RAPID INTEGRATED POLICY ASSESSMENT IN ARMENIA

Key Observations, Findings and Provisional Recommendations
Armenia is a lower-middle-income and landlocked developing country with a GDP per capita of $3,498. It is bordered by Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Turkey. Its borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey remain closed, which is an apparent violation of the norms of the United Nations Charter, the international law, including the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States. This creates unfavorable conditions for sustainable development.

In 2009, as a result of the global economic crisis, Armenia’s GDP declined by 14.2%, one of the deepest declines in the region. Since 2010, the economy has entered a period of recovery although more recently growth has slowed. According to official preliminary estimates, growth for 2015 stood at 3%. Mining products, textile and shoes, tobacco, fresh fruits and vegetables, IT and tourism services are most dynamically growing sectors of the economy.

Armenia’s exports are concentrated in several product groups: base metals (copper, molybdenum, gold) and cut diamonds, food and beverages (canned and fresh food, brandy), tobacco. The recently developed export-led industrial policy of Armenia focuses on increasing the competitiveness of targeted sectors and reducing export concentration. Between 2010-2015, exports of goods grew at 8% Compound Annual Growth Rate, reaching $1.5 billion by 2015. Export goods have become increasingly diversified geographically and by product structure. However, the resource intensiveness of exports has increased from 73% in 2009 up to 83% in 2014.

In this economic context, over the course of the last decade, Armenia has undertaken wide-ranging and comprehensive institutional, economic and social reforms towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Overall, Armenia identified and committed to fulfil 16 national targets under the eight MDGs. For the measurement of the implementation or fulfilment of these targets, 66 indicators were identified in the process of MDG nationalization. Public spending on social protection, education, infrastructure enhancement and health care has increased, though in absolute numbers this remains moderate. Out of the total 66 indicators, Armenia achieved 22 indicators and had good progress towards another 10 indicators, while half of the indicators were not achieved by the final reporting period in 2015. Achievements were especially high in the areas of child health protection (child and maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases) and, partially, in environmental protection, while progress was weak in poverty reduction and fighting hunger, education, gender equality (in particular, women’s participation in economic, business and political decision making), environmental protection, and governance areas (in terms of ensuring a level of governance, political rights and responsibility, and protection of human rights that would contribute to the sustainable development of Armenia). In terms of environmental protection, several issues remain critical, including deforestation risks, use of solid fuel by the population, availability and access to sanitation, ratio of slum households, etc. The poverty level in Armenia remains high, with 30% of population below the poverty line.

It is critical, that during the nationalization and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Armenia builds on the experience gained and the lessons learned during the implementation of the MDGs, and addresses the issues and gaps remaining from MDG implementation. The results of and the lessons learned from the MDGs implementation were published in the “Armenia MDG National Progress Report-2015”. The SDG nationalization process in Armenia was initiated with the outcome of the Post-2015 Development Agenda described in the section below.

Introduction
In 2013, in the context of shaping the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Government of Armenia and the UN Armenia Country Team (UNCT) partnered to form a Post-2015 Task Force, co-chaired by the First Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and the UNFPA, Assistant Representative, with the aim of identifying priorities for the next global sustainable development agenda. The participatory process used for prioritization, which in practice was comprised of a series of town hall meetings, was essential for reflecting the perspective of all stakeholders and reaching consensus across society about the SDGs and the mechanisms of their implementation. In addition, the National Council on Sustainable Development (NCSD), in cooperation with international and national organizations, produced the Rio+20 National Assessment Report (2012) and the Post-Rio+20 Strategy Plan (2015) that offered concept notes and action plans on key directions for sustainable development, as a result of which, Armenia should move from the group of countries with average human development to the group of countries with high level of human development.

- Mitigation of disproportionate levels of territorial development and acceleration of economic growth of underdeveloped regions by developing and implementing a relevant territorial policy. In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the ADS envisages three sets of priority policies:
  - Economic policy for ensuring sustainable and accelerated economic growth;
  - Active social and income policy for vulnerable groups of the population (including the poor);
  - Modernization of the governance system, including improved institutional capacity, inter-agency coordination and data availability.

