

Rio+20 follow-up

UN DESA questionnaire related to the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Preliminary views and responses by GREECE

16 November 2012

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.

SDGs should capture key global challenges in the years to come while at the same time bring together the three dimensions of SD in a balanced and coherent way, while encompassing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues. Therefore the priority areas for SDGs should correspond to “mature” issues important to all countries where progress is required, in a synergistic way, in order to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, the SDGs should be limited in number, thus covering only major selected common priorities.

In this context, the SDGs could reflect the multidimensional nature of well-being, looking beyond GDP measures and taking into account the broader concept of measuring the quality of life. Thus, SDGs could indicatively address issues related to the quality of life like, inter alia, water, food security, sustainable energy, health, education etc. The selection of the themes to be covered by the SDGs should also take into account the results of the review of the achievement of the MDGs by 2015, placing emphasis on areas where progress may be still required, bearing also in mind matters of compatibility with the three dimensions of SD.

As far as cross-cutting issues are concerned, focus could be given, primarily, to the “traditionally” accepted ones, both at national and international level, like rule of law, good governance and gender equality. Priorities arising from the current economic recession like decent work for all could also be addressed possibly on a cross-cutting level due to its importance. Still, setting up cross-cutting issues for the whole range of SDGs and consequently development policies and programmes should be based on flexibility, mutual compatibility, so that the selected themes can interact, co-exist and not impede one another.

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)

(a) The SDGs should reflect social, reflect social, economic and environmental dimensions within each SDG, possibly through the associated targets, and

(d) Other: In case particular targets under the current MDGs are not met by 2015, these could be reflected and/or integrated, appropriately adapted and updated, under the new SDGs, possibly at target level.

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. Influencing national budget allocations**
- c. Reviewing the impact of national policies**
- d. Addressing key pressure leading to unsustainability**
- e. Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making**
- f. Guiding development cooperation**
- g. Other (please describe)**

For Greece, the different indents associated to this question can be complementary, rather than alternative to each other. However, the key purpose of the SDGs, in Greece, is expected to be for:

(a) and (e) Defining coherent national policies balancing the three pillars of sustainable development, that, not only do they not undermine international development, but also they support, interact and comply thereto,

(c) Reviewing the impact of national policies, and

(d) Addressing key pressure leading to unsustainability.

Moreover, they are also expected to contribute to (f) Guiding development cooperation. Greece, as a small donor which is now elaborating its development cooperation programme for the next five years, could benefit from the setting of global SDGs that could also serve to assist guiding the channelling of ODA in a more targeted and effective manner, where there is continuing need for assistance. In this regard and on a broader level, SDGs are also expected to assist enhancing policy coherence for 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)

See response under Question 5 below.

5. The SDGs are supposed to be “global in nature”. Should targets associated with those goals be:

- a. common to all countries?**
- b. defined by each country? or**
- c. common but differentiated depending on country characteristics and level of development?**

(c) Common but differentiated depending on country characteristics and level of development

The SDGs should be flexible in order to cover countries with different levels of development to the maximum extent, aiming, on one hand, at ensuring ownership and commitment to a target (under each SDGs) at country level and, on the other hand, overall coherence and progress for the world as a whole. The structure of SDGs and their analysis in targets and indicators is of critical importance in order to have SDGs which are applicable in practice, measurable, able to indicate progress, meaningful, helpful for each county in its efforts towards sustainable development, not creating additional unnecessary reporting burdens to countries and not fostering inequalities between countries and within each country between different groups. In this respect, SDGs themes should be common for all countries, i.e. global. Moreover, the targets under each SDGs covering the pillars of sustainable development could also be, in principle, common to all countries. However, indicators should be flexible and adapted to national characteristics, particularities and circumstances, such as the level of development. In order to avoid inequalities in the implementation and monitoring, resulting from any eventual subjective SDG definition by each country, the possibility of setting SDGs applicable to group of countries with similar characteristics and circumstances (e.g. according to

their GNI) could be explored so as to ensure a minimum level of objectivity. Greece, is open to considering all proposals regarding SDGs' structure that are going to be put forward with the aim to achieving maximum effectiveness of the overall approach.

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?

SDGs should be complementary, coherent, not contradictory, creating synergies with and building on related existing international goals and targets. Thus, SDGs and existing related goals and targets should be mutually reinforcing. The exercise to define global SDGs should not be regarded as an opportunity to renegotiate or alter existing goals and targets at the international level. At the same time, SDGs should neither be overlapping nor duplicating existing international goals. Regarding the possible incorporation of MDG targets, see also answer to Question 1, above.

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

In order to achieve coherence and integration between the post-2015 framework and the SDGs, it is important to ensure that the process to establish the SDGs is coordinated, coherent and compatible, also timing-wise, with the processes to consider the post-2015 development agenda. It is also important to ensure opportunities for the two processes to interact. To this end, an important opportunity for cross-fertilisation will be in September 2013, when the 68th UNGA will hold a Special Event on the Review of MDGs when initial progress on the development of the SDGs should also be presented and discussed. The post-2015 development agenda should aim at achieving sustainable development for all countries bearing also in mind ethnic, cultural and social diversities. At the same time, there should also be a continuing focus on poverty eradication and on enhancing the resilience of conflict affected and fragile states. Both these aspects should also constitute the core objective of the SDGs.

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

As abovementioned, SDGs should be accompanied by appropriate measurable targets and indicators to assess progress, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development, and without adding unnecessary reporting burdens to countries. The review of progress towards the achievement of SDGs should go beyond a sterile reporting from a national perspective. It should be regular but also flexible, allowing for actual interaction and dialogue between countries (also through high-level Events and Dialogues attracting visibility to the scope of the SDGs), promoting mutual accountability, providing a driver for periodic fine-tuning of policies towards sustainable development and fostering a fruitful exchange of lessons learned and national experiences, possibly in the context of the ECOSOC or the HLPF.

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?

It is very important to ensure, even from the very early stages of SDGs development, that the process is open to all countries and to all stakeholders at international, regional, national and local levels, either by allowing observers to participate to the work of the Open Working Group and/or by regularly consulting them and inviting for their feed-back and recommendations. All UN major groups and civil society as a whole should be able to take part in the process. In this context, research and science will provide important inputs, especially regarding the articulation and structure of SDGs so to reach to measurable and applicable goals. Special emphasis should also be given to the active participation of grass roots representatives, as they can provide a practical

assessment of the actual challenges and pressures, on the ground, in developing countries. Finally, the process of developing SDGs should also be gender-balanced.

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);

The principles that should underpin the SDGs, should encompass, inter alia, the promotion of good governance and the rule of law as well as the reduction of inequalities between countries and within each country.

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

A new Global Partnership for Development should aim to promote sustainable development, as an overarching objective shared by all countries, encompassing all three dimensions, with peace and security fully taken into account. At the same time, it should pay special attention to the needs, features and characteristics of each country, especially the most fragile ones, i.e. the least developed (LDCs) and landlocked developing (LLDCs) ones as well as the small island developing States (SIDS). This special focus on ethnic, cultural and social diversities should be the cornerstone of building:

- Partnerships, especially the new forms thereof, that is to say triangular (North-North-South, North-South-South) or South-South cooperation, enhancing better coordination and in-country division of labour;
- New means of implementation, namely public-private partnerships, new technologies, especially information and communications;
- Effective monitoring mechanisms, able to address mutual accountability and guarantee transparency to the maximum possible extent.