

Post-2015 Human Rights Caucus Statement

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3 min.

The post-2015 human rights caucus [recognizes](#) some significant advancements in the Co-Chairs' [Working Document](#) in aligning the SDGs with existing human rights norms. In the spirit of improving on these achievements, we'd like focus our attention on select focus areas which have not already received attention from other Major Groups on other days—in particular on hard-wiring targets on accountability over sustainable development.

Embedding human rights accountability into the SDGs is critical. Without it, progress will continue to be hampered and people will continue to get left behind. All this work to arrive at internationally agreed commitments will be mere paper promises. Yet, recognition of the importance of human rights to information, participation, accountability and access to justice in the working document is uneven.

Overall, it is unfortunate that many of the laudable socioeconomic targets listed are not recognized as human rights in themselves, which in our experience would greatly improve their accountability and public uptake.

FA 15: Strengthened global partnerships for sustainable development

In particular, transparency and participation over sustainable development—key human rights in themselves—are laudably addressed throughout focal areas 15 and 16. Target **15n** is well-formulated to promote participation in decision-making at national and international levels, and we strongly advocate for its retention. Institutionalizing full, meaningful participation of all social groups is especially important if non-zero target benchmarks are going to be made at the national level. Yet, we also hope that the document would *support full transparency and meaningful participation by all social groups in budget and tax policies*, including but not limited to gender-sensitive budgeting as articulated in **5j**.

Meanwhile, it is alarming that the proposals in target 15 on strengthening global partnerships for sustainable development document do not recognize existing obligations of international cooperation which are key to ensuring human rights accountability between countries. We recommend as a start to include *clear, time-bound commitments by governments, international institutions and large businesses to conduct periodic and independent human rights and sustainable development impact assessments of their policies, within and beyond their borders, and to provide means of redress for individuals and groups adversely affected by these*. (in 15v for example)

FA 16: Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions

Focal area 16 also very welcome in seeking to strengthen accountability in sustainable development, and we strongly call on OWG members to retain and strengthen it. Yet, three main points need strengthening.

First, we welcome target **16b** on developing equal access to an independent and responsive justice system, and think it should be strengthened by including *a target to eradicate all barriers to accessing justice, in particular for people living in poverty*.

We also very much support target **16d** on access to information in regard to public finance management, public procurement and national development plans. Yet, surely the target should not be restricted to those areas alone, but ensure the right *to information to all aspects of public policy. We would also specify that such information should be timely, of high-quality, accessible, reliable and disaggregated*.

Finally, target **16f** to remove unnecessary restrictions of freedom of media, association and speech will be counter-productive as formulated because it gives ultimate discretion to governments to define what a necessary restriction is. The target should be kept, but re-phrased along the lines of *removing restrictions that are contrary to international law*. Further, this target should *expressly include freedom of assembly, meaningful political participation, the right to information as well as protection of civil society space, and in particular human rights and environmental defenders* who are the life-blood of accountability in development.

Thank you.