example as panellists.
- Background documentation should clearly distinguish government and UN sources from other sources.

#### **Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region in 2017**

3. Based on the discussions with delegations, the **one-day Regional Forum** on Tuesday, 25 April 2017 could be structured as follows:

10:00 – 10:45	<b>OPENING</b>
10:45 – 13:00	<b>POLICY SEGMENT</b>  <b><i>THE SECOND YEAR OF THE SDGs IN THE REGION – KNOWING WHERE WE STAND AND MOVING ON TO PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL</i></b>  Interactive and cross-sectoral panel discussion
13:00 – 15:00	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b> – Side events, SDG fair, SDG lab ( <i>tbc in cooperation with UNOG</i> )
15:00 – 17:00	<b>PEER LEARNING SEGMENT</b> - Parallel Regional Round Tables -
	Regional Round Table I: <b><i>NATIONALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION OF SDGs</i></b>
	Regional Round Table II: <b><i>SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION</i></b>
	REGIONAL ROUND TABLE III: <b><i>DATA AND MONITORING</i></b>
17:00 – 18:00	<b>REPORTING BACK AND CLOSING</b>

4. The **features of the different meeting segments** are suggested as follows:

a) Opening:

A **limited number of speakers** (tentatively 3-5) will **set the stage** and provide an **introductory overview** of the status of SDG-related policy efforts and some existing challenges. Possible speakers are the Chair of the Regional Forum, high-level government representatives, the UNECE Executive Secretary, and the Chair of the Regional UN Development Group.

b) Policy Segment:

The Policy Segment on ***“The Second Year of the SDGs in the Region – Knowing Where We Stand and Moving on to Prosperity and Well-Being for All”*** will be organized as an **interactive and cross-sectoral**

**panel discussion** in the plenary. Within the broader HLPF theme for 2017<sup>1</sup>, it will focus on a set of key themes that are of **relevance to all countries in the UNECE region: prosperity, health and well-being, and gender** (hence, particularly SDG 3 on health and well-being, SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, and SDG 9 on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation). The Policy Segment aims at a cross-sectoral exchange and discussion among **national SDG coordinators and focal points** and other representatives from governments and non-governmental actors (UN system, other regional and international organizations, civil society, private sector, academia) with an **integrated perspective on the SDG agenda**. Speakers in the Policy Segment will be asked to elaborate on the following aspects:

- Status of SDG progress and policy efforts in a country, subregion or in the region across all SDGs
- Challenges and solutions to integrate prosperity, health and well-being, and gender in a coherent policy framework for SDG implementation and to take into account interlinkages and trade-offs
- Key issues with regard to the adaptation of SDGs to national and local circumstances, subregional cooperation, and data and monitoring, which the Peer Learning Segment in the afternoon will consider more in-depth
- The role of different actors (governments and non-governmental actors) and their cooperation at the national, subregional and regional levels for SDG implementation
- Through the lens of prosperity, health and well-being, and gender, other themes that will be dealt with at the HLPF will be raised mainly from the floor by countries or stakeholders, in particular on poverty and social protection (SDG 1) nutrition and agriculture (SDG 2), and oceans (SDG 14). Within the regional UN system, the entities leading on these themes are UNDP and ILO (SDG 1), FAO (SDG 2), and WMO and UNEP (SDG 14).

The **UNECE expertise** in the key thematic areas will be stressed and will serve as an important entry point to the discussion. It will be combined with the **expertise available in the regional UN system** in areas beyond UNECE's mandate to arrive at a more **complete picture**:

- Prosperity: SDG 9 on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation will allow to bring in UNECE expertise from the Inland Transport Committee, the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships, and the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, including on the Innovation Performance Reviews and the Studies on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade. Furthermore, coordination with the Regional Offices of UNIDO on industrialization and ITU on information and communications technology will be useful.
- Health and Well-being: SDG 3 on Health and Well-being relates to UNECE activities on road safety (target 3.6), the Air Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), and the International Specialist Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Health. The close cooperation with WHO/Europe, for example within the European Environment and Health Process, as well as with the Regional Office of UNICEF will be instrumental in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> The HLPF theme for 2017 is "*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*". The SDGs to be reviewed in-depth at the HLPF 2017 are SDGs 1 (poverty), 2 (hunger, nutrition and agriculture), 3 (health and well-being), 5 (gender), 9 (infrastructure, industrialization, innovation), and 14 (oceans).

