UNITED
NATIONS

REGIONAL REVIEW

REPOSITIONING THE REGIONAL ASSETS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM TO BETTER SERVICE THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UPDATE TO MEMBER STATES
27 JANUARY 2020

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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

1. CONTEXT AND MANDATE

1. From the outset of the process of repositioning of the United Nations development system, the Secretary-General has underscored the importance of realigning the UN regional assets to better support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The rationale is clear: the heightened demands of the 2030 Agenda – and the cross-border, sub-regional and regional challenges facing governments in their road towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - require a better organized, more collaborative regional UN presence to ensure that countries can fully benefit from the large pool of expertise that sits in regional hubs. There is a clear need to unleash the potential of the regions.

2. Through GA resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, Member States endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General to revamp the regional architecture through a gradual approach: starting by the optimization of our existing structures, while undertaking a review to present options for longer-term reprofiling and restructuring, on a region by region basis.

3. In response, the Secretary-General has worked with the UN development system to ensure that all aspects of first phase of the review - the optimization of existing regional structure – were fully implemented. In addition, he provided the ECOSOC with an initial set of broad recommendations developed in consultation with entities of the UN development system and informed by independent insights by a group of experts from different regions specialized on sustainable development and familiar with the different regional contexts, under the overall coordination of Cepei – a think tank based in Colombia with strong track-record on the 2030 Agenda.

4. In ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2019/15 of 12 July 2019, Member States requested the Secretary-General to move forward with "inclusive, intergovernmental consultations for the finalization and implementation of the regional review, on a region-by-region basis". The present note provides an update on efforts undertaken since and an overview of next steps towards the finalization of the review and its consideration by Member States.

2. EFFORTS IN RESPONSE TO ECOSOC RESOLUTION E/RES/2019/15 ON THE QUADRENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW (QCPR)

5. In line with the guidance provided by Member States in ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2019/15, the Secretary-General has launched the final phase of the regional review, which aimed to provide further details and regional specificity to the five broad transformative areas previously put forward by the Secretary-General as critical to reposition the UN regional assets. These include, in summary:

   i. The creation of "UN Regional Collaborative Platform" (RCP), that would absorb existing, duplicative coordination mechanisms to foster collaboration on sustainable development across UN development system entities operating at the regional level.

   ii. The establishment of strong knowledge management hubs in each region, by pooling together policy expertise currently scattered across entities.

   iii. Efforts to enhance transparency and results-based management at the regional level, including through annual reporting on system-wide results of the UN at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda.

   iv. Launch of a region-by-region change management process that will seek to consolidate existing capacities around data and statistics.

   v. Identification of administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices (HR, procurement, common premises, inter alia), similarly to our efforts at the country level.

6. The full, independent report by Cepei was also made available to Member States, and can be found in the ECOSOC's portal.

7. The unpacking of these five areas constitutes the last phase of the regional review and is being carried out under the overall leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General. To ensure robust discussions on the way forward and strong ownership across the UNSDG, the Secretary-General has extended the mandate of the Internal Review Team (IRT) for the regional review, with the participation of regional economic commissions and different entities of the UNSDG, convened by the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on reforms.

8. In each region, dedicated interagency teams – co-led by Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions and the respective chairs of the regional teams of the UNSDG – also provided recommendations on how to implement, on a region-by-region basis, the five broad transformative areas proposed by the Secretary-General to the ECOSOC.

9. In addition, the Special Advisor on Reforms has continued to leverage the United Nations' partnership with Cepei to take forward consultations in each regional hub and ensure independent perspectives and insights to inform the work of the IRT.

3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS TOWARDS THE FINALIZATION OF THE REGIONAL REVIEW

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "UN REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM"

10. The Internal Review Team (IRT) has played a critical role in detailing the functions and governance architecture of the RCP and its secretariat. It has identified a list of 13 core functions for the RCPs (see annex 1). The functions clarify what the RCP is, as well as what it is not. In particular, the RCP is not an implementing entity, nor is it a platform for intergovernmental deliberations . It is a platform for collaboration that will see – for the first time – consistent joint planning and collaboration by the entire UN development system presence at the regional level, for effective deployment of resources and capacities in support of country action for the 2030 Agenda.

