

IRF2015

Independent
Research
Forum



Media briefing

Transforming the course of development post-2015

Summary

On 25-27 September, the [70th Session](#) of the United Nations General Assembly is expected to agree on new global goals for development for the next 15 years. The **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** represent a new direction for the global community, integrating environmental sustainability with eliminating poverty and inequality wherever it is found. The change agenda touches every country, and aims to leave no-one behind.

The goals are a key part of the 2030 agenda (often referred to as the post-2015 agenda), which also incorporates a new international agreement on finance for development, agreed at the Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa in July, and proposals for a successor to the Kyoto Protocol committing countries to tackle climate change, due to be finalised at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change talks in Paris (COP21) in December 2015.

The **Independent Research Forum for a post-2015 sustainable development agenda (IRF2015)** is a partnership of 10 research institutes from across the globe that has provided an independent source of critical thinking, integrated analysis and awareness-raising on the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda. Our aim has been to promote informed debate both inside and outside the UN, with a focus on what the international agenda could mean at the regional and national levels.

Background

In 2000 the UN member states identified and agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. At the second UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), in June 2012, they decided that the MDGs should be succeeded by a more comprehensive set of goals for sustainable development, addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges that confront us today.

To ensure the new goals reflected the ambitions of the whole international community, the UN General Assembly created an intergovernmental working group (the [Open Working Group](#))

representing 70 UN member states, tasked with designing and drafting a proposal for these new goals. The Open Working Group's work was supported by input from UN agencies, civil society, academia, and businesses. A broad consultation in 100 countries was organised by the UN Development Group. The text for adoption at the UN Summit, [Transforming our World: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development](#), was published in August 2015.

IRF2015

Established in 2013, the **Independent Research Forum for a post-2015 sustainable development agenda (IRF2015)** brings together international think tanks with regional research and development organisations, which links national, regional and international processes and debates. It has drawn on its combined expertise across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, to inform the post-2015 development debate.

Working at the international, regional and national level, IRF2015 has pushed for:

- a bottom-up, evidence and knowledge-based understanding of the development process (how sustainable development affects people on the ground);
- an integrated approach to sustainable development (recognising that tackling hunger, poverty and social inequalities also depend on ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of ecosystem services); and
- a new global partnership, with a commitment from all countries to work together to achieve the goals.

This has included hosting a series of informal retreats for UN member states on different aspects of the post-2015 agenda.

The IRF2015 members are: Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Research Centre for Sustainable Development, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (RCSD/CASS), Development Alternatives (DA), Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and World Resources Institute (WRI).

The SDGs

[Transforming our World: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development](#) includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and describes itself as “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”.

The framework includes 169 targets to help achieve these goals, and progress will be measured by a comprehensive set of global indicators. Work to define the indicators has begun, but is not scheduled to be complete until next year.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

What's new about the SDGs

The 17 goals reflect a global agenda – agreed by all UN member states and applicable to all countries. This universal agenda reflects a significant shift in the global order – it is not just about how rich countries support poor countries, but about how the global community works together to tackle global problems.

This universal agenda also reflects the reality that the divide between developed and developing countries is dissolving as many formerly underdeveloped countries move up the economic ladder.

The agenda also suggests a step forward in international relations: not all goals have been supported by all countries, but all countries have agreed on the final list by consensus.

The breadth of issues covered and the level of ambition also reflect a new approach compared to the [MDGs](#). The agenda states that improved human wellbeing is the ultimate purpose of all development effort. Achieving that purpose substantially depends on a foundation that binds together and gives balanced weight to economic progress, equity, a healthy environment and democratic governance.

While the goals could be described as offering “something for everyone”, they connect the essential dimensions of development – which are too deeply intertwined to treat separately – and call for structural transformation. Goal 11 on inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable cities for example links to Goal 6 on water and sanitation, Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and between countries, for example. The sustainable management of forests (Goal 15) and sustainable use of the oceans (Goal 14) are also part and parcel of Goal 8 (on sustainable economic growth).

