

THE DANISH  
INSTITUTE FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN THE FOLLOW-  
UP AND REVIEW  
OF SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT



In September 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A crucial aspect of the Agenda is the implementation and reporting of progress, which is specified in its guiding principles on **Follow-up and Review (FUR)**.

The 2030 Agenda specifies that the purpose of FUR is to **ensure accountability** and that FUR mechanisms should **respect human rights** and be inclusive, participatory, transparent, gender-sensitive, and have a particular focus on those furthest behind.

This guidance paper unfolds how the FUR principles reflect the principles of the **Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)** to development, and how the HRBA and existing human rights mechanisms can guide both the design and the operationalisation of FUR mechanisms.

## THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda provides a comprehensive and universal framework, uniting the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The Agenda comprises three main elements:

- The **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and 169 targets to be achieved by all countries by 2030.
- The **Means of Implementation (MOI)**, which specify the resources and partnerships that are necessary to reach the agreed goals and targets.
- The **Follow-Up and Review (FUR)** processes and mechanisms, including the global indicators framework, that will monitor and guide implementation.

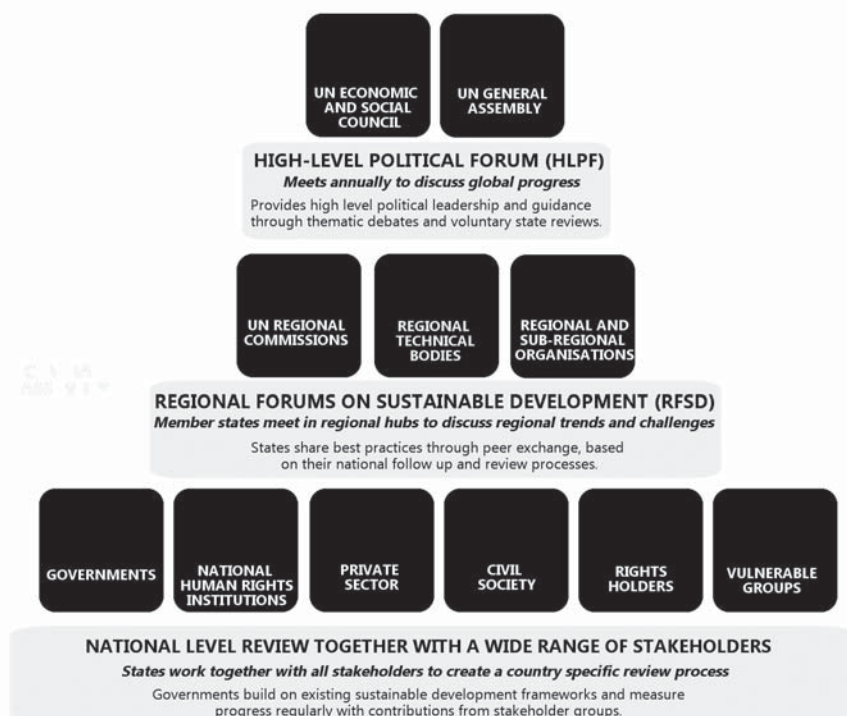
## THE FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW ARCHITECTURE

The 2030 Agenda outlines a three-levelled FUR architecture at national, regional and international levels.

At the **global level**, the FUR revolves around the annual High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and has the purpose of keeping track of global progress, providing political leadership and guidance, and addressing emerging issues.

At the **regional level**, Regional Forums for Sustainable Development (RFSD) follow up on and review the implementation of the Agenda in the different regions by focusing on exchange of best practices.

At the **national level**, states are encouraged to develop “ambitious national responses,” building on existing frameworks. Reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels should be regular and include contributions from diverse stakeholder groups.



## A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

The principles of accountability, participation and non-discrimination are at the core of the HRBA, which stipulates that development should serve to further the realisation of human rights. These principles are also strongly emphasised in the 2030 Agenda, which stipulates that Follow-up and Review (FUR) mechanisms should:

- Promote respect for **human rights and accountability** to citizens;
- Have a **particular focus on vulnerable groups and those furthest behind**;
- Ensure **inclusion, participation, and transparency**; and
- Generate data, which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and **disaggregated** by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

These principles reflect the principles of a HRBA to development, which should therefore guide both the design and the operationalisation of the FUR mechanisms aimed at measuring progress of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Goals.

