

1 WHAT IS THE 2030 AGENDA AND WHAT ARE THE SDGs?

In September 2015 all 193 United Nations member states unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which intends to eradicate poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet.

This agenda is applicable to all nations and stimulates action on five key themes: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. Its objective is to build a world where all humans thrive within the planetary boundaries. It is based on the rule of law and human rights and proposes leaving no one behind.

The 2030 agenda encompasses 4 components:

The Declaration: where the world leaders announce their vision, shared principles and their commitment to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This is important for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) because it provides the frame to hold leaders at all levels (from local to global) accountable for this implementation.

Results frame: containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or in short SDGs, and 169 associated targets. These are universal and therefore accepted by

and applicable to all developed and developing countries with the different national realities, capacities and levels of development taken into account. The SDGs are integrated, indivisible and they balance the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental). They came into effect on 1 January 2016 and will last until 2030.

Means of implementation: establishing the means and the Global Partnership to realize the SDGs.

Follow-up & review frameworks: including the principles for translating the SDGs into implementation plans and strategies on local, national and regional levels, plus the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of their advance. CSOs are explicitly recognised here as valuable stakeholders in both processes and governments are encouraged to include them in the whole process.

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WHY DO THEY EXIST?

We are on the threshold of a change at global level where life quality of all human beings is at risk. During the past few years we have seen the rise in inequality bringing social conflict and instability everywhere. On the other hand, science is warning that we are reaching our planet's ecological limits. By the end of the century we may be confronted with a hostile climate, depleted resources, devastated habitats, large-scale species extinction, food shortage, mass migration and their almost inevitable results of conflict and war.

Sustainable Development is the promising path that leads us from today's ecological and social global crisis into the future. The SDGs are the global crisis plan, the agreed, fair and green way to the sustainable future we want, aiming for a world where wellbeing of all people is achieved within the environmental boundaries of the planet.

The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed upon in 2000. The MDGs aimed to halve extreme poverty by 2015 and eradicating poverty in all its forms thereafter. The MDGs achieved great successes and proved to be successful in mobilizing collective action around a time-bound set of globally agreed goals. Yet, many countries did not make sufficient progress, particularly on environmental sustainability.

The SDGs seek to complete what the MDGs did not achieve, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable social groups and countries. But more than just being a continuation of the MDGs, they add critical issues of environmental sustainability, social inclusion, economic development, and governance challenges. Moreover, the MDGs encompassed a developmental agenda in which the role of rich countries was limited to the support of developing countries. In the SDGs framework the concept has changed: improving is now no longer the sole task of developing countries, but that of the developed countries as well.

The SDGs result from a long inclusive dialogue with governments involving business, civil society and academia agreeing on where the world needs to go. Civil society played a central role in the preparation of the SDGs and its role is even more important in the implementation phase as analyst and advocate on strategies, policies, budgets and programs. Civil society can also work as implementer of sustainable development and capacity builder, as communicator of the SDGs to a broad audience, raising awareness and engaging citizens, and by holding governments and others accountable.

What are the overarching benefits of SDG implementation?

Given its universality and indivisibility the implementation of the SDGs demands a holistic and integrated approach, calling for a profound scrutiny on both governance institutions and policies to work harmoniously. Silos within governments and across actors and sectors are still strongly present, but SDGs have the potential to find synergies and identify blockages.

The principle of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) requires that governments take into account the different dimensions of sustainable development in their internal and external policies. PCSD appears in the SDGs as a means of implementation under SDG17.14. As a minimum, policies across different spheres, for example trade and development assistance, or economic growth and environmental protection, are not mutually contradictory or inconsistent. PCSD offers the prospect of identifying policies that damage or block sustainable development.

RESOURCES

[SDG Tool Kit: What is it?](#)

Other training resources:

[UNSDSN: Getting Started Guide](#)

[European Parliament: Understanding SDGs](#)

[SDG Cities: Practical Tools for Getting Started with the SDGs](#)

Background information:

[United Nations: Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

[SDG Guide: Getting to know the SDGs](#)

[IDDRI: NGO Mobilisation around the SDGs](#)

[Bertelsmann Stiftung: SDGs: Are the Rich Countries Ready?](#)