

Sustainable Development Goals post 2015



BAKU - Azerbaijan

Regional NGO Position Paper
Eastern Europe, Caucasus and
Central Asia (EECCA)

FOR THE SDG
post 2015 - FRAMEWORK

15-16 July 2013

*"We have to be radical in our analysis,
visionary in our strategies and
ambitious in our concrete steps."*

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Introduction

At Rio+20, June last year, 193 countries renewed their political commitment to the development of a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction. They also agreed to establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a high-level political forum on sustainable development, which included provisions for enhancing the engagement and consultation of Major Groups and other key stakeholders. More than specific goals, the outcomes of Rio+20 stated that the SDGs should be limited in number, aspirational and easy to communicate.

In order to prepare a regional position on the future SDGs, non-governmental organisations from 12 countries in Central Asia, Caucasus and Eastern Europe (EECCA hereafter) got together on the 15 and 16 of July 2013 to discuss the overall framework and regional priorities for the SDGs and post2015 agenda.

The present text is the resulting agreement among the participants of the meeting (see annex), and is based on the position paper of European and international NGOs.

On the process and merge with the MDGs/post 2015 agenda

The MDGs have proved to be an important element towards building international/global coordination capacity between states and other developmental actors. They brought together public, private and political support for global poverty reduction and provided an effective tool to stimulate the production of new poverty-related data and additional aid commitments. In some countries, they became tools for civil society and other development actors to participate more successfully in the international efforts towards achieving the goals. It is important that the post-2015 process - both in its design and its implementation - builds on this momentum to further strengthen the voice of civil society organisations at all levels (Green et al., 2012).

In a number of countries, some of the goals were made explicit in national development policies and they were often the reference point for donor agreements with partner countries. A 2008 study of 22 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) showed that low-income country governments consistently referenced the MDGs, but were selective and did not always include timelines or action plans for meeting the MDGs target. This suggests that some governments are using the MDGs as planning and communications tools or as a common language with which to talk to donors - not necessarily that they are changing their behaviour as a result. Progress could be measured, albeit in an overly narrow manner, on the basis of the agreed indicators.

Some of the strengths of the MDG framework also proved to be risks and weaknesses. For example, the narrow focus on a number of social issues and the fact that progress in these fields has been measured by even narrower indicators, has led to only late inclusion, undervaluation or even total omission of some important aspects of development such as peace and conflict, freedom from violence, governance and anti-corruption, decent work and social protection, uneven population growth, climate change adaptation etc. This gap was filled by some nations by adjusting the MDGs. Green et al (2012) note that some of the more developing country governments have consistently 'customised' the MDGs, adapting them to national realities and priorities and including them in national planning documents.

A UNDP study of 30 countries found that 10 had added or modified their goals. For example, Albania, Iraq and Mongolia had added a goal on good governance and/or fighting corruption. Armenia, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had modified MDG 2 (education) to include eight or nine years' schooling for all children. And Colombia and Mongolia had added specific infectious diseases to MDG 6 (tackling HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases). Fifteen countries had added, expanded or modified targets, and no fewer than 25 had added, expanded or modified indicators – for example, to reflect national poverty lines.

Certainly, the MDGs failed to address the root causes of poverty and they lack on progress on strengthening human rights. There is an inherent danger in the 'MDG approach', in that it reduces 'development' to progress on some of the basic needs and development policy to development assistance to the most poor and problematic countries. So one could argue, as has Jan Vandemoortele, that the MDGs "represent a reductionist view of development" or an oversimplification.

Overcoming these dangers will be one of the biggest challenges to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are addressing the root causes of poverty and environmental degradation, the interlinkages between both while trying to achieve the needed paradigm shift crucial to build real sustainable societies worldwide. Furthermore, the main impact of the MDGs was on the aid system, while any post-2015 arrangement has to be designed to influence governments and citizens behaviour.