## INCLUSIVE CONSULTATION ON INDICATORS FOR FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

In March 2017, the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation announced an initial **Draft National Indicator Framework for the SDGs** based on inputs from relevant ministries and departments. The draft was shared with the public and made available at the Ministry's website with a wish to "to seek the comments and views of the general public and experts [...] for further improvement in the indicators". This open consultation, constitutes an example of how FUR processes can be made **inclusive, participatory and transparent**.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE 2030 AGENDA – MUTUALLY REINFORCING

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is anchored in international human rights, and affirms that the SDGs “seek to realize the human rights of all”

Consequently, the SDGs reflect key provisions of international human rights and labour standards. **More than 90% of the SDG targets are linked to international human rights and labour standards.**

Explore these links at the **Human Rights Guide to the SDGs**, which identifies the linkages between the SDGs and universal human rights and labour standards.

The Guide is the essential tool to:

- Understand the linkages between human rights and the SDGs;
- and Develop a HRBA to sustainable development programming, implementation as well as follow-up and review (monitoring, evaluation and reporting)

[HTTP://SDG.HUMANRIGHTS.DK/](http://SDG.HUMANRIGHTS.DK/)

The screenshot shows the search interface for the Human Rights Guide to the SDGs. It features a teal header with search filters and options. Below the header, there is a grid of 17 SDG icons, each with a small grid of target icons. The interface includes a search bar, a 'Save search' button, and a 'Print' button. The search results are displayed in a grid format, with each SDG icon and its corresponding target icons.

Direction of search  
● Right to goal  
● Goal to right

Goal: Choose some options  
Target: Format: 14.4

Rights instrument: Choose some options  
Rights article: Format: 24.2.c

Term (full-text search): Search in instrument, target or article title/description  
Items: 100 Search Reset

Save search  
Print  
PDF  
Data/csv

Choose a goal **1** or a target **11** to see linkage to human rights.

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

## **BUILDING FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

FUR is supposed to “draw as far as possible on the existing network of follow-up and review institutions and mechanisms,” including with a view to easing reporting obligations.

The high degree of convergence between human rights and the SDGs points to the potential of using national, regional and international human rights mechanisms to assess and guide SDG implementation. By virtue of their ratification of specific human rights treaties, states are required to report to specific bodies mandated to supervise the application of these treaties. Such supervisory bodies include, for example the UN treaty bodies, the ILO’s supervisory bodies, and regional supervisory bodies such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Other international human rights mechanisms include peer review and expert mechanisms such as UN Special Rapporteurs on specific countries or themes, and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

Since the SDGs are anchored in human rights, States and other actors can use the analysis, data and recommendations that are already being produced by these institutionalised human rights mechanisms, for their SDG monitoring.

### **Human rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms can contribute to Follow-up and Review by providing:**

- Systematised qualitative analysis and data through institutionalised reporting mechanisms by States, United Nations bodies, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society.
- Identification of specific and systemic implementation challenges, as well as recommendations and guidance to overcome these.
- Expertise on developing national monitoring systems that are aligned with global standards, and best practice on peer review mechanisms, expert and thematic reviews.
- Best practice on systematic engagement of stakeholders in monitoring, reporting and follow up, guided by HRBA principles of accountability, transparency and access to information.

## USING HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS FOR SDG MONITORING

SDG Target 16.b aims to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development. The related global indicator, as a tier III, perception-based indicator, faces many challenges and lacks any structural element to hold states accountable. This is where global, regional and national human rights mechanisms can be helpful.

- National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have the potential to monitor progress and serve as data providers for Target 16.b and other human rights-relevant targets.
- Similarly, international human rights mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and various treaty bodies including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 111, can provide access to a wide array of data and therefore accurate and context-specific monitoring.

These complementary mechanisms are well placed to report on the status of recommendations related to discriminatory policies and legislation, thus contributing to a fuller picture of the progress towards Target 16.b.

## USING NHRI RECOMMENDATIONS TO GUIDE SDG IMPLEMENTATION

As independent State bodies, NHRIs monitor and analyse the national human rights situation against international standards. NHRIs prepare annual status reports on the general situation and research on specific human rights topics.

NHRIs have a strong focus on discrimination and inequalities, and monitor the situation of vulnerable and marginalised groups and particular rights-holders. Internationally, NHRIs prepare shadow reports for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and treaty bodies. NHRIs can therefore play a significant role in both international and national FUR processes by using their existing mandate.

## RECYCLING REPORTING ENHANCES COHERENCE, EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A way for States and other actors to utilise the synergies between human rights and the 2030 Agenda is by integrating their SDG reporting with their human rights reporting.

By recycling reporting, States can accommodate the two agendas at once, strengthen coherence and efficiency, ease their reporting burden and add accountability to their SDG reporting through human rights mechanisms.



