



Bern, 25 October 2012

Response of Switzerland to the questionnaire regarding the development of Sustainable Development Goals distributed by the UN Secretariat on 28 September 2012

Preliminary Remarks

Switzerland has as yet no final position on SDGs and the post-2015 process. However, Switzerland identifies important principles for such a process and for a future post-2015 framework from previous negotiations, particularly the MDG review and the Rio process, which are:

- A convergence of the SDG agenda with the post-MDG agenda into one process (“post-2015”) and one single set of future goals.
- New goals have to be based on the results and assessments of the MDG review, the Millennium Declaration, the Rio+20 Outcome, as well as on a sound scientific basis.
- A balanced consideration and integration of all dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) as well as the dimension of peace and security.
- The following key areas must be central elements of a new agenda: poverty and reduction of inequalities; the necessity to protect the environmental and natural resources, and to address fragility of states; and the nexus food/energy/water.
- Protection of human rights and a peaceful and safe development
- Universally applicable goals, which can be used for all countries, but allow for differentiated approaches or/and country-specific adaptations.
- Inclusion of financial flows beyond official development aid, with a special focus on mobilizing resources from developing countries and from the private sector.
- To use synergies with other relevant international agreements and initiatives.
- Action and result-oriented framework.
- Clear and measurable targets and indicators with a mechanism for periodic review, accountability and reporting on progress.
- Goals that are time-limited, limited in numbers, and clear and easy to communicate.
- **Switzerland is currently holding national consultation, also with relevant stakeholders. The answers provided are therefore to be seen as preliminary and might be further developed in the light of the international discussions.**

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.

Switzerland does not yet have a final position on priority areas. However, as a first input, Switzerland would like to propose 1) some possible criteria to identify SDGs, and 2) some preliminary thoughts on priority areas. During the Rio+20 negotiations, Switzerland used the **following criteria list** to identify SDGs priorities, which might be useful for further consideration.

- Importance for countries and global impact: Is the theme equally important for all countries? Can it be concretized for country groups?
- Relevance: How relevant is a theme for all dimensions of sustainable development? How does it contribute to the implementation of the JPOI, namely poverty eradication, changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, managing the natural resource base of economic and social development? How does it advance the implementation of the results of all major UN summits in the economic, social and environmental fields? How does it contribute to equity?
- Leverage: Does the theme provide for significant leverage for promoting sustainable development in general, and for each of the dimension of sustainable development in particular? Does it have a good potential for improvement?
- Concreteness: Can the theme be concretized in a country and context-specific manner? Is it useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development?
- Problem-solving competence: Where are the largest gaps impeding effective action at the level of knowledge, aptitude, means, commitment, or legitimacy? Does it address an urgent need for action?
- Resilience: Can negative impacts be buffered within socio-ecological contexts, or will there be lasting damage?
- Reversibility: Can a negative process be reversed and the original state restored?
- Speed of change: How dynamic is the change process? Do changes occur within hours, days, months, years, or decades?
- Regional disparities: Are there differences between continents or sub-continental regions in how severely they are affected?
- Impact: Who is affected by negative processes, and how severe and widespread is the damage?
- Responsibility: What are the most effective levels of intervention? International, national, business, community or individual actors?
- Legitimacy: Does the theme have a high legitimacy based on existing international agreements and commitments?

2. With respect to **possible priority areas**, there are a range of areas discussed, and Switzerland cannot offer a prioritization at that stage. These are: Nexus sustainable energy, food and nutrition security, and sustainable agriculture; water and the efficient use of resources; (disaster) resilience; urbanization; chemical and waste; biodiversity; green economy; decent work; economic stability, including financial and macroeconomic stability; gender education; health, social security and protection. Governance at all levels, human rights, justice/rule of law, representative and accountable institutions.

With regard to the above list, the areas could represent possible future goals of transversal issues. If a goal is chosen, it should incorporate all three dimensions of sustainable development and be formulated accordingly.

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).

2. How might the SDGs strive to balance the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development?

The SDGs should strive to balance the economic, social and environmental dimension as indicated in option a). As Switzerland promotes an integrated post-2015 framework, which also incorporates the follow-up of the MDG agenda, this framework should incorporate

lessons learnt and follow-up of the MDGs as indicated in b). However, approach c) does not seem to enable an integration of the three dimensions as the environmental pillar is separate from the other dimensions. We offer the following thoughts for consideration:

a. Reflect social, economic and environmental dimensions within each SDG, possibly through the associated targets

One example of this approach is the “Sustainable Energy for All” initiative. Here we have different targets in all three dimensions: targets on access to energy (social and development dimension); sustainable energy production targets (ecological dimension); and efficiency targets (economic dimension). A similar approach could be envisaged for a water goal or a goal on food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture. It could be thought through for sustainable resource-use in general (biodiversity, water, soils, etc.).

b. Integrate the MDGs, suitably modified/updated for post-2015, into a larger sustainable development framework.

