

# THE ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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## I. Background and History

Many global problems have remained unsolved and new ones have arisen since the Millennium Declaration<sup>1</sup> in 2000, which is the basis for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Growing social inequality, continuous and increasing environmental devastation, increasing natural resource use, progressing urbanization and migration, as well as intensifying climate change are challenges for both countries in the north and south. While the MDGs' targets, which were aimed at poverty reduction, achieved political results due to their straight-forwardness, as well as their communicable and quantifiable nature, they remain unsatisfactory in many areas such as social justice, peace and security, democracy building, human rights, and global governance reform. They also disregard the vital link between social development processes and ecological, social, and economic sustainability and do not question economic growth vis-à-vis our planet's obvious natural limits.

Hence, in 2012, the Rio+20 Conference<sup>2</sup> agreed upon launching negotiations for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The proposal put forward by several southern countries aimed at formulating and implementing concrete goals for a new agenda for sustainability and development. The 68th UN General Assembly confirmed this decision in September 2013<sup>3</sup>, decided to agree upon an integrative Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and merge the MDGs and SDGs processes. As a first step, ideas and suggestions for a new set of goals are to be compiled until the fall of 2014. However, it is disconcerting that the ecological dimension has been immensely underrepresented amongst the existing proposed goals for a Post-2015 Agenda.

German environmental and development organizations have therefore drafted a set of ecological sustainability goals to be included in the Post-2015 Agenda. These suggestions are neither final nor complete; rather, they are intended to focus attention on existential ecological baselines as well as the necessity of regarding ecology as an integral part of the new Post-2015 Agenda. Particular emphasis was given to issues that have so far received little attention from existing conventions and international processes. The following proposed goals assume that issues are cross-cutting and that they will be linked with each other as well as with development goals.

## II. Basic Principles and Guidelines for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life<sup>4</sup>, this includes future generations. Therefore, development can only be sus-

tainable if it respects and is realized within the planetary boundaries<sup>5</sup>. The Post-2015 Agenda presents a historic opportunity to promote this new sustainable development dynamic. The MDG principles should be combined with goals for sustainable development, as well as solutions for the dramatic global environmental crisis, equity, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination. The 1992 Rio Declaration principles<sup>6</sup>, which include the polluter pays principle, solidarity principle, precautionary principle, free, prior and informed consent principle, common but differentiated responsibility principle, as well as social, cultural, economic, political and civic human rights<sup>7</sup>, must serve as central pillars for the new Sustainable Development Agenda.

The Post-2015 Agenda can only be successful and effective if it applies equally to countries in both the south and north; as many states as possible participate; all state, civil society, relevant stakeholders and marginalized groups are equally involved in its development, implementation, monitoring and assessment; and its impact does not discriminate or leaves anyone behind. The Post-2015 Agenda has to be based on commitment and accountability, including among other things appropriate transparency mechanisms, regular reviews, collective pressure, and the option of holding states responsible for non-compliance. In collaboration with affected regional and local groups and communities, the Agenda must be broken down to the national level. Financing has to be binding, but managed fairly between states.

Existing international agreements must not be overruled or weakened by the Post-2015 Agenda. Rather, frames and goals should build on existing international conventions, and bring renewed energy in their implementations and close existing gaps. The Post-2015 Agenda has to ensure cooperation and coherence between agreements and issues.

## III. Proposals for an Ecologically Oriented Set of Goals

### 1. Sustainable use of water

Sufficient and clean water is essential for life on earth. It is one of the most important foundations and resources for social and economic development and is a decisive factor in poverty alleviation. Currently, 780 million people do not have access to clean drinking water and 2.5 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities.<sup>8</sup> In addition, women and girls are still severely constrained in their ability to work or go to school as they are often solely responsible for the time consuming task of having to carry

water across long distances. Furthermore, intact water cycles are essential for climate change mitigation, flood control, and nature conservation. Many aquatic ecosystems have been degraded as a consequence of pollution and decreasing water quantities.

### **We call for**

- By 2013, universal and long-term access to clean water and sanitation facilities. We call for the international recognition of water as a public good and the prohibition of its commercialization. The primary use of water should be considered as drinking water and for subsistence economies and be distributed fairly and efficiently amongst all sectors and social groups.
- By 2020, an increase in water use efficiency by 20% in the industrial, energy, and agricultural sector; comprehensive utilization of waste- and rain-water as an important resource in all sectors; as well as an increase of water recycling by 50%.
- As of 2015, a general prohibition on water deterioration due to a water cycle's pollution through waste, pesticides, industry, fertilizers and mining activities as already exists in Europe since 2000 under the European Water Framework Directive<sup>9</sup>; a long-term ban on the entry of dangerous substances into water cycles; strict monitoring and adherence to national and international water protection and conservation laws, as well as efficient sanctions in case of violations.
- By 2020, the development of regulations and implementation programs for maintaining or achieving good water quality ("environmental flow"), defined respective to existing natural landscapes.

