



# SDG Indicator 17.14.1. Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development

## *Concept note for the development of a global methodology*

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### 1. Introduction: the Global Sustainable Development Goals indicator framework

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals contains 169 targets which are followed up and reviewed using a set of 232 individual global indicators. The Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Framework has been developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), agreed upon at the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2017. In the context of the SDGs follow-up and review process, international agencies (also referred to as “custodian agencies”) are requested by the IAEG-SDGs to compile global and regional aggregates of data on the SDG indicators based on their respective existing mandates and/or expertise, following quality standards and best practices, and depending on the status of development (data availability) of those indicators.

### 2. The task at hand: developing a methodology for Tier III Indicator 17.14.1

Target 17.14 under Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) calls on all countries to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development and the agreed global indicator, 17.14.1, measures the “**number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development**”. UN Environment Programme has been mandated to develop a global methodology for this indicator– and to report to the UN Statistics Division – in its role as custodian agency.

### 3. Defining the scope of policy coherence for sustainable development

Enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development is important for achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in a balanced and



integrated manner; for ensuring coherence between policies at various levels of government; and for ensuring that policies in different sectors are mutually supportive and do not work against each other. It is also important in addressing the impacts of domestic policy internationally. Policy coherence aims, as a minimum, to identify trade-offs and mitigate negative impacts between policies. At a more ambitious level, it should also aim to foster synergies and produce policies that mutually reinforce each other.

For the purpose of this indicator, we are interpreting ‘policy coherence of sustainable development’ as the coherence between sustainable development policies in general, rather than adopting a narrower definition of mechanisms put in place to support the coherent implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, so as to promote coherent policy for sustainable development well beyond this time frame. The policy coherence mechanisms set out in this methodology may therefore include mechanisms already in place before 2015 and the adoption of Agenda 2030, and any mechanisms established during the next decade leading up to 2030 should aim to continue well beyond that timeframe.

#### 4. Proposed nature and content of the indicator

##### *A composite indicator*

UN Environment has developed a draft indicator framework for SDG 17.14.1 based on initial research on existing work, literature, partners and existing indicators on similar issues. This framework has been inspired by existing conceptual frameworks, particularly by the building blocks of the OECD framework for measuring policy coherence for sustainable development, and by examples of mechanisms in place in countries to foster policy coherence for sustainable development, observed through efforts on the ground, reported by countries through their voluntary national reviews or other mechanisms, or reflected in studies.

Considering the complexity of the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development, and the multitude of possible mechanisms that can enhance it, UN Environment, in consultation with external experts has opted for a composite indicator to measure progress on this issue. The proposed composite indicator comprises a mix of mechanisms (sub indicators) that would help a country advance its policy coherence for sustainable development.

The indicator framework identifies several sub indicators, each focusing on a specific mechanism, which together give an indication of whether and to what extent a country has in place mechanisms to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

##### *Types of mechanisms and areas of coherence that could be measured*

The indicator methodology attempts to capture various forms of policy coherence, including:

- Vertical coherence between different levels of government, from local to national
- Horizontal coherence across key government ministries, departments and agencies and across sectors and themes
- Transboundary coherence, i.e. between national and international policy and across national boundaries



- Temporal coherence, promoting a long-term vision and coherence across political mandates
- Political or intrinsic coherence (i.e. taking a policy decision through all the steps necessary to translate it into action)

Mechanisms to promote better coherence in these areas can vary greatly from country to country and can take different forms. However, based on existing practice, it is possible to identify a range of mechanisms which are likely to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, and therefore the presence of a combination of these mechanisms in a given country would indicate progress toward meeting this indicator.

This methodology attempts to capture these mechanisms, so that countries may assess and report on their progress toward the indicator and at the same time identify areas for improvement to further enhance their policy coherence. In addition to defining and describing the mechanisms that together would lead to enhanced policy coherence, the methodology also provides examples of existing mechanisms put in place by countries globally, as a form of inspiration for other countries.

The current indicator framework is composed of 10 sub indicators/mechanisms, organized under four categories, based on the types of mechanism. These sub indicators are listed below. More details can be found in the annexed Indicator Framework and guidance notes developed for each sub indicator.

**A. Political commitment**

1. Institutionalized political commitment
2. Long-term considerations underpin decision-making on sustainable development

**B. Coordination**

3. Inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination
4. Participatory processes (Major Groups and Stakeholders)
5. Integration of international standards and priorities

**C. Policy formulation**

6. Integration of the three dimensions of Sustainable Development and assessment of policy effects and cross-sectoral linkages
7. Consultation and coordination at various government levels (including alignment of policy processes and cycles)

**D. Policy implementation and monitoring**

8. Monitoring and evaluation for policy coherence
9. Harmonised information and reporting
10. Adequate financial resources and financing tools

The indicator framework only focuses on whether the proposed mix of mechanisms is in place in a given country, and is not meant to measure if these mechanisms are effective, in line with the textual formulation of indicator 17.14.1.

*Devising a universal indicator*

The indicator needs to be universally applicable, allowing all governments to recognize their mechanisms in it. Therefore, it needs to be flexible and adaptable to varying national circumstances, and focus on common denominators across countries globally. It should also not be overly complex. The initial data collected will be the opportunity to set a baseline for every sub-indicator in each country, which will enable to measure progress until 2030 (and possibly beyond).



## 5. Calculating progress

There could be various ways to calculate progress. At national level, each country could be assigned a number out of 10. At regional and global levels, the number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development could be defined as the number of countries with a majority of mechanisms/sub indicators in place (i.e. six out of 10 or more).

The ultimate objective of the proposed indicator is not to rank countries, but to help countries assess where they are and what they can do better to enhance their policy coherence for sustainable development, with a clear trajectory towards 2030.

## 6. Status of methodology development

UN Environment has set up an expert group with external experts who have experience in policy coherence for sustainable development, to further develop and finalize this methodology. While UN Environment is the custodian agency for this indicator, the engagement of other relevant agencies, external experts and countries is crucial for the development of a useful methodology. In June 2018 UN Environment organized a first teleconference with this expert group to present the work done so far and the draft indicator framework enabling the expert group to comment and discuss on it. In July 2018, the experts provided additional written comments on the draft indicator framework, more specifically on the general approach, the types of coherence and mechanisms covered by the framework as well as the sub-indicators of the indicator framework. As the approach of the composite indicator has been confirmed, the UN Environment team has taken into account these comments in refining the indicator framework and has developed guidance notes for each of the 10 sub indicators, providing a description and examples in order to create a better understanding of the sub indicators and the framework.

## 7. Future Steps

The methodology for indicator 17.14.1 needs to be ready at end of 2018 / beginning of 2019 and be presented to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on Sustainable Development Indicators. The next step for UN Environment is to finalize the methodology with the inputs from external experts from various organizations and to engage with selected countries to further develop the indicator.

An in-person meeting with the expert group has been planned on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 at OECD in Paris. The goal of this meeting will be to collect feedback and input in order to finalize the indicator framework (including the guidance notes) in order to have the methodology ready for submission to the IAEG on SDG indicators by February 2019.

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