MDGs	SDGs
Development	Sustainability
Focus on developing countries	Focus on all countries
Aid and Trade agenda	Human Rights and Justice
No recognition of planetary boundaries	Living within the limits of the resources of one planet
Environment is luxury, development first	Environment is basic for developing well-being

The SDGs should go beyond the weaknesses of the MDGs, making use of all the available knowledge to invigorate systemic change and fundamental transition agenda. The business as usual way is not an option, and incremental changes are not enough, as the urgency to act is high. The International Council of Science in 2010 stated: "Humanity has reached a point in history at which a prerequisite for development-the continued functioning of the Earth system as we know it- is at risk". The financial, social and environmental costs of not acting are huge already in the short and mid terms. Environmental damage and biodiversity loss is happening in a spectacular rate. A considerable increase in inequality has also been noted over the last 10-15 years, with the marginalised and disadvantaged falling still further behind and the gaps between the rich few and the poorer masses widening dramatically.

Results of the MDGs in EECCA region

According to the UNECE report on results of the work on the MDGs in the EECCA region it is stated that the MDG performance has continued to be highly uneven in the ECE emerging economies. Basically, two groups of countries can be identified on the basis of MDG indicators.

The first group consists of middle and upper middle-income countries that have eliminated extreme poverty to a large extent and are likely to achieve most MDG objectives. The second group includes mainly the lower middle and low-income countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia as well as the relatively less advanced transition economies of South-Eastern Europe.

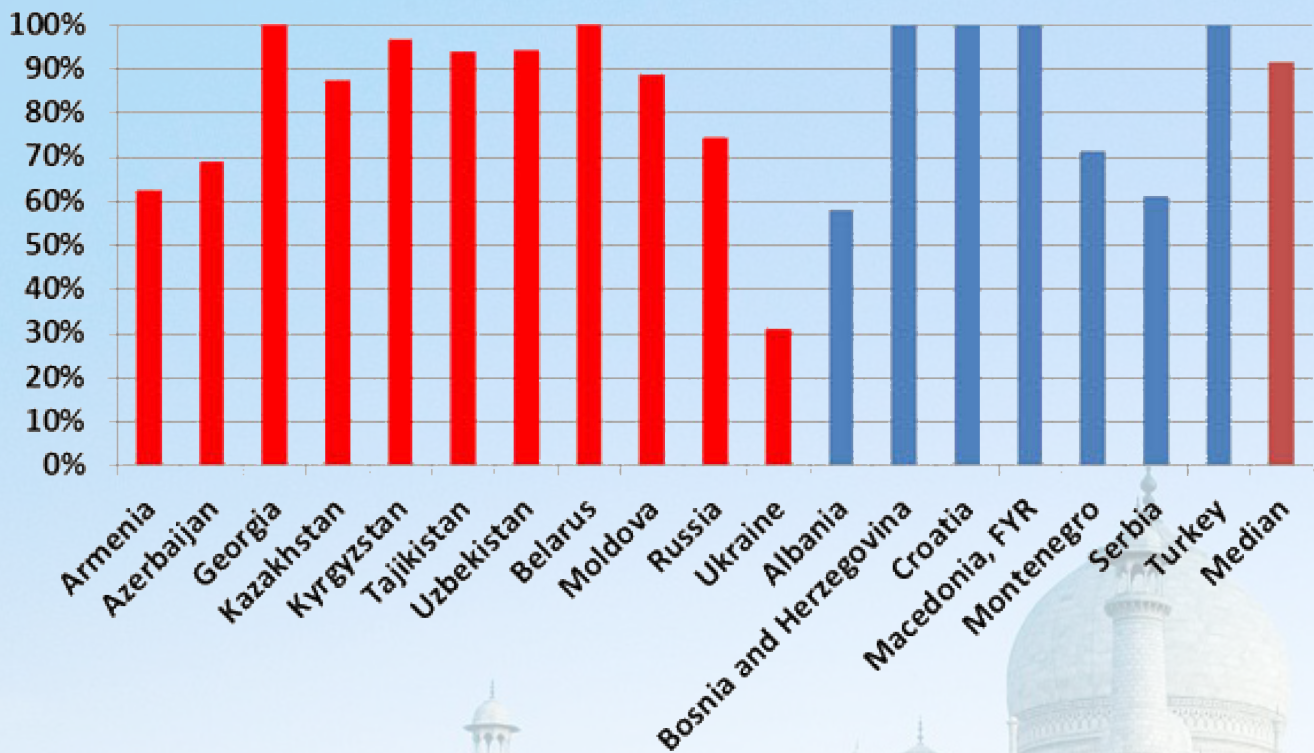
Higher unemployment and/or lower incomes in Central Asia have forced households to economize not only on luxuries and conveniences but also on necessities. This adjustment has been especially regressive in the health sector because governments in a number of countries have reduced public spending or restricted access in this area while low-income families have cut out of-pocket expenditures on medical care and pharmaceutical products. Only a handful of countries have attempted to compensate the poor for reduced access to healthcare. The education expenditure, both public and private, has been better protected, at least to date.

