

The Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and the UN Proposal on Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

Since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, ('the Earth Summit'), sustainable development was identified as a new pathway to human well-being. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) articulated in 2000 placed people at the centre and generated unprecedented improvement in the lives of many. The global mobilization behind the MDGs showed how multilateral action can make a huge difference.

The experiences of implementing the MDGs proved that the international community can be mobilized to confront complex challenges to economic and social development. Governments, civil society and a wide range of international actors supported the MDGs by generating innovative approaches, vital new data, new resources and new tools and technology.

In addition, transparency was enhanced, multilateral approaches were strengthened and a results-based approach to public policy was fostered. Collective action and international cooperation inspired by the MDGs, led to remarkable successes.

Since 1990, 700 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty. From 2000 to 2010, an estimated 3.3 million deaths from malaria were averted and 22 million lives were saved in the fight against tuberculosis. Since 1995, access to antiretroviral therapy for HIV-infected people has saved 6.6 million lives. At the same time, gender parity in primary school enrolment, access to child and maternal health care and women's political participation has improved steadily.

Despite all this, the MDGs left unfinished work which should be used as a platform to build the future we want: a future free from poverty and based on human rights, equality and sustainability.

Currently, the United Nations is in the process of defining a post-2015 development agenda to be launched at a Summit in September 2015, which is the target date for realizing the MDGs. The development agenda toward a sustainable future with dignity for all is being elaborated through informal consultations of the UN General Assembly. The process of arriving at the post-2015 development agenda is led by the Member States with broad participation from Major Groups and other civil society stakeholders.

The cornerstone for the current global process was established in Rio in June 2012, with the adoption of the Outcome Document "The Future We Want," at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ('Rio +20'). This document described the lessons learned from the prior 20 years of development and provided an extensive assessment of the progress and gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

The discussion on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda has stressed the importance of the specific conditions in each country and an advance in perspective from the Millennium Development Goals framework. Special attention also was required for the most vulnerable, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. Particular attention will be given to the challenges faced by middle income countries and countries in conflict.

Throughout 2014, Member States exchanged views and consolidated their inputs through the work of existing United Nations development entities. For example, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its functional and regional commissions, committees and expert bodies have identified the potential elements of the post-2015 review and monitoring framework and explored how to adapt the United Nations development system and its operational activities to respond to changes in the development landscape.

The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) provided policy space for stakeholders to discuss the implications of a unified and universal agenda, the global partnership, modalities for more effective review and monitoring and concrete actions by development cooperation partners from the global South on common challenges.

The High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) has, since its inaugural session in 2013, turned its attention to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, with leaders calling for a coherent approach and noting the important role that it can play in the national reviews and monitoring and evaluating the sustainable development goals.

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF) delivered its report last August on options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy. It recommended individual, country-owned financing strategies, rooted in enabling national policy environments and complemented by a reformed international enabling environment.

Lastly, the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG-SDGs) delivered the results of its historic deliberations this past July. Its narrative is grounded in the Outcome Document of Rio+20, emphasizing poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, inclusive growth, equality and a people-centred agenda for sustainable development.

The Open Working Group proposed 17 specific sustainable development goals with 169 associated targets that are action-oriented, global in nature and universally applicable. The SDGs take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and seeks to combine global targets, with country-specific targets.

The SDGs reinforce the commitment to the unfinished Millennium Development Goals, in addition to proposing goals on inequalities, economic growth, decent jobs, cities and human settlements, industrialization, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, peace, justice and institutions.

Specific to our work is SDG #7 which proposes to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. The targets set for 2030 are: i) to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services; ii) increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix; iii) and double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.

The two means of implementation for SDG 7 are to: i) enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology; and ii) expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States.

All the sustainable development goals are underpinned with a goal on global partnerships for implementation and have underscored the need to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions across the new agenda.

Stakeholders contributing to the post-2015 development agenda have asked for a rigorous and participatory review and monitoring framework to hold Governments, businesses and international organizations accountable to the people for results.

They also have called for information and data to be made more available, more accessible and more broadly disaggregated, as well as for measurable goals and targets and a participatory mechanism to review implementation at the national, regional and global levels.

The new agenda also takes shape from the broader international human rights framework, including elements of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, and the right to development. Specific targets are set for disadvantaged groups and indicators will need to be broadly disaggregated across all goals and targets.

Finally, the new development framework will provide an opportunity to link to the broader United Nations agenda, with its interdependent peace and security, and human rights objectives.

With the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations underway, the United Nations will continue to facilitate the global conversation on the post-2015 development agenda and has the responsibility of supporting Member States by providing evidence-based inputs, analytical thinking and field experience as it works to achieve a life of dignity for all.