A thorough review of the MDGs, as foreseen in the review 2013, will reveal gaps in achievements. As equity and the social dimension constitute an important building block for SDGs, these gaps will then have to be considered in a future framework.

To integrate and modify MDGs is certainly feasible for a range of themes. Specifically: MDG1 on hunger can be integrated into an enlarged and comprehensive goal on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. Similar approaches could be envisaged with health (MDG4, 5 and 6).

A follow-up on MDG2 education could address the relevance of education with regard to the different dimensions, taking into account the special relevance of the social dimension in the education field. Switzerland would assume that further goals are based on ongoing international initiatives such as “Education for All” and “Education First”.

One important element of the MDGs is MDG8 on global partnership. MDG8 lays out the agenda of **policy coherence** in the context of sustainable development and addresses important issues related to the **enabling environment** for development. A careful consideration of this agenda and its integration into a future post-2015 framework is important. Whether it will be a free-standing goal, such as MDG8, or will be integrated into all goals, will have to be considered carefully.

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 and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities” (The Future We Want, paragraph 247).

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 MDGs were important to guide development cooperation (**hence f**). Therefore, Switzerland expects SDGs to be important to guide international cooperation on sustainable development (**hence g “guiding international cooperation on sustainable development”**). Common goals will be an important basis to cooperate at the international level and to invest in developing countries, particularly LDCs. But Switzerland expects SDGs to play an increasingly important role in domestic policy and to contribute to increased coherence between national sectoral policies as well as international cooperation. While they will probably not define Swiss national policies, they could have an influence on the national sustainable development strategy (**hence a**).

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.)

Switzerland expects goals to address globally relevant themes for all countries. The “Sustainable Energy for All” initiative serves as an example for this approach: For Switzerland, the access target is not that important, but the targets “energy efficiency” and “sustainable energy production” will be relevant for domestic policy. For a developing country, on the other hand, the access to energy remains important and Switzerland will support this in the context of its development cooperation. Additionally, in facilitating access to energy, countries will also have to take into account the other targets of sustainability and efficiency. Switzerland also expects that a goal on “food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture” would have dimensions that are relevant at the domestic and the international levels, e.g., reduction of food waste and post-harvest loss (see Zero Hunger initiative).

In the field of urbanization, the provision of services and basic infrastructure might be key for developing countries, while addressing urban sprawl might be a priority for a country like Switzerland. In order to trigger action, the SDGs and the implementation/monitoring process should be as mandatory and concrete as possible.

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.**

Switzerland has no final position on this. However, in order for the SDGs to be global in nature, each of the overarching goals needs to be broken down in targets which also reflect global ambitions. As in the case of the MDGs, the goals and targets should outline global ambitions to be met collectively by the international community (but not necessarily by each country on its own). It is therefore important that there is some sound guidance and scientific backing to proposals to be made and that the experience of the MDGs is analyzed thoroughly. There also seems to be some evidence that complementing the global goals and targets with a national target-setting process and monitoring could make sense, yet not necessarily as part of the global process.

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).

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?

Apart from the mentioned reference to the Rio Principles etc., Switzerland expects SDGs also to be based on the Millennium Declaration and the Rio+20 Outcome itself.

The current MDGs and particularly the **results of the MDGs review** will be an important input to the framework. MDGs already incorporate existing goals in the social dimension; the review will reveal existing gaps in achievements.

Economic and political governance should be addressed on the basis, or as an update, of MDG8 and the relative commitments in the field of trade, finance, etc. A careful analysis of the necessary international and national enabling environment for sustainable development should form the basis.

Policy coherence for sustainable development should be addressed possibly as an update and expansion of MDG8.

Switzerland would also like to draw attention to the work of **UNEP on “Environmental Goals and Gaps”**. This work constitutes a compilation of internationally agreed goals and assesses their achievement.

See: http://www.unep.org/geo/pdfs/geo5/Measuring_progress.pdf

The report could be used to select important environmental goals and incorporate environmental targets across SDGs.

An extended list of internationally agreed goals is available under: <http://geg.informea.org/>

In the field of **food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture**, consideration should be given to the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security adopted in 2009 as well as to the “Zero Hunger” initiative launched by the UN Secretary General at Rio+20.

