



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN A POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

Beyond2015UK
September 2014

bond
FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

About Bond Beyond 2015 UK

Beyond 2015 is a global campaign aiming to influence the creation of a post-2015 development framework that succeeds the current UN Millennium Development Goals. Beyond 2015 brings together more than 1000 civil society organisations from all over the world. In the UK, the campaign is represented by Bond.

Beyond 2015 UK group is a coalition of over 100 UK-based agencies hosted by Bond. We work to ensure the UK government pushes for an ambitious post-MDG framework that contributes to Beyond 2015's vision of an equitable and sustainable world where every person is safe, resilient, lives well and enjoys their human rights; a world where political and economic systems deliver well-being for all people within the limits of our planet's resources.

The purpose of this paper is to articulate a Bond Beyond 2015 UK consensus position on what environmental sustainability means in the context of the post-2015 SDG agenda and how environmental sustainability should be addressed as an integral part of the post-2015 framework.

This paper is intended to be complementary to positions of individual member organisations of Bond Beyond 2015 UK that may be more specific or go beyond the views expressed in this paper.

Acknowledgements

Report commissioned by Bond. The report was drafted by Christina Chang, an independent advocacy and research consultant, with input from members of Bond Beyond 2015 UK. Many thanks to Joanna Phillips for her contribution and to everyone who commented on the paper.

For more information:

www.bond.org.uk/advocacy/beyond-2015

Mariana Rudge (mrudge@bond.org.uk)

INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that the post-2015 process creates a vital opportunity to bring development and environmental concerns, approaches and solutions together within one integrated global framework – one that can deliver mutually reinforcing progress in both areas. The new framework must address the false dichotomy that has emerged between our development and sustainability objectives, not only to avoid progress in one area undermining progress in the other, but because an integrated approach is the best route for delivering long-lasting change for people living in poverty. Doing this will ensure that our efforts and results can be sustained.

This paper outlines the four compelling reasons why sustainability must be both the heart and backbone of the new global framework; it outlines six key recommendations for policy and decision makers; and it offers a range of practical ideas and suggestions about what sustainability could look like in the new framework in the form of goals and targets.

WORLD LEADERS AT THE 2012 UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20) UNDERSCORED THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Recognising the interconnectedness of these issues, there is a consensus that this understanding of sustainable development should underpin the post-2015 agenda for the following reasons:

1

The new framework must be constructed in a way that ensures that it can respond to future trends

High levels of consumption and waste in rich countries coupled with the growing demand for resources in emerging and developing countries show that business as usual is not an option. The world is also running out of time to prevent dangerous climate change.

2

A healthy environment is a prerequisite for social and economic development.

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries depend directly on healthy ecosystems and good biodiversity.

Basic inputs for lives and for industry derive from our environment and human well-being is directly affected by environmental quality.

3

Environmental degradation affects the economic security and prospects of everyone, but especially those of the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

Environmental degradation, including climate change impacts, affect livelihoods, reduce crop yields and water availability, result in the destruction of homes, and lead to increased food prices and food insecurity. Climate change and environmental destruction is impacting on economic development and long-term costs will be severe. According to the Stern Review, without action, the overall costs of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) each year, now and forever.

4

How social and economic development happens matters for the environment.

Certain models may reduce poverty in the short-term but exacerbate long-term environmental problems. For example, reducing hunger can be achieved by greater output from modern agriculture accompanied by its requirements for water, synthetic chemical fertilizers, herbicides and intensive use of machinery.

Agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of freshwater withdrawals and contributes greatly to freshwater pollution. Expansion of farmland to meet increased food demand has also contributed to deforestation and higher greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts can be substantially reduced by practising models of sustainable agriculture.

WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

1

Build on MDG7 and incorporate environmental sustainability as a 'green thread' that is considered and addressed in all goals, including issues that were deficient in the last goal and targets such as linkage with development goals.

2

Ensure **a comprehensive approach** by adequately addressing all critical environmental issues, including climate change, natural resource management, sustainable energy for all and water management. Ensure adequate coverage and representation among the headline goals.

3

Ensure **a coherent approach** by preventing lose-lose and win-lose outcomes, by addressing resilience, investing in adaptation strategies and ensuring the needs of the poorest are taken into account. Promote win-win outcomes by setting targets that have benefits for both environmental and other development outcomes.

4

Integrate sustainability and equitable economic development goals and ensure that they address the social, economic and environmental objectives that promote synergies and avoid a siloed approach which could see progress on one area at the cost of another.

5

Tackle underlying drivers by:

- requiring governments to commit to policies and actions **that genuinely change behaviours and drivers of environmental degradation** at the local, national and regional levels
- increasing the **voice of the poorest groups**
- making the **private sector an integral part of any agreement**
- requiring governments to commit to develop and use the right measurement tools to track progress and to incentivise progress towards environmental sustainability, including **effective natural capital accounting and beyond GDP measures**.

