



# Sustainable Development Goals

## Discussion Brief

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This discussion brief gives an overview of the concept of sustainable development in the current international development discourse.

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# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The report of the World Council on Environment and Development, titled “Our Common Future”, defined the concept of sustainable development as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Through three pillars, namely, economic development, social equity, and environmental protection sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social equity and environmental protection. The concept of sustainable development has been mainstreamed in multilateral fora since 1992 with the landmark United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. Since then, sustainable development has received increased focus by Member States who have been working on mainstreaming sustainable development in national development strategies.

Commitments in the outcomes of key United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, and environmental fields have been instrumental in steering the discussion globally. The key outcomes guiding the post-2015 development process include the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, Future We Want, United Nations Millennium Declaration, the 2005 World Summit Outcome, Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, and Doha Declaration on Financing for Development.

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Open Working Group (OWG) was established as an intergovernmental process by

decision 67/555 of the General Assembly. The OWG held 13 sessions, eight of which were on stock taking and the five remaining were for the preparation of its proposal for SDGs. At the 68th session of the General Assembly, the OWG submitted its proposal for the SDGs. The General Assembly has recognized the OWG proposal as the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the future development agenda. The OWG has proposed 17 goals (Table 1).

The proposed SDGs draw from major commitments and goals agreed by the Member States in various multilateral discussions, including Agenda 21, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), JPOI, UN Convention on Biodiversity, and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The United Nations Prototype Global Sustainable Development Report lists current global status of key thematic areas that were under consideration by OWG (Table 2). It can be seen that the progress in key thematic areas around climate change, biodiversity, forests, and sustainable energy are off-track. Crucial social areas such as education and employment are also off-track. The thematic area of means of implementation is also off-track, indicating the inadequate nature of international cooperation.

The current performance reflects that there is a need for concerted efforts to achieve environment and energy goals. Equity, both intergenerational and intragenerational, needs to be the basis of action by the international community as well as Member States. For the same, there is a need to track the progress of outcomes at the global and national levels. The next chapter develops a tracking framework for energy goals based on the proposed SDGs by the OWG—Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. The tracking framework is based on global as well as national databases in India. The objective is to inform responses for India and for the international development community.

## Sustainable development goals

| Goal number | Goal name   |
|-------------|---|
| 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  |

Source OWG (2014)

| Thematic areas  | Energy/<br>environment areas | Selected international reports<br>and assessments  | Existing goals or<br>commitments  | Examples of existing<br>targets  | Current status   |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Poverty eradication (MDGs)                                  | Resilience                   | UN Millennium Development Goals Reports; World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Reports  | Eradicate poverty   | Reduce extreme poverty by half by 2015   | Completed in the MDGs context, but still 1 billion people in extreme poverty |
| Food security and sustainable agriculture (MDGs and beyond) | Resilience, biodiversity     | UN Millennium Development Goals Reports; World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Reports; FAO The State of World Reports; the State of Food Insecurity Reports; UNCCD Reports | World free of hunger  | Reduce hunger by half by 2015  | On-track in the MDGs context   |
| Water and sanitation (MDGs)                                 | Water                        | UN Millennium Development Goals Reports; World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Reports; UN World Water Development Report   | Ensure access to safe drinking water and stop unsustainable exploitation of water resources | Reduce proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by half by 2015 | On-track in the MDGs context   |

Contd...

