A Post-2015 Monitoring and Accountability Framework

José Antonio Ocampo*

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a bottom-up, multi-layered and multi-stakeholder framework for the accountability of the post-2015 agenda. It would be built upon national follow-up processes supported by the UN country teams, and complemented by consultations (and possibly peer reviews) at the regional level, and global accountability exercised by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), with support from the ECOSOC system, UN organizations and other relevant international organizations. It would also be accompanied by parallel accountability mechanisms for civil society and the private sector as key partners in the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda.

Keywords: accountability, development agenda, United Nations, High-Level Political Forum, ECOSOC

JEL Classification: F02, O19, P45

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Acronyms

AMRs	Annual Ministerial Reviews
CSOs	civil society organizations
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GPEDC	Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HLPF	High-level Political Forum
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MA	mutual accountability
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Orgranization
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University – World Institute for Development Economic Research
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
SWAp	sector-wide approach
TBT	technical barriers to trade
TPRM	Trade Policy Review Mechanism
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
TRQs	tariff rate quotas
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPOV	International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
WP	Working Party
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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José Antonio Ocampo[1]

1 Introduction

One of the historical success stories of the United Nations, which reflects its convening power and representativeness, has been its capacity to serve as a forum to agree on global development goals.[2] However, this success has not been matched by the design of an adequate follow-up of the commitments made by member states. The success of the post-2015 development agenda depends not only on an adequate design of the goals themselves, but also of an appropriate monitoring and accountability framework.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were an improvement in this regard. They constituted a concise set of measurable goals, with a high level of visibility that served as the framework to develop national policies in many developing countries, and were strongly backed by the development assistance community, the Bretton Woods Institutions and numerous civil society organizations.[3] The UN put in place, with support of specialized agencies and other international organizations, a well-developed statistical data base which, despite the difficulties faced in finding appropriate and comparable statistical information for all countries, served as the best framework for monitoring the UN goals in history. The monitoring process included regular evaluations of progress made in achieving the MDGs prepared by the UN Secretariat –the annual United Nations' *Millennium Development Goals Reports* and the more recent *MDG Gap Task Force Reports* on the global partnership for development (MDG-8)—, the World Bank's *Global Monitoring Reports,* and several regional reports organized by the UN regional commissions with collaboration of multiple UN agencies. It also included many high-level debates in the UN, including the 2005 and 2010 summit events that took place in New York around the General Assembly, and the Annual Ministerial Reviews (AMRs) of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UN country teams, generally under the leadership of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), with support from national governments and multiple national actors, organized high-profile national evaluations and debates on the progress toward the achievement of the MDGs. Numerous civil society organizations also provided "social accountability" at both global and national levels.

However, the MDGs were also deficient in several ways. Some of the problems were associated with the selection of the goals and targets, which was a highly centralized process that lacked participation by UN member states, and was perceived to be donor-centric. MDG-8 (on the global partnership for development) is widely considered to have been a fragmented set of targets with weak accountability. Some crucial issues were absent from the goals –notably employment, which was included as a target of MDG-1 (on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger) after the 2005 follow-up summit. The set of targets for some of the goals also captured only a small segment of the "internationally agreed development goals"

approved at previous global summits and conferences –e.g., in relation to MDG-3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, and to MDG-7 on environmental sustainability. Some of these limitations have certainly been solved under the extensive consultation process that has taken place for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), although perhaps at the cost of broadening the agreed goals and targets to an unmanageable level –17 goals and 169 targets, some of which can be read as goals by themselves—, a process which, as of late May 2015, has not concluded.**4**

There are, of course, many other experiences of monitoring, accountability and compliance frameworks in other international processes. In terms of compliance with binding commitments, the dispute settlement mechanism of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is perhaps the best example. WTO's *World Trade Policy Reviews* and IMF's Article IV Consultations are examples of strong monitoring frameworks. International Labor Organization (ILO) and human rights conventions provide other important cases. When they have become national law, the domestic judicial system is in charge of guaranteeing their implementation. The domestic framework is complemented by the treaty bodies (committees) created to check compliance with the conventions' provisions –which provide, however, only moral sanctions. In the case of non-binding commitments, the peer review processes of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and, more recently, the peer reviews of the African Union and "mutual accountability" under the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation are probably the best examples. In all these cases, the only instrument for compliance is

peer pressure. The "universal periodic reviews" of the Human Rights Council belong, in a sense, to this family. The "voluntary presentations" at ECOSOC's AMRs are a weaker form of accountability and, as its name indicates, are only voluntary.