11. In doing so, the RCP will generate synergies by consolidating functions currently performed by different coordination mechanisms and will strengthen strategic direction and accountability for system-wide work at the regional level, in line with the vision of the ECOSOC in its landmark 1998 resolution on regional coordination.

12. The functions of the RCP are underpinned by the principles of ownership, system-wide collaboration to support Member States, and cost-neutrality (i.e. draw on existing resources and mechanisms). Each RCP will hold an annual meeting under the chairship of the Deputy Secretary-General, with Regional Commissions and the UN development programme serving as co-vice-chairs. The annual meetings will provide opportunities to agree on a common work-plan, informed by the priorities of Member States in the regions as reflected in the focus of the respective regional SDG Forum and in the demand for policy support by national governments and UN country teams. The annual meetings will also review progress in advancing the common priorities.

13. The work of the RCP will be fed by dynamic Issues-Based Coalitions, chaired by entities with relevant mandate and expertise. These Issues-Based Coalitions will vary in each region and are currently being defined in ongoing consultations in regions and upcoming dialogues with regional groups in New York (to commence in the second half of February 2020).

14. The RCPs in all regions will be supported by a Secretariat, which will be jointly organized by DCO, regional economic and social commissions and other UN entities leading Issues-Based Coalitions. The Secretariat will operate along the following lines:

i. DCO, with substantive support by the co-vice-Chairs (regional commissions and UNDP), will be accountable for ensuring preparation of the annual RCP work programme and agenda, taking into consideration regional specificities.

ii. DCO will ensure adequate the participation of RECs in the RCPs and facilitate efficient access to the resources of the RCP and the feedback loop between UN country teams and the RCPs.

iii. The Secretariat will jointly ensure effective communication across the RCP membership.

15. DCO's role in the Secretariat will help ensure consistency across the global, regional and country levels, while the substantive role of regional commissions and other regional entities will help ensure that specific regional priorities are being addressed in accordance with demands of countries from the region and the outcomes of the respective Regional Forums for Sustainable Development, and other regional intergovernmental processes.

16. To maximize these interactions, the Secretary-General is proposing to hold back-to-back meetings between the RCPs and the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development.

PROGRESS IN OTHER AREAS

17. The consultations in each regional hub have – once again – revealed that there is strong appetite by officials across different entities at the regional level to advance the proposals of the Secretary-General and maximize the impact of the UN's regional support to the SDGs. The UN regional teams have deployed significant efforts to detail how the other four transformation areas would be rolled out in each region. This work is still ongoing, and its finalization will be informed by the consultations with Member States in upcoming weeks.

18. **Some highlights:**

(i) Knowledge Hubs and data: Regions are now well-advanced in the identification of areas where common expertise resides, and regional-specific knowledge hubs are now being set up, with a consistent focus on improving access to disparate data sources, expertise and knowledge products. The Arab region for example is relatively advanced in the use of artificial intelligence in expeditiously synthesizing relevant information from a vast array of knowledge products. A full overview of potential knowledge hubs will be presented to Member States for feedback during the upcoming consultations. Additionally, SDG Gateways are being developed in all regions to provide consolidated data on SDG progress at the regional level and are becoming more accessible and actionable.

As part of this effort, cross-regional discussions and knowledge exchange are taking place as UN colleagues in the region have shown interest in learning how other regions are responding to the proposals of the Secretary-General.

(ii) Transparency and results-based management: All regions have now identified the focus and possible format for annual reporting on system-wide activities in each region. This type of reporting does not exist currently, and the creation of annual reports will enhance transparency on results and allow for a continuous dialogue between the UN and Member States in regions to strengthen results and value for money.

Most regions indicate that they will focus on reporting on joint actions that address regional and transboundary issues; hence complementing the national reporting provided by UN country teams to host governments. For greater accountability, these reports could also be shared yearly with the respective Regional Fora for Sustainable Development.

With greater transparency and awareness among regional entities, overlap in knowledge products, policy analysis and recommendations will also decline.

(iii) Regional business operations and common back offices: A dedicated briefing on common services and efficiencies is being scheduled for late February, where a more detailed update on this effort – including the regional level – will be provided. Some examples of the work being envisioned in this regard includes the piloting in Nairobi and Bangkok of the first of their kind system-wide Business Operations Strategies; and the move of a group of UN entities into common premises in Addis Ababa.

4. ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/ GUIDANCE BY MEMBER STATES

19. The Secretary-General's Special Advisor on reforms will initiate consultations with Member States from late February to end of March, including with all regional groups,-to discuss the Secretary-General specific proposals for each region. This will complement the engagement in plenary by the Deputy Secretary-General.

20. Some of the key questions that will mark the consultation process includes:

    o   Are the initial areas identified for the Issues-Based Coalitions and knowledge management hubs the most relevant from the perspective of Member States?

    o   In addition to strengthening the interface with Regional SDG Fora, drawing on the role of regional economic and social commissions, what other steps would Member States like to see to ensure strong interface of the RCPs with regional intergovernmental bodies.

    o   Are there additional Member States' expectations regarding accountability and transparency to work to ensure that the resources are put into the priorities with clear objectives and results in mind?

    o   What type of engagement and reporting process would Member States like to see in place as the efforts to advance more efficient operations at the regional level unfold?

    o   Are Member States envisioning changes in their own funding procedures to reduce competition and enable the collaboration and pulling of expertise across the system at the regional level for better support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

ANNEX 1 –
LIST OF PROPOSED FUNCTIONS OF THE UN REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS
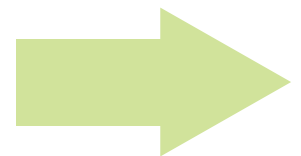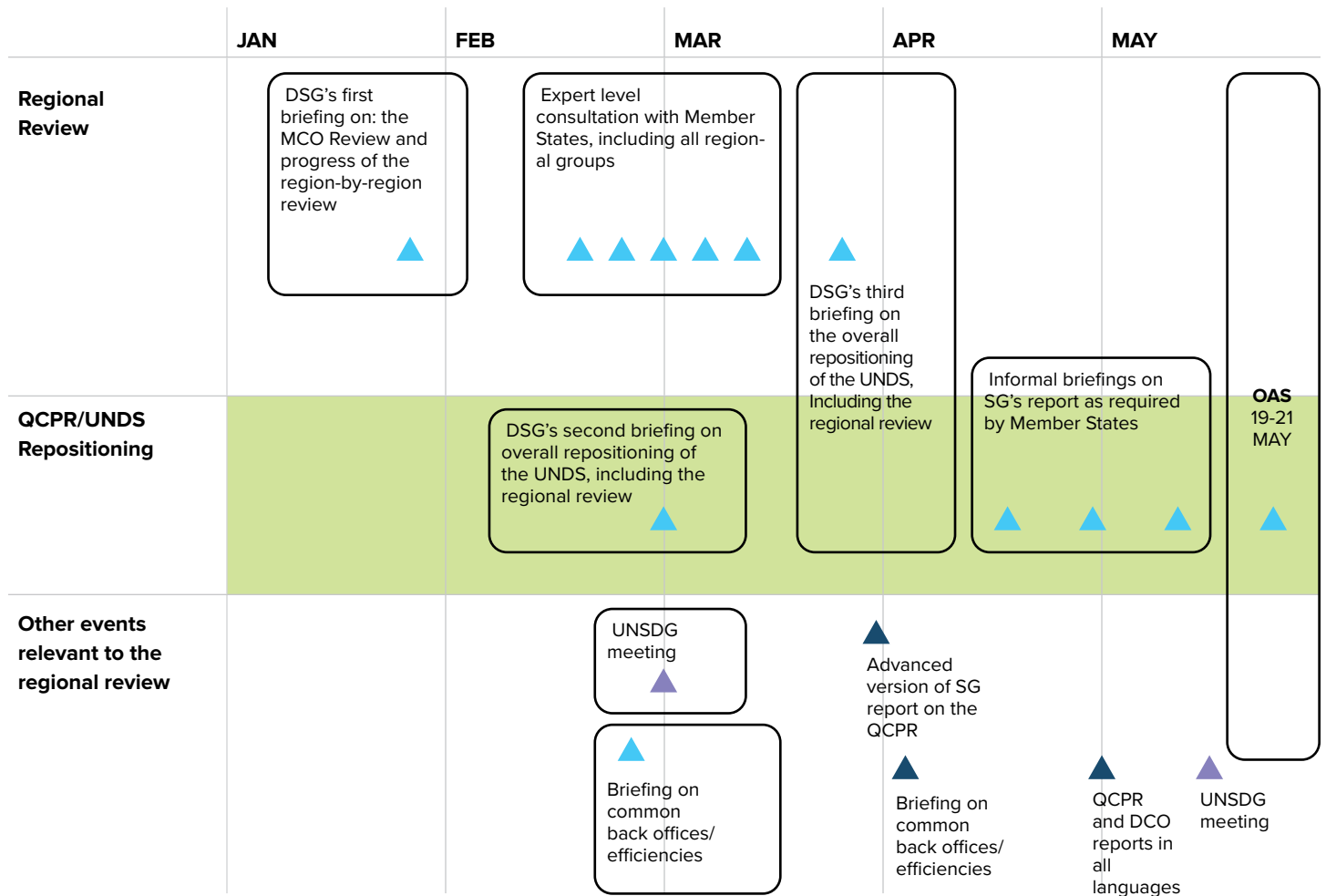
The overall objective of the RCP is to provide a light and agile internal collaboration platform for the UN system at regional level, while reducing current overlaps emanating from the existence of multiple coordination mechanisms. The work of the RCPs will be focused on the following key functions:

