

Rio+20 follow-up

UN DESA questionnaire related to the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Preliminary views and responses from Cyprus

16 November 2012

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.

Cyprus considers that the SDGs should address and incorporate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced, holistic, coherent and synergistic way, while capturing inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues. SDGs should be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, being guided by the Rio+20 outcome document.

In this respect, SDGs should capture key global challenges in the years to come while at the same time bring together the three dimensions of sustainable development. 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. In this context, the SDGs could also encompass the multidimensional nature of well-being, looking beyond GDP measures and taking into account the broader concept of measuring the quality of life.

It is also very important, when considering themes for the SDGs, to take into account the progress in achieving the MDGs and, therefore, to also reflect the least achieved ones, in 2015. The work on the SDGs in combination with the review of the MDGs will provide the opportunity to ensure coherence within an overarching, comprehensive and ambitious post-2015 agenda that will be the reference framework for developing common, interlinked and mutually reinforcing policies on sustainable development, development cooperation and peace and security.

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)**

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

It is very important for each SDGs to have a holistic approach to the three pillars of sustainable development, as appropriate (possibly at target level), since in practice there might be a tendency to have separate goals on environment, social and economic aspects. In this respect, it is critical to

make use of the expertise of stakeholders and experts from all related backgrounds (e.g. development, environment, social policy and employment, economy).

At the same time, the contents of SDGs should also give high consideration to the content of MDGs, taking into account the outcome of the 2013 MDG Special Event. In this respect, the relation between SDGs and the current MDG7 should be looked into in order to consider how aspects of the MDG7 which will still be relevant after 2015, can be reflected in future SDGs. Furthermore, aspects relating to other MDGs and the links between them might also need to be reflected among the future SDGs, taking, however, into account that each SDG should in principle seek to encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development.

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)**

All above mentioned intents could be complementary to each other rather than alternative. However, from a national perspective SDGs are expected to be mainly used for (e) Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making and (d) Addressing key pressure leading to unsustainability.

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 since they can threaten social cohesion and welfare, economic development and environmental sustainability and constitute 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 their, capacities, circumstances and characteristics, such as the level of development. In this respect, particular attention should be paid to the poorest and most fragile countries. Thus, SDGs should be guided by the principles of mutual accountability, respect for national ownership and shared responsibilities. 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.

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?**

(c) common but differentiated depending on country characteristics and level of development

As mentioned under question 4, the approach to be followed should aim, on one hand, to ensure overall coherence and progress towards sustainable development for the world as a whole, and on the other hand, to ensure ownership, commitment and accountability to goals and targets at country level.

In order to ensure the latter, even though SDGs should clearly be common for all countries, their associated targets and indicators should be flexible in order to capture national circumstances, particularities, needs and priorities set by the countries themselves, so that they can be measurable and useful at national level.

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 formulation of SDGs should be coherent with existing intentionally agreed goals and targets, such as biodiversity, climate change, social inclusion and social protection floors and others. At the same time, the SDG process should not be used to renegotiate existing goals and targets, which should maintain their relevance and integrity, but rather support their implementation and achievement. Regarding the MDGs, and since the Millennium Declaration will continue to be relevant after 2015, the Special Event on the MDGs' Review in September 2013 will be important to indicate if and which MDGs should be reflected, in some way, in the future SDGs.

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

With regard to the post-2015 development agenda, it is important to pursue the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and synergistic manner and to promote policy coherence for development so as to avoid having two different agendas: one on development cooperation and one on sustainable development.

In parallel, as agreed in the Rio+20 outcome, the SDGs can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and serve as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the UN system as a whole.

Therefore, the Millennium Declaration, the Busan Declaration, the Rio+20 outcome document to which the SDGs are linked and other related UN agreements can all together and in coherence provide an overarching, comprehensive and ambitious foundation for the post-2015 development agenda, where poverty eradication, together with well-being and securing the means of livelihood for future generations, should be a central objective.

Finally, in order to achieve coherence and integration between the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, it is also important to ensure opportunities for the timely interaction of the two processes. To this end, it will be critical for the OWG on SDGs to present a first report as early as possible and in time to be considered both by the first High Level Political Forum-HLPF (that should be the body to follow-up on SDGs) and by the Special Event on the Review of MDGs, which will both take place in September 2013.

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

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. To this end, a sound monitoring system, at country- and at HLPF-levels, is essential to ensure effective implementation. It is also important to secure common standards for methodology that will be used for monitoring progress so as to ensure accountability, meaningful assessments, fruitful interactions between countries and commitment to progress.

Therefore, there is a need to urgently proceed with the preparation of a relevant set of indicators in conjunction with the new GDP indicators in order to assign the targets and monitor the progress achieved during the implementation period. Particular attention has to be devoted on indicators related to economic and social inequalities as a basic prerequisite for achieving a real sustainable and balanced progress.

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?

In order to ensure a process which is inclusive and participatory, all interested countries should be able to actively take part in the works of the OWG and be able to contribute with proposals, ideas and recommendations. The process should, thus, be as transparent as possible. It is also very important to establish a process open to all stakeholders; the work of developing the SDGs throughout its different stages, should be informed by research-based evidence and expert analysis and inputs from the broadest possible range of stakeholders. Finally, the input and support to be provided by the UN system and ensured by the UNSG should also be an essential contribution to the process.

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);

SDGs should address and incorporate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable developments in a balanced, holistic, coherent and synergistic way.

From a practical point of view it is very important to focus on reducing with the aim to eliminating social and economic inequalities in order to ensure sustainability. Human rights, together with good governance and rule of law, should be viewed as pre-condition and at the same time as end-goals for all aspects of sustainable development. Finally, peace and security is another important precondition which can link and reinforce the three dimensions of sustainable development.

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

The architecture of the post-2015 development agenda will have to pay due attention to the fact that a future Global Partnership for Development should aim to promote sustainable development encompassing all three dimensions, with peace and security fully taken into account, and must reflect new global and national realities, while accommodating for the continuing special needs particularly of poor and fragile countries, i.e. LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.