

## KEY COMMENTS

**Beyond2015 Reaction to the Outcome Document of the  
Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals**  
*August 2014*



**Beyond2015**

## **Beyond 2015** key comments to the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (OWG)

**Beyond 2015**, a global civil society campaign consisting of over 1000 CSOs in over 130 countries, has actively engaged over the lifetime of the Open Working Group, participating in meetings, contributing concrete proposals and engaging with Member States and other stakeholders.

**Beyond 2015** recognizes the openness and participatory approach of the OWG, which allowed space for non-governmental actors to exchange ideas and present proposals. **Beyond 2015** looks forward to continued openness and transparency in the forthcoming negotiations on the Post-2015 agenda.

Over the next year of negotiations, the framework must **move forward** in key respects. It should **aim higher** by building on key values of *participation, human rights and environmental sustainability*, and by extending the content of goals on *climate change, equality and peaceful and inclusive societies*; it must **move forward** by addressing the means of implementation for the goals, strengthening the interlinkages between goals, and agreeing an extensive and robust accountability mechanism.

### **Aiming higher:**

The OWG outcome document is a **good starting point** for the intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 development agenda. Nevertheless, the OWG's proposals must represent **the floor, not the ceiling** of the ambitions for a truly transformative and people-centered framework. The levels of commitment and engagement from Member States in the negotiation process so far show the political will needed to agree on a universal and transformative agenda. To realise this transformation, the goals must do more to express key values of participation, human rights, and environmental sustainability, and the content of crucial goals on climate change, inequality, and inclusive societies must be strengthened.

### **On Participation**

Since its inception, **Beyond 2015** has pushed strongly for the participation of those most affected by poverty and inequality in the design, implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 agenda. **The document's chapeau is clear on the central importance of people** and this is very positive. However, the OWG outcome document does not reflect this by guaranteeing *participation of*, and *accountability to*, those most affected by poverty and injustice across the framework; nor does it prioritise those populations clearly enough by addressing structural root causes.

**Disaggregation (Target 10.2)** enables a focus on those most affected by poverty, inequality and injustice, and highlights divisions between social groups as targets for action. Disaggregation should be further expanded according to national context, including using community-based approaches, in consultation with civil society and the most vulnerable groups.

### **On Human Rights**

We **welcome paragraph 7 in the Chapeau** that clearly reaffirms international human rights commitments. However, this alone does not make the SDGs human rights-*based*. The proposed SDGs do not properly frame goals and targets around existing human rights obligations; do not promote the integration of a human rights based approach; and fail to guarantee human rights accountability, including for the private sector. These shortfalls have the potential to undermine the effectiveness - and indeed the basic purpose - of the Post-2015 agenda. Conversely, clear references to human rights would strengthen the SDGs by clarifying the responsibility and answerability of the Goals.

We also strongly regret that **targets to hold companies accountable for their impact on human rights** are no longer present.

We welcome the **goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** and acknowledge that the targets under this goal address some of the most fundamental barriers to equality. **Beyond 2015** is concerned, however, that the proposed gender goal does not explicitly refer to and support the *full* realization of **women and girls' human rights**. For example, the omission of sexual rights undermines women's ability to participate equally in all spheres of society, and weakens the human rights of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to have control over and decide freely on matters related to their sexuality and reproduction free from coercion, discrimination, or violence.

Furthermore, the proposed targets and their accompanying means do not go far enough in addressing the **structural changes** needed to realize substantive equality, e.g. in areas of employment, the reduction and redistribution of unpaid carework and women's control over assets. Nor do they recognise the differential impacts of environmental threats on the lives of women and girls, or their distinctive role in contributing to sustainability, and to peacebuilding activities.

### ***On Equality***

**Goal 10** - "**Reduce Inequality within and among countries**" - is one of the most transformative goals proposed by the OWG. By including this goal, the new development framework commits to address both economic inequalities and forms of discrimination that affect poor, marginalised and vulnerable social groups. Only a goal with both of these components will truly "**leave no one behind**".

**Goal 10** makes important commitments on fighting discriminatory laws and practices (**Target 10.3**) and fiscal, wage and social protection policy (**Target 10.4**). We welcome the focus on addressing inequalities between countries, especially **Target 10.6** on enhancing the voice and representation of developing countries in decision-making. A goal to reduce inequality must, however, commit to measure and address economic inequality between the richest and poorest and to reduce the absurd and accelerating differences between the top and bottom 10-20% of populations.

The framework should explicitly specify that **no target should be considered met unless it has been met for all**, including the poorest and most marginalised groups. The commitments in the outcome document to social protection systems and floors, and universal health coverage truly accessible to the poorest must be maintained in the upcoming negotiations.

### ***On Environmental Sustainability***

Global resource constraints and planetary boundaries in the proposed SDGs must be clearly acknowledged. The Post-2015 framework cannot afford an approach that promotes growth at all costs without considering human rights and environmental implications. We welcome the inclusion of references to "Mother Earth" in the Chapeau (**Paragraph 9**), the need to promote harmony with nature, and the importance of regulatory and accountability frameworks that enable the protection of the environment. Nevertheless, the goal to promote economic growth (**Goal 8**) does not take into account the environmental dimension of sustainability at target level, except in one target to "endeavour" to "decouple economic growth from environmental degradation" (**Target 8.4**). The framework must demonstrate coherence and integration across the environmental, economic and social dimensions of different goals and targets.