This paper presents a proposal for a monitoring and accountability system for the post-2015 development agenda. Section 2 analyzes the concept of accountability and its limitations when applied at the international level. Section 3 develops the basic elements of a bottom-up multi-layered and multi-stakeholder framework for the post-2015 agenda. Section 4 presents how the proposed framework would operate: national follow-up processes supported by the UN country teams, consultations with possible peer reviews at the regional level, and a global accountability to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), with support from the ECOSOC system, other UN organizations (including the Bretton Woods institutions as specialized agencies of the UN System) and other relevant international organizations outside the UN system. This section also includes some reflections on the accountability mechanisms for civil society and the private sector as key partners in the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda. The last section considers the monitoring of the "Global Partnership for Development".

2 The concept of accountability and its application to the international system

Whereas monitoring of commitments is frequent and thus fully exercised at the international level, accountability in its strong forms is generally absent. Indeed, the concept of accountability has been originally developed to refer to the oversight over the fulfillment of responsibilities of public sector officials and the checks and balances on the exercise of political power, but these mechanisms have, at most, weak international equivalences.

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4   Needless to say, this has not followed the recommendation to set a limited number of "bold but practical" goals made by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013). *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, New York: United Nations, May [Quoted below as High-Level Panel Report].

National accountability involves three major dimensions.[5] The first is *answerability*, which can be understood as the obligation of public officials to inform, explain and justify their decisions and actions, and should involve formal monitoring mechanisms. The second dimension is *enforceability*, which is the capacity to impose sanctions on public sector officials who violate their duties, and is exercised both through the classical mutual control among the different branches of power and/or by independent agencies specialized in public sector oversight (comptrollers, attorney generals, ombudsmen, etc.). The third, which may be seen as a prerequisite for both answerability and enforceability, is a *clear delimitation of responsibility* –i.e., the requirement that all positions of authority should have clearly defined duties and performance standards, which would enable their behavior to be assessed objectively and transparently.

These three dimensions of accountability relate, in turn, to the modalities of accountability.[6] The first is *vertical* accountability, the most important of which is elections, when the principals (voters) put the agents (governments) to account. The second is *horizontal* accountability, which is closely linked to enforcement, and is thus exercised through the institutional mechanism already mentioned. The third

is *social* accountability, which refers to the control exercised by multiple civil society organizations and independent media on public sector officials. The effectiveness of this form of accountability depends, however, on its capacity to influence the other modalities – i.e., how people vote and whether the public debates initiated by civil society induce actions by the institutions of horizontal accountability.

The application of these concepts to the international level has several limitations and challenges. In particular, inter-governmental organizations lack the equivalent to the national modalities of both vertical and horizontal accountability for the international agreements that have been signed by member states.[7] The ultimate mechanism of national accountability, enforcement, is almost generally absent at the international level.[8] Additionally, most international commitments by member states are voluntary and thus non-binding. Finally, also in contrast to national governance, the responsibilities of different actors are not always clear at the international level.

As a result, among the three dimensions of national accountability, only answerability is fully operational at the international level, and progress can be made to implement the third, delimitation of responsibility. Enforceability, the second dimension, is, however, generally absent. In turn, of the different modalities of accountability, the only one fully functional at the international level is social accountability, which in

5   See Andreas Schedler (1999). "Conceptualizing Accountability", in Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, Boulder: Lynne Reiner; Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) and Center for Economic and Social Rights CESR) (2013). *Who Would be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, New York and Geneva; and, Ocampo and Gómez, op.cit.

6   I follow here Guillermo O'Donnell (2007). Dissonances: Democratic Critiques of Democracy, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press; and (1999), "Delegative Democracy" and "Illusions and Consolidation" in *Counterpoints: Selected Essays on Authoritarianism and Democratization*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. On social accountability, see also Catalina Smulovitz and Enrique Peruzzotti (2000), "Societal Accountability in Latin America", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 11, No 4 (October).

7   The European Parliament is, of course, a partial exception in this regard. There are also agencies that oversee the international civil service, but this does not relate to the international commitment of countries, which is the issue to which we refer in this paper.