Finally, the UNECE report emphasizes that marginalized groups have been hit harder by unemployment, income losses and reduced accessibility of health services than the majority population. Such groups include disadvantaged ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and migrants. MDG progress could be accelerated at minimal cost if the social and economic policies of governments would focus on improving the living standards of these disadvantaged groups.

The report states that achieving Sustainable Development requires the creation of viable schemes for regional cooperation. For instance, in Central Asia such schemes might replace the centralized national management of transnational water and biodiversity resources. The sub-region also needs a proper maintenance scheme for large-scale energy and water supply infrastructures, including for irrigation. Over the past decade, the area affected by salinization and water-logging has increased by between a quarter and a half. The Aral Sea has lost 90 per cent of its volume since the early 1960s and its biodiversity is probably irretrievably lost. Lack of progress in these areas is a cause of rising tensions between Central Asian countries.

Forest maintenance and development are subject to severe challenges in the Caucasus and Central Asia where forest cover is low and must compete with other land-uses and for water resources, while at the same time being subject to illegal logging. Forest as a percentage of land area is particularly low in Kazakhstan (1.2 per cent), Tajikistan (2.9 per cent) and Kyrgyzstan (5 per cent).

The report of Joint Monitoring Program of the WHO/UNICEF shows that a number of ECE emerging economies have not been on track to achieve the national drinking water target. These include Albania, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for which the coverage rate in 2010 was below 1990 level and Tajikistan that was below 10 per cent of the 2010 rate required to meet the target. At the same, it should be noted that both Albania and Kazakhstan had over 95 per cent of population in 2010 with access to improved source of drinking water; nonetheless, any negative trend should be avoided. Despite the many efforts undertaken and progress achieved, over 15 million people (down from some 25 million in 2000) in the EECCA and SEE countries in 2010 had only access to unimproved sources of drinking water. A vast majority of these people – median value for the EECCA and SEE region is 91 per cent – live in rural areas (see figure).



Graphic: Persons in rural areas using unimproved water sources (2010). Percent of population with access to unimproved water sources only. Source: UNECE calculations based on data from the Joint Monitoring Program of WHO and UNICEF.

