

Towards a Sustainable Future

NGO Major Group's vision & priorities for delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda

An updated position paper for the SD 2015 programme:

“Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process”

March 2015

Introduction

This short position paper details the NGO's vision and priorities for delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in the wider post-2015 development agenda. It forms part of the European Commission-funded programme "*Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process*" (*Post 2 Post*). This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups. This updated position paper highlights the priorities of the NGO Major Group and builds upon a previous position paper that was released in 2014. This update takes into account the work that has taken place in drafting text for the SDGs as well as the December 2014 United Nations Secretary General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda which summarised the latest priorities for delivering the SDGs.

The NGO Major Group is the largest and most diverse group of organisations, with even a broader spectrum of activities around the globe. Our strength is to bring them all together, with a rich exchange of knowledge, experiences and networks as result. These groups are also embedded at all levels of society, and well placed for the mobilisation, monitoring and implementation of the future set of SDGs.

Summary

Thinking of the SDGs we expect to be able to build a visionary governance model worldwide that captures the need to transform society, embracing a new world that leaves no one behind, that provides the earth with a sustainable future, achieves justice for all and gives new hope to succeeding generations. In a world governed by the rule of law and gender equality, we see the eradication of poverty, the elimination of inequalities and the implementation of a fair and just economic system that provides education, decent work and sustainable patterns of production and consumption for the world. We see an end to all kind of inequalities and violence and with respect for all peoples.

Our position

NGOs continue to advocate systemic change in our economic thinking and acting, as we see the business-as-usual economy as the main driver of unsustainability and impoverishment. We see the SDG framework as an opportunity to move away from the old paradigm of development as being synonymous with GDP-growth, and towards creating well-being for all. Poverty eradication can only be achieved if removing inequalities and emphasizing the redistribution of wealth. A rights-based approach, including calling for women rights and gender equality, is crucial. Good governance needs to be open, Accountable and inclusive. We endorse the 17 SDGs as now proposed, with its targets and indicators as the way forward. As the SDGs will be universal, we have to work in partnership with all governments and stakeholders and based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms and good governance, including policy coherence, have to be strong parts of the framework, as is guaranteed funding.

On the declaration:

- There must be recognition that to ensure the transformative potential of this post-2015 SD framework, respecting the planetary boundaries, well being for current and future generations and social and environmental justice must be embedded in its core;
- The declaration should include fundamentally different ways of measuring well being, which implies no specific reference to GDP growth as an overarching goal, as infinite economic growth will never be compatible with sustainable economies worldwide. We don't want the SD agenda be jeopardized by one sole economic indicator.

- The Declaration should include a specific reference to the universality of the SDG-agenda to be sure that all countries are obliged to implement all goals and will be held accountable for the results achieved.
- It is also important to make reference to the criterion that *'no target should be considered met unless it is met for all social and economic groups'*.
- There needs to be strong emphasis of full understanding of the link between the environment and development where it is clear that increasing resource depletion and damaging ecosystems (including climate change), will heavily jeopardize the eradication of poverty.
- This agenda must enable all peoples to live a good life within their fair share of the planet's resources, therefore recognising the limits of economic growth.
- The Declaration must call for human rights to be upheld in all aspects of their conception, implementation, follow up and review, particularly for the poorest and most marginalised.
- The Declaration must recognize that movement of peoples is an important vulnerability factor when it comes to achievement of the proposed sustainability goals.
- The Declaration must call for gender equality and women's human rights.
- The meaningful and critical role of civil society in achieving sustainable development should be underscored- both in the decision-making processes and in the implementation of the goals. Unless people feel ownership of their own well-being and collectively managing public goods, little will be achieved.
- The Declaration must emphasise that achieving justice, the rule of law and building peaceful societies with strong public and legal institutions is a key condition for enabling sustainable development. Corruption, acts of violence and war are ultimate barriers to achieving progress in relations to sustainable development.

Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development:

Policy and partnerships

- Governments are the main duty-bearers of the implementation and success of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- Implementation of the post-2015 development agenda needs to be based on meaningful, equal and global partnerships. Greater attention needs to be paid to defining the nature and characteristics of genuine and durable partnerships, characterised by inter alia, commitment, trust, respect, transparency and mutual accountability. It will require the collaboration of all stakeholders to be successful.
- The role of the access to information, data and technology is crucial for both implementing and ensuring accountability in the post-2015 development agenda. Technology must be people and planet-centered, inclusive, accessible, gender and age appropriate, participatory, with justice at its core. There must be access to information that is timely, usable and understandable, for all people of all ages and at all levels of society.
- Policy coherence for Sustainable Development is key for all governments and of all levels of governance.
- Industrialised countries, which tend to have internal policies (trade, agriculture, overconsumption of resources) that have a negative impact on the development of the Global South, will need to shift to a new paradigm to assure global well-being and justice.
- National and international legal frameworks need to be put in place that require corporations to report on and to be held liable and accountable for the social and environmental impacts and effects on human rights and the environment of their activities.