8   The major exception is Security Council resolutions that determine military interventions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. States who have signed the relevant conventions or treaties are also bound by the decisions of international human rights and criminal courts, and to the dispute-settlement mechanisms in trade and investment treaties. However, it is not infrequent for states to ignore associated "enforcement" decisions, notably when their own national rule of law and independent judiciary powers are weak.

fact has flourished with the development of communication technologies, but it lacks the strong effect that it can have at the national level as it cannot unleash mechanisms of enforcement.

3 Monitoring and accountability for the post-2015 agenda: the essential elements

Some essential points of agreement on the post-2015 agenda have been made clear in the major reports prepared in the run-up process,[9] the resolution that created the HLPF,[10] the report of the Working Group on the SDGs,[11] and associated public debates. The first is that the new agenda should encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. The second is that goals should take into account regional, national and local circumstances and priorities, and they should leave ample space for national policy design and adaptation to local settings. This is critical, in the view of many, to guarantee the "ownership" of the agenda by national governments and societies—without which it will not be realized. The third is that the agenda should be universal, and the associated goals applicable not merely to developing countries but to *all* countries, rich and poor alike. This means that the goals and targets for developed countries should, therefore, include their support to developing countries, but also their own development objectives (e.g., in relation to employment, social protection or

reduction of inequalities) and their contribution to global development (e.g., in climate change or global financial stability).

The resolution that created the HLPF also determined essential elements of the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments, in particular that it shall be voluntary (while encouraging reporting), include developed and developing countries, and be State-led but provide a platform for partnerships.[12]

With these agreements on the agenda and on the follow-up process, it is possible to identify eight essential elements of the monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda.

First, it should be a *bottom-up process* that relies on the broad use of *national* accountability mechanisms, which are essentially stronger than relevant international ones. This also responds to the fact that, as agreed, the commitments made by UN member states in the post-2015 agenda will be adapted to the national priorities. Furthermore, since making governments accountable for fulfilling their international commitments and allocating the public sector resources for the achievement of the development goals are essential functions of parliaments, national parliaments must be at the center of the post-2015 accountability exercises. In the developing world, UN country teams can play an important role in supporting national monitoring exercises and public sector debates, as well as helping governments build robust capacities to implement the goals in some cases. Civil society organizations should also be very active in monitoring the results and encouraging national debates, as drivers of social accountability.

Second, *strong monitoring* of the post-2015 development agenda must be put in place *at both the regional and global levels*. To serve as an appropriate accountability mechanism, monitoring exercises should have a certain level of independence. This could be achieved basically by giving this responsibility to

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9   See, in particular, Secretary-General's High-Level Panel Of Eminent Persons On the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013). A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development, and; UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda (2012). *Realizing the Future We Want,* June.

10   General Assembly (2013). *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development* (67/290), 23 August.

11   General Assembly (2014). *Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development* (69/970), 12 August.

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12   General Assembly (2013), *op. cit.*, paragraph 4.

the UN Secretariat, including the secretariats of the regional commissions. This is essential to guarantee the impartiality of the monitoring exercise, including its "even-handedness" (to use a term typical of IMF debates) –i.e., equally strong evaluation of powerful countries and analyses that respond to the needs and take into account the views of less powerful members. Secretariats also provide member States of these organizations with neutral information and technical support in a myriad of areas. Furthermore, the UN Secretariat should also advance novel initiatives to guarantee the achievement of the agenda, and identify the common ground on which global agreements might be forged.

Third, monitoring requires a *robust information system,* essentially an expanded statistical data base that was created for the follow-up of the MDGs. As in the case of the current information system, this expanded information system should be coordinated by the UN Statistical Division and count on the collaboration of a multitude of international agencies. This system may require new dimensions of development that are not usually measured, and rely on the broad use of information and communications technologies to collect and disseminate information. In this sense, it involves a "data revolution", to use the term proposed by of the High-Level Panel's report on the post-2015 development agenda.[13] However, a more important task than building a sophisticated information system is to produce basic data on economic and social indicators with high quality standards, particularly in the national statistical offices of the developing countries that lack such capacity at present. This quality basic data should include, among others, information on education, health and other human development indicators; population and employment; measures of multidimensional poverty and inequality in all its dimensions (wealth, income, gender and ethnic); the quantity and quality of basic social services, and the public sector spending associated with them; and adequate national accounts and

supporting production and trade statistics. Furthermore, this information should be broken down, to the extent possible, by geographical location, gender, age, ethnicity and income. In sum, much more important than investing in sophisticated data production, what the post-2015 agenda requires is a major push in development cooperation to strengthen the statistical offices of the developing countries that do not meet international standards at present. This would also avoid the current need for international organizations to estimate the data of some countries.