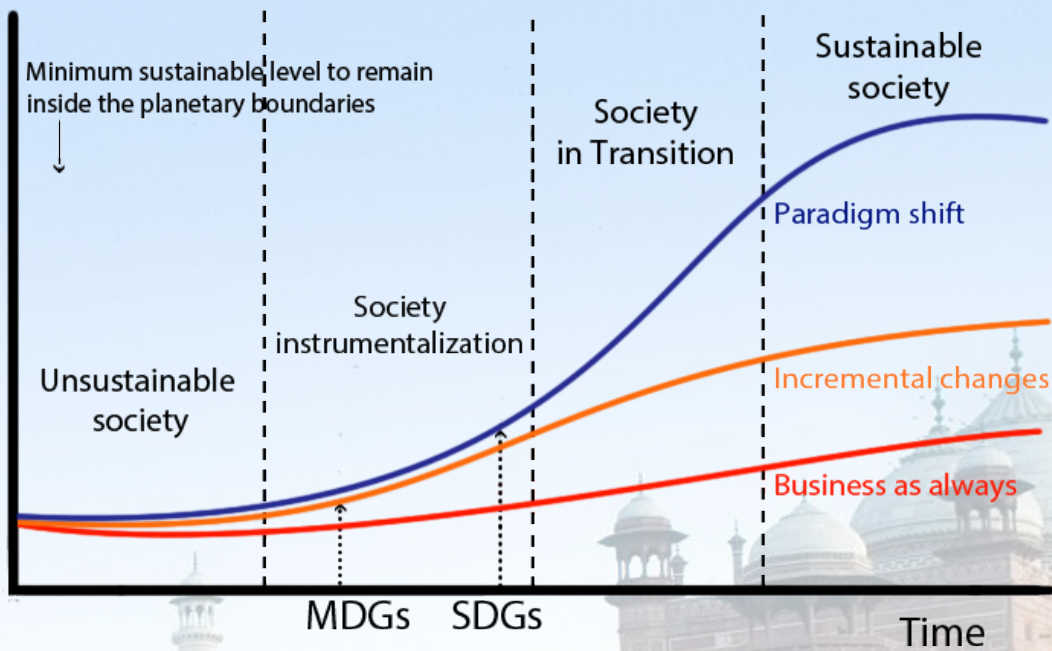
As main conclusion we see four key points to be integrated in the future SDGs:

- The shift for a new development paradigm: deep and thorough structural and inclusive change for all sectors of society, not only the easiest to reach in a short term
- Holistic and coherent approach: linking development and environment, in analyses and in governance policies
- Full and effective participation of civil society at all levels to ensure that leaders take the right decisions, that organisations (public and private) support and control the change and that the citizens participate to achieve democratic ownership and policies.
- Rights based approach in a common based economy (equality and recognising limits of planet and people) and with appropriate means to check and demand the accountability of all stakeholders.

VISION AND PURPOSE OF THE SDG/ POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

We need: A shared vision of just, equitable and sustainable societies in harmony with nature in which every person can realise their human rights, based on common responsibilities, well being and a life free from oppression.

The purpose of the framework would therefore be to establish a new global consensus and commitment to achieve this vision and set out the roadmap regarding how its objectives will be reached. The framework must enable people to hold world leaders to account for the changes they have committed to.



FRAMEWORK DESIGN

We recognise that the design of a future framework is extremely challenging since there is such a wide variety of issues that could merit inclusion and many are interdependent. We urge EECCA leaders to show political will, vision and courage to identify and tackle the key challenges faced by the world today in a comprehensive manner and addressing their root causes.

There are already a lot of agreed documents produced during the last 20 years of CSD-meetings. Most of them also refer to existing UN-agreements, like on: gender-issues, food sovereignty, biodiversity, climate change, human rights, indigenous rights, etc. We don't have to start from scratch but to be able to build on the knowledge already accrued.

The two most explicitly important agreements in relation to Sustainable Development are 1) the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and 2) Agenda 21: an action plan focused on social, economical and ecological problems.

The Brundtland report has been the basic ground for both, providing also what today is the most common definition of SD. Some of the most important elements to recall from the Brundtland report for preparing the SDG's proposal are that:

- The earth system carrying capacity is limited: the concept of development does imply limits- not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. This is crucial, since science already shows with increasing certainty that our human society is at the border of our planetary boundary's.

- The fact that poverty and environment are two independent determinants, if alleviating one fails, improving the other will fail as well: Poverty is not an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes. In Rio+20 the final message reaffirm this statement.