For **gender**, the relevant decisions are the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as Agenda 21 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

For issues related to peace and security and fragile states, the **New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States** of the Busan Declaration should be considered.

Generally, we assume that **existing international initiatives**, such as “Education for All”, will be evaluated and form a basis to define a program for action.

A systematic overview of existing commitments in all three dimensions (environmental, social and economic) could form a basis for decision. This could include recent decisions on social protection floors or considerations concerning gender, etc. For the environmental pillar, such a compendium can be found on the following website: <http://geg.informea.org/>

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

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

In Switzerland's view, there should be one coherent post-2015 agenda with one single set of universal goals by 2015 (see preliminary remarks).

This can only be achieved, if the post-2015 process is structured accordingly and fully incorporates sustainable development principles. There will be input from the OWG on SDGs, the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, from countries, as well as from thematic consultations. It will be important to bring these inputs together at one stage before 2015 in order to develop a common framework.

"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?

Switzerland expects SDGs to include indicators that are based on a conceptual indicator framework. This framework and the related indicators have to be based on the experiences made by countries in monitoring sustainable development and on the work done by the Joint UNECE-OECD-Eurostat Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development. Capacity building and supporting countries to measure progress are important. Synergies with other programs or initiatives like "beyond GDP" could be explored.

At the international level, a global sustainable development report, as foreseen in The Future We Want, paragraph 85k, might be used as monitoring/reporting tool.

"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)

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?

Regarding the work of the OWG on SDGs, there are, in Switzerland's view, two requirements:

- On one hand, the OWG needs some space for discussion and consideration among its members in order to avoid political confrontation.
- On the other hand, inputs from countries that are not members of the OWG and from stakeholders are important.

Switzerland expects the OWG to have closed meetings and deliberations. However, there should be regular information to and consultations with UN member states which are not represented in the OWG, as well as with stakeholders and the scientific community. This includes the sharing of information about themes and the agenda of OWG meetings beforehand.

There is also a clear expectation that the method of work should be constructive and based on sound proposals. It will be difficult for an intergovernmental negotiation group to elaborate proposals. A more efficient way would be to discuss inputs which are prepared by a competent secretariat with support from the UN System.

Meetings should also take place in locations other than New York and consultation should be organized in a way that stakeholders, especially from developing countries, can give input.

This would require good support from a secretariat to facilitate the information flow and the consultations.

The structure developed for the reformed Committee on Food Security could be a useful example since it includes the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

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

Switzerland supports all three principles proposed by the UN TT: (i) reducing inequalities, (ii) promoting human rights, and (iii) ensuring sustainability.

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

A new **Global Partnership for Development** will have to be a major ingredient for the post-2015 agenda. Switzerland expects the following elements to be included in such a framework:

- To encompass all forms of partnerships and all actors, including governments, civil society, private sector, scientific community
- To have a specific focus on the effects on vulnerable groups and countries (e.g. LDCs, SIDS)
- To address key areas for global collective action. This includes management of migration, global health and global environmental challenges, access to knowledge, development and transfer of technologies, trade or financial regulation and other issues, which are relevant for an enabling environment
- To be based on the Busan Principles for Effective Development Cooperation, including the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States
- To have a clear framework of (mutual) accountability and transparency both towards a domestic constituency as well as at the international level.

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?

1. The process of setting up the SDG framework should ensure that the framework is defined in a way that makes it **measurable with existing official statistics** and adaptable in function of need and possibilities of countries. Switzerland prefers absolute over relative targets, because the latter are much more difficult to measure and interpret.

2. The UN Task Team report has also referred to the important dimension of **peace and security**. This will be particularly relevant to countries in conflict or post-conflict setting. Additionally, many themes have a potential for conflict if they are not addressed in a sustainable way; for example, food security and natural resource management (energy, water, land) are also a source for potential conflict. Switzerland therefore welcomes a comprehensive approach, which also addresses the peace and security dimension. This should particularly incorporate the potential of preemptive measures as, for example, the integration of **Disaster Risk Reduction**.

3. Furthermore, **economic and political governance and policy coherence** for sustainable development should be addressed explicitly, since an addition of sectoral approaches does not by itself lead to a balance of the economic, social and environmental pillars.

4. Additionally, Switzerland stresses the need to integrate the various key international agencies, in function with their particular mandate, into the process and for consultation. This includes UNESCO for education, WHO in the field of health, etc. In the field of “food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture”, it should be ensured that the Rome-based UN Agencies (FAO, FIDA, WFP, Bioversity) are involved in the process in a way that highlights both their interactions as well as their key role and position on this issues at the international level.