Fourth, it is essential that such monitoring exercises should feed into the first dimension of accountability –*answerability*— and lead governments to explain and justify their performance in fulfilling their international commitments. This implies that the monitoring and surveillance reports prepared by the UN Secretariat must be given prominence in the inter-governmental processes – i.e., the reports must have an "institutional home," where governments discuss the conclusions of those evaluations and their recommendations. This should be provided in the post-2015 agenda by the HLPF, including its annual ministerial meetings in the high-level segment of ECOSOC and, in the case of development cooperation, by ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum (DCF).

Fifth, the system should use, to the extent possible, the *best forms of international horizontal accountability.* Thus, aside from the pressure by the UN Secretariat through its monitoring process and the inter-governmental debates where its reports are discussed, there is need to put in place *peer reviews* of different character, which can support accountability through peer pressure. An essential requirement of such exercises is, of course, their symmetry –i.e., the peer reviews should be done by partners that see themselves "as equals". For that reason, the regional processes should be the basic framework to undertake such exercises.

Sixth, *"mutual accountability" (MA) should be used for development cooperation and, more broadly, for*

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13 See High-Level Panel Report, *op. cit.* and http://www.un-datarevolution.org/

the global partnership for development as the essential mechanism of horizontal accountability. It should be exercised through ECOSOC's DCF and the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), on the one hand, and through the follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus for mon-itoring of rules and governance of global trade and finance, on the other hand–which, as argued in sec-tion 5, could be eventually merged. MA is defined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness as shared responsibility among both donors and recipient countries for the effectiveness and quality of devel-opment cooperation, which is essential to build up trust and partnership around shared agendas. As in the case of peer reviews, MA works by encouraging changes in the policies and actions needed to meet commitments rather than on imposing sanctions for non-compliance.**14** To function effectively, MA requires, aside from shared objectives, a certain de-gree of symmetry in the relationship, which is not easy to observe, because the donor-recipient relation involves an inherent power imbalance. This is why MA should be supported by strong monitoring of the global partnership for development by the UN Secretariat. Given the prominence of these issues from the point of view of international cooperation, it is suggested below that *progress in furthering the global partnership for development should always be an item in the agenda of the HLPF at the heads of state level*.

This sixth element of the monitoring and account-ability framework is *the development of strong DCF-GPEDC synergies*. This implies that the DCF, acts as the global body for policy advice on quantitative and qualitative trends in global development cooper-ation, and can review the development cooperation aspects of a renewed global partnership, while the GPEDC can contribute to UN discussions, includ-ing on financing and other means of implementa-tion, with a particular role in operationalizing and

advancing country-level implementation of effective development cooperation, and sharing policy lessons. It is important, in this regard, to underscore that the GPEDC has so far only demonstrated limited effect in promoting country-level implementation, particularly in developed countries, which should, therefore, be a priority going forward. In broader terms, this means that the GPEDC has a role, as a multi-stakeholder partnership, to advance the effec-tiveness of development cooperation, rather than as a global MA mechanism. In this regard, GPEDC findings should feed into the DCF discussions at global level.

Seventh, the fact that the sustainable development agenda will involve strong partnerships implies two things for the monitoring and accountability frame-work that should be put in place: (i) *active social accountability*, exercised by multiple civil society organizations at the national, regional and global levels, should be an essential component of the fol-low-up process, and; (ii) *specific accountability frame-works will have to be put in place for the civil society organizations and the private sector*.