Greater emphasis is required on equitable access and sharing as well as inclusive and participatory management of natural resources and ecosystem services, especially for people living in poverty, indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities. Natural resources and ecosystem services underpin all human and economic activities hence, this focus needs to cut across the entire framework. **Goals 7, 8, 9 and 16** lack this focus, as do **12 and 13**. Goals **1, 2, 5, 14 and 15** whilst better, can still do more to reflect the environmental pillar of sustainable development.

### *On Climate Change*

We fully support the maintenance of this Goal in the SDGs, and the inclusion of a strong paragraph on climate change in the Chapeau (**Paragraph 8**). **Beyond 2015 recommends reinserting a target on holding the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C rise.** There is also a need to include more specific and quantified targets under this goal to adequately address the most fundamental challenge of our time.

The SDGs must be designed so as contribute to a global low-carbon, green development pathway and to keeping global warming below dangerous levels.

### *On Peaceful and Inclusive Societies*

**Beyond 2015** strongly welcomes the retention of a goal on **peaceful and inclusive societies**, and specifically the reference to **access to justice and governance**. **Targets 16b** on the promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies and **16.7** on participatory decision-making are especially important. We regret to see that language on prior and informed consent of indigenous communities has disappeared.

The current goal does not go far enough to guarantee political and civil freedoms or ensure the protection of human rights. Wording and content should be improved to focus on outcomes and people, rather than state outputs and capacities, and to ensure the **protection of human rights** (including for vulnerable populations affected by conflict such as refugees and internally displaced persons - IDPs) and **human rights defenders**. On peace specifically, evidence suggests that society's ability to manage conflict peacefully is crucial to peace, but none of the targets effectively promote this. More widely, peace can be promoted across the framework through addressing issues such as jobs, natural resource management and inequalities between people and social groups.

### **Moving Forward:**

The proposed goals and targets often miss the interlinkages between the three dimensions of sustainable development, undermining a coherent and holistic approach. Questions of indicators, universality and differentiation, and the responsibility *for* and governance *of* the new framework, all need to be resolved in the negotiations moving forward.

### *On accountability*

The Post-2015 framework must be underpinned by the **strongest, most robust and comprehensive accountability framework** possible, incorporating the commitment to monitor and report on progress and share learning and knowledge. This will help build a global partnership towards achievement of the SDGs that makes all actors – governments, civil society and private sector – accountable.

Accountability should be, first and foremost, to those the SDGs are designed to help – the poorest and the most marginalised. Only through hearing the voices of the poorest and most marginalised can we be sure that their lives are truly improving; only through protecting and valuing their participation do we respect and empower them. Hence, mechanisms at the local and national levels, as those closest and most accessible to affected populations, must be strengthened and must feed into processes at regional and global levels. Furthermore, the **universal nature of the SDGs** creates an urgent need to assess each country's contribution to global realisation of these goals. A key challenge will be to assess the extraterritorial impacts and contributions of states, including to the reform of global governance, trade and finance. The contribution of all actors to the global responsibility for realising this agenda must be assessed.

Governments, as duty-bearers and signatories to the framework, have a responsibility to commit to ensuring accountability of all relevant actors in these respects. This will require a multilevel domestic, regional and

global system. Accountability cannot exist without an enabling environment of capacity building, freedom of association and information, transparency, independence and fairness, and broader mechanisms to ensure the effective participation and influence of all people in decision-making processes. The accountability framework of the Post-2015 agenda must include clear directions for governments to provide a conducive environment for citizens, civil society and voluntary organisations to hold governments to account.

### *On the means to realise the goals*

Too many of the proposed means of implementation targets - on trade, development finance etc. - sound like **'business as usual'**. For example, targets requiring international cooperation to change global economic structures that cause poverty such as illicit financial flows, tax evasion and odious debts are very limited in scope. It is not clear that these will achieve the transformative shift envisioned in the chapeau and expressed by many of the goals: an approach tied too closely to the economic *status quo* and its approach to growth risks undermining the realisation of a transformative agenda.

The gap between the cost of implementation and the finance currently available has not been adequately addressed, much less resolved. The OWG outcome document touches on global issues of responsibility, but the nature of broader means of implementation, and *who* must do *what* to realise the agenda, must be agreed over the next year if the goals are to be a success.

### *Participation and the next phase of negotiations*

In **conclusion**, the high standard of debate around the Post-2015 framework so far is a direct reflection of an **open and inclusive process with multiple channels of input for stakeholders**. Only by welcoming a diversity of voices can a legitimate and **people-centred** Post-2015 framework be designed. It is therefore vital to ensure strong participation of civil society in the process leading up to and following the Post-2015 Summit in September 2015. **Full access and the meaningful participation** of all groups will be essential to the transparency and integrity of the forthcoming negotiations. **In this regard, the OWG has been a strong and successful model.**



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