

## **March IGN: UK statement on Goals and Targets – as delivered**

Thank you co-chairs. I'd like to align the UK with the statement by the European Union.

The UK strongly welcomes the space the co-facilitators have provided for this discussion and thanks you for circulating the paper suggesting 19 targets "for tweaking" in the proposed SDGs framework. We think this is a promising start.

I want to begin by being clear about the UK position. We have said several times now that we welcome the breadth and delicate political balance of the Open Working Group's proposals. Therefore, we should not to reopen that breadth and balance. That would be an own goal. Rather, our aim is to strengthen the targets to ensure the SDGs establish the best possible basis for action over the next 15 years.

### **Let me explain WHY?**

There are three reasons we think it is important to do our utmost on the targets.

First, we want the targets that we will agree in September to command respect and drive action in each and every country. The targets must be universally relevant. And they must support real and tangible outcomes for the poorest and most marginalised people in all societies. Governments and citizens around the world expect us to do the best we can to ensure our targets are clear and concrete in their ambition.

Second, the targets will determine how we will spend billions of dollars over the next 15 years – not only domestic resources, but also development assistance and private flows. In the UK, our strategy for delivering against our 0.7% ODA commitment – now enshrined in UK law - will be shaped by what we agree in September. We therefore need the targets to provide a clear action agenda and a credible underpinning for significant flows of sustainable development finance.

Third, these targets are more than an expression of global aspiration. They are of course voluntary, but to succeed they will need to provide the clearest possible guidance to implementers and those who will monitor progress. Ensuring that is the case across the board is fundamental.

### **Let me now turn to the WHAT?**

The question raised by many in the room is how to advance the targets without unravelling the careful balance of the OWG proposal. This is an important question and one that requires continued very careful consideration.

Our approach to further strengthening targets must be pragmatic, but we see two criteria for this.

First – targets should have a numerical value where appropriate

Secondly – targets should be in line with existing ambitions and agreements

First, and building on Germany's intervention on Monday, there seems to be some acceptance in the room that we should consider assigning numerical values to targets which currently include an "x" or imply a quantifiable increase or decrease.

In some cases it may not be possible or desirable to assign a specific value. But it seems to us important that we collectively ask ourselves whether the global ambition can be made more clear and that we draw on expert scientific and technical advice when we do so. Let us not forget a key lesson from the MDGs is that a scientifically robust, yet stretching, level of ambition is critical to the credibility of the framework as a whole.

Second, again as others have said, we should be absolutely clear that the targets we agree should not fall below existing international standards, agreements and ambition. The targets we agree in September must stand alone and stand the test of time.

I would add that we should in all cases build on the ambition of the OWG and not allow slipping back.

There may be other targets beyond the 19 you have proposed that would benefit from further consideration. Let me give two examples:

The first is target 11.1 which reads "by 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums". UN Habitat has previously proposed a more specific target of "halving the proportion of people living in slums at the city level..." UN Habitat is the lead organisation on urban issues and has been central to the delivery of MDG7. It strikes us as important that we consider the ambition they propose.

The second is target 3.3 which currently reads "by 2030 end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases". The Gates foundation have proposed specific, achievable numerical targets for each epidemic and disease including to reduce AIDS deaths to no more than 3 per 100,000, annual TB deaths to no more than 4 per 100,000, and to reduce Malaria incidence and mortality by 90% and control or eliminate neglected tropical diseases. Incorporating cutting edge technical expertise as this seems fundamental in establishing the credibility of targets.

Co-chairs, if we focus on these two criteria, and ensure consistency of approach throughout, we think we can strengthen the targets and thereby the goals without compromising the breadth and delicate political balance of the Open Working Group.

### **Finally, allow me to talk about HOW?**

Co-chairs, you have already begun this important work through the assessment of the 19 targets you have circulated. We welcome this as a

helpful step and appreciate the careful and pragmatic way you have approach this. As other countries have said, we will need longer to consult on whether we agree with the adjustments you have suggested.

However, we can say at this stage that we think there is more that can be done, drawing on the inputs from technical and scientific experts both within and outside the UN system. In addition, we would welcome further clarity on why some of these changes have been proposed, and why other targets have not been addressed. We would welcome an opportunity to return to these issues as soon as possible. We will be guided by you, co-chairs, on the next steps.