## **2. Healthy Oceans and Sustainable Fisheries**

Marine and coastal ecosystems play a central role in the global natural environment and its biodiversity. At the same time, they have been an integral part of human civilization as a food source, natural resource supplier, and employment source. Despite their vital importance, their protection as well as their role in development politics has thus far been disregarded. For instance, artisanal fisheries play a crucial role in regional food security in the south, yet they are threatened by coastal development, privatization of fishing licenses, competition with industrial trawlers and long-distance fishing fleets, and overfishing of many commercially exploited fish populations. In addition, pollution and acidification of the oceans is steadily increasing, as is climate change's negative impact on many marine areas. Since there are few international agreements concerning marine policy, many marine targets must be addressed by the Post-2015 Agenda.

### **We call for**

- By 2020, a new orientation of global fisheries policies towards the implementation of sustainable fisheries through "maximum sustainable yield" regulations that

take the precautionary principle and ecosystem approaches into account; the reduction of harmful fisheries subsidies; and stock management at least 20% below the "maximum sustainable yield" by 2030.

- By 2030, the implementation of selective fishing methods, the broad landing of by-catch in a useable form; the reduction of by-catch in allocated quota as well as the implementation of regulations that allow only by-catch unfit for human consumption to be used in the production of fishmeal and fish oil; the control of illegal fisheries; and an immediate ban on deep sea and bottom trawls.
- By 2020, a ban on patenting of marine species and the declaration of marine genetic material as a common good.
- By 2025, the introduction of a participatory and transparent spatial planning for the sea and coasts that engages regional committees, civil society, and affected artisanal fishery folk in particular; and the establishment of regional institutions that fairly shape policy processes, thereby taking into account traditional use forms, by 2020.
- By 2020, the establishment of zones reserved for artisanal fishery within all Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) that are at least 12 nautical miles and whose selection, fishery methods and catch quotas are agreed upon through a transparent and participatory approach.
- By 2020, the development of independent capacities in the global south; the reduction of global over-capacities; as well as the establishment of comprehensive Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.<sup>10</sup>
- By 2020, at least 10% of coastal and marine areas are established as protected areas in accordance with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Strategic Plan. By 2030, this is transparently and scientifically expanded to 20% with a hierarchical zoning within the areas.<sup>11</sup> The zoning should reflect an efficient and sufficiently funded management based on participatory and fair principles, respect for the rights of local communities and other affected stakeholders, as well as conservation regulations.
- By 2020, a reduction of marine waste pollution by 50%; a reduction of nutrient contamination by 50% compared to levels from 1985<sup>12</sup>; and a ban on heavy fuel oil in shipping.
- By 2025, a significant reduction of the processes, particularly due to climate change, causing marine acidification; and by 2030, an absolute stop of its harmful impacts, with the guideline that the pH of surface waters in any larger ocean region (nor in the global mean) should not drop more than 0.2 units below the pre-industrial average value.<sup>13</sup>
- By 2030, a moratorium on ore mining in the deep sea with only select few trials supervised by the International Seabed Authority allowed and an appropriate framework implemented until then.<sup>14</sup>

- By 2020, a ban on the extraction of energy resources from the deep sea and the arctic; by 2025, a complete stop of deep sea and arctic oil exploration; and an immediate ban on methane extraction and on CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration in the deep sea.

### 3. Preservation and Restoration of Soil Fertility and Access to Land

Nearly all aspects of human life, such as the provision of food and feed, fiber, fuel and firewood, infrastructure and housing development, as well as carbon sinks, oxygen production, and a multitude of ecosystem services, fundamentally depend on soil. However, previous soil management and use, resource misuse, exploitation of water and nutrient sources, as well as soil sealing and compaction have all led to a sharp decrease in nutrient rich soils. With this loss, fundamental requirements for development, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and intact ecosystems are being destroyed.