- The need to fairly distribute our natural resources inside and among nations: equity among and inside nations: meeting essential needs requires not only a new era of economic development for nations in which the majority are poor, but an assurance that those poor get their fair share of the resources required to sustain their well being. A right based approach and based on justice, is what sustainable development aims for.

- The need to improve governance on one hand, and enable the wide participation of society on the other hand: equity would be aided by political systems that secure effective citizens participations in decision making and by greater democracy in international decision making.

- Structural change in the way we live, exploit and use our natural resources. Global Sustainable Development requires that those who are more affluent adopt lifestyles coherent with the planet's ecological means - in their use of energy, for example, by accepting sufficiency strategies.

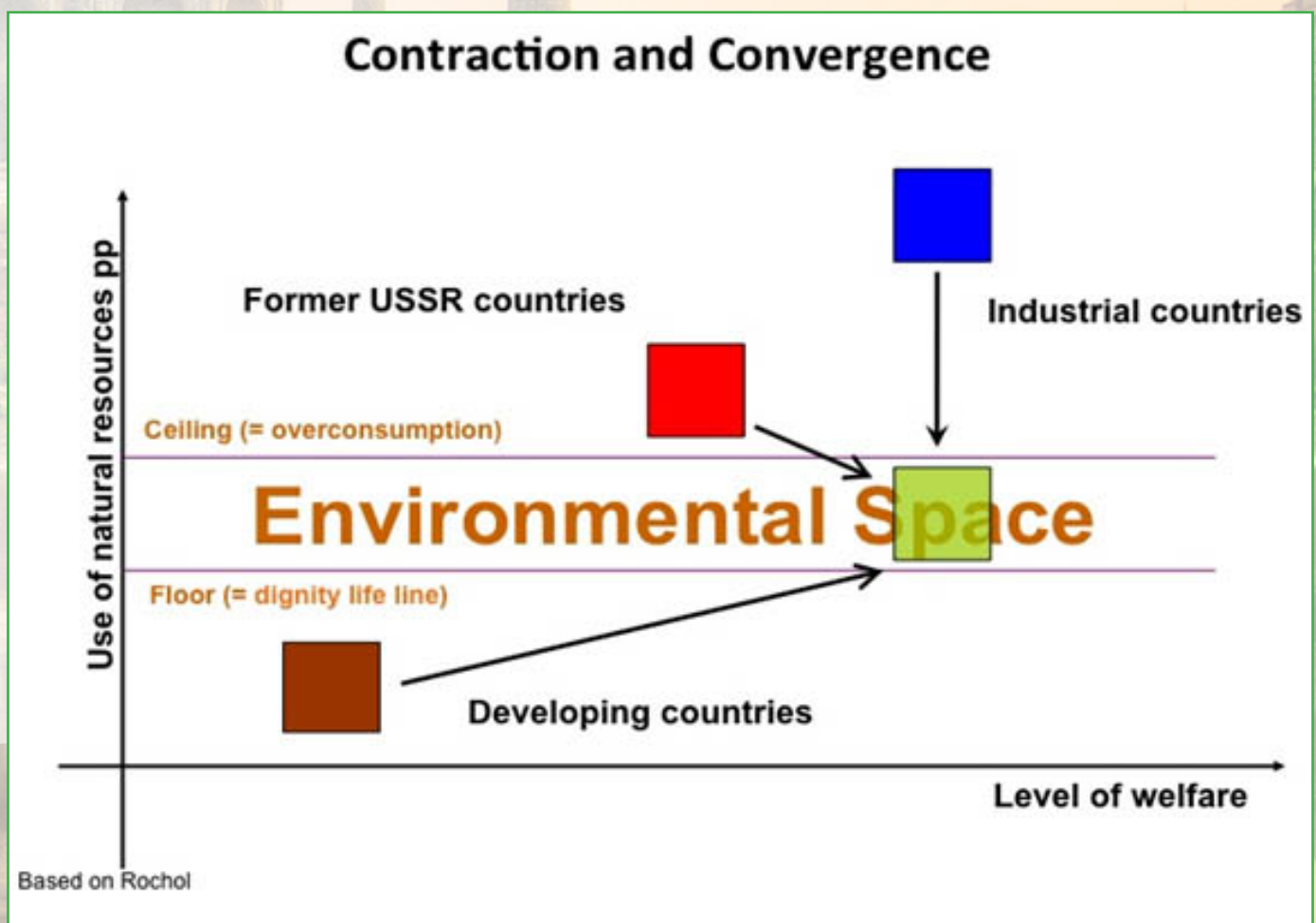
- Demographic management to fit in the limited earth system: Further, rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem.