Finally, it should be underscored that the mecha-nisms that are put in place *should build up on existing monitoring and accountability frameworks*. It should start, in a sense, as an upgrade of the mechanisms being used in the follow-up of the MDGs, which include, as it has already been indicated, the nation-al evaluations supported by the UN country teams, the regional follow-up documents prepared by the regional commissions with the support of other UN agencies active at the regional level, the global mon-itoring exercises by the UN Secretariat, the World Bank and OECD-DAC, among others, the global database organized by the UN Statistical Division with support from a myriad of agencies, and the voluntary presentations in the AMRs of ECOSOC. The next section also mentions other existing mechanisms. Thus, to a large extent, a significant part of the exercise is to take stock of the existing mechanisms, filling up gaps (e.g., monitoring of the

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14 See the 2005 Paris *Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, para-graphs 47-50, available at http://www.oecd.org/dac/effec-tiveness/34428351.pdf .

universal goals in developed countries) and guaranteeing greater coherence and coordination.

Borrowing from previous analyses of this issue,[15] an interesting way to summarize the modalities of international accountability relevant for the follow-up of the post-2015 agenda is by differentiating four categories of accountability, the first of which relates to social accountability and the remaining three to different international forms of horizontal accountability:

"Spotlights", which are unofficial mechanisms that seek to provide independent information on how countries are meeting the goals and highlight issues that should be subject to specific attention of the inter-governmental debates.

Monitoring by the UN Secretariats and regional commissions, which are the "official spotlights" and the minimum form of horizontal accountability.

"Mirrors" (peer reviews): this is accountability exercised by peers, holding up "mirrors" to one another. Aside from its proposed use in regional consultations, this should also be the framework for accountability for civil society and the private sector.

"Two-way mirrors" that allow donors and partners to oversee one another's performance in the context of "mutual" agreements and shared responsibilities. This should be the framework put in place for the global partnership for development.

Given the voluntary character of the commitments, neither the stronger form of monitoring, surveillance, nor compliance mechanisms would be appropriate for this framework. Consequently, the system would need to rely on pressure to meet commitments by peers, the UN system, and civil society.

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15 Liesbet Steer, Cecilie Wathne and Ruth Driscoll (2008). *Mutual Accountability at the Country Level: A Concept and Emerging Good Practice*, London: Overseas Development Institute. We mix, however, their concept of spotlights, mirrors and two way mirrors, with other categories previously analyzed.

4 The proposed framework

The backbone of the accountability exercise will, thus, be national follow-up processes – and, given the voluntary character of the exercise, only within those countries that have expressed willingness to participate. These processes would have to take into account how specific countries have mainstreamed the global goals in their development agenda –i.e., the agreed adaptation to national circumstances and national development plans.

As already indicated, a central agent in national consultations should be national parliaments. For this reason, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) should be an essential partner in the consultations, perhaps even creating a special line of work of IPU or a special group of parliamentarians ("Friends of the global development agenda"). National follow-up processes should also involve regional and local governments –notably when they have a major competence in the specific issue being discussed—, as well as civil society and the private sector. UN country teams should support these processes in developing countries. The absence of such country teams in developed countries represent a challenge that can be overcome by the support of agencies with presence in those countries or by "UN Associations" or other civil society organizations that actively participate in UN processes.

The regional layer of the accountability mechanisms should be designed as the framework for peer reviews among participating countries. So, existing peer review processes would be ideally set to contribute to the exercise, notably those of the African Union, and perhaps those of the OECD in the case of developed countries. In other cases, new peer review processes could be set up with the support of the UN regional commissions and other regional organizations. A less ambitious objective would be to think those consultations as essentially a framework for information sharing, particularly the exchange of experiences and lessons learned in the particular realm subject to review in a specific year. Of course, these objectives

should be at the center of peer reviews if that is the agreed mechanism.

As the regional commissions have argued in the consultation process on the SDGs, regional consultations can build and enhance the collaborative spirit, and encourage countries "to share information, knowledge and experiences, strengthen their respective capabilities and define coherent regional policies and approaches". Additionally, "the regional level is also the natural platform to address regional or trans-boundary challenges which have an important role in sustainable development".[16]

The regional consultations should also be the appropriate place to present and discuss monitoring reports on the post-2015 agenda. These reports should be prepared by the regional commissions with support of other UN organizations present at the regional level (including, when relevant, the Bretton Woods institutions) and regional organizations willing to participate in the process. The periodic sessions of the commissions (annual or biannual) or its special committees –e.g., regional committees on sustainable development—could serve as the framework for these consultations.

