

Open Working Group, December 2013

Human Rights, the Right to Development, Global Governance: Statement by
Netherlands, Australia and the UK

Human Rights and the Right to Development

We welcome the Technical Support Team's paper on human rights, including the understanding that human rights are an essential part of development; these concerns are deeply linked and mutually reinforcing.

Fundamentally, human rights need to be reflected in the framework because they are essential for sustainable development. They are the building blocks of shared prosperity and enable people to ensure governments are delivering on their commitments to tackle poverty.

Human rights are universal and apply equally to all people; and they are especially important for vulnerable groups and people living in poverty

The MYWorld survey and consultations undertaken by UN Development Group and the UN High-Level Panel show that people want to see the promotion and protection of all their human rights.

From civil society globally there is rising demand for human rights concepts and instruments to be mainstreamed in development activities.

We need to deliver human rights in practice.

This means ensuring that all people can have a voice and access to information. Evidence shows that these are what drives self-sustaining improvements in the living standards of the poor.

We believe that the SDGs should support human rights in three critical ways.

First, we need to incorporate the "leave no one behind" principle. There are many ways in which the post-2015 development goals can address discrimination and inequality in all areas and support the full implementation of human rights, including:

- zero or 100% targets for appropriate goals;
- data disaggregation;
- targets should be met by all groups;
- and a data revolution to enable this to happen

Second, we need to make sure that the post-2015 goals and targets promote the institutions that enable people to realise their human rights: open and accountable government, access to justice and the rule of law, property rights, legal identity, personal security, political participation, freedom of speech, assembly, and of the media.

And third, the framework should promote equal rights for women and men. Ensuring that women have the means to enjoy their rights is crucial to achieving sustainable development. We need to empower women and girls, including through the promotion and protection of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, an end to child marriage and the elimination of all forms of violence and ending discrimination which prevents them from fully participating in economic, political and public life.

Measurability

Many aspects of human rights, governance and peace can be measured with robust indicators. Indeed, the current MDG framework contains a target and indicator of women's political participation (Indicator 3.3 – female representatives in national parliaments).

- As the Technical Support Team notes, the High Level Panel recommended goals 10 and 11 (on governance and effective institutions and stable and peaceful societies respectively) with illustrative targets that are technically possible to measure.
- We can use both quantitative indicators (e.g., whether the right to freedom of speech is enshrined in law; the number of people with birth certificates) and measures of citizens' experiences and perception (e.g., whether or not citizens trust the judiciary; proportion who feel safe walking alone at night).
- Much of this data is already available
- Where it isn't, we need to develop new data collection approaches and work with others to increase the rigour and credibility of subjective indicators.
- This fits further underlines the call for a data revolution that "strengthens accountability".

Conclusions on Human Rights and the Right to Development

In conclusion, we recognise that we cannot overload the Post-2015 framework, that we need a balance between aspirational, catalytic goals on the one hand, and the requirement on the other for strong accountability with clear measurement, monitoring and reporting.

The post-2015 framework is not a legally-binding treaty and it should not compete with, replicate, or seek to re-negotiate existing legally binding documents, but it should be aligned with, and be underpinned by, those standards. We therefore think that the most important role that the post-2015 framework plays in promoting human rights is making sure that the policies, resources and institutions are in place that will deliver human rights in substance. We want to see the essence of the human rights framework captured throughout the goal framework through:

- Incorporating the principle of "Leave no-one behind";
- Goals and targets that promote the institutions that will enable people to realise their human rights; and
- Promoting equal rights for women and men.

Global Governance

Effective and robust global governance is important to ensuring that we are able to build a global partnership that delivers results for people living in extreme poverty and that responds to the new challenges of the post-2015 development agenda.

We should support efforts to improve, and strengthen the coherence of, the governance of global sustainable development consistent with other international processes. Coherence is highly relevant in a globalising economy, e.g. food security is affected by competition for land, water and energy, land tenure rights and sustainable management of the global commons such as fish stocks. The world's ability to make progress on these issues depends on the effectiveness of the range of international institutions active in these fields.

UN Reform

We welcome the call by the UN Secretary General for a strong UN system that is “fit for purpose”; that ensures the international community is equipped with the right institutions and tools for addressing the challenges of implementing the sustainable development agenda at the national level.

As recognised by the Secretary General, the UN system should continue to reform and make sure that it is effective, demonstrates results, and is able to respond to future challenges, including by for example modernising budgetary and accounting processes and improving performance management.

In this regard, we acknowledge efforts to implement the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and welcome the UN Development Group's QCPR Action Plan.

We support the continued efforts at UN Reform, such as the integration of the UN Development Group into the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the on-going development of the “Delivering as One” approach, the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system and the formation of UN Women, among other reforms, which adhere to the principles set out in the Rio+20 Outcome Document of avoiding duplication and reducing administrative burdens.

Informal Groups and Partnerships

As the Technical Support Team paper notes, countries come together in many settings to tackle a range of different challenges. Groupings such as the BRICS, the G20, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the African Union, Pacific Island Forum and other regional forums will have an important role in supporting the new agenda.

These groups can be of enormous help in providing political leadership and practical suggestions to sustain the post-2015 agenda and bring to life the spirit of global partnership in their respective forums.

While acknowledging the primacy of the UN process, we very much welcome the role that these groups can play and the contribution that they can make in the post-2015 development agenda.

High-Level Political Forum

We want the post-2015 development agenda to signal a new era for multilateralism and international cooperation. The UN can lead in setting the agenda, coordinating and ensuring accountability.

To ensure effective delivery of the post-2015 development agenda, there should be clear guidance and monitoring of the delivery of sustainable development commitments.

The HLPF provides a forum at the highest political level to provide guidance on sustainable development and assess the challenges ahead. It can promote coherence between the three dimensions of sustainable development, but most importantly, review the progress being made against our commitments to make sure we stay on track. We welcome the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the HLPF.

Ensuring accountability in the next framework at every level is key; Governments must be accountable to their citizens, corporations to their shareholders, civil society to the constituencies they represent. This is key if we are to make sure that we meet the challenges of the next development agenda.

Conclusion on Global Governance

We strongly support effective, robust and coherent institutions of global governance. This will be key if we are to deliver a post-2015 development agenda that delivers real results for people across the globe.