- Gender: Gender equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5) will be mainstreamed throughout the Policy Segment. The UNECE Gender and Economy Programme and the Regional Offices of UN Women and UNFPA will provide relevant contributions.

The Policy Segment will be **moderated** by the **UNECE Executive Secretary**. The panel will consist of approximately **six panellists**, who will speak for 5-7 minutes each. This will leave room for **interactive discussions and solutions** that are brought up from the floor. The panellists will be from governments (e.g., a country from the Eastern part that underwent an Innovation Performance Review, a gender focal point from a government from the Western part of the region), UNECE intergovernmental bodies (e.g., Chair or Vice-Chair of the Inland Transport Committee), regional UN system (e.g., Regional Director WHO), civil society (one speaker selected by civil society), and private sector.

c) Peer Learning Segment:

The Peer Learning Segment will promote **voluntary and more in-depth peer learning** and **practical exchange of experiences and best practices** in smaller groups. To this end, participants will break out in **three parallel Regional Round Tables**. The multi-stakeholder Round Tables will be facilitated by a **moderator** and summarized by a **rapporteur**. Selected speakers from governments and stakeholders will be contacted in advance to prepare and briefly present their experiences. Resource persons and experts from the regional UN system and other stakeholders will provide inputs and share lessons. The objective of the Round Tables is to compile a **set of key action areas and good practices** in these areas.

It is suggested to organize Round Tables on the following cross-cutting topics:

- Regional Round Table I: **Nationalization and localization of SDGs**

Round Table I will focus on the ongoing process of adapting the global SDGs to national and local circumstances. Reviewing and adjusting national strategies, plans and instruments is a major first step taken by governments in the region to start SDG implementation.<sup>2</sup> The Round Table will discuss challenges, exchange different approaches, and collect preliminary lessons from devising national and local SDG strategies and programmes, benefitting from a wealth of country experiences, including from the 9 countries from the region that participated in the National Voluntary Reviews at the 2016 HLPF and the 12 countries from the region that will do so in 2017.

The Round Table will be organized in cooperation with the Regional UN Development Group, who will provide an overview of SDG nationalization and localization in the 17 countries of the region with UN programmatic presence. A representative of UN-DESA will share the lessons from the National Voluntary Reviews (NVRs). UNITAR with their experience from national SDG briefings could be another valuable collaborator. The key themes of prosperity, health and well-being, and gender will serve as useful examples for SDG adaptation.

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<sup>2</sup> See Regional SDG Survey 2016: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=42256](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42256).

- Regional Round Table II: **Subregional cooperation for SDG implementation**

The subregional level is important in a multi-layered system of SDG implementation and follow-up. Neighbouring countries working together can help address issues of common concern, including those of transboundary nature. The subregional level connects the local and national levels on the one hand and the regional and global levels on the other hand. With regard to the key themes for the Regional Forum, this applies in particular to cross-border infrastructure and trade. The Round Table will share experiences and discuss how cooperation within the different UNECE subregions can help advance the SDGs. The Round Table will encourage participation by governments, subregional organizations and bodies, and non-governmental actors engaged in subregional cooperation. Relevant subregions are in particular Central Asia (involving the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) in cooperation with ESCAP, taking into account that ESCAP does discuss subregional issues at the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum), South-Eastern Europe (Regional Cooperation Council), Eurasia (Eurasian Economic Union) and the European Union.

