



The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Main Messages

The 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals are about changing the way we think about development - they are about changing our concepts as much as our actions. They have given us a way of talking not only about how you focus on eradicating extreme poverty, but also how you talk about so many of the other things that matter to human lives and the planet. A conversation that would have previously been about incomes has become an invitation to think about values, our responsibilities towards the environment, towards the poorest and most vulnerable, the planet and a fuller conception of human life.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this has been applying these lessons to how we think about development and politics in the UK. We are, like every government, trying to do the very difficult task of balancing realism with optimism and all the competing demands and priorities of millions of citizens. The Goals have helped us not just to compare our programmes abroad with those at home but also to reconsider our approach in the UK – a vision that is not just about raising incomes but stretches to thinking about the quality of our cities, the strength of our communities, the air that we breathe, our nature and landscape and the way we preserve our heritage for future generations.

The challenge is to keep this vision connected unflinchingly to reality, to specific people and places. Our Voluntary National Review charts the journey we have been on reviewing progress, highlighting achievements, challenges, sharing lessons and identifying next steps. It will outline collective effort and action across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

None of this is easy. It has taught us, as a country which spends 0.7% of Gross National Income on international development, something about the kinds of pressures that these processes impose on other people's governments. We know just how important transparency is in terms of the public's trust in us and our own understanding of what we are actually achieving. We have learnt a great deal about the strengths and occasional weaknesses of our statistical processes. The Office for National Statistics has been able to source good data on most of the Goals – reporting data on 72% of Global Indicators on the National Reporting Platform – but data gaps remain. This has reminded us that, if it is sometimes difficult to get data in a very stable developed country, it can be much more difficult to get data in more challenging environments.

Finally, it has reminded us that we do not hold all of the levers, and of how much of sustainable development depends not just upon government but also on civil society and the private sector too.

Three things we are particularly proud of have been the steps we have made recently in terms of increasing employment - including for women and those with disabilities - improving standards in schools, and our progress on climate and environment, having decarbonised more than any advanced economy. But, equally, there are real areas for



improvement, thinking for example about ensuring the housing market works for everybody, mental health, and supporting a growing and ageing population.

The process has further deepened our respect for and understanding of the Global Goals. Thank you for this opportunity.