National and regional consultations would converge to HLPF, which has been given the responsibility to both "provide political leadership" and "review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments".[17] Given the complexity of the post-2015 agenda, it would be necessary to undertake the annual follow-up accountability exercises by ECOSOC with a thematic focus (more on this below), though "reflecting the three dimensions of sustainable development". This should also be the focus of the regional consultations. In contrast, national consultations would have to take into account

national priorities. This assumes that regional and national follow-up processes would be undertaken on a yearly basis, but they should certainly take place around the four-yearly meetings of HLPF at the heads of state level (HLPF summits in short), and obviously adopt the themes in the agenda of those meetings.

The four-yearly HLPF summits should emphasize, in a clearer manner, the comprehensive character of the post-2015 agenda, though perhaps placing very high in the agenda specific goals. These goals could be, for example, SDG-1 ("End poverty in all its forms everywhere") and SDG-10 ("Reduce inequality within and among countries"). The summits should also underscore critical issues identified by the annual ECOSOC meeting of the Forum. One item in the agenda of the HLPF summits should always be the analysis of progress in furthering the global partnership for development and associated "means of implementation". The major objective of these summits should naturally be to provide political leadership at the highest level and initiate new actions to accelerate those elements of the agenda that are progressing at slow pace and unblock perceived obstacles that may be determining such slow progress.

The multi-layered accountability system described above, with HLPF at the apex, should not be an end in itself, but rather a means for effective development results. Results in progress toward achieving the SDGs should, therefore, be the guide to national, regional and global processes, as well as the guide for the analyses of the effectiveness of the different means of implementation, notably finance. According to the analysis of section 2, this requires a clear delimitation of responsibilities and, particularly, should help steer action by the responsible level of government or international organization.

One way to organize the annual ECOSOC meetings is by progressively reviewing clusters of issues. If we take the SDGs as proposed by the Working Group (see box 1), a way to organize them in four-year cycles (to coincide with the periodicity of the HLPF summits) could be:

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16 Regional Commissions New York Office (2014). *Towards an effective monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda: perspectives from the regions, Synthesis report*, 8 October.

17 These as well as other quotations in the following paragraphs come from the General Assembly (2013), *op. cit.*, preamble paragraphs 2 and 3.

- Social development issues: SDGs 1 to 6 and social dimensions of SDG-10.

- Economic development issues: SDGs 7 to 9 and economic dimensions of SDG-10.

- Human settlements and environmental issues: SDGs 11 to 15.

- Institutional issues: SDG-16.

As indicated, the links with the other dimensions of sustainable development and, therefore, the integrality of the sustainable development agenda, should be present in each case. These linkages could also be the subject of the fourth cluster, and so discussed together with the institutional issues. In this framework, the follow-up of SDG-17 would be the subject of debates in ECOSOC's DCF (see last section).

Beyond the specific responsibility of the HLPF, the resolution that created the Forum reaffirmed that the mandate of ECOSOC under the UN Charter should be understood as being the "principal organ in the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields". *This should be understood as a mandate for the whole ECOSOC system*, which includes the functional and regional commissions and expert bodies. In this light, the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC should undertake specific responsibilities for the much closer follow-up of specific development goals, which should be integrated with their own follow-up of the global conference and summits under their purview and in the broader set of "internationally agreed development goals". In this line, and again based on the proposed set of SDGs, these are specific responsibilities that could be assigned to specific subsidiary bodies in the follow-up process:

- The Commission on Social Development for the follow-up of SDGs 1 to 4, 6 and the employment dimensions of 8. This could include annual reviews of specific goals.

- The Commission on the Status of Women for the follow-up of SDG-5, in the broader context of the follow-up of the Beijing Summit.

- The Commission on Population and Development for the issues of universal access to reproductive health-care in SDG-3, and migration issues of SDG-10.

- The Commission on Science and Technology for Development in the technological aspects of SDG-9 and technology cooperation issues of SDG-17.

- The UN Forum on Forests for the follow-up of the relevant issues in SDG-15.

- The Statistical Commission for monitoring the information system that has to be put in place as well as the technical support for developing countries than could require it, according to the relevant mandates of SDG-17.

- The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the broader follow-up of how the post-2015 is reflected in the well-being of indigenous people.