6

Use **trackable indicators** to ensure that we can assess and monitor if and how progress is being made, including the timely and accurate collection and relevant data and use of measures such as tracking footprints and natural capital valuation.

SUMMARY

Notes on this report

i Our longer paper also has an annex attached which gives examples of good integration.

ii Our longer paper gives the example of an integrated sustainable and equitable economic development goal instead of a goal which implies 'growth at all costs'.



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN A POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

"We, the heads of State and Government and high level representatives, having met at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20-22 June 2012, with full participation of civil society, renew our commitment to sustainable development, and to ensure the promotion of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations...We therefore acknowledge the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognising their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions²".

World leaders at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) underscored the importance of balancing environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development and of realising the complementarity of these goals.

1. A healthy environment is a prerequisite for social and economic development. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries depend directly on healthy ecosystems and good biodiversity. Basic inputs for lives and for industry – water, fuel, construction and manufacturing materials – all derive from our environment. Human well-being is directly affected by environmental quality, for example through air and water quality impacting on health³.

2. Environmental degradation affects the economic security and prospects of everyone, but especially those of the poorest and most vulnerable groups. They can be affected directly through impacts on livelihoods, reductions in crop yields or water availability, or destruction of homes; and indirectly through increased food prices and food insecurity. Reports show that climate change impacts will slow down economic growth, exacerbate inequalities, worsen existing poverty in most developing countries, and trigger new poverty traps in both developed and developing countries⁴. This is supported by the experience of people living in poverty and vulnerability⁵.

3. Conversely, how social and economic development happens matters for the environment.

For example, reducing hunger can be achieved by greater output from modern agriculture accompanied by its requirements for water, synthetic chemical fertilizers, herbicides and intensive use of machinery. Agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of freshwater withdrawals and contributes greatly to freshwater pollution. Environmental side effects include pesticide contamination of ecosystems, nitrate pollution of water, soil compaction, and emissions of greenhouse gas and air pollutants. Expansion of farmland to meet increased food demand has also contributed to deforestation and higher greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts can be substantially reduced by practising models of sustainable agriculture⁶.

Such models should enhance soil quality, use water sparingly and not pollute it, restore biodiversity and ecosystems, and reduce the use of human-edible crops as animal feed⁷.

Similarly, further expansion of public water supply to households and industries may result in a large increase in wastewater loadings to freshwater ecosystems. This, in turn, could lead to major water pollution problems including threats to the freshwater fishery and food security. But if wastewater is treated appropriately while ensuring water is used efficiently, the expansion of water supply may be to a lesser extent and may not lead to major water pollution problems⁸.

² The Future We Want (outcome document adopted at Rio+20) <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf>, Paras 1 & 3

³ UNEP (2013), Embedding the Environment in Sustainable Development Goals, UNEP Post-2015 Discussion Paper 1 v. 2

⁴ IPCC, AR5, WGII: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, from Working Group II of the IPCC, Summary for Policy-makers, March 2014 and Olseen, et al 2014. Chapter 13 Livelihoods and Poverty, in IPCC AR5, WG II report, Cited in Beyond 2015 (2014) Discussion Paper: Exploring Options to Integrate Climate Change into the Goals and Targets for Post 2015 Development

⁵ See IDS, 2013, Work with us and CAFOD 2013, Setting the post-2015 development compass: Voices from the ground

⁶ UNEP (IBID)

⁷ UNEP (IBID)

⁸ UNEP (IBID)

4. The need to address issues of environmental sustainability in the context of broader development is becoming more pressing.

Growing demands for food and water, increasing urbanisation and the rise of the middle classes in many emerging and developing countries all add to the potential stresses on the environment and point to the need to urgently find sustainable solutions to meet development needs. Environmental degradation is also causing huge losses, especially for poor countries and communities.

Business as usual is not an option. Climate change, habitat destruction and over-exploitation of natural resources such as forests and fisheries are now doing great harm to human health, well-being and livelihoods, especially among poorer communities. This threatens catastrophic damage for future generations. It is our accelerating production and consumption of goods and services which is mainly to blame. We are reaching and breaching the earth's limits, as is apparent from the evidence provided by the early stages of work on ecological footprinting and planetary boundaries, and the scientific advice of Intergovernmental Panels⁹.

Preventing dangerous climate change requires that all countries adopt low-emission development pathways, to facilitate the peaking of global emissions as soon as possible and to drive the rapid emission reductions needed thereafter. The IMF, World Bank and OECD, have recently underscored the benefits of early climate action¹⁰. As the IPCC showed recently, mitigation efforts beyond those in place today through to 2030 are estimated to substantially increase the difficulty of the transition to low longer-term emissions levels and will make it much more difficult to keep global warming below 2 degrees C¹¹.