1. Foster collaboration on sustainable development across UN development system entities operating at the regional and sub-regional levels, including by promoting and facilitating issue-based coalitions to respond to regional, sub-regional or cross-border or common development issues.

2. Promote joint actions to address gaps in SDG implementation, including those identified through the regional forums on sustainable development.

3. Discuss major regional strategic developments and issues, pathways to addressing them and align regional and global agendas accordingly.

4. Promote regional coherence with the policies agreed by CEB's High-Level Committee on Programs (HLCP), the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the UN Sustainable Development Group.

5. Promote interagency joint actions, strategies, and coalitions, particularly in support of regional integration and collaboration, regional and sub-regional initiatives and programmes, and transboundary and common issues.

6. Foster interagency cooperation and collaboration on sustainable development to ensure or improve implementation of internationally and regionally agreed frameworks, norms and standards.

7. Promote coherent regional policy dialogues and responses to respond to challenges related to SDG achievement.

8. Facilitate demand-driven integrated policy advice, normative support and technical capacity to regional and sub-regional organizations, Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs), including the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the UN Cooperation Framework.

9. Promote a region-by-region change management process that will seek to consolidate existing capacities for data and statistics, as well as other relevant analytical functions that may be currently duplicative.

10. Coordinate and transparently share policy-relevant tools and knowledge products.

11. Facilitate effective and efficient management at the regional level, aligned with the region-by-region approach.

12. Provide an agreed mechanism for the oversight, performance management and appraisal of UNCTs and input into the appraisal of RCs, in accordance with the Management Accountability Framework. The same mechanism will be used for troubleshooting and dispute resolution.

13. Provide criteria and guidelines to prepare the System-Wide Results Report by the UN development system in each region.

**CONSULTATIONS ON THE REGIONAL REVIEW IN THE LEAD
UP TO THE 2020 ECOSOC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES SEGMENT**

▲ Member States' briefing or formal meeting (specific dates to be communicated in due time)

▲ Report milestone

▲ UNSDG consultations

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
Regional Review	DSG's first briefing on: the MCO Review and progress of the region-by-region review ▲	Expert level consultation with Member States, including all regional groups ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲		DSG's third briefing on the overall repositioning of the UNDS, Including the regional review ▲	Informal briefings on SG's report as required by Member States ▲ ▲ ▲	OAS 19-21 MAY ▲
QCPR/UNDS Repositioning		DSG's second briefing on overall repositioning of the UNDS, including the regional review ▲				
Other events relevant to the regional review		UNSDG meeting ▲ / Briefing on common back offices/ efficiencies ▲		Advanced version of SG report on the QCPR ▲ / Briefing on common back offices/ efficiencies ▲	QCPR and DCO reports in all languages ▲ / UNSDG meeting ▲	

As of 27 January 2020