

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.¹

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 68th 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.² At the request of the

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

² http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTReport.pdf.

28 September 2012

Secretary-General over 60 entities across the United Nations and including the World Bank, IMF and OECD 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.

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

Questionnaire

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).

1. Addressing global problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, desertification, hunger and poverty
2. Increasing international cooperation
3. Ensuring economic and political stability
4. Ensuring equal opportunity in accessing to basic needs such as energy, water and food, and in accessing to services like education and health, as well as improving the quality of these services.
5. Supporting the disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the society, especially women and youth,
6. Fighting poverty by improving income distribution and creating employment opportunities; strengthening employment structure with qualified labor force and decent jobs,
7. Sustainable use of natural resources
8. Minimizing environmental degradation
9. Sustainable production and consumption
10. Conservation of cultural heritage

- 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).

The interconnections and synergies among economic, social and environmental priorities of sustainable development must be analyzed thoroughly with an integrated approach. Those priorities and SDG’s should be designed in a strategic and systematic way so that positive impacts are promoted

and negative effects on other dimensions of SD are eliminated. Specific importance should be given to horizontal issues to increase the synergy among pillars of SD.

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. **Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making**

Please explain your choices if you would like:

Turkey's national development priorities are determined in line with MDGs.

MDGs, by providing a useful guidance, significantly contributed to Turkey's development policies. Similarly, SDG's can serve as a reference point to help shape policies for sustainable development. Additionally, if SDG's are constructed on the basis of concrete and measurable indicators, they can be used as a means to monitor and evaluate country's progress towards sustainable development.

-
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.)**

The principle level goals should be based on universally common values. They should be general and applicable for each country reflecting the minimums for common understanding. For instance, improvement of human life, environmental protection and economic progress are universally valid objectives for all countries. It is apparent that an inclusive, human-centered and conscience-oriented approach can lead to universally applicable SDGs. All countries should be able to contribute to SDG identification process and they should approve the final outcome. Guaranteeing a multi-dimensional approach and ensuring stakeholder participation in the development process are essential for the effective implementation of SDG's.

5. **The SDGs are supposed to be "global in nature". Should targets associated with those goals be:**
 - a. **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).

Global sustainability can be achieved through contributions of all countries. Targets, related to the general goals, should be more comprehensive and they should be identified in accordance with countries' own responsibilities, levels of socio-economic development, values and capabilities. The link between global and national goals needs to be identified clearly. Diversification of countries as "developed" and "developing" countries might be reviewed and a new, more equitable and dynamic country classification system might be generated. Hence, these targets can be set accordingly.

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)

The existing goals/targets are the outcomes of global studies and long negotiations. If SDG’s are built upon the lessons learned and the good practice models, the prospect of success would increase. However, the set of SDGs should be more comprehensive and should cover other relevant aspects of sustainable development which are not covered by the existing goals. Besides, SDG’s should be more measurable, quantitative, action oriented and easy to communicate. The shortcomings and challenges of existing goals/targets should be detected according to future needs for sustainable development.

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

All studies regarding SDG development should be parallel to UN development agenda beyond 2015 in order to ensure interaction and to avoid weaknesses of having multiple and uncoordinated processes. The outcome of both processes should be exchanged and evaluated, and there should be joint consultations and meetings.

“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).

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

It is essential to measure progress towards sustainable development in a comprehensive manner. It is crucial to design and use proper measures of progress in order for countries and communities to collect data accordingly. In this regard indicator sets for SDGs should be identified to measure the progress efficiently. Countries should establish or assign institutional bodies which will be responsible for monitoring and reporting.

“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)

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?

Each country can carry on a multi-stakeholder study with involvement of different segments of society in order to gather contributions and views of different groups on SDGs. Platforms and dialogues to exchange information and views can be established and information technologies can be benefited. UN organizations and international NGOs could provide coordination on this 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);

- Equitable growth
- Environmental sustainability
- Global social justice
- Freedom, peace and security,

- Respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate Standard of living, including the right to food and the rule of law,
- Gender equality, the empowerment of women
- Just and democratic societies
- Good governance

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

Similar to MDGs, a set of goals on a new Global Partnership for Development could be established.

In this context, it is important to,

- Redefine the role of private sector, promote private sector initiatives and enhance public-private partnerships for sustainable development,
- Mobilize partnerships and assistance at each level, particularly at regional level, and ensure information and experience sharing for sustainable development,
- Provide equal opportunities and accessibility to international finance mechanisms,

Additionally, in order to address today's challenges and to ensure a more sustainable and equitable development, the importance of additional resources to fund innovative solutions should not be undermined.

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?