- Regional Round Table III: **Data and monitoring**

Improving the data situation and building statistical capacities for SDG monitoring remains a significant challenge for all countries in the region and beyond. Statisticians are working at the global and regional levels, including in the Conference of European Statisticians, to develop methodologically sound SDG indicators. The Round Table will provide an opportunity for dialogue between policy-makers and statisticians on the needs, feasibility and limitations of SDG data. SDG coordinators and other participants with a demand for data will discuss with statisticians and data experts from UNECE, national statistical offices and the regional UN system.

Delegations may also wish to consider whether the issue of Financing for Sustainable Development and partnerships, taking into account the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the cooperation with the private sector, should be integrated in the Policy Segment or should be dealt with separately, for example in a Round Table.

d) Closing:

The moderators and rapporteurs will **report back from the Regional Round Tables**, summarizing the main points of discussion and highlighting the key action areas and good practices that were identified in the Round Tables. The Chair of the Regional Forum and a limited number of speakers, including the UNECE Executive Secretary, will then make **closing remarks**.

5. **Objective:** In the proposed format, the **key objective** of the Regional Forum is to **support the implementation** of the complex **2030 Agenda in the region**, involving multiple sectors and actors. In doing so, it aims to achieve **results in several areas:**

- Uncertain knowledge on what works: Exchange of national experiences and best practices on SDG implementation at the regional level, resulting in increased capacity of national policymakers and other decision-makers to design and implement SDG-related policies.
- Providing an open regional platform to gather experiences across different sectors, leading to increased awareness of cross-sectoral implications of SDG initiatives and better coordination by governments and international organizations.
- Multiplicity of existing follow-up and review mechanisms: Synthesis of outputs from existing mechanisms in the region and identification of regional trends, resulting in better availability of aggregated information and coherent regional input to the global level.

6. **Outcomes:** The main outcome of the Regional Forum will be a **Chair's summary**. The Chair's summary will constitute the **input from the UNECE region to the High-level Political Forum**. The Chair's summary will be of political significance to the global process as a contribution from a high- and middle-income region to the universal SDG agenda. The Chair will circulate the draft Chair's summary to the participants of the Regional Forum. Comments can then be submitted to the Chair within a **one-week commenting period**. Attached to the Chair's summary is the **compilation of key action areas and good practices** resulting from the Regional Round Tables.

7. **Chairing arrangement:** The Regional Forum will be **chaired by a representative of a member State** to be determined by member States (EXCOM or EXCOM Bureau) in consultation with the UNECE secretariat (alternatively, member States may wish to determine two Co-Chairs). The **moderators and rapporteurs** of the Regional Round Tables will be **selected by the Chair** of the Regional Forum in consultation with member States and the UNECE secretariat. The Chair will develop, approve and distribute the **provisional agenda** of the Regional Forum in consultation with member States and the UNECE secretariat.

8. **Background documentation:** A **concise background document** (official UNECE document with word limit 8,500 words) will be prepared to facilitate the discussions at the Regional Forum in 2017. The document will **synthesize available materials** that are directly relevant to the meeting, in particular existing reports from governments, summary of peer review mechanisms and reports and inputs from the UN system (other sources will be clearly identified). The background document will identify major trends and provide references to further, more detailed information. The information, inputs and reports collected will be shared on a **dedicated website**. Other dissemination channels (by UNOG - GVAdata.ch or the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem -, or DESA's global UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform) will also be used.

9. **Target groups and participation:** The Regional Forum primarily targets **national SDG coordinators, focal points or similar government officials** with a cross-sectoral perspective on the SDGs. The Regional Forum will also welcome interventions by **high-level government representatives** that are bearing responsibility for the national SDG process. In addition, the **regional UN system** will be the main partner for organizing and contributing to the Regional Forum. The Regional Forum is also open to participation by **other relevant stakeholders**, in particular other international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia. Their roles will be to provide speakers for the Policy Segment and the Regional Round Tables, share available background information, and

intervene from the floor after member States at the discretion of the Chair or moderator and as time permits. For civil society, the coordination structure of *Major Groups and other Stakeholders* will be used to interact with civil society, following the approach of the HLPF. Civil society groups that are working on SDGs in the region will be invited to organize their own civil society consultation prior to the Regional Forum. Due representation will be ensured from all parts of the region and from NGOs working at the national and local level. The outcomes of the civil society consultation will be presented by one civil society speaker at the Policy Segment of the Regional Forum. Other interventions by civil society will be made by representatives selected by civil society through their internal coordination mechanism.