- As the main technical committee of ECOSOC, the Committee for Development Policy should be given the responsibility of advising the annual HLPF ministerial meetings on the theme chosen –in a sense upgrading its current contributions to ECOSOC's AMRs.

As this list makes it clear, there are "orphan" issues that the current ECOSOC system does not address. So, the work of the different subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC should be complemented with other bodies within the UN system. This includes in particular:

- The United Nations Environmental Assembly, as the governing body of UNEP for the follow-up of SDGs 12 to 15.

- UNCTAD for the follow-up of the economic development issues of SDGs 8 to 10 and relevant cooperation issues of SDG-17.

- The follow-up process for the Monterrey Consensus (hopefully to be upgraded in Addis Ababa in 2015) for the follow-up of the relevant cooperation and systemic issues in SDG-17.

- The Peacebuilding Commission for the follow-up or relevant issues in SDG-16.

UN specialized agencies –FAO, IFAD, ILO, IMF, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO, WIPO and the World Bank Group— and funds and programmes –UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF and WFP, aside from those already mentioned— should also participate in the follow-up process in their areas of competence. They should place the post-2015 at the center of their work, and participate in the HLPF consultations to the extent that the theme covered is relevant for them. It would also be desirable that the World Bank would continue to publish the *Global Monitoring Report* as one of the instruments for high-level monitoring of the post-2015 agenda that serves for the discussions in the Development Committee of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Accountability also demands academic and policy-oriented research with a focus on forms of development cooperation that deliver better results. The United Nations University system –notably the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) – can make major contributions in this regard. But, this is also true of many academic institutions doing research on the UN system. The results of such research should, in turn, feed back into the accountability exercises.

A practical, but essential, issue relates to the *uniformity of reporting*. Without common reporting standards, the effects of the regional and global consultations would become very difficult to manage, both in terms of the capacity to add up progress in the different goals and transmit the lessons from specific national experiences that may be useful for other countries. This should apply certainly to regional reports presented to the HLPF and, to the extent possible, to national reports. The latter represents a

challenge, if national priorities or targets differ from the common global targets that form part of the global monitoring system.

As already indicated, this multi-layered inter-governmental accountability system should also be a platform for partnerships with civil society and the private sectors, both as providers of services but also, in the case of civil society, as the agents of social accountability. This requires that specific accountability mechanisms be developed for these partners. It is, of course, not for the UN, but for them to design their own accountability mechanisms.

In the case of civil society organizations (CSOs), the "Global Assembly of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness" and the eight guiding principles approved in Istanbul in 2010, could be one possible framework.[18] In any case, it is essential that CSOs align their efforts with wider development processes, both at the national and international levels. In the area of our concern, this means that their social accountability function must have a clear link with other accountability mechanisms, particularly with those of national parliaments at the country level. Equally, as actors of development, CSO cooperation should be aligned with national priorities and development strategies and with wider development goals. Additionally, CSOs should interact actively with other development actors.

In the case of the private sector, a possible framework is the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI),[19] which monitors the sustainability performance of private firms according to some sector guidelines and principles, and which an increasing number of private firms have joined. GRI has also global strategic partnerships with the OECD, UNDP and the United Nations Global Compact. An alternative is, of course, for the Global Compact to provide the framework for such monitoring. A major challenge

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18 Open Forum for CSO (2011). An International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, available at http://cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/bt-cdt_may_30_final_version_3_framework_for_cso_dev_eff_doc.pdf

19 See https://www.globalreporting.org/Pages/default.aspx

is how accountability of the business sector could be integrated with other global reporting and accountability mechanisms on global development goals. In this regard, it is essential that such accountability goes beyond the usual concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and gradually includes *an evaluation of how core business practices contribute to development* –and not only through the social and environmental footprint.

5 Monitoring of the global partnership for development

As it was underscored in the introduction of this paper, the drafting and monitoring of MDG-8 were particularly weak. A strong global partnership for development must, therefore, be at the center of the post-2015 development agenda, which includes progress in advancing its different elements proposed on SDG-17 and the associated "means of implementation". For this reason, it is also proposed that the evaluation of progress in the global partnership should always be an item in the agenda in the HLPF summits.