Besides the push for more sustainability, it is also very important to immediately stop all kind of trends and policies that support the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. For doing so, we need to know where and what are the main blockers to our efforts for living more sustainably and equitably. Our current economic system has clearly proven to be inappropriate for achieving sustainable development worldwide. A fundamental shift is necessary.

One of the key challenges faced today is the definition of "life quality", since this involves the economical dimension and elements of well being (for example human rights). To effectively evaluate whether a country has achieved its proposed/desired life quality, a complex combination of economical and social values together have to be addressed together and not in isolation. Unfortunately, the idea that well-being and development equal to a continually greater acquisition of material possessions and growing consumption is now globally widespread, leading to more unsustainable lifestyles. This is fuelled by both governments and the private sector: governments because the income of their country is measured by GDP, and they are seen to be failing if this does not increase, and the private sector because their *raison d'être* is to continually rise profit, for which it needs to produce and sell more, while cutting costs wherever possible, including the creation of "junk jobs". The role of international institutions in developing and perpetuating this model should also be questioned. We have reached a stage today at which possession of material goods is equated with a sense of well-being or prosperity.

Such an emphasis on permanent GDP growth and possession of material goods is, however, not only entirely unsustainable but ultimately also self-destructive, both in economic and environmental terms.

When basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more human, not about having more things. However, in order to bring the standards of living of people across the world closer together, the poorest within poor countries must be capable to produce and consume more until equity/equilibrium is achieved but it has yet to happen within the limited resources of the planet. For this equation to work, overconsumption has to be eradicated in rich countries and rich fractions in poor countries. Furthermore, it is of the highest importance that the overconsumption model is NOT transferred/adopted/introduced in the lifestyle of emerging economies. It is simply no longer credible to imagine that economically richer countries can continue their current consumption patterns, whilst also encouraging others to increase consumption and growth.



Graphic: Contraction and convergence scheme (ANPED 2013)

Our economic system is actually based on debts. Most of our money and financial transactions are virtual. We need to bring back the economy into a real economy. One of the options is a common-based-economy, bringing the economic system also back to the limits of the planet's resources.



What has become patently clear is that business as usual is not an option.

Thus, the starting point of the SDG/post-2015 framework must be in respect of the original definition of Sustainable Development (Brundtland Report):


“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

According to the same report, the above definition contains within it two key concepts: *“The concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs”.*

In short, the SDGs are not about **new** commitments, but about ambitious **means and targets** and strong **decision/will** to fulfil/implement what has been already agreed among nation leaders since 1992.

Accordingly, the framework should set the conditions that need to be put in place to overcome the obstacles people face for participating fully in society in a satisfactory way. These obstacles are rooted in political, legal, social, economic, and other structures starting at the local level and extending up to the international level. The adverse effects of these obstacles are compounded by the accelerated impacts of environmental degradation, increasing risks because of climate change, the demographic crisis and mounting social inequality and ecological debt that has arisen out of an ineffective paradigm of growth and development. While these obstacles are experienced across cultures, economies and geographical territories and include, for example, corruption, non-transparent decision-making, lack of accountability of duty-bearers, gender inequality etc., their exact nature and extent differ depending on the local circumstances.

