2030

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

JOINT POSITIONING BY THE REGIONAL UN SYSTEM
IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Background

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States underlined "the important role and comparative advantage of an adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective United Nations system" in supporting SDG achievement. This is applicable to the UN system at all levels – global, regional and national.

Over 20 UN entities[1] are active with regional or sub-regional mandates in Europe and Central Asia. The Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia (R-UNDG) and the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) serve as platforms for close cooperation within the areas requiring diverse technical expertise and application of best available approaches. The two key mechanisms responsible for ensuring system-wide coherence at the regional level have a long-standing history of good cooperation, and recognize the need to deepen it still further in light of the significant work to be undertaken, in the coming months and years, on SDG prioritization, integration, localization, implementation, monitoring, and review.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reinforces the need for even greater cooperation – SDGs do not recognize mandates and territories, but push for interconnected action and strong cooperation. The regional UN system has a key role to play in effectively translating large ambitions into concrete results by providing policy coherence and support to joint advocacy, analysis, and programme initiatives. Building on this strong ground, the R-UNDG and the RCM held a joint Retreat on SDG Implementation in Europe and Central Asia on 16 December 2015.

The joint Retreat focused on the following objectives:

- Examine the leverage points presented by the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda for addressing regional challenges and building prosperous, inclusive and resilient societies in Europe and Central Asia;

- Elaborate concrete actions the regional UN system should undertake to meet priority support needs for SDG implementation, follow-up and review; and

- Enhance mechanisms for strengthening policy and programme coherence (including robust linkages between the global, regional, and country levels).

The present note captures the key messages and actions that were agreed by the Heads of the regional UN entities at the retreat.

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[1] Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); International Trade Centre (ITC); Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); World Food Programme (WFP); World Health Organization (WHO); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is not a UN entity but closely cooperating with the Regional Coordination Mechanism.

The Starting Point

The region of Europe and Central Asia faces a number of challenges. Refugees and migrants are heading towards the region to escape war, violence and instability. Political tensions have re-emerged and frozen conflicts persist. Despite a high general level of development, inequalities are on the rise in all parts of the region, manifested in youth unemployment, exclusion of marginalized groups and lack of access to social services. In addition, the region is struggling to reduce its large ecological footprint and greenhouse gas emissions and to move to sustainable production and consumption patterns.
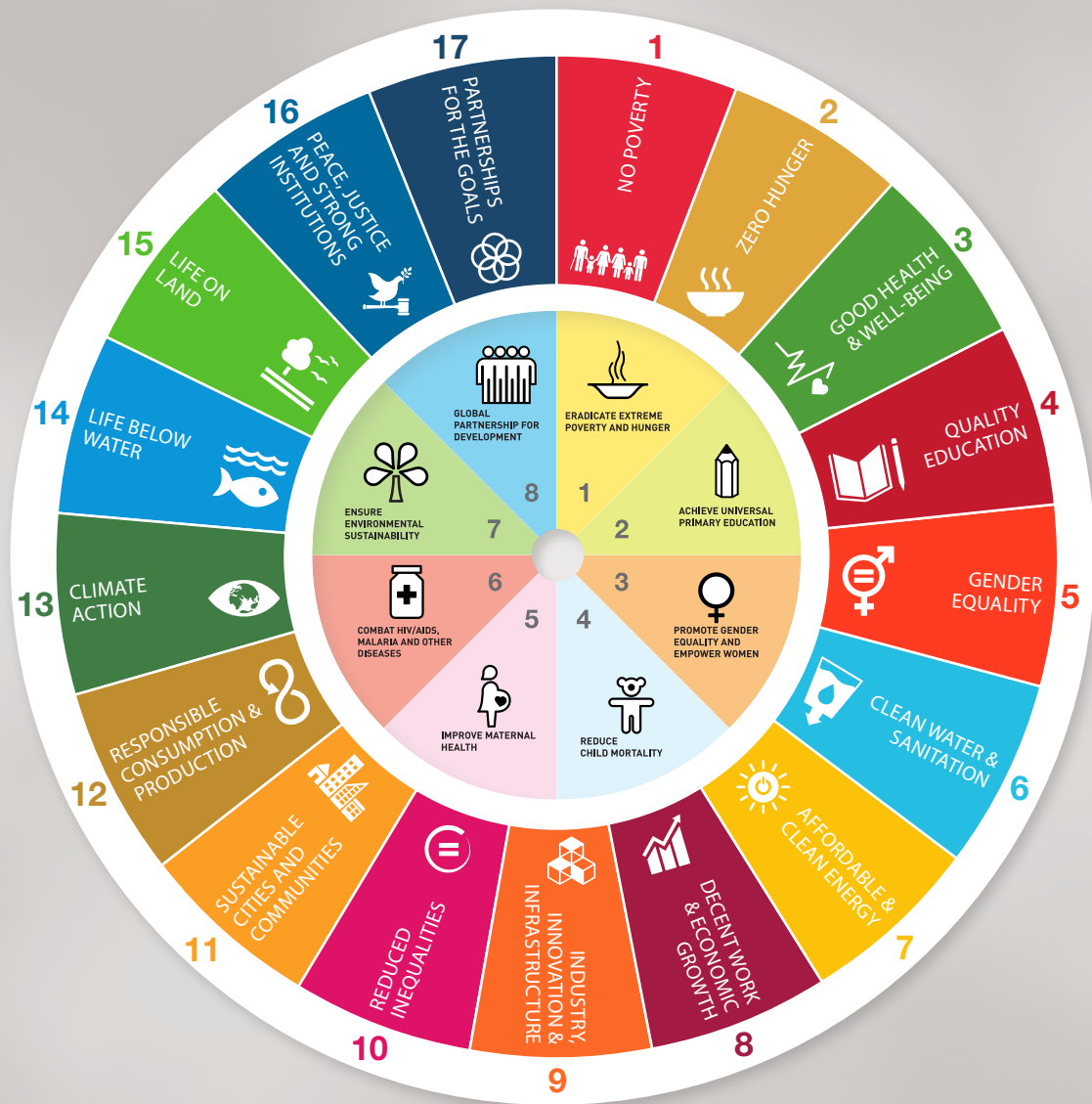
At this juncture, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals offer a powerful instrument to tackle the challenges at hand in an integrated manner. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the new and universal agenda applies to all countries both in the Western and Eastern parts of the region. The main responsibility to implement the SDGs lies with the Member States. The regional UN system will provide support to programme countries, mainly through the UN Country Teams and the UN Resident Coordinators, and will offer support to other countries, upon request.