#### We call for

- By 2030, zero net land degradation by prioritizing the preservation of fertile soil, improvement of water-holding capacity, restoration of degraded soils, and through measures that prevent land conversion for agricultural use, while simultaneously ensuring the right to food and prioritization of local communities' rights and usage forms as well as their involvement in measures aiming at soil fertility improvement.<sup>15</sup>
- By 2020, the prevention of land- and water-grabbing; the binding implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security<sup>16</sup> agreed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to safeguard land rights; the establishment of human-rights-based mechanisms to control investors in their home countries; and equitable access to fertile soil favoring small-scale producers.

### 4. Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use of Forests

More than one billion people live in forests or directly depend on forest products for their livelihood. Only natural and near-natural forests can fulfill these important economic functions. Nevertheless, global forest cover is decreasing by around 13 million hectares annually<sup>17</sup> due to the growing demand for food and feed, as well as wood for construction, energy, and paper. This not only destroys more forest area than can be replaced with reforestation or wood plantations. After all, the net loss of global forest cover between 2005 and 2010 amounted to 5.6 million hectares per year.<sup>18</sup> Forests are also rapidly losing their near-natural condition and with this their quality. Deforestation and degradation threatens biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the livelihoods of many indigenous peoples and local communities. Additionally, it leads to the deterioration of forest soil, the disruption of water supplies, and a reduction of important carbon sinks, and thus greenhouse gas emissions.

#### We call for

- By 2030, zero loss of forest cover without destruction of natural ecosystems and compensation for the degradation of forests through restoration at a minimum.
- By 2030, a significant increase of mandatory and permanently protected forest conservation areas including the protection of remaining old-growth forests. The cultivation and management of forest by indigenous groups and other communities dependent on forests via traditional forms of usage and small-scale interferences must be excluded from restrictions.
- By 2020, the prevention of illegal logging with special consideration of local community needs and the implementation of respective laws.
- By 2020, no more sustainability certification of wood originating from both near-primary or pristine old-growth forests; the limitation of wood certification from such plantations; mandatory labeling of plantation wood; and an improvement and comprehensive implementation of FSC certification standards.<sup>19</sup>
- By 2020, a significantly more sustainable use of wood with an emphasis on long-lasting and high-value products and massive reduction in the consumption of firewood and other short-lived wood products.
- By 2030, the reduction of paper consumption to a sustainable level in all countries with an annual per capita consumption of more than 55 kg<sup>20</sup>, and a maximum annual per capita paper consumption of 60 kg through effective restrictions in consumer behavior, regulation at the production level; an increase of recycling rates; and mandatory use of recycled resources for specific products.

### 5. Conservation and Restoration of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Human life depends on intact ecosystems and the conservation and restoration of terrestrial and marine biodiversity. Today, animal and plant extinction dramatically surpasses the natural extinction rate. The list of endangered species is constantly growing and many ecosystems are losing their fundamental functions as well as their ability to provide ecosystem services. Drivers of ecosystem loss include the constantly growing land needs of humans, the over-use of natural resources, the destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of habitats, climate change, and invasive species. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) plays a fundamental role in solving these problems.

#### We call for

- By 2020, the implementation of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets<sup>21</sup>, including the Nagoya Protocol against biopiracy<sup>22</sup>; as well as the establishment of additional measures for the restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services after 2020 and in accordance with the CBD's 2050 Vision.<sup>23</sup>

- By 2020, the implementation of efficient and sufficiently funded management of all protected areas based on participatory and fair principles, respect for the rights of local communities and other affected stakeholders, and conservation regulations.
- By 2020, effective measures are taken to prevent the further extinction of known species (according to Aichi Target 12) and by 2030 measures are taken that will no longer threaten the majority of species still endangered in 2015 with extinction.

## 6. Halting Climate Change

One of the greatest challenges faced by mankind is anthropogenic climate change, particularly global warming. Its ecologic and economic consequences on humans and nature can hardly be predicted. To date, climatic changes have not only threatened biodiversity and ecosystems, but are also linked to increasing natural disasters and a rise in sea levels. This makes it harder to predict developments and measures to adapt to climate change become inevitable. While climate debates must be solved within the respective UN bodies, the Post-2015-Agenda must also include climate change.

### We call for

- Compliance with the 1.5°C/ 2°C threshold above the pre-industrial value, taking into account historic emissions and the associated responsibility, by guiding development in such a manner that it does not promote climate change any further and aims at reducing greenhouse gases in the long term.