10. **Meeting sequence:** In 2017, the Regional Forum will be preceded by a one-day, joint DESA/UNECE **preparatory expert group meeting** for the 12 countries of the region that will participate in the National Voluntary Reviews at the HLPF. It will also be preceded by a one-day, self-organized **civil society consultation**. The Regional Forum will be held back-to-back with the **67<sup>th</sup> Commission session** taking place from 26-27 April 2017. These four meetings together could be branded "**Sustainable Development Week**". The following table provides an overview of the planned meeting sequence:

Monday, 24 April 2017	Tuesday, 25 April 2017	Wednesday, 26 April 2017	Thursday, 27 April 2017 (a.m.)
<b>Preparatory civil society consultation</b>  <b>Expert Group Meeting DESA/UNECE</b>	<b>Regional Forum on Sustainable Development</b>	<b>67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission</b>	<b>67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission</b>

11. **Regional SDG Progress Report:** Looking ahead, it is proposed that a **Regional SDG Progress Report** with a broader scope will be prepared jointly with the regional UN system **every four years** when the High-level Political Forum is convened **under the auspices of the General Assembly**. The report goes beyond summarizing key documents relevant for the meeting to provide a more comprehensive picture that identifies progress and gaps in the region, on the basis of available statistical data and other available reports and assessments, and major policy directions. The Regional SDG Progress Report will also be based on the results of the **Regional SDG Survey**, which will be carried out for this purpose **every four years**. The HLPF will be convened under the auspices of the GA the **next time in 2019**.

12. **Financial implications:**

a) **Regional Forum 2017:** The UNECE secretariat, in particular the Sustainable Development and Gender Unit (SDGU), will **prioritize the organization of the Regional Forum** in 2017. Although this will constitute a major strain on the resources of the Unit, the Regional Forum 2017 can be organized and serviced **within existing regular budget resources**.

**Limited financial resources of about 60,000 \$** will be required for the Regional Forum in 2017 to cover the **travel costs** (air ticket and 2 DSAs at 381 \$ per day) of **20 participants** (3 speakers/experts from the region as well as 17 participants from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia). The

amount will need to be covered from **extrabudgetary sources** from governments, the UN system (e.g., UN Country Teams) or other sources. In addition, an amount of **20,000 \$** will be made available by UN-DESA to fund the **preparatory civil society consultation**.

- b) **Longer-term resource requirements**: More staff resources would be needed for a more **continuous monitoring of SDG progress** in the region and collecting and processing inputs from other mechanisms in an in-depth manner as well as for strengthening cross-cutting activities in support of the 2030 Agenda in UNECE. UNECE had initially requested an additional P-3 post, partly to carry out tasks related to regional follow-up and review.

To prepare the broader **Regional SDG Progress Report** every four years, extrabudgetary funding of 20,000 \$ will be needed for a **consultant** to help with the preparation of the report. This amount will need to be raised from governments, the UN system or other sources.

### **Next steps**

13. **Regional Forum 2017**: Member States may wish to agree upon the **modalities of the Regional Forum to be held in 2017**. On this basis, the UNECE secretariat will then initiate preparations in close and ongoing consultation with member States.

14. **Decision on general functions and features**: Based on the discussion of the proposed modalities for the 2017 Regional Forum, member States may wish to develop the **longer-term modalities** of the Regional Forum in general in the form of a **draft decision** to be negotiated by member States and submitted for approval by the 67<sup>th</sup> Commission session. The deadline for the submission of the text of the decision is **beginning of February 2017**.

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