

## **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.<sup>1</sup>

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 68<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> At the request of the Secretary-General over 60 entities across the United Nations and including the World Bank, IMF and OECD

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post\\_2015\\_UNTTreport.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf).

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.

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**The Secretariat kindly requests that Member States provide responses to the following questionnaire and submit them to DSD ([vaturi@un.org](mailto:vaturi@un.org), copied to [soltau@un.org](mailto:soltau@un.org)) before 21 October 2012.**

## QUESTIONNAIRE RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### NEW ZEALAND RESPONSE

*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).*

#### New Zealand comment

New Zealand proposes the following areas be addressed:

In the economic development sphere:-

- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
- Sustainable Fisheries (the “Blue Economy”) (also linked to the environmental sphere)
- Sustainable Energy encompassing access to modern energy services, and Renewable Energy (addressing also the need for Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform)
- Disaster risk reduction (including disaster preparedness)

In the environmental sphere (closely related with the economic areas listed above):

- Oceans
- Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience (focusing in particular on the link with disaster risk reduction)
- Biodiversity

In the social development sphere:

- Education
- Health
- Democratic Governance, and the Rule of Law (including building safe and secure communities)
- Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

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

#### New Zealand comment

New Zealand proposes that the SDGs should comprise goals that holistically address the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental, recognising the linkages between them. They should focus on the key priority areas for global action to achieve sustainable development over the coming decades. Our initial thinking is that a similar simple format should be used as for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), supplemented by practical and measurable targets and indicators (see further below).

The SDGs need to be integrated into the post-2015 UN development agenda. New Zealand’s present view is that there will need to be successor goals to the MDGs - aimed at further reductions in poverty. Key elements from the SDGs relating to sustainable development may be able to be integrated into the MDG successor goals. However, the overall objective should be a coherent and complementary set of goals regardless of what they are called, and all with practical and measurable targets and indicators.

- 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:**

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#### New Zealand comment

Points relevant to New Zealand

- e. Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making
- f. Guiding development cooperation

The MDGs have been instrumental in rallying, focussing and better measuring efforts to reduce poverty, largely because they are simple and enjoy universal support. They have also been a powerful communication tool and a successful global brand. They have influenced the framing of development cooperation programmes by donors and national development strategies by developing countries.

SDGs have the potential to do the same and, as they will be applicable to all countries whether developing or developed, we envisage that they would both shape our approach to policy making, ensuring the economic, social and environmental factors are considered, and extend beyond our own national planning to the nature of our support for national planning in partner 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.)**

New Zealand comment

As noted in response to question 3 above, New Zealand would contextualise the SDGs in relation to challenges of sustainable development that we face as a nation. Our developing country partners would do likewise, determining their priorities and the targets which they wish to strive for in the short to medium term in much the same way that countries such as Viet Nam did following the articulation of the MDGs when they developed their own national Vietnam Development Goals (VDGs).

**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).*

New Zealand comment

New Zealand considers that the targets associated with the goals should depend on country characteristics including, but not limited to, the level of development. All countries can do more to ensure sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. For example, it is clear that the focus of effort on energy in New Zealand where we enjoy substantial access to renewable sources of hydro energy will be different to that of small islands developing states that are heavily reliant on fossil fuels for energy.

**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)*

New Zealand comment

Where there are existing goals and targets that have not been achieved and remain relevant for the global community, these should be considered in devising SDGs, and their targets and indicators. Remaining goals and issues such as the challenges facing our oceans, diversity of marine resources, fish stocks and the like should be considered for incorporation. There may also be new challenges that need to be addressed in particular contexts. As noted above, New Zealand considers that the SDGs themselves should use a broadly similar format to the MDGs, simple and focused enough to become a global rallying point, and supplemented by practical measurable targets and indicators that ensure effective measurement of progress.

**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).*

New Zealand comment

The processes relating to the SDGs and the broader post-2015 UN development agenda, including the Secretary General’s High Level Panel, will need to be brought together, with some sort of intergovernmental process being required. In our view the 2013 high level review of progress with the MDGs would provide a useful opportunity to map out the way ahead. By then the High Level Panel will have reported and the SDG working group should be well underway, also hopefully taking relevant recommendations of the Panel into account.

In addition, decisions on establishment of the High Level Forum on Sustainable Development agreed at Rio will be made in the first part of 2013, including whether the Forum should be part of the Economic and Social Council, with the Forum’s first meeting also due to be held in September 2013. While decisions on the post-2015 UN development agenda need to be taken by the General Assembly, longer term we would see the Forum having an oversight role. At the operational level, bodies of the UN system will need to integrate relevant SDGs (and other aspects of the post 2015 development agenda) into their work programmes as appropriate.

**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)*

New Zealand comment

While global monitoring and reporting is essential, this should be aggregated from information available from country and/or region levels as and when it becomes available through normal statistical processes. The approach envisaged for the monitoring of Busan commitments by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation has considerable merit. Analysis of progress should draw on perspectives from each of the communities mentioned in Rio paragraph 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?**

New Zealand comment

It is important that the SDG working group process is inclusive in order for its recommendations to gain broad support. Like the states that are not represented on the SDG working group, the nine major groups which participated in Rio need to have an opportunity to contribute to the process. This could be done by allowing them to make written submissions (including perhaps preparing responses to a focused questionnaire such as this). The working group should hold some meetings that are open to all where it gives an

update on progress and where states and major groups have an opportunity to make comments or suggestions.

Lessons could be learnt from the establishment of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation arising from the 2011 Busan Conference. Although focused particularly on development cooperation, it unites a wide range of state and non-state actors including developed and developing countries, international and regional institutions, parliamentarians, local government, civil society and the private sector in a partnership that is broader and more inclusive than ever before.

**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);**

New Zealand comment

As already noted the SDGs need to be focused and limited in number allowing a global rallying point, with practical measurable targets and indicators.

The UN Task Team's report said that the post-2015 development agenda should build on the values outlined in the Millennium Declaration and around three fundamental principles: respect for human rights, equality and sustainability. New Zealand agrees that these are all important values. However, further consideration is needed as to how these values should be integrated into both the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda. We expect the High Level Panel will address being addressing this cross-cutting issue.

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

New Zealand comment

New Zealand acknowledges that the goals and targets of the current MDG 8 ("develop a global partnership for development") were too imprecise to ensure strong accountability from the whole international community. Lessons should be learnt from this experience in framing future global partnerships for development. Assessing the need for a new global partnership would require careful consideration of a range of issues such as the governance and institutional arrangements around the SDGs as these are relevant to implementation. Enhanced policy coherence at different levels would be an essential element of any future partnership or other governance arrangements.

This is not, however, just an issue for the SDGs but one which has relevance for the post-2015 development agenda generally. Since the MDGs were formulated there have been many changes to the international development architecture, and many new actors have appeared. For example it will be important to learn lessons from the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation as an innovative, though as yet untested, alliance of different actors.

It will also be important for the second working group to come out of Rio to be established soon so that its work can proceed in tandem with the SDG working group. The mandate of the second group is "to propose options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to mobilise resources" which will be key to implementation.

**11 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?**

No further comment.