Sustainable Development is not a new concept in Europe and Central Asia. With the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) back in 2000, all countries in the region stepped up their efforts towards sustainable development results. In programme countries, there have been mixed results regarding overall MDG achievement, although definitive conclusions cannot yet be drawn. For other countries in the region, the MDGs have not been relevant to a large extent.

"Transitioning" from MDGs to SDGs brings in certain complexities, which need to be taken into account while countries embark on SDG implementation. Whereas the MDGs were fundamentally about poverty reduction in developing countries, the SDGs are about sustainable development in all countries. This elevated the ambition of the SDG agenda, both in terms of universal country coverage (a particular issue for the region, which includes dozens of upper-income as well as middle-income countries) and in terms of the thematic/sectoral breadth of the sustainable development agenda (which must necessarily address environmental, governance, and peace-building issues as well as socio-economic questions).

Outer ring (SDGs):

1. NO POVERTY
2. ZERO HUNGER
3. GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING
4. QUALITY EDUCATION
5. GENDER EQUALITY
6. CLEAN WATER & SANITATION
7. AFFORDABLE & CLEAN ENERGY
8. DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH
9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION
13. CLIMATE ACTION
14. LIFE BELOW WATER
15. LIFE ON LAND
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Inner ring (MDGs):

1. ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER
2. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION
3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN
4. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY
5. IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH
6. COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES
7. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
8. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

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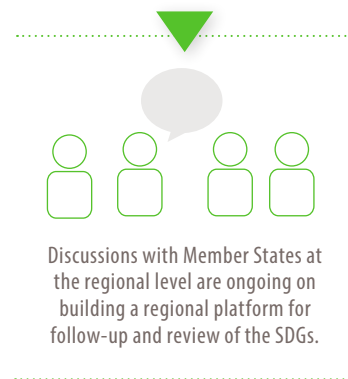
The integrated nature of sustainable development implies a need for whole-of-government responses, while the breadth of this agenda requires data and statistical capacity that is not always present, particularly in programme countries.

The new 2030 sustainable development agenda is not only universal and complex in nature. It introduces interconnectedness between the goals to the extent never experienced before. This will require full and genuine governments' ownership of the global agenda. It will also demand support from the United Nations – the only system that holds a wide variety of technical expertise and has access to many countries' experiences. There are expectations from Member States towards the UN system, including at the regional level, in several regards. The different parts and activities of the UN system are expected to become even better connected than this is currently

the case. The necessary support to countries should be provided within existing resources and without creating additional institutional structures. Existing instruments and mechanisms are to be used to implement and follow-up on the SDGs. It is also expected to provide support and capacity-building for the "data revolution". The UN system would also need to engage other actors – other regional organizations and entities (EU, OECD, EEU, etc.), civil society, and the private sector. Discussions with Member States at the regional level are ongoing on building a regional platform for follow-up and review of the SDGs.

UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) are at the frontline of meeting Member States' expectations and providing UN system's support adjusted to countries realities. To be able to fulfil this task, RCs and UNCTs are expecting support from the regional UN system. Overall and in the majority

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of cases, as part of UNDAF roll-out processes, UNCTs already started thinking and initiated dialogues with governments on how to take the SDG agenda forward. In several countries, mapping exercises to identify linkages between national development strategies and priorities, and SDGs was initiated.