Integrated reporting and review on human rights and SDGs  
→ enhanced **efficiency and accountability**

### NATIONAL FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

Inclusive and accountable FUR processes at the national level constitute the backbone of the FUR architecture.

The 2030 Agenda specifies that national FUR processes should be country-led and tailored to the national context. Also, they should depart from what is already there in terms of, for example, policies, dialogue processes, data, monitoring mechanisms and reporting cycles. Taking into



account the 15-year perspective of the 2030 Agenda, most national FUR processes will be iterative processes of review, planning, implementation and reporting, then followed by review, and so on.



The national processes will present a diverse range of models and modalities for FUR, as well as different degrees of efficiency and inclusiveness.

## NATIONAL REVIEW

The annual status report of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) reviews the status of human rights in Denmark – and provides recommendations to further strengthen them.

DIHR has linked its 2014-15 recommendations to specific SDG targets, as illustrated in the table below. The recommendations thereby serve to identify priority areas for Denmark to consider in its national SDG implementation. Beyond Denmark, the mapping provides an example of:

- The relevance of the SDG targets in a national human rights context; and

- The linkages between human rights monitoring and SDG implementation and in particular, the value of qualitative context-specific analysis.

### **SDG TARGET**

**Target 3.8:** Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

**Target 16.a:** Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

### **DIHR RECOMMENDS THAT DENMARK:**

#### **Overcome discrimination based on ethnic origin:**

Ensure that qualified interpretation services are available when a patient in need of interpretation is in contact with the Danish health system

#### **Strengthen the implementation of human rights:**

In cooperation with the self-governance of Faroe Islands establish a national human rights institution for the Faroe Islands

## **REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW**

The regional FUR is based on national-level reviews and at the same time contribute to the review at global level. Focus is on identifying regional trends and addressing specific regional challenges.

The 2030 Agenda does not give detailed description of the regional review processes but encourages states to identify the most suitable regional arrangements and to build on already existing regional mechanisms, where possible. Several regions have set up **Regional Forums on Sustainable Development** (RFSDs), and the first meetings of such Forums have taken place in Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Arab region.

## **SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY?**

At the first Session of the HLPF in 2016, the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI) submitted a report on the (shrinking) space for civil society in the 22 countries undergoing Voluntary National Reviews.

To inform the report, GANHRI conducted a survey among the NHRIs in those countries. The report highlights the crucial role NHRIs and broader civil society play for the implementation of the SDGs. It also presents key ingredients for an “enabling environment” essential for NHRIs and civil society to fulfil their role, and outlines current trends with regard to their operating environments and level of participation in the 2030 Agenda and SDG processes.

As with the national processes, the regional processes are playing out in different modalities, and whereas the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) had its first regional forum in April, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has held four sessions of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) with the participation of states, UN organizations, the nine Major Groups and other stakeholders.

## **TAKING THE PRINCIPLE OF PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY**

The Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM) enables civil society organizations to engage with and be heard in inter-governmental processes at regional and global levels.

The 1st session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) was preceded by a civil society forum convened by UN-ESCAP in collaboration with CSO partners, to enable the full and effective participation of the civil society organizations from different sectors and groups in the region, and provide a platform for bringing a common voice to the Forum.

## GLOBAL FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

The annual **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** on Sustainable Development is the key focus of the global review of the 2030 Agenda. By bringing together governments, Major Groups and other stakeholders, the HLPF provides political guidance, keeps track of global progress of the SDGs and addresses emerging issues. The HLPF comprises both **thematic debates** and **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)**. The purpose of the VNRs is for States to report on progress and challenges in reaching the SDGs in their particular countries.

The **human rights system can also add value** to VNRs through enabling the compilation of country-specific reports on SDG implementation from a human rights perspective which include treaty body and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. Likewise, NHRIs can provide information on the general human rights situation, on unequal progress and the situation of those furthest behind, as well as information on procedural aspects of national consultations, including transparency and stakeholder participation. In turn, the **HLPF can support the realisation of human rights** through the 2030 Agenda by addressing human rights-relevant transversal themes in its debate.

## MORE ON A HRBA TO THE 2030 AGENDA

Read more on a HRBA to the 2030 Agenda in the series of DIHR guidance papers:

Danish Institute for Human Rights, **Guidance Paper on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, June 2017.

Danish Institute for Human Rights, **Guidance Paper on Data, Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, June 2017.

Further reading:

Human Rights in Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda:

[bit.ly/follow-review](https://bit.ly/follow-review)

Human Rights and Data: [bit.ly/humanrights-data](https://bit.ly/humanrights-data)

For more information, visit

<https://www.humanrights.dk/our-work/sustainable-development>