

**Rio+20 follow-up
UN DESA questionnaire related to the development of Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs)**

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Draft preliminary responses from the EU and its Member States

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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.

In the run up to Rio+20 and at the Conference, the EU and its Member States had considered proposals for priority areas and cross-cutting issues. In this respect, the EU and its Member States had indicated that SDGs could address and be focused on priority areas for the achievement of SD, such as energy, water, food security, oceans, sustainable consumption and production, as well as cross-cutting issues like equity, social inclusion, decent work, rule of law and good governance, gender equality and women's empowerment. These possible areas were presented at the time in indicative terms. The EU and its Member States feel that these areas still represent valid building blocks, and they could therefore serve as inputs for the future work on SDGs and should be reflected, in one way or the other, in any final framework on SDGs.

The EU and its Member States are determined to constructively take part in the process to develop global SDGs. As this process now starts in the UN, the EU and Member States are ready to reflect further, [through an inclusive elaboration process on defining key priority areas] and taking also into account proposals by other partners, before taking a final position on priority areas.

Since the SDGs should be coherent with and integrated into the UN post-2015 development agenda, their structure and content should be optimal to fit this important purpose. Moreover, SDGs should capture key global challenges in the years to come while at the same time bring together the three dimensions of SD in a balanced, holistic, coherent and synergistic way, while capturing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues. Furthermore, the SDGs should be global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, limited in number, action-oriented, easy to communicate and linked to concrete targets and indicators.

These are important elements, inter alia, to be taken into account in developing SDGs, which require a careful consideration of options and alternatives that can mature over time and in dialogue with partners. The EU is committed to listen, consider, interact on and assess proposals on priority areas and on the structure of SDGs that may be proposed by other countries, the UN secretariat and stakeholders.

NB: to be reviewed after Council on 25 October, since para 29 of the draft Council conclusions is still outstanding. Ministers might discuss on concrete priority areas in this context, following to the request made by DK at Coreper on 17 October.

Slovakia considers SDGs to be global goals related to all countries regardless of their resources, geographical position, political and social structure. The twenty-

first century brings global challenges and so the SDGs, defined as post 2015 goals, and should be arranged globally based and focused on:

1. New Economic Set-Up – economic governance + new economic order.
2. Taking Responsibility for Social – Economic Issues – universal access to education and healthcare.
3. Demography and Migration – establishing conditions for value generation and dignified living conditions, in residence, reducing labour migration.
4. Energy Sufficiency – access to energy (energy mix) that leads to sustainable economic development.
5. Poverty Reduction and Food Shortage Elimination – elimination of distribution shortcomings as well as access to the drinking water.
6. Environmental Issues and Solutions.

SDGs should consist of a balanced mix of economic, environmental and social goals. The green economy is a cornerstone of development initiative both in the EU and globally, and therefore should be mentioned here. Moreover, the green economy concept includes environmental aspects which have to be respected when seeking new ways of economic and social development. The environmental pillar of sustainable development should focus mainly on conservation of biological diversity, natural resources and waste management as these issues are important for all world regions. As regards social aspects, the major attention should be focused on public health, sustainability of pension schemes and inter-generational equity.

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)**

For the EU and its Member States, the different indents associated to the question can be complementary, rather than alternative to each other.

Thus, it could be useful indeed to reflect as appropriate within each SDG social, economic and environmental dimensions, rather than having SDGs focusing on a dimension alone. This may help to ensure a holistic approach that integrates all three dimensions of sustainable development. The EU places particular emphasis in ensuring a holistic approach for each SDG, as appropriate, possibly at target level, since in practice there might be difficult to avoid a tendency to have separate goals on environment, social and economic aspects.

The EU and its Member States are further developing their position on the matter while keeping in mind the need for coherence with the post-2015 development agenda, where the SDGs should be integrated.

Paragraph 246 of "The Future We Want" states that the SDGs need to be "coherent with and integrated into the UN 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". In this respect, the EU and its Member States place particular importance on the need to ensure that the overall post-2015 development agenda itself also comprises the three dimensions of sustainable development. Indeed, the UN System Task Team report on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda places environmental sustainability, along with inclusive economic and social development as well as peace and security, as core dimensions of a future development agenda. In this context, the EU and its Member States recall that strong commonalities between the various strands of work that already exist in practice, e.g. poverty eradication is one of the three overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development (WSSD §2, 2005 World Summit §48, Rio+20 §4).

This entails that the contents of SDGs should give the highest consideration to the content of current MDGs. It is also required that the process to establish SDGs needs to be coordinated and coherent with the processes to consider the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, regarding the relation between SDGs and the current MDG7: one could consider how aspects of the MDG 7 which are still relevant can be reflected in future SDGs, possibly at target level. However, it is again noted that each SDG should in principle seek to encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development.