A few countries established national coordinating mechanisms for SDG implementation at government level. During 2013 and 2014, UNCTs supported national consultations on Post- 2015, which – among

other important outcomes – helped raise awareness about the SDGs not only within governments, but also among the larger public.

2013 ⟶ **2014**

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As a follow-up to these early efforts, RCs and UNCTs expressed some clear expectations towards the regional UN system:

- RCs and UNCTs are expecting coordinated UN-wide approaches to the SDGs. In this regard, the strategic framework agreed upon by the UN Development Group (UNDG) – MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support) – provides a global unified approach to the UN support at country level.

- UNCTs will also need the regional UN system's support in helping governments to "bring the SDGs home". Even though the universality of the SDG agenda entails the applicability of all 17 goals, prioritization and integration of the agenda into national development strategies and processes will be a critical first step in SDGs implementation.

- Localization of SDGs will require support translating national-level goals into local-level plans and actions. This will also entail the adjustment of related processes for budgeting, monitoring and reporting, as well as building respective national capacities.

- Intensified efforts are also envisaged in supporting governments for SDG monitoring and data, and national statistical capacities. Countries will require intensified support in this area, with special focus on disaggregation of data to, for example, capture inequalities. Support will also be required in building or strengthening national monitoring systems, which would link local-level data, as well as advance citizen engagement and use of open data.

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- Clear guidance on reporting modalities, formats, timeline and frequency of SDG reporting are also expected.

Key Messages

The UN system in the region has committed to jointly pursue the following key messages in order to meet Member States' expectations and to be 'fit for purpose' in support of SDG implementation at country level:

- The regional UN system is fully committed to the promotion and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

- The regional UN system will support countries in taking bold and transformative steps in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

- The regional UN system will strengthen interagency cooperation and seek synergies at the regional and country levels, driving for joint high-impact results with multiplier effects, strengthening mutual accountability, and promoting common messaging and joint positioning on SDGs implementation. This will ensure governments' access to the wide spectrum of the UN's normative and technical expertise in all areas covered by the SDGs.

- The regional UN system will build on existing structures, mechanisms, instruments and guidance frameworks. The regional UN system will also promote the establishment of Results Groups at country level and Issue-Based Coalitions at the regional level, to serve as platforms for engagement with partners in SDG implementation, resource mobilization, partnerships, advocacy, monitoring and review.

- Governments' full ownership of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs is a critical prerequisite for the success of its implementation. The regional UN system is, thus, committed to promoting government ownership of the SDG agenda, including by engaging with top government leaders.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are not an add-on to existing objectives. The regional UN system will advocate for, provide required expertise to and support full integration of the SDGs into national strategies, policies, and programmes, both at the national and local levels.

- Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, as well as active citizen engagement will be supported, including through engaging people in SDG implementation and follow-up in all countries.

KEY MESSAGES

The UN system in the region has committed to jointly pursue the following key messages in order to meet Member States' expectations and to be 'fit for purpose' in support of SDG implementation at country level.

- The SDGs are integrated and interrelated in nature. Recognizing that no single SDG can be led or owned by any single UN entity, the regional UN system will work to achieve far greater inter-sectoral coherence, integration and coordination of efforts than has hitherto been in evidence. Greater synergies between normative and programme approaches, as well as more integration between development, humanitarian, human rights, and peace and security pillars of the UN system will be pursued in support of countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs and respective targets.

- The promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and provision of effective institutions at

all levels will be crucial for the implementation of the SDG agenda. The regional UN system will, thus, provide concerted support to governments in this regard, as well as for revitalization of global and regional partnerships for sustainable development.

- The SDGs are strongly grounded on global standards, values and norms, such as human rights, and equality in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Moreover, all existing norms, standards and conventions should be fully used and further developed in pursuing the SDGs. The regional UN system will support countries to fully commit to and fulfil their obligations under international law, as well as to implement internationally agreed norms, standards and conventions.

- The regional UN system commits to advancing the universality underlying the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development and stands ready to assist all, including those with no UN country presence, if requested.

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- The regional UN system will strengthen its common UN approaches for effective and coherent support to the implementation of the SDGs in programme countries, including by strengthening SDGs mainstreaming, their acceleration and provision

of respective policy support through the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and related UN entities' programmes including through the strategic framework adopted by the UN Development Group (UNDG) – SDGs Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support to UN Country Teams.

- The regional UN system stands ready to build on existing mechanisms and engage in an open regional platform to ensure regional SDGs follow-up and review, based on national reviews and with full engagement of regional organizations and stakeholders.

- The regional UN system will promote and support forums for exchanging of experiences and good practices among countries within the region, as well as interaction among various partners, including civil society, the private sector, academia and others.