

Comments from Canada – Interim Report of the UN High Level Panel on the Development of a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)

Summary

Thank you to the UN High-Level Panel for their work in developing this interim report. It is useful to see the initial underpinnings of the proposed MVI, and Canada looks forward to reviewing the final report. We would strongly recommend that UN member states be given another opportunity to feed into this important process prior to the finalization of the final report, specifically to be able to address more technical elements including the proposed indicators for the framework.

Canada supports the principled approach the High-Level Panel has taken in developing an MVI to establish a systematic and comprehensive analysis of vulnerability. Upholding the principle of universality in the implementation of an MVI would maintain a long tradition in the UN system underlying much of its work. Practically, it will also ensure sufficient data collection of all developing countries that is required for a proper and credible comparison of its indicators. To provide balance, Canada would encourage an equal weighting of all three dimensions of sustainable development and their corresponding indicators, as has been the past precedent in other global development indices including the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

We strongly support the inclusion of resilience as a main concept and key dimension in the proposed MVI framework, in order to provide a holistic picture and balanced assessment of both the threat of an exogenous shock and a country's capacity to prevent, cope, and adapt to these stressors. Including resilience in the MVI framework and in national vulnerability-resilience profiles also provides a helpful guidepost for developing countries in creating coherent national sustainable development policy frameworks and in targeting their development financing.

Canada appreciates the High-Level Panel's distinction between structural and non-structural factors although would encourage a clearer consistency in the distinction of exogeneity of their characteristics, particularly when comparing structural vs. non-structural resilience. We support the report's proposal to isolate and only include structural factors of vulnerability and resilience in an MVI. Excluding non-structural factors avoids issues associated with changes in governance decisions, which would influence rankings within the index, and tracking those over time.

We would welcome further clarity with a detailed outline of the specific indicators that will be proposed for the MVI and, if possible, preliminary rankings of countries to highlight the index's results to the international community before the MVI is brought forward for adoption. An explanation of how the MVI references and incorporates elements of existing vulnerability indices would also be helpful to include in the final report.

The final report should also offer clarity on how structural vs. non-structural characteristics will be disentangled in the measurement of indicators. It will be important for the report to be transparent about how indicators are selected, or not selected, based on their relationship with GNI per capita, recognizing the high prevalence of economic and social data that correlates with this measurement.

Lastly, Canada welcomes that the National Vulnerability-Resilience Profiles, developed by governments in partnership with multilateral institutions, would provide additional nuance to the indicators and index

ranking, creating a basis for more coherent national and sectoral sustainable development policy frameworks that reflect domestic priorities beyond a static index. Further clarity on the level of standardization and scope of ownership countries will have over their profiles is important, as is the development of statistical capacity to maintain the universality, comparability, and credibility of the MVI.
