**Concept note**

**Retreats on the preparation for the 2016 session of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**New York, February and April 2016**

***The importance of follow-up and review and the role of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)***

The outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” – represents the shared vision and plan of action of all countries and stakeholders, for building a better world on a healthy planet. This Agenda, and the SDGs it contains, are ambitious and broad ranging.

The 2030 Agenda attaches great importance to follow-up and review as a way to guide and accelerate implementation. It outlines a framework for reviewing implementation at national, regional and global levels. The critical level for implementation and review is the national level, where governments are accountable to their citizens. Country-level reviews will support regional and global reviews. At the global level, the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) is the central follow-up and review platform. It will oversee a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, including the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental forums and bodies supported by UN system organizations. The HLPF will review global progress, carry out voluntary national reviews of implementation and conduct thematic reviews of the SDGs, including cross cutting issues. Follow-up and review at the HLPF will be informed by an annual SDG Progress Report and a Global Sustainable Development Report.

In July 2016, the HLPF will hold its first full-fledged session. It will need to start to deliver on its central role in follow-up and review and stand up to the high ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the HLPF has to deliver on a range of functions defined by the Rio+20 conference and the GA to promote implementation of sustainable development commitments, review the situation of countries in special situation, reflect on regional dimensions, address new issues and scientific findings as well discuss sustainable consumption and production.

What is at stake in the 2016 HLPF:

The 2016 session of the HLPF must demonstrate that the HLPF, and the UN at large, are able to ensure a robust follow-up and review to the 2030 Agenda and live up to the high ambitions embraced by Member States and other stakeholders.

The first HLPF voluntary national reviews will be conducted, along with a thematic review and the review of a pilot SDG progress report. The expectation is that, given that the 2030 Agenda was just adopted, the voluntary national reviews in particular will focus on steps countries are taking to implement the 2030 Agenda. These reviews at the HLPF would build on inclusive State-led processes at the country level to take stock of critical steps in implementing the Agenda. The 2030 Agenda and earlier mandates do not provide many details on how the HLPF voluntary national reviews will be prepared at national, regional and global level, and conducted.

Such guidance is likely to be elaborated by the General Assembly based on the report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (mandated by the 2030 Agenda, paragraph 90).

The first reviews of the HLPF in July 2016 will thus have to proceed in the absence of detailed guidance, apart from the broad principles identified in the 2030 Agenda. The President of ECOSOC and Member States will have some flexibility to innovate in preparing these reviews which will set the tone for future reviews and should therefore champion inclusive, rigorous, robust and innovative approaches. The President of ECOSOC is keen to consult closely with Member States so as to make sure that the 2016 HLPF, including the reviews, is consistent with Member States’ expectations for the work of the HLPF in the longer run.

In order to make the HLPF 2016 - and its first voluntary national and other reviews- most ambitious and effective, it would be useful to hold two retreats.

* The first retreat would focus on preparing the reviews at the 2016 HLPF. It would take place on 23 and 24 February and discuss expectations by Member States towards the organization, work and outcome of the HLPF in 2016.
* The second retreat would gather countries who volunteered to conduct national reviews at the HLPF and focus on the preparations for these reviews and the related reporting. This retreat would take place during the last week of April.

* **Retreat 1 -- Preparing the 2016 HLPF and its national and thematic reviews**

***Objective of the retreat:***

The retreat will aim to inform the preparation of the reviews at the 2016 HLPF, including the voluntary national reviews, the thematic reviews as well as the annual SDG Progress Report and the Global Sustainable Development Report.

***Focus of the retreat***

The main focus of retreat 1 would be:

* Discussing countries’ expectations for the HLPF 2016 session, and notably for the HLPF reviews, building on the retreat convened by the President of ECOSOC in November 2015 and the theme chosen for the session, which is expected to be “Ensuring that no one is left behind”.
* Discussing what the voluntary national reviews at the HLPF and their State-led preparations should be like, notably
  + focus
  + on-going or planned national-level preparations, possible innovative and ambitious approaches and how to ensure some comparability as well as inclusiveness and rigor.
  + how can some comparability be ensured among HLPF national implementation reviews and what would be common characteristics which all reviews should have, based on the core principles of the 2030 Agenda?
  + support which countries would need from the UN system and from each other for their national-level reviews, possible role of the regional level
  + preliminary ideas on how to prepare and conduct the HLPF voluntary national reviews in 2016
* Reflecting on how best to prepare and conduct HLPF thematic reviews in 2016
* Discussing the possible outcome and follow-up to the HLPF reviews in 2016 – including how voluntary national reviews can lead to possible support and new partnerships to assist the reviewed countries
* Reflection on the documentation for the HLPF, notably the global sustainable development report and the SDG progress report, and how the HLPF can address it
* Other aspects related to the 2016 HLPF session

This first retreat will be followed by a second retreat at the end of April to discuss the status of national preparations to HLPF voluntary national reviews, emerging findings and to start preparing for the presentation of the voluntary national reviews at the HLPF, so as to help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda at country-level and beyond.

***Program of the retreat***

The retreat could last one day and a half and would be conducted under Chatham House rules.

***Participants:***

Participants could be representatives of countries from capitals and from Missions in New York (DPR level and working level experts). They will include in particular representatives of countries who have expressed a strong interest in the HLPF and those countries having volunteered to conduct HLPF national reviews of implementation in the HLPF 2016. They would also include four representatives of major groups and other stakeholders. A very limited number of representatives of international organizations and possibly experts would also be invited. The second day of the retreat will engage only the countries having volunteered for HLPF voluntary national reviews.

***Documentation:***

The discussions would draw from a background document outlining questions for discussions.

***Outcome:***

The outcome of the retreat would be an informal summary to inform the continuing preparations for the 2016 HLPF and its reviews.

***Dates***

23 and 24 February 2016

***Points for attention:***

There will be a need to finance travel expenses for several representatives from developing countries.

***Venue:***

German House

Concept note for the Second Retreat will be shared at the later stage with volunteering countries.