Many of the challenges identified through this participatory process are in line with the Armenia Development Strategy (ADS) for 2014-2025, which is the overarching strategy document in Armenia, which sets the strategic goals, targets and indicators as set out by the UN Economic and Social Council in the “Report of the Inter- Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators”, of 19 February 2016 (document number E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1), in Annex IV - Final list of proposed Sustainable Development Goal indicators. This RIPA provides preliminary assessment and analysis in relation to:

- the relevance of SDGs to the country context;
- linkages between strategies, policies and action plans in multiple sectors or areas covered under the SDGs.

The assessment involved a broad set of sector specific policy/strategy documents, in addition to the analysis of Armenia’s overarching strategy document – the ADS 2014-2025. In addition to the ADS 2014-2025, the RIPA studied and assessed at least 48 sector specific strategy documents, concepts, action plans, plus relevant laws and regulatory documents. A full list of documents studied can be found in the Annex to this document.

In 2015, a constitutional referendum was held in Armenia on 6 December 2015. The proposed amendments will radically change the country’s political system, shifting from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary republic. These amendments will come into force in 2018, and are expected to contribute significantly to the improvement of state governance in the country.

The assessment is important to note that the assessment was based on the strategies, concepts, action plans, and laws and regulations made available to the team by relevant agencies. There may be documents adopted recently or in draft stage that were not provided to the team and, thus, not taken into account. These documents still can be incorporated into the national planning of SDG implementation at next stages of the SDG nationalization process.

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Overall, the SDG principles and approaches are well reflected in Armenia's national strategic documents. There is a high level of integration of the SDG targets into the ADS for 2014-2025 and a number of sector-specific strategic documents.

**Overall level of SDG integration**

1. The assessment covered all targets and indicators under the SDGs. Based on the analysis of the documents made available for the assessment, 108 SDG targets have been prioritized out of 169. Overall, the main strategic document – the ADS for 2014-2015 - reflects on 64 SDG targets, i.e. about 40% of SDG targets.

However, some reservations can be held in relation to the prioritization and compliance with SDG targets. In 44 out of the prioritized 108 SDG targets, the wording of the national target differs from the corresponding SDG target. In some cases, the difference is significant.

In addition, in 91 of the prioritized SDG targets, the relevant national indicator does not comply with the corresponding SDG indicator or does not exist (of which, in 62 cases indicators do not comply, and in 29 cases the national indicator does not exist). This issue needs further discussion in order to identify the reasons and effective solutions.

**Key Observations and Findings**

**Prioritization of SDG Targets**

- Prioritized only in sectoral documents: 26%
- Prioritized in ADS: 38%
- Not prioritized: 36%

**Compliance and Availability of Indicators for Prioritized Targets**

- Comply: 16%
- Does not exist: 27%
- Does not comply: 57%

**Level of Prioritization of SDG Targets**

- SDG 1: Poverty
- SDG 2: Hunger
- SDG 3: Health
- SDG 4: Education
- SDG 5: Gender
- SDG 6: Water & Sanitation
- SDG 7: Energy
- SDG 8: Employment
- SDG 9: Infrastructure
- SDG 10: Reduce Inequality
- SDG 11: Crime
- SDG 12: Sustainable Consumption & Production
- SDG 13: Climate Change
- SDG 14: Conservation & Sustainable Use of Marine Resources
- SDG 15: Terrestrial
- SDG 16: Peaceful Societies
- SDG 17: Means of Implementation
The level of alignment and gaps with SDGs, SDG targets and indicators

1

It is important to note that the SDGs and the targets under the SDGs are presented as they appear in the "Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for SDG Indicators" developed by the UN Economic and Social Council (document E/2016/2, Rev.1), without altering the official wording. Some SDG targets may include parts that could be considered to be not relevant for Armenia. For example, while “the use of child soldiers” mentioned in SDG 8.7 is not relevant for Armenia, it may be relevant in other countries, i.e. to “end child labor in all its forms”. In such cases, this assessment uses the full name of the target, i.e. “SDG 8.7 - Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, eradicate forced child labor in all its forms, including economic exploitation and bonded labor in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers”.

2

In order to not overburden the reader with information, the focus of this assessment is on the gaps identified in relation to the SDGs and SDG targets.

SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG 4.a - Increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

SDG 4.6 - Guarantee equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical and vocational education and training.