Thus, environmental sustainability must be a foundation of any new framework. It needs to be a 'green thread' that is woven throughout all goals, especially in relation to economic transformation and industrialisation, as well as issues of water, energy and agriculture. Environmental sustainability cannot be an afterthought or treated tokenistically if global development goals to eradicate poverty are to be achieved.

For these four reasons, examining social, economic and environmental dimensions of development in isolation from one another would be a major failing of a new framework.

⁹ Bioregional, Beyond 2015, One Planet Living -The case for Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Post - 2015 development agenda (2013)

¹⁰ Cited in Beyond 2015 (2014)

¹¹ IPCC 5th Assessment Report, WG III, Summary for Policy Makers.

Environmental degradation and climate change bear great economic costs

- A recent study estimates that the total global value of ecosystem services stood at \$125 trillion per year as of 2011. However, they also showed that the loss of ecosystem services between 1997 and 2011 was up to around \$20 trillion per year, as a result of land use change¹². This shows the enormous economic costs of failing to halt unsustainable patterns of development.
- A recent two-year study for the United Nations Environment Programme, entitled *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity*¹³ (TEEB), estimated the cost of damage done to the natural world by human activity at between \$2-4.5 trillion in 2008.
- A second study, for the UN-backed Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), puts the cost considerably higher, at \$6.6 trillion, equivalent to 11 per cent of global economic output. If unchecked, this cost is set to rise considerably: it is estimated that it could cost \$28.6 trillion (£18.2 trillion), or 18 per cent of global economic output, by 2050¹⁴.
- *The Stern Report on the economics of Climate Change*¹⁵ (2006) showed the costs of climate change far exceeded the cost of tackling it. According to the Review, without action, the

overall costs of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) each year, now and forever. Including a wider range of risks and impacts could increase this to 20 per cent of GDP or more, also indefinitely. The Review estimates that one per cent of global GDP per year is required to be invested to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

- The most recent IPCC WGII report admits that global economic impacts from climate change are difficult to estimate, but states that the "incomplete estimates of global annual economic losses for additional temperature increases of approximately 2 degrees C are between 0.2 and 2.0 per cent of income" and potentially more than that. Also there will be large differences between countries, some of them hit much harder than others¹⁶.
- While the IPCC WGIII report acknowledges that estimates of the aggregate economic costs vary widely and depend highly on the basic models and assumptions, it clearly argues that delaying mitigation further increases its costs in the medium and long-term¹⁷.

¹² Costanza et al. , "Changes in the Global Value of Ecosystem Services", *Global Environmental Change* 26 (2014) 152-158

¹³ TEEB (2010), *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity: Mainstreaming the Economics of Nature: A Synthesis of the Approach, Conclusions and Recommendations of TEEB*. <http://www.teebweb.org/our-publications/teeb-study-reports/synthesis-report/>

¹⁴ See also: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11606228> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11495812>

¹⁵ Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130129110402/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/Executive_Summary.pdf

¹⁶ IPCC 5th AR, WGII

¹⁷ IPCC 5th AR, WG III

THE BOND BEYOND 2015 UK POSITION

1. Building on MDG7 – lessons learned

It is important that environmental sustainability must be properly addressed in any post-2015 agreement.

Environmental sustainability was included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but results have been disappointing. Although there has been some minor progress and some political attention galvanised since MDG7 was agreed, degradation of ecosystems, unsustainable use of natural resources and loss of biodiversity have continued.

Several important deficiencies in the manner of including environmental sustainability in the earlier agreement can be identified¹⁸:

- Its scope was too limited and critical environmental problems were not included
- It failed to look at linkages with other development goals
- It did not target underlying causes, only symptoms
- Goals were too vague and provided too little guidance for governments to implement them well
- When it comes to comprehensive coverage, many critical environmental issues were absent in the MDGs, such as air and water pollution, key ecosystems, and accumulation of chemical waste

The new goals, targets and implementation measures of any successor framework to the MDGs must tackle these deficiencies.

2. A comprehensive approach

Environmental sustainability must be the strong backbone or the 'green thread' rather than a goal of any new development framework. It is one of its overarching objectives of sustainable development alongside social and economic development.

There is unlikely to be a single goal covering all aspects of environmental sustainability. Rather, governments should ensure that sustainability is adequately reflected in any framework so that it is covered across and within the goals (a sufficient number should directly address critical environmental issues and all goals should be consistent with promoting environmental sustainability).

Bond Beyond 2015 UK have made proposals for broader coverage of environmental issues to include:

- Climate change
- Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Incentives/enablers of sustainable consumption and production
- Natural resource management
- Sustainable energy for all
- Sustainable water management
- Sustainable agriculture and food production
- Protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services

These issues do not necessarily need to be each represented by a stand-alone goal; many can be integrated into broader goals. Still, a balanced number of goals covering the issues listed above should be