In order to develop the future SDGs for the achievement of sustainable societies, where wellbeing and dignity of all is secured, lifestyles within the limits of the ecological capital are established, equality is the norm and life in all its forms and expressions is treated with respect, we propose that the SDG/post-2015 framework will be structured as follows:



1 An overarching, global consensus stating the vision of sustainable development and the values that should guide policies and actions outlined in the framework. This would be similar in style to the Earth Charter, and reflected in its entirety of all sustainable development goals. This shared vision can be inspired by already official agreed international documents, principles and targets (UNDESA, FAO, WHO, Habitat, CBD, ..). Agreed concepts like common-but-differentiated responsibilities, subsidiarity principles, precaution principle, polluter pays principle, right to food and access to basic needs must be integrated. The shared vision also has to be constructed on evidence based reports on planetary boundaries, carrying capacity of the earth, systemic change, transition management, and of course on civil society methodologies, like human rights based approach, redistribution of wealth, material flows and fair sharing of ecological footprint.

2 There need to exist mechanisms for demanding the accountability of progress made: for all goals we need clear and bold targets, timetables and review mechanisms. Every 3 years countries have to explain what they did, how they did it, and with what results. On the other hand, a bottom up citizen's accountability has to be recognised, like ombudsperson for future generations, peer reviews, monitoring reporting. Clear deadlines must be set for such mechanisms and systems of appeal established when all other avenues of accountability have been exhausted.

3 Democratic governance and implementation: all countries agreed already on defining a National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD). In this NSSD the SDGs can be integrated as main points of action, together with the country specific targets. The PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans), imposed by the Worldbank, can be shifted into the NSSDs. Especially because the PRSP are too export oriented, while the NSSD have more attention for own food and resource sovereignty. The NSSD have to be the overall framework where other strategy plans and roadmaps have to fit in. Based on the subsidiary principle regional and local governments have to define where their role and responsibilities lay.

4 Sources of finances for the SDGs has to be clear from the start: just as the integration of the SDGs in overall policy goals (NSSDs), the national budgets for achieving those goals have to be defined on national levels. And all budgets that go against those goals have to be cut. Besides the integration in the national budgets for realising their own policy strategies, the agreed 0,7% GDP for ODA can be directed for the SDGs in partner countries. Nevertheless there will be need for further investments to be made. For that additional and alternative mechanisms have to be applied, like a global Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), CO2 tax, footprint tax, ..

5 Coherence checks with other (inter)national policies and institutions: Sustainable Development needs a paradigm shift. Currently, most of existing policy strategies and institutional bodies are still in the old paradigm of supporting unlimited economic growth, large scale, intensive and global production schemes, privatisation of the commons, creating a debt-based economy. For that reason it is crucial that while implementing the SDGs, there is a continuous coherence check with related internal policies, like the European 2020, Europe for Environment, Aarhus Convention, but also with the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the impacts of the IFIs. Together with the 3-yearly reviews of the SDGs,

we need to detect what kind of reforms are needed to get liberated of the potential blockers coming from the other institutions and policies.

6 Alternative indicators: debates on the beyond GDP indicators are growing. A lot of knowledge and indicators already exist. Together with the holistic and interlinking approach of Sustainable Development, a set of indicators (environment, equity, well being, etc.) has to be developed to give the best display of the current situation. No need to invent new ones, but combine several existing ones to one overarching dashboard. As the MDGs have shown, data collection can be vastly improved and broadened as a positive outcome of the framework. Process indicators on levels of participation and accountability processes should be included.

7 Transparency and access to information and active participation: One of the key drawbacks of the MDGs – both in terms of the process of designing the framework and its outcomes- was the total lack of empowerment and involvement of the actors concerned. Transparency where and when decisions are made and active participation in the whole process is crucial for the concrete implementation of the future goals. On the different levels, (inter)national, regional and local, the appropriate structures must be there for all stakeholders to be informed and involved.