| Table 2 Contd...   |                                       |  |   |   |                              |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|------------------------------|
| Thematic areas   | Energy/<br>environment areas          | Selected international reports<br>and assessments  | Existing goals or<br>commitments                                  | Examples of existing<br>targets   | Current status               |
| Health (MDGs)  | Air quality                           | <i>UN Millennium Development Goals Report; World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Reports; WHO World Health Report</i>   | Reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/ AIDs | Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate  | On-track in the MDGs context |
| Education (MDGs)   | Resilience                            | <i>UN Millennium Development Goals Report; World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Reports; UNESCO Global Monitoring Reports</i>  | Universal primary schooling                                       | By 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling         | Off-track                    |
| Employment (MDGs)  | Resilience                            | <i>ILO Global Employment Trends; World Bank World Development Reports</i>  | Full and productive employment and decent work for all            | Time-bound targets for assessments are not stated   | Off-track                    |
| Oceans (Ch. 17 of Agenda 21; JPOI; Aichi Targets 6, 10 and 11; Target 7.B of MDG)                    | Resilience, water, biodiversity       | <i>UNGA Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socio-economic Aspects; UNEP Keeping Track Reports</i> | Protection of the oceans and all kinds of seas                    | By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs are minimized, to maintain their integrity and functioning | Off-track                    |
| Biodiversity (Aichi Targets; MDG Target 7.B)   | Biodiversity                          | <i>CBD Global Biodiversity Outlooks</i>  | 20 Aichi Goals of halting global biodiversity loss                | Achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss  | Off-track                    |
| Forest (Aichi Targets on forest; four shared global objectives on forests, agreed at UNFF Session 6) | Forests                               | <i>UN Forest Forum Reports; CBD Global Biodiversity Outlooks; FAO Global Forest Resources Assessments</i>  | Forest component of Aichi targets: reducing deforestation         | A 25% reduction in annual global deforestation and degradation rates by 2015 relative to the 2000–05 average            | Off-track                    |
| Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) (Ch. 4 Agenda 21; and JPOI Ch. 3)                       | Waste management, resource efficiency | <i>UN Trends Reports: Towards Sustainable Consumption Production; World Business Council for SD Vision 2050 Report; UNEP The Marrakech Process Progress Report</i>   | Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production     | International Plan of Action is in place, but no time-bound target yet  | Off-track                    |
| Means of implementation (MDGs, Rio+20; Copenhagen Accord)  | Development cooperation               | <i>UNCTAD Trade and Investment Reports; MDG Gap Task Force Reports; World Bank World Development Reports; IPCC Reports WIPO; Annual Reports</i>                      | Develop a global partnership for development                      | Meet the 0.7% ODA/GNI target now; \$100 billion per year for climate change by 2020                                     | Off-track                    |

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## Sustainable development goals

| Table 2 Contd...  |                                     |   |   |  |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Thematic areas  | Energy/<br>environment areas        | Selected international reports<br>and assessments   | Existing goals or<br>commitments  | Examples of existing<br>targets  | Current status                                     |
| Sustained and inclusive economic growth (Rio+20)  | Resilience                          | UN DESA <i>World Economic and Social Survey</i> ; <i>UNIDO Industrial Development Report</i>  | Achieve sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth                                      | On-going   | Mixed progress                                     |
| Needs of countries in special situations, and mid-income countries (Istanbul PoA; Rio+20) | Resilience                          | SG's Report on Implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs; <i>UN-OHRLS Reports on LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS</i> ; <i>ADB African Development Reports</i>                              | Address special needs of Africa, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS; goals/commitments on mid-income countries | On-going   | Mixed progress among these groups                  |
| Human rights, the right to development and global governance (Rio+20)                     | Resilience                          | <i>UNDP Human Development Reports</i> ; <i>World Bank World Development Reports</i>   | Respect, protect, and promote human rights and fundamental freedom for all                        | On-going   | Mixed progress                                     |
| Equality (MDGs)   | Resilience                          | <i>Human Development Reports</i> ; <i>UN-Women Progress of the World's Women</i> ; <i>UN Millennium Development Goals Reports</i>   | Promote gender equality and empower women   | Equal girl's enrolment in primary school; women's share of paid employment by 2015             | Off-track  |
| Energy (Rio+20 Outcome Document)  | Clean energy, energy access         | <i>Global Tracking Framework Report</i> ; <i>IIASA Global Energy Assessment</i> ; <i>IEA World Energy Outlook</i> ; <i>IPCC WG III Reports</i>  | Make sustainable energy for all a reality   | On-going   | Off-track  |
| Sustainable cities, transport (MDGs)  | Resilience, resource efficiency     | UN-HABITAT <i>Global Reports on Human Settlement</i> ; <i>IEA World Energy Outlook</i> .  | Improve the lives of slum dwellers  | Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers | Off-track  |
| Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (Copenhagen Accord)                            | Resilience, climate change response | <i>IPCC Assessment Reports</i> ; <i>UNFCCC Independent Reports</i> ; <i>UNEP Emission Gap Reports</i> ; <i>World Bank Turn Down the Heat Reports</i> ; <i>UNISDR Global Assessment Report</i> | Hold global mean temperature increase below 2°C   | By 2050 or longer term based on scientific evidence  | Off-track  |
| Conflict prevention, post-conflict peace building   | Resilience                          | <i>Human Security Report</i>  | Maintain international peace and security—UN Charter  | Time-bound goals are not stated  | Different views on how much progress has been made |

Note: Green indicates on-track, Red indicates off-track and Yellow indicates mixed progress.

Source United Nations (2014); column 2 is self-tabulated

## References

OWG (Open Working Group). 2014. Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Details available at <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>>

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## **Sustainable Development Goals: A Discussion Brief**

The discussion brief is an output of a project on energy and environment indices under DFID-TERI Partnership for Clean Energy Access and Improved Policies for Sustainable Development. The objective of the project on energy and environment goals is to support policy development and build capacity of TERI's annual flagship publication, TEDDY (TERI Energy & Environment Data Diary and Yearbook) through new policy relevant content.



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