The social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development must be mutually integrated, and these should be reflected also in definition of SDGs, especially environmental and social aspects in relation to green economy strategies. Similarly, SDGs must be flexible enough to respect different stages of development and needs of respective countries.

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)**

For the EU and its Member States, a key use of SDGs will be to help balance economic, social and environmental dimensions in policy making (point (e) above), ensuring, inter alia, policy coherence and reinforcing the impact of policies which should be designed also from a cross-sectoral perspective. In doing so, the SDGs can also help to define policies (relevance to point (a) above), at various levels, which are holistic, integrated and, thus, sustainable. Finally, point (f) on SDGs guiding development cooperation is also potentially crucial but its relevance will depend on the success of having SDGs which are truly coherent with and integrated into the post 2015 development agenda, in practice. In this respect, it is important to ensure an integrated approach to the various MoI aspects of the Rio+20, the

post-2015 and other relevant processes. On a broader level, the SDGs are also expected to assist all countries to track progress towards a more sustainable path of development, identifying key pressures and weaknesses (point (d) above) and further aligning/fine-tuning of efforts.

a) Defining national policies

After the expiry of the current national Action Plan for Sustainable Development for 2005–2010 period we plan to start preparing a new strategic document of sustainable development at national level (probably a new sustainable development strategy with an action plan defining strategic objectives for the next mid-term period). Although, the national strategies should reflect the problems at national level, global and regional initiatives should also be taken into account as we believe that the national, regional and international (global) issues are mutually interlinked.

e) Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making

Considering the policy of the Slovak Republic as the member of the EU (de facto the core EU), the formulation of the national position aims to balance three basic pillars of SDGs.

f) Guiding development cooperation

The development cooperation of the Slovak Republic should target the innovative models and tools stimulating the establishment of a stable and sustainable environment in recipient countries.

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.)

In order to ensure that SDGs are universally applicable, their thematic areas should be broad and relevant to all countries. They should cover priority areas that correspond to the key global challenges in the years to come, in the face of which all countries need to further enhance their resilience and which need to be addressed as they can threaten social cohesion and welfare, economic development and environmental sustainability also as a prerequisite of social and economic development. Thus, the underlying concerns captured by the SDGs should be common to all countries.

However, different goals could have different implications for different countries, depending on national characteristics, particularities and circumstances, such as the level of development. In addition to considering differences between countries, SDGs should also be flexible and adaptable to consider diversity within countries, e.g. important variations within societies, risks of growing inequality or exclusion to be tackled within countries, etc.

In developing global SDGs that can also be translated into national goals, the input of all stakeholders, and in particular, in this respect, research-based evidence and scientific input, is very crucial. This can, particularly, assist in defining appropriate targets and indicators which can be measurable by all and which can be tailored to countries’ specificities.

The SDGs should start from global issues and goals (tool box and tool kit) to be achieved and involved in national programs of member states which are ready to

fulfil them. At the same time, reference time frame, as well as target frame, are being arranged in order for them to be fulfilled.

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?

As mentioned under question 4, the approach to follow should aim, on one hand, to ensure ownership and commitment to a target (under each SDGs) at country level and, on the other hand, also ensure overall coherence and progress for the world as a whole.

The SDGs should be defined broadly enough to reflect the situation within the international community (though we are aware that the situation in particular countries is very diverse). On the national level the focus should be oriented to defining particular measures dealing with nation-specific problems, contributing so to meeting the global SD objectives.

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 EU and its Member States consider that the formulation of SDGs should be coherent with existing intentionally agreed goals and targets on important and “mature” areas, such as biodiversity, climate change, social protection floors and others. At the same time, SDGs should not be renegotiating existing goals and targets that should maintain their relevance and integrity. The EU and its Member States are still developing its detailed position on the matter.

When defining targets and tools of SDGs it is useful to assume the best practices of MDG fulfilment and even to continue to meet some of the MDGs (poverty, education, healthcare). We support the continuity and integrity of the goals. When speaking about incorporation of “old” goals and targets from previous initiatives, we hold a position that special attention should be paid to eradication of poverty and education as these two objectives have their broad implications in all three pillars of sustainable development, mainly in the least developed countries.

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 the run up to 2015, the EU and its Member States are determined to make every effort to achieve the MDGs. With regard to the post-2015 framework, it is important to pursue the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and to promote policy coherence for development. In such a framework, the EU regards the Millennium Declaration as an important policy basis with continuing relevance. The Millennium Declaration, together with the Rio+20 outcome document and other related UN documents can, thus, provide an overarching comprehensive and ambitious foundation for the post-2015 period, where poverty eradication should continue to be a central objective and the need to enhance resilience in conflict affected and fragile states be adequately addressed. The

post-2015 development agenda could build on and improve the MDGs framework, recognising its strengths, modernising it and enhancing weak or missing issues, such as economic prosperity and creation of decent jobs, inequality and social protection, environmental sustainability, human rights, good governance and the rule of law, peace and security and demographic dynamics. In the post-2015 framework, it is also important to devise a system that would encourage the adoption of nationally adapted targets as contributions to global goals, allowing for measuring progress and in line with principles of national ownership and responsibility.

