

Questionnaire related to the development of Sustainable Development Goals

To seek input from national Governments in preparation for the Secretary-General's initial input to the Open Working Group

Introduction

In the Rio+20 outcome document, member States agreed that sustainable development goals (SDGs) must:

1. Be based on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
2. Fully respect all the Rio Principles.
3. Be consistent with international law.
4. Build upon commitments already made.
5. Contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields.
6. Focus on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, being guided by the outcome document.
7. Address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages.
8. Be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.
9. Not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
10. Include active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, in the process.¹

It was further agreed that SDGs must be:

- Action-oriented
- Concise
- Easy to communicate
- Limited in number
- Aspirational
- Global in nature
- Universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.

The outcome document further specifies that the development of SDGs should:

- Be useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Serve as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the UN system as a whole
- Address and be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development

The Rio + 20 outcome document *The Future We Want* resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on SDGs that is open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the UNGA. The outcome document mandated the creation of an inter-governmental Open Working Group, that will submit a report to the 68th session of the General Assembly containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action. The outcome document specifies that the process leading to the SDGs needs to be coordinated and coherent with the processes considering the post 2015 development agenda and that initial input to the work of the Open Working Group will be provided by the UNSG in consultation with national governments.

Attached is the UN Task Team Report *Realizing the Future We Want For All*, which constitutes one of the important Secretary-General's inputs to the Open Working Group.² At the request of the

¹ *The Future We Want*, Rio+20 Outcome Document, paragraphs 246-7.

² http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTReport.pdf.

Secretary-General over 60 entities across the United Nations and including the World Bank, IMF and OECD worked together to produce this report, co-chaired by UNDESA and UNDP. The UN Task Team, or a subset thereof, will be the appropriate inter-agency entity or “technical support team” requested in the Rio+20 outcome document to support the Open Working Group.

Against the backdrop of the UN Task Team Report, this questionnaire is a preliminary means of conducting consultations with national Governments on SDGs. It could be considered as a contribution to UN-supported national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. It intends to elicit views and suggestions on some key principles and criteria for developing a proposal for SDGs. Responses will be posted on the DSD website, summarized, synthesized as part of the Secretary-General’s initial input to the work of the OWG.

The Secretariat kindly requests that Member States provide responses to the following questionnaire and submit them to DSD (vaturi@un.org, copied to soltau@un.org) before 5th November 2012.

Questionnaire

The Rio outcome document states that the SDGs should be limited in number, and at the same time focus on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development.

- 1. Please list a limited number, preferably between five and ten, of the important priority areas that must be addressed through the SDGs to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.**

The SDGs “should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages. They should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and serving as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. The development of these goals should not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals” (The Future We Want, paragraph 246).

The UNTT Report covers most of the priorities. What is missing from our perspective is community, culture and spirituality. This must be addressed through SDGs if we are to achieve sustainable development.

- 2. How might the SDGs strive to balance the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development?**
 - a. Reflect social, economic and environmental dimensions within each SDG, possibly through the associated targets**
 - b. Integrate the MDGs, suitably modified/updated for post-2015, into a larger sustainable development framework**
 - c. Expand MDG7 (‘environmental sustainability’) into a number of goals with a natural/environmental resource dimension (water, food, energy, etc.)**
 - d. Other (please describe)**

The SDGs must be “global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities of development and respecting national policies and priorities” (The Future We Want, paragraph 247).

The best way to balance the pillars is to do a. and c. but add the qualitative aspects as well as the missing domains of community, culture, human rights and spirituality.

- 3. Based on your experience with MDGs or other existing goals, what would be the key use of SDGs for your country (select at most two)?**
 - a. Defining national policies**
 - b. Influencing national budget allocations**
 - c. Reviewing the impact of national policies**
 - d. Addressing key pressure leading to unsustainability**
 - e. Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making**
 - f. Guiding development cooperation**
 - g. Other (please describe)**

Please explain your choices if you would like:

The main use would be a. and f.

4. **How can “universally applicable” SDGs be made practically relevant for countries at different levels of development? (Please refer to your country’s situation as appropriate.)**

We should use a MDG type of approach which worked well.

5. **The SDGs are supposed to be “global in nature”. Should targets associated with those goals be:**
- a. **common to all countries?**
 - b. **defined by each country? or**
 - c. **common but differentiated depending on country characteristics and level of development? If c., please explain how.**

The SDGs must be based on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, fully respect all the Rio Principles, build upon commitments already made, and contribute to the implementation of the outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields (The Future We Want, paragraph 246).

It should be formulated like the MDGs so that we can avoid one size fits all problems while keeping it on the agenda.

6. **Which existing goals and targets (e.g., MDGs, goals/targets in Agenda 21, JPOI) do you think *should* be incorporated – perhaps in updated form – in a proposal for sustainable development goals?**

The SDGs “should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. (The Future We Want, paragraph 246)

I think all the existing goals and targets with improvement in terms of qualitative aspects as well as expansion of the environmental goal should become part of the SDGs.

7. **What specific steps can be taken to ensure that the SDGs are coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015?**

“We recognize that progress towards the achievement of the goals needs to be assessed and accompanied by targets and indicators, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development.” (The Future We Want, paragraph 250).

8. **How should assessments of progress toward the achievement of the SDGs be carried out at the global level?**

“The Future We Want” states that at the outset the Open Working Group will decide on its methods of work, “including developing modalities to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the United Nations system ...” (para 248)

Assessment of the progress towards achievement of SDGs should be done annually by the UN and a report on this should be made by the UNSG at the UNGA annually. Also, we should encourage the involvement of CSOs both national and international to monitor and report on these goals.

9. **What measures should be taken to make the process of developing a proposal for SDGs inclusive and participatory? How should civil society and other relevant stakeholders be engaged?**

The national consultations should be mandated to ensure the participation of all relevant stakeholders. In addition, the UN could support the CSOs to recommend SDGs from their side also,

- 10. What principles should underpin the development of the SDGs? (the UN TT report, for example, recommended adding (i) reducing inequalities and (ii) promoting human rights (iii) ensuring sustainability);**

In addition to the above, efficient use of resources should be another principle.

- 11. How should a new Global Partnership for Development be constructed within or around the SDGs?**

- 12. Do you have any other observations, ideas or inputs you would like to offer to inform the initial work of the open working group on sustainable development goals?**

As its title suggests, the objective of the SDGs should be to contain all the goals that must be met for a sustainable development. Whether countries are able to meet their target is another issue but what is important is also to be explicit about what must and needs to be done. It will be important for the UN not to lose sight of this as it engages the OWG.