Financing for Development:

- Transparency, accountability and participation must be central to a post-2015 sustainable development financing strategy. Financing mechanisms and a monitoring and accountability

framework must also reflect and express a commitment to human rights norms, recognition of limits to growth, international standards and commitments.

- New and innovative funding sources, such as a financial transaction tax and/or taxes on carbon emissions and kerosene, must be implemented to realise the extent of financing needed for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- National domestic resources must increase, including through improved progressive tax systems, an urgent elimination of tax evasion, speculation and of corruption.
- Existing resources need to be redirected in favour of sustainable investments and spending. Direct phase-out of all unsustainable investments has to be realised.
- A substantial reduction of military spendings will make resources free for investing in Sustainable Development and contribute to more peaceful societies.
- Subnational and local governments can improve domestic resources mobilisation for sustainable development, local taxation and fee collection to invest in basic and public services.
- Overseas Development Aid (ODA) must remain a priority while countries put in place public policies that halt fraud, corruption and money laundering, and are monitored for effectiveness.

Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

- The 17 goals and 169 targets include critical issues for sustainable development, which together aim to protect the planet for future generations, eradicate poverty and redistribute wealth and give significance to human rights.
- We urge governments to agree to the 17 goals in the intergovernmental negotiations this year as reopening the goals for negotiation could risk the significant weakening of ambition, especially towards environmental challenges.
- Any proposed 'technical proofing' of targets and indicators by the co-facilitators should only be done in an open and transparent way, using a commonly-agreed criteria, by independent experts, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, with an aim to strengthen the post-2015 framework and technical ways to measure the results.
- There must be important recognition that all countries have a responsibility to achieve all of the goals within their own countries as well as to contributing and/or not hindering the progress beyond their borders.
- A strong goal on gender and mainstreaming of gender equality throughout the goals must be implemented, as it has been shown that without specific mention of women's human rights and gender equality, half the world's population is ignored.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- There needs to be a robust, transparent and comprehensive accountability mechanism underpinning the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.
- Those accountability mechanisms, guided and supported by governmental structures - from the local and regional levels, to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) - must be supported by political will and adequate resources (human and financial).
- NGOs call on UN Member States to strengthen the mandate and the capacity of the HLPF by establishing an appropriate bureau consisting of Member States and civil society representatives for their guidance and political support, and a highly-skilled secretariat with enough resources and a clear structure to achieve all ambitions. The world needs an institution that is solely dedicated to the sustainable development agenda and implementation of the Sustainable Development at all levels, in particular the SDGs.
- The follow up and review process must ensure that the results of local and national level accountability and governance processes are incorporated and institutionalised at regional and (inter)national levels; this is the only way to ensure a strong, multi-faceted global monitoring and accountability framework which can track the compliance of all stakeholders working to deliver sustainable development to their commitments.

- Crucially the HLPF must assure a meaningful role for civil society- in both its design and implementation. No goals or targets and no policies on sustainable development will be implemented unless people and civil organisations are engaged- it is a well-established principle that sustainable development cannot be achieved by governments alone, it requires the active and inclusive participation.
- Data collected must be disaggregated to reflect the differences among various groupings, and must at a minimum include disaggregation by sex/gender, age and income.
- The Major Groups and other Stakeholders represent key sectors of society, help channel the engagement of citizens, economic and social actors, and expert practitioners in UN intergovernmental processes related to sustainable development. According to the Rio principles there will be full recognition of the participation modalities of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders.
- We call for necessary legal frameworks to be put in place to assure effective participation of individuals and communities to capture best practices and lessons learnt, in line with paragraph 149 of the UNSG's Synthesis Report, which recognises the legitimacy and role of nongovernmental actors in accountability.

Next Steps

Now that we are close to the final negotiations and agreements it is very important to prepare ourselves, including governments and civil society groups, for the implementation of the Post2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Awareness-raising and dissemination of the SDG framework, the implications for governance models and policy approaches will be very crucial in the coming years. In formal and informal education the SDG agenda needs to be integrated.

Conclusion

In looking at the future, the NGO Major Group seeks a transformative society, based on a sustainable and fair management of natural resources in order to achieve well-being worldwide. It sees a global society based on respect for human rights, dignity, trust and support for persons at risk. It recognizes the principles of gender equality, good governance and the rule of law. It assures access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and full access to quality education and decent work. It is a society that brings together persons of all ages and all income groups, working with both public and private systems to protect the planet while leaving no one behind.