An explicit goal to tackle inequality is also new and reflects a major shift in the international community’s understanding of development. Prevailing economic models that externalise environmental and social costs have undermined development and increased inequality. Alternative models emphasising secure livelihoods, decent jobs, technological innovation and greater productivity are more likely to achieve shared prosperity, lasting wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Global goals cannot themselves resolve complex and high-stakes challenges. IRF2015 believes the SDGS, and the new sustainable development agenda, could be a rallying point for concerted and positive action. Whether that happens, and what it achieves, will be up to the countries, businesses and people of the world. IRF2015 argues that they can make a substantial contribution to global collaboration on sustainable development as part of an ongoing global compact whose aim is sustained progress over the long term.

The success of the new agenda will depend on our collective capacity to implement it within and by each country. As such, the will and capacities of national governments to provide leadership and support will be crucial.

More detailed IRF2015 analysis of the changes in approach is available here:

Post 2015: framing a new approach to sustainable development:

http://www.irf2015.org/sites/default/files/publications/IRF%20briefing%20paper_FINAL.pdf

A global partnership for sustainable development: essential ingredients:

<http://www.irf2015.org/global-partnership-sustainable-development-essential-ingredients>

A *transformative* post-2015 development agenda:

http://www.irf2015.org/sites/default/files/publications/Retreat%20%233_BP%201%20Final%20ODraft.pdf

Paying for the new development agenda

The key question of how to finance action towards the post-2015 sustainable development agenda was addressed at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which took place in Addis Ababa on 13-16 July 2015. The three main funding streams discussed are: international public finance (channelled via the World Bank and increasingly through

regional development banks as well as bilateral official development assistance (ODA), domestic public finance (raised at the national level via taxation), and private finance.

Finance is a particularly crucial issue for the world's Least Developed Countries who need development assistance, both in the form of financial aid and also other support such as access to technologies and markets – which require the support of the private sector.

The [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) agreed at the conference mirrors the universal approach embraced by the SDGs. Financing for development is no longer about rich countries paying for development in poor countries, but about mobilising the resources of rich, poor and middle-income countries alike. There is a particular focus on how poor countries can increase domestic revenue through taxation and other means. However, negotiators in Addis failed to agree on global measures on taxation, which had been called for by many developing countries.

Whether the Addis Ababa Action Agenda will deliver the finance needed to support a global transition to a more sustainable development agenda will be up to countries, businesses and other stakeholders.

More IRF2015 analysis on financing the SDGs is available here:

Towards a Monterrey Plus Outcome: what is needed for a sustainable development finance agenda, IRF2015 background paper, February 2015

http://www.irf2015.org/sites/default/files/publications/Retreat%20%236_BP%201_Final%20for%20website.pdf

Financing for sustainable development:

http://www.irf2015.org/sites/default/files/publications/Retreat%20%236_BP%202_Final%20for%20website.pdf

Facts and Figures on Financing for Sustainable Development:

http://www.irf2015.org/sites/default/files/publications/Retreat%20%236_SD%202_Final%20for%20website.pdf

IRF2015 spokespeople and areas of expertise

Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) – available to comment on the SDGs and the Caribbean;

Contact: Nicole Leotaud, email: nicole@canari.org

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) – available to comment on the general framing of the SDGs and implementation, plus expertise on the SDGs and oceans, climate and urbanisation.

Contact: Tom Bigg, email: tom.bigg@iied.org

Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP) – available to comment on inequality, food security and smallscale farming, and the challenges of implementation in Latin America;

Contact: Ignacia Fernández, email: ifernandez@rimisp.org, tel +56 2 2236 4557
Julio Berdegué, RIMISP, email: jberdegue@rimisp.org, tel +56 2 2236 4557

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Contact: Måns Nilsson: General SDG framing, SDG implementation in Sweden, email: mans.nilsson@sei-international.org

Åsa Persson: governance in SDG implementation and target-setting; global environmental governance' (NB NOT the governance goal per se), climate adaptation, email: asa.persson@sei-international.org

World Resources Institute (WRI) – available to comment on the SDGs and implementation, in particular Goals 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 15

Contact: Kitty van der Heijden, World Resources Institute, email: Kitty@wri.org
Peter Hazlewood, World Resources Institute, email: PHazlewood@wri.org

More resources:

Read more comment and analysis on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda at www.irf2015.org