In order to achieve coherence and integration between such a post-2015 framework and the SDGs, it is important to carry out a thorough and constructive assessment of the major outcomes under both tracks in the past years, identifying and highlighting elements in common, considering existing similarities in scope and objectives and ensuring that both tracks can become mutually reinforcing in the future. It is, therefore, very important to ensure that the process to establish SDGs be coordinated and coherent with the processes to consider the post-2015 development agenda. It is also important to ensure opportunities for the two processes to interact. In particular, a critical point in time will be in September 2013, when the 68th UNGA will hold a Special Event on the Review of MDGs.

Until the end of 2015 a great effort will be made to fulfil the MDGs. Subsequently, it will be necessary to review the goals and their relevance to the further period. Certain steps can be taken in the area of institutional framework of sustainable development at global level. In this context the ECOSOC should be strengthened to include the environmental pillar of sustainable development. In this way a unit would be established to deal with sustainable development as a whole. The UNEP should also be transformed to a special UN agency.

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

In developing SDGs, we need to explore various appropriate options for a monitoring and accountability system enabling reporting both on national governments' actions and on multilateral institutions' actions, based on results oriented management and mutual accountability.

For the EU and its Member States, it is very important to ensure that SDGs do not simply become a long wish list of objectives without sufficient accountability. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to ensure that progress towards the achievement of the SDGs be assessed and accompanied by appropriate measurable targets and indicators, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development, and without adding unnecessary reporting burdens. This is an area where the input from the UN inter-agency technical support team and expert panels (e.g. on GDP+ from the UN Statistical Commission), inter alia, can be critical and should be addressed early in the process.

Responsibility, stimulus, sanction mechanism, as well as a control mechanism should be involved in implementation of the SDGs.

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 EU and its Member States believe that it is very important, even from the early stages of the development of the SDGs OWG's modalities, that the work of the OWG be informed by research-based evidence and expert analysis to the maximum possible extent, inter alia, through the full involvement of the broadest possible range of stakeholders, expertise from civil society, local governments and the scientific community in order to ensure that a maximum of bottom-up information is provided to its work, as well as from the United Nations system and specialised institutions outside the UN system. In this respect, stakeholders should be consulted throughout the whole process of developing SDGs, either by participating as observers in the works of the OWG or by being regularly updated on the progress of the OWG and having the opportunity to provide feed-back, ideas and recommendations.

We fully agree that the work has to be based on scientific evidence and research analyses. Involvement of civic society has to be improved in many countries of almost all regions as this is usually underestimated. Such an approach will enhance the ownership of SDGs and their fulfilment. Alongside civil society involvement in the process of establishing SDGs, and based on global development issues, private sector involvement in close cooperation with the international non-governmental sector, will be of benefit in developing SDGs.

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);

All three fundamental principles highlighted in the UNTT Report are relevant and should equally underpin the development of SDGs. However, human rights should be viewed as a condition and at the same time end-goal for all aspects of development. It is more practical to focus on reducing inequalities and ensuring sustainability, taking into account all 4 core dimensions mentioned in the UN STT, where progress will be needed in the coming years and decades in order to build a rights-based, equitable, secure and sustainable world for all people. Peace and security is an overarching dimension which can link and reinforce the other 3 core dimensions (which reflect the 3 dimensions of sustainable development).

Slovakia agrees with above mentioned elements and recommends the further order: 1.) sustainable development, 2) reduction of inequalities, 3) promotion of human rights.

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

The purpose and the architecture of the post-2015 development agenda will have to be clearly defined, paying due attention to the fact that a future Global Partnership for Development should aim to sustainable development encompassing all three dimensions, and must reflect new global and national realities.

The global partnership for development has to reflect global targets as well as the national specifics and limits. We can agree on common sustainable development goals, common principles - but measures aimed at implementation of these goals and principles have to be nation-specific. Sustainable Energy 4 All (SE4A) is a good

example for applying different attitude in the field of energy mix. The EU countries and other developed countries should in this respect pay adequate attention to construction of such a partnership in order to avoid misuse of resources flowing to the developing countries.

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?

The EU and its Member States remain open to exchange views and discuss options with all interested parties.

Slovakia is ready to discuss further and share its knowledge on international development cooperation agenda as well as participating in knowledge sharing from the period of transformation and integration.