8 A set of global goals challenging the status quo and addressing the key global challenges.

In view of the degree of globalisation today, with even closer interrelationships between economies and people and a growing number of universal challenges which require international cooperation, cross-border action and policy coordination, a global framework is undoubtedly needed. This must inevitably therefore be made up of a series of global goals. To our mind, if the framework is to transform business as usual, while abiding by the principles we mentioned, then these global goals must be aspirational in nature and must apply to all people in all countries. Furthermore, all countries will be required to contribute to make progress on each goal in their own context (taking into consideration the fact of different starting points). Those will be expressed in the National Strategies on Sustainable Development (NSSD).

This framework was presented to and agreed on for developing the SDGs for the EECCA region by all the participants of the Baku workshop.

After a day of work related to presenting the current of NGO work in the region, the second day of the workshop was devoted to the review of the framework for SDG development and prioritizing the areas where further efforts have to be made.



PRIORITIES OF EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The initial brainstorming and drafting of the priorities took place during the workshop. The agreed topics were translated into Russian and circulated electronically among all the participants to enable a second review and possibilities of amendments.

The list below is the outcome of this process:

Priority	Context
Water and sanitation	The basic right to access potable water is still inexistent in our region
Water resources	There is no real recent data on existing water resources in Central Asia. More and better scientific and statistics have to be developed. Local knowledge and community involvement are crucial for these data.
Trans boundary Integrated management	The adequate use of common rivers is hampered mainly by three factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use of the rivers, this should be determined by the water volume related to the seasons •Conflicts of interest between the countries •Pollution of rivers, with effect for agriculture and health Therefore, there is a need for intergovernmental agreements and an integrated management of common rivers.
Energy	More investment in renewable energy is needed. Technology transfers institutions needed. Phase out nuclear- and coal plants energy immediately.
Climate change	Adaptation and mitigation are crucial for all countries, but for Central Asia and Caucasus more emphasis should be made on the adaption programs.
Sustainable Consumption and Production - lifestyles	SCP is crucial for our region, both eco-efficiency (energy/natural resources) and social innovation. Traditional lifestyles (local ways of living before Soviet times) should be used as a reference since they were more harmonious with the environment. A comprehensive SCP policy mix and enabling more active participation of the civil society are also needed for adopting lifestyles coherent with the resources of one planet.
Deforestation	Industrialization, exploitation of natural resources, water availability, phasing out traditional local practices for agriculture and political conflicts, are among the reasons contributing to the alarmingly high deforestation rate the region faces today.

Good Governance (including civil society participation)	Institutionalisation of Sustainable Development in governance structures (interdepartmental) and with full civil society participation is still lacking. NSSDs have to be developed and implemented. Transparency and accountability mechanisms still need to be developed and implemented.
Education for Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development must be integrated into the curricula in schools. Non-formal education on Sustainable Development needs to be promoted, including trainings for public servants.
Land/Soil degradation – agriculture	Lot of lands can not be used for food production because of erosion (because of monoculture agriculture), land mines, impact climate change, poisoned by toxics (DDT, mercury, uranium) or armed conflicts.
Food security – agriculture	Small scale farming need to be increased and improved (diversification), organic agriculture, facilitate local farmer markets, increase finance mechanisms for small farmers should also be strengthened and promoted widely across our region.
Biodiversity and eco-system services	There is an urgent need to increase protected areas, adopt better policymaking, including eco-system services. More civil society participation and accounting mechanisms need to be in place.
Peace keeping and conflict resolution (cfr occupied territories – water conflicts)	Frozen conflicts are a threat for the development of the region. Reliance on public diplomacy (people talking to people) and cross border negotiation are of paramount importance.
Social protection, social inclusion and eradicating poverty	Build and strengthen a Social Protection Floor

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FOOTNOTES

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