## 7. Sustainable and Fair Agriculture and Eradication of Hunger

Enough food is produced worldwide to feed the global population; however, at least 850 million people still suffer from hunger. This is due to various factors, such as unfair distribution, insufficient stemming of food losses and waste, food speculation, harmful subsidies, land grabbing, and unfair access to basic production resources. At the same time, the mass-production, fossil-fuel driven industrial agricultural policies of big industrial nations provides no fundamental solutions to the food security crisis, as they mainly aim for production increases rather than sustainable production and redistribution. In this agricultural model, resources, fertilizer and pesticides have to be used excessively, which often destroys small producers' livelihoods.<sup>24</sup> Bio-fuel production, soil degradation, and climate change are further exacerbating the existing global food security crises. Small-scale farming with regional supply structures, fair access to resources, land, technology, and seeds is needed, as well as policies that allow farmers to earn a living from their farm must be the goal. In addition, all stakeholders have to be equally involved in trade agreements and producers in the global south must be protected from product dumping.

### We call for

- By 2030, the total eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; universal, fair, and equitable access to sufficient, safe, well-balanced, affordable, nourishing and culturally appropriate food based on resources that are available to both current and future generations; and the attainment of the human right to food and the implementation of food sovereignty.
- By 2030, the establishment of a zero-emission agriculture that does not invest more energy than the areas used for agriculture generates and is based on renewable energy sources and local cycles.
- By 2030, the regulation of global factory farming and linking the number of livestock with the farming area's capacity.
- By 2030, a significant reduction and the long-term phase-out of pesticides<sup>25</sup> and no additional subsidies for synthetic nitrogen fertilizer.<sup>26</sup>

## 8. Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns

Mankind is living beyond its means with an extremely unequal distribution of natural resource use. Especially in the global north, overconsumption and resource waste has exceeded acceptable levels. Existing economic conditions in the north often lead to market distortions, which promote the degradation and waste of natural resources. However, even countries in the global south can no longer ignore that while everyone has the right to development, the old, resource-intensive, fossil-fuel dependent development model offers no development perspective for the majority of humankind. Within the next five years, the international community should agree on how much the absolute global consumption should be reduced by 2050.

### We call for

- The inclusion of the human right to decent work in the Post-2015 Agenda, focusing on gender equality at work, equal pay for equal work, living wages, combating the global increase in youth unemployment, equitable access to work, especially for marginalized groups, and prohibiting child labor.<sup>27</sup>
- From 2015 onwards, the establishment of a key indicator to calculate every country's natural resource consumption (i.e. Raw Material Consumption (RCM)<sup>28</sup> or ecological footprint<sup>29</sup> along with a national water, land, and CO2 footprint).
- By 2020, the abolition of environmentally harmful subsidies, in accordance with Aichi Target 3 expressed in the CBD Strategic Plan.
- By 2030, a reform of the tax system where the extraction of certain raw materials and/ or the use of

specific resources is taxed with an eco-tax that is regularly adjusted to the appropriate, real tax rate, accompanied by a restructuring of the tax system aiming at lower taxes for labor and higher taxes and charges for environmental and resource consumption.<sup>30</sup>

- By 2030, a worldwide implementation of permanent resource recycling, in which the design and manufacture of products follows principles that ensure thriftiness, efficiency, longevity, reusability and recycling; a landfill ban on organic, plastic, and recyclable matter; raising awareness of waste as a resource; as well as a global national agreement on waste for the comprehensive collection of secondary raw materials, financed by producers and distributors.
- By 2025, a global ban on plastic bags distributed free of charge and non-deposit plastic bottles paired with the establishment of reusable systems through effective taxation or bans at the national level as well as higher resource efficiency.
- By 2020, a 100% social, ecological, and just public procurement that establishes life cycle costs for a fixed period of time as well as resource conservation as key criteria in procedures and provides transparent and easily accessible information on public procurement process.<sup>31</sup>

## 9. Sustainable Energy Use

Nearly every fifth person does not have access to modern energy services. Three billion people depend on wood, coal, charcoal, or traditional biomass for their cooking and heating needs. This lack of access to modern energy has grave consequences for development as it threatens human health, promotes gender inequality and social injustice, and contributes to land and forest degradation as well as climate change.

### We call for

- By 2030, universal access to energy, a 14% reduction of energy consumption in buildings and industry, a doubling of worldwide energy efficiency and the portion of renewable energies in the global mix, and support for the UN Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative<sup>32</sup>. As a prerequisite, renewable energy projects with negative effects on the ecological and social conditions regionally or globally should not be supported. This includes large hydropower plants, dams, and large-scale biofuels.
- By 2020, 100 million households are supplied with clean cooking energy, for example through support of the "Alliance for Clean Cookstoves".

## Endnotes

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