SDG 4.7 - Increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical and vocational skills, including through technical and vocational education, to achieve decent and productive work for all.

SDG 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls.

SDG 5.3 - End all forms of violence and discrimination against all women and girls.

SDG 5.4 - Ensure women’s full and equal participation in the political, economic, cultural and public life of the country.

SDG 5.10 - Implement international cooperation for education, including through sharing best practices, policies and resources.

SDG 5.a - Promote the full and effective implementation of women’s rights as set out in the 1995 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and similar international instruments.

SDG 6 - Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.

SDG 6.3 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

SDG 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

SDG 7.a - Increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix, including through investment in renewable energy capacity.

SDG 7.b - Expand infrastructure and upgrade networks in 3 billion households, and increase access to clean cooking fuel.

SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 8.7 - Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, eradicate forced child labor in all its forms, including economic exploitation and bonded labor in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

SDG 8.10 - Increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical and vocational skills, including through technical and vocational education, to achieve decent and productive work for all.

SDG 9 - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

SDG 9.5 - Strengthen the availability of high-speed internet, establish community terrestrial broadcasting systems, and protect the integrity of broadcast messages.

SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries.

SDG 10.7 - Address the root causes of poverty, including through financial inclusion, and provide access to basic banking, insurance and financial services for all.

SDG 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

SDG 11.2 - Strengthen governance and coordination of urban and land use planning to ensure sustainable urbanization.

SDG 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

SDG 12.3 - Promote integrated strategies, including through greenilan, green financing and development policies.

SDG 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

SDG 13.2 - Strengthen the global partnership for sustainable development, including through enhanced international cooperation.

SDG 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

SDG 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

SDG 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

SDG 16.1 - Ensure equal participation of all, and the active engagement of women and girls, in policy-making and decision-making at all levels.

SDG 16.2 - Ensure responsible and transparent management of financial resources at all levels.

SDG 16.3 - Promote the rule of law at the local level and access to justice for all.

SDG 16.4 - Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions and improve access to technology and new tools for monitoring early warning systems at the local level.

SDG 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

SDG 17.2 - Build on national strategies, in line with the national context and capacity.

SDG 17.3 - Enhance global partnership for sustainable development and the means of implementation, including financial resources.

SDG 17.4 - Mobilize, deliver and report on the means of implementation and the Addis Ababa_action_towards_2030_pillars_2014-2015 and other national policy/strategy documents do not appear to integrate the SDG 17 targets and indicators. This is a significant gap, which may be a reflection of the fact that Armenia’s legislation, there are no relevant indicators available.

SDG 17.5 - Ensure the participation of all, including women, girls and local and indigenous communities, and encourage private sector and civil society involvement.

SDG 17.6 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

SDG 17.7 - Rev.1, without altering the official wording. Some SDG targets may include parts that could be considered to be not relevant for Armenia. For example, while “the use of child soldiers” mentioned in SDG 8.7 is not relevant for Armenia, it may be relevant in other countries, i.e. to “end child labor in all its forms”. In such cases, this assessment uses the full name of the target, i.e. “SDG 8.7 - Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, eradicate forced child labor in all its forms, including economic exploitation and bonded labor in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.”
The SDGs do not include specific indicators in relation to landlocked small countries such as Armenia in relation to internationalization (trade and trade logistics, global value chain, investments). In the context of ensuring effective participation of landlocked small countries in international trade and economic cooperation, it may be justified under the SDG framework to include specific indicators for such countries in relation to promoting their active involvement in international trade and global value chains.

8. The assessment identified several issues related to the availability of national data. Addressing these issues will be critical for enabling effective monitoring and evaluation of the process of attaining SDG targets. In addition, addressing these issues is essential for strengthening policy and strategy design capacities in Armenia. In particular, “It was noted that in a considerable number of areas national indicators defined in policy/strategy documents do not have the level of disaggregation (by gender, race, age, income level, regions, education level, etc.) as required in SDG indicators.

9. The assessment identified that in some areas (e.g. healthcare and environment) SDG targets and indicators were widely used for designing the relevant policies and strategies and establishing their corresponding M&E frameworks. These are good examples demonstrating that SDGs can be utilized for policy making.
Mainstreaming and institutional settings

13. The self-assessment helped to identify several issues to be addressed in the development of national targets and indicators. Effective links and consistency in policy targets and indicators should be ensured in order to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of any national goal and/or SDGs.

14. Horizontal integration within national plans across sectoral areas exists, but could be further improved. In Armenia, positive examples of such integration are seen as strategies and concepts in the areas of healthcare, child health, gender, and education. Cross-sectoral linkages can range from complete to moderate synergy through to no interaction; and onwards through SDGs moderately to fully offsetting each other. These kinds of interactions are essential for mainstreaming the SDG agenda in an integrated—and therefore effective—manner.

15. As indicated above (see under Goal setting issues), one of the major points identified by the assessment is the insufficiency and/or the lack of indicators to measure and evaluate the attainment of the policy goals and strategy targets reflected in the national policy issue, which needs special attention and coordination among all the agencies/institution involved in the development of national targets and indicators. Effective links and consistency in policy targets and indicators should be ensured in order to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of any national goal and/or SDGs.

Strategy/policy level issues

16. While the assessment tried to identify as many cross-sectoral linkages as possible, there may be additional linkages that may need to be identified for effective SDG implementation. This will require additional discussion.

17. There are a number of SDG areas that have not been given priority or have not been reflected effectively in the national strategies. There is a need for greater focus on these areas, especially where evidence and data are available.

18. For effective integration and implementation of SDG targets and indicators, it is critical for ensuring consistency in defining policy/strategy goals and relevant indicators. In this regard, the SDGs and SDG targets and indicators can serve as an effective supporting framework for policy-making and implementation.

19. Data gaps are also important. These need early consideration and action, because relevant and timely data will be critical for monitoring, evaluation, and for evidence-based policy adjustments. It should be noted also that addressing data issues, in some instances, will require enhanced institutional setting and policies in relation to the development of appropriate data infrastructure for providing timely and accurate data for addressing the issue of administrative registers for collecting sufficient data, with sufficient level of disaggregation or aggregation.

20. Addressing the data availability and data quality issues would require effective dialogue and cooperation between the National Statistical Service (NSS) and relevant government agencies. While some of the data sets are compiled and processed by the NSS, there is a broad set of data which is collected by line ministries or agencies. Armenia could build on the good experience of NSS Armenia which has established a comprehensive database, including a database of MDG indicators and carries out effective international cooperation under the framework of the SDGs.

Funding

21. The extent to which the strategies and corresponding action plans aiming to directly achieve the SDGs targets are funded by the budget is essential for effective implementation. Therefore, it is critical that to ensure that adequate funding is made available in the state budget, at national and sub-national levels, to finance activities towards achieving SDG-related targets.

In the context of funding, it will be important to effectively leverage and utilize the opportunities provided by international organizations and donors, for instance, the activities of the World Food Program (WFP) towards addressing food security issues, fighting hunger, various donor projects towards agribusiness and rural development, and many others.

Provisional Recommendations
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ANNEX

List of Strategies / Policies Studied under RIPA Armenia

2. Civil Code and other legal acts.
10. EAEU agreement.
13. Law on the National Water Program.
14. luys Foundation Armenia.
22. National Program on Disaster Risk Reduction of the RA and the Action Plan of the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction” (Decree No. 281-N, dated 7 March 2013).
28. Program for Public Awareness Raising and Knowledge Dissemination in Emergency Situations due to Epidemic, Chemical and Radiation Causes, as well as in Everyday Situations, Government Protocol Decision # 15, 19 April 2012.
29. Program of Fight Against Transmitters of Infectious Diseases, Government Decision # 22, May 29, 2014.
32. RA Constitution.
33. RA Law on Combating against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing.
35. Regional and Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation agreements.
36. Regional and Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation agreements.
37. Strategy of Fight Against Infectious Diseases (2012-2016); Government Decision # 1913, 29 December 2011.
41. Regional and Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation agreements.
42. Regional and Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation agreements.
43. Regional and Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation agreements.
44. Strategy of Fight Against Drug Abuse and Illegal Circulation of Drugs.
53. Timetable of activities developed in accordance by the 2009 Action Plan of the Commission for Sevan Lake Issues at the office of the RA President and submitted by the Commission (RA Government Decree N 876-N dated on 2010).
54. Tourism Development Strategy (until 2030).
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