

# INTRODUCTION

## The Sustainable Development Goals



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# The Sustainable Development Goals

*“The stars are aligned for the world to take historic action to transform lives and protect the planet.”*

Synthesis Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda<sup>8</sup>

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>9</sup> (now referred to as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) are intended to unite the world behind a series of shared priorities – indivisible and integrated for all countries. Over two years in preparation, the process to shape the Goals has been broad-based, sustained and inclusive. The Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012<sup>10</sup>, the High-Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda<sup>11</sup> and the report of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>12</sup> provided the foundations for the SDGs. They have also been informed by the Financing for Development process and in particular the Outcome Document agreed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2015 in advance of the finalisation of the SDGs.<sup>13</sup> More importantly perhaps, the proposed SDGs have not simply been dictated from above but also informed from below. Millions have had their say through dedicated consultations and written and verbal submissions or responses to the MY World survey.<sup>14</sup> The final draft SDGs document was approved by UN member states on 2 August 2015 and will be adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2015.<sup>15</sup>

The SDGs are needed because the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain unfinished business.<sup>16</sup> First outlined in 2000 and subsequently formalised in 2001, the MDGs laid out a series of common objectives, values-based and inspirational but at the same time practical, measurable and achievable. Globally, many of the key MDG targets have either been substantially met (income poverty, gender parity in primary education and water) or will fall just short (nutrition, primary school enrolment, child mortality and maternal health).<sup>17</sup> The celebrations have been muted and with reason: bare figures do not tell the whole story. China and, to a lesser extent, India account for much of the good news, particularly on poverty reduction. Regional differences remain striking and national performance often masks significant disparities within the same country.<sup>18</sup> The individual achievements have not matched the wider ambition of delivering development for all.

This ambition is clear to see in the SDGs and reflects changes in development thinking over the last decade. While the MDGs were deliberately designed to achieve a few, specific outcomes, they did not explicitly recognise that achieving those outcomes was partly dependent on a whole host of other factors, including infrastructure development, job creation and equitable economic growth, not to mention human rights, good governance and peace. In short, an emphasis on selected manifestations of poverty at the expense of its causes.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, the 17 SDGs (see box below) and 169 targets recommended by the Open Working Group (OWG) offer a genuinely comprehensive vision of the future. From the wellbeing of every individual to the health of the planet, from infrastructure to institutions, good governance to green energy, peaceful societies to productive employment, little is left unaddressed. Also in contrast to the MDGs’ “tyranny of averages” that already in the goals themselves explicitly missed half the population, the SDGs are an inclusive agenda, focused on leaving no one behind – anywhere. They apply to all countries – rich and poor alike – and to everyone in the population. This inclusive agenda has significant implications for governments and businesses alike, in prompting a move from an aggregate mindset to a focused attention on the most vulnerable.

Ambition on this scale inevitably comes at a price. With an estimated bill in the order of US \$4 trillion annually and with current expenditure on SDG-related sectors amounting to approximately \$1.5 trillion, there is a \$2.5 trillion financing gap.<sup>20</sup> This will not be filled through aid alone. Official development assistance (ODA) totalled \$150 billion in 2013.<sup>21</sup>

## The Sustainable Development Goals<sup>22</sup>

- Goal 1. End **poverty** in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End **hunger**, achieve **food security** and **improved nutrition** and promote **sustainable agriculture**
- Goal 3. Ensure **healthy lives** and promote **well-being** for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure **inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve **gender equality** and **empower** all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of **water and sanitation** for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, **sustainable and modern energy** for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive **employment and decent work for all**
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable **industrialization** and foster **innovation**
- Goal 10. Reduce **inequality** within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make **cities and human settlements** inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure **sustainable consumption and production** patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat **climate change** and its impacts\*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the **oceans, seas and marine resources** for sustainable development
- Goal 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
- Goal 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
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of **implementation** and revitalize the global **partnership** for sustainable development

\* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

### Introduction Endnotes

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 25 (2014). Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>

<sup>9</sup> UN, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, Outcome Document For The Un Summit To Adopt The Post-2015 Development Agenda", Finalised Text For Adoption, 31 July 2015. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7888TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD\\_final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7888TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD_final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UN, "The Future We Want. Outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development", (2012). Available at: <http://www.uncsd2012.org>

<sup>11</sup> UN, A new global partnership: "Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development". The Report of the High-Level panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 development agenda, (2013). Available at: [http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP\\_P2015\\_Report.pdf](http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See, A/68/970 – Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E)

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

<sup>14</sup> MY World Survey. Available at: <http://www.us.undp.org/content/washington/en/home/presscenter/articles/2014/12/16/my-world-survey-celebrating-7-million-voices-we-the-peoples/>

<sup>15</sup> See letter of UN GA President dated 12 August 2015. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8026Letter%20from%20cochairs%20on%20post2015.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Millennium Development Goals Report. United Nations (2014). Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Melamed, Claire, "After 2015: Context, policies and processes for a post-2015 global agreement on development". Overseas Development Institute (ODI). 2012. Available at: [www.odi.org/resources/docs/7537.pdf](http://www.odi.org/resources/docs/7537.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> World Bank Global Monitoring Report. 2011. Available at: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:23100866~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html>

<sup>19</sup> Melamed, Claire, "After 2015: Context, policies and processes for a post-2015 global agreement on development". Overseas Development Institute (ODI). 2012. Available at: [www.odi.org/resources/docs/7537.pdf](http://www.odi.org/resources/docs/7537.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> UNCTAD, 'World Investment Report 2014'. Available at: <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=937>

<sup>21</sup> OECD. Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org>

<sup>22</sup> UN "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, Outcome Document For The Un Summit To Adopt The Post-2015 Development Agenda", Finalised Text For Adoption, 31 July 2015. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7888TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD\\_final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7888TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD_final.pdf)