

Comment on post-2015 zero draft from climate change perspective¹

CARE International

Summary

- The zero draft falls short of adequately incorporating the severe threats emerging from climate change, and the opportunities of decisive action, which will have a decisive impact on the ability to achieve the SDGs
- This would send a disappointing signal by political leaders just a few weeks before the Paris climate conference;
- It would also reflect a disconnection from the real world dynamics where climate change impacts are unfolding rapidly mostly undermining the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, and where renewable energies are evolving rapidly as a key energy source for multiple purposes
- The framework must be significantly strengthened, inter alia by incorporating clear reference to the 2/1.5 degree goal, the need to phase-out fossil fuel emissions and pursue 100% sustainable, renewable energy access for all no later than 2050; and by strengthening the role of adaptation to climate impacts and addressing loss and damage.

The post-2015 development framework must give a clear and unanimous call to the world that achieving sustainable development, eradicating poverty and tackling climate change are inextricably linked. However, with the proposed zero draft the post-2015 development framework is **at risk of complete failure due to the insufficient recognition of the role of global climate disruption**.

While the document makes some references to climate change, maintains the 17 SDGs including the climate change goal (13) and recognises the link to the UNFCCC, **it falls short of fully incorporating the fundamental sustainable development challenge entailed in climate change**.

The fact that **climate change will lead to grave and irreversible impacts** if the world does not act immediately and decisively with unprecedented ambition, and that it has the **potential to overwhelm** progress on and achievement of virtually all SDGs, but in particular related to poverty eradication food security and health, **is not recognised**. Climate change rather appears as one important issue, among many others.

A clear call to have a **cross-cutting approach on climate change applied to other relevant areas** as it affects and has the potential to undermine many other targets is lacking. The draft only includes a very vague language related to interlinkages.

There is the risk that the whole framework would **lack any reference to the 2/1.5 degrees limit** and to the **need for enhanced action before 2020**, as the introduction to the SDGs (as agreed by OWG) is now shifted to Annex 3, where it is really unclear what will happen with it,

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The document reveals ignorance to the power of renewable energies: where Section I refers to energy, it avoids using the term “renewable energy” although its increase is captured as one key target under goal 7, and it is a key strategy to cut greenhouse gas emissions which mostly emerge from the burning of fossil energy.

However, with the adoption of the post-2015 development framework Heads of States and Governments must send in September a strong, unequivocal and historic signal that tackling climate change and achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication are two sides of the same coin.

For this, the integration of climate in the zero draft must significantly strengthened. This CARE paper includes concrete textual suggestions to that purpose.

2. Key textual suggestions

Related to climate change specifically:

27. We are determined to address decisively the threat posed by climate change and environmental degradation, since otherwise sustainable development is unattainable. The global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible international cooperation aimed at holding the increase in global average temperature below 2° C, or 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels by accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions, aiming globally for zero fossil fuel emissions and clean, renewable energy access for all no later than 2050. Looking ahead to the COP21 conference in Paris in December, we underscore the historic responsibility of all States to work for a meaningful and universal climate agreement which will put in place this essential component of a sustainable world. We must also safeguard our oceans and seas, protect biodiversity and promote resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness, and address loss and damage from climate impacts.

Justification: In the only paragraph which addresses climate change more explicitly just calling for the acceleration of the reduction of emissions is insufficient as it does not set any level of ambition. The post-2015 development framework should set the global ambition at a level commensurate with the objective to limit global warming to as close as possible to 1.5 degrees, as demanded by LDCs and Small Island Developing States. The recently released report of the Structured Expert Dialogue (SED) under the UNFCCC concluded that “The ‘guardrail’ concept, in which up to 2 °C of warming is considered safe, is inadequate and would therefore be better seen as an upper limit, a defence line that needs to be stringently defended, while less warming would be preferable.”¹¹ Thus, “leaving no one behind” is not possible with a temperature increase which would be highly dangerous for 100 vulnerable developing countries.

Furthermore climate change adaptation must be explicit recognised here, as it is not sufficiently captured by the concepts of resilience or disaster preparedness.

12. We are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. [...] Spiraling conflict, violence and extremism, humanitarian crises and a growing migration challenge threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. Natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including drought, and, above all, the prospect of

irreversible, dangerous climate change, exacerbate the ~~add to the list of~~ challenges which humanity faces. The survival of many societies, entire nations, and of the planet itself, is at risk.

Justification: assuming climate change as just an issue of environmental degradation is wholly inadequate. Climate change significantly threatens to reverse development progress made, further exacerbating humanitarian crises and migration.

13. These challenges are interrelated and call for integrated solution. To address them effectively, a new approach is needed. Sustainable development recognises that eradicating poverty and inequity, preserving the planet and tackling climate change, and creating inclusive economic growth are linked to each other and interdependent. We will apply them in a cross-cutting to the implementation of all goals and targets, harnessing also decisive opportunities for synergies.

Justification: just recognising that the issues are linked and independent does not send the clear message that tackling climate change in particular needs to be considered in the implementation of all goals potentially affected by climate change, or potentially contributing to its drivers.

15. ADD: "A world in which our societies thrive without carbon emissions and are adapted to climate change impacts."

Justification: this visionary paragraph should also reflect more clearly the need to make societies thrive in a climate-friendly and resilient manner, in line with a global temperature limitation goal of 1.5 degrees which leaves no country behind.

41. Today we are taking a decision of comparable significance. Ours can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we are the last to have a chance of saving the planet and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. [...]"

The time window of the post-2015 development framework is crucial in order to avoid an irreversible, dangerous level of climate disruption, as the chance to close the emissions gap becomes smaller and smaller the later real action is taken.

Related to renewable energies:

24. [...] We will therefore adopt policies which increase productivity and productive employment, financial inclusion, sustainable agricultural and industrial development, sustainable transport systems and ~~modern~~ sustainable, efficient and renewable energy provision.

Justification: as renewable energy solutions have rapidly involved to be a fully competitive energy sources and are the key strategy – together with energy efficiency – to trigger the phasing out of fossil fuel emissions, and as they are specifically addressed in Goal 8, they must be mentioned here. "modern" is not a useful term here. Similarly agricultural development as such is not the objective, but its development in a sustainable manner.

26. [...] We will reduce the negative impacts of urban activities, including through the safe management and use of chemicals, the reduction and recycling of waste and more efficient use of water and energy, and shifting to sustainable renewable energies. And we will work to minimise the impact of cities on the global climate system.

Justification: Shifting to clean, climate friendly sustainable forms of renewable energy will also be a key strategy for sustainable development in the urban context which reduces its negative impacts.

ⁱ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/sb/eng/inf01.pdf>; page 18