

Regional mechanisms and forums

While the primary responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda rests with national governments, many countries cooperate via regional mechanisms, bodies and forums. Countries in a given region often share specific concerns and priorities and confront similar challenges, based on comparable geographies, macroeconomic structures, cultures and other shared characteristics. Consequently, countries in the same region may appreciate comparative perspectives and benefit from inter-regional cooperation and mutual exchange in the form of learning, resources and expertise. Regional forums and bodies provide a space for such collaboration and the sharing of best practices, particularly around SDG 16.²⁴⁷

Moreover, the results of regional monitoring are more likely to influence policy making, given that national governments are usually eager to compare their performance to that of neighboring peers. For example, many countries become champions of a particular SDG to position themselves as regional leaders, in turn mobilizing necessary political support at the national level.

Regional entities can foster political commitment to and national ownership of commitments by linking the 2030 Agenda to regionally specific agreements. CSOs interested in promoting accountability and advancing SDG16+ through regional approaches should consider engaging with the following regional bodies and forums:

- UN Regional Commissions:** At the regional level, national governments are required to identify the most suitable regional forum for following up and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, building on existing mechanisms and successful experiences. The UN Regional Commissions have emerged as one of the most important forums for regional sustainable development processes and provide inclusive platforms for regional reviews. Regional processes facilitated by the UN Regional Commissions provide a forum for peer learning through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussions on shared targets. These forums are usually held between March and May. They tend to include regional intergovernmental forums focused on specific themes; agreement on region-specific priorities and indicators; and regional thematic and progress reports. Regional processes are also important for ensuring that global and regional agendas—such as the African Union’s Agenda



247 TAP Network (2019), SDG Accountability Handbook, p. 91-93

2063 or the European Union’s Consensus for Development—are aligned with the 2030 Agenda in order to avoid duplication or fragmentation. National accountability can be complemented by regional dialogue and monitoring in coordination with and making use of UN Regional Commissions. Civil society engagement at this level is critical to contribute knowledge-sharing, learning and identification of good practices, and in generating solutions and mutual support.

- **Sustainable Development Forums:** Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSD) have been established in many regions by the UN Regional Commissions and help facilitate follow-up and review of the implementation of the Agenda. RFSDs—such as the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD), Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, and Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD)—serve as hubs for follow-up and review activities and help to facilitate peer learning and exchange of best practices, which then feed into the HLPF. These Forums serve as important mechanisms for monitoring and tracking progress in implementation at the regional level, as well as for mobilizing and ensuring the participation of stakeholders.
- **Regional human rights bodies and mechanisms:**
 - Inter-American Human Rights System: Being responsible for monitoring and ensuring implementation of human rights in 35 countries of the Americas, the Inter-American system is composed of two entities: a commission and a court. Both bodies can decide individual complaints concerning alleged human rights violations and may issue emergency protective measures when an individual or the subject of a complaint is at immediate risk of irreparable harm.
 - European Human Rights System: In Europe, the principal judicial and quasi-judicial organs responsible for defining and overseeing States’ compliance with their regional human rights obligations are the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the European Committee of Social Rights, both created under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The ECtHR has jurisdiction to decide complaints submit-

ted by individuals and States concerning violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, which principally concerns civil and political rights, whereas the Committee oversees the protection of most economic and social rights in most of Europe. In addition, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights serves as an independent monitor, highlighting issues of concern in the region. The Commissioner’s responsibilities include assisting national governments in implementing regional human rights standards, promoting understanding and awareness of human rights in the region, identifying gaps in protection, facilitating the activities of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and similar actors, and providing advice and information on human rights protection in Europe.

- African Human Rights System: The African human rights system is composed of two entities: a commission and a court. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) promotes and protects human rights in the 54 member States of the African Union, which – with the exception of South Sudan – have all ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. The Commission accepts complaints from individuals, groups of individuals, non-governmental organizations and States concerning alleged violations of the Charter. The second organization guarding human rights in Africa is the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights (AfCHPR). This is a regional human rights tribunal with advisory and contentious jurisdiction concerning the interpretation and application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which is also referred to as the Banjul Charter.

- **Other bodies and forums (including peer review mechanisms):** There are a number of other bodies and forums, including peer review mechanisms, with which CSOs can engage at the regional level for SDG monitoring and accountability. In Asia, for instance, CSOs might seek to collaborate with the Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (RCEM) or the Asian Parliamentary Forum. Other relevant peer review mechanisms include the African Peer Review Mechanism, the peer reviews of the Pacific Island Forum and the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) initiative, which cover many thematic aspects of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, routine reports on regional support and achievements from both public and private and civil society sources, such as the EU's annual "Accountability Report on Financing for Development" or Concord Europe's annual "Aid Watch Report," are useful accountability tools that employ both learning and peer pressure "naming and shaming" mechanisms. The EU even has a program for peer reviews of national sustainable development policies, though this is rarely used.