In this regard, however, it is useful to differentiate two dimensions of development cooperation and thus of the global partnership. The first relates to official development assistance and technical cooperation, and could be called development cooperation "in the narrow sense". Following a recent paper, this should incorporate not only financial and in-kind transfers, but also interventions and activities specifically intended to support capacity building and policy design in developing countries.[20] The second relates to the rules and governance of global trade and finance, as well as issues of technology generation and transfer, migration, investment, taxation and other areas, and can be called development

cooperation "in the broader sense".[21] The monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 should explicitly incorporate both dimensions.

In the first case, and given their different histories, characteristics and forums, a triangular accountability architecture has to include the following three elements: North-South, South-South and non-governmental cooperation. A basic point of departure in all cases should be *explicit agreements on principles, commitments and standards of development cooperation*, without which no accountability exercise can take place. This practice applies today only to North-South cooperation, through the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Busan Partnership. Even in this case, many developed countries do not recognize as commitments the half-century old ODA targets. In turn, although some principles have been agreed for South-South cooperation, they lack explicit standards and commitments upon which to base an accountability exercise, and no principles have been agreed on development cooperation by non-governmental organizations.

The building of a better accountability architecture for development cooperation should, thus, start by overcoming these fundamental problems. This means that OECD-DAC should adopt an explicit commitment to the UN targets of development cooperation. In turn, the relevant forums from the South should adopt explicit standards for South-South cooperation. This should include a clear separation of development cooperation from the economic activities (trade, investment and finance) that are undertaken as part of normal and growing economic relations among Southern partners. In the case of civil society (including philanthropic) organizations and the private sector, explicit standards should also be set, building upon existing frameworks, some of which were already mentioned in the previous section.

This triangular architecture should build upon the existing frameworks, and enhance their linkages and complementarities. In the case of North-South

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20 José Antonio Alonso and Jonathan Glennie (2015). "Development cooperation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: a scoping study for the UN Development Cooperation Forum", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (January).

21 This is the terminology used by Ocampo and Gómez, *op. cit.*

cooperation, MA through the Busan Partnership should be supported by peer reviews, particularly those in place in the context of OECD-DAC. It would also be useful for South-South cooperation partners to develop their own peer review process. In turn, a unique and strong global accountability report should be developed at the global level, which would subsume the current *MDG Gap Report* and the *International Development Cooperation Report*. This monitoring report should have a clear "institutional home" where it is discussed, which should be ECOSOC's DCF.

The accountability mechanism should aim at creating credible incentives to comply with international commitments. Currently, the OECD-DAC peer review is the only accountability mechanisms that donors put in place, through peer-pressure and strong surveillance, credible incentives to comply with agreed commitments and standards. But, even in this case, it has failed to fully take into account the Paris and Busan commitments, as reflected in the asymmetric character of the Busan Partnership.[22]

In the case of development cooperation "in the broader sense", accountability frameworks should also be put in place the design of the post-2015 agenda. The best way forward would be to design a strong follow-up mechanism for the Monterrey Consensus and related agreements, which would replace the extremely weak one that was created over the past decade. This issue should be at the center of the forthcoming follow-up Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015. UNCTAD could also be called to fulfill some of the tasks of monitoring elements of this broader agenda, as it in fact has been doing through its history.

Finally, a clear link between two mechanisms of accountability of development cooperation in the narrow and broader senses should be created. One alternative is to continue to have two parallel processes that would then report to the HLPF, but encourage mutual interaction between them. The second –and,

in the view of this author, preferable way forward—is to broaden the mandates of the DCF to include both forms of development cooperation. This would benefit from the mandate of the HLPF resolution that the annual meetings of the Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC "[s]hall take into account the work of the Development Cooperation Forum."[23] This might require increasing the frequency of the DCF meetings to an annual basis. These meetings should include the inputs from the different parts of the ECOSOC system, and notably form the regional commissions. They should lead to a four-yearly report to the HLPF summits on progress in furthering the global partnership for development.

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22 On the asymmetric character of the Busan Partnership, see Ocampo and Gómez, **op.cit.**

23 See General Assembly (2013), *op. cit.*, paragraph 7(e).

Box 1

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as proposed by the Open Working Group

Goal 1
End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10
Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

Goal 14
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15
Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and half and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16
Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

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* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Source: Report of the General Assembly Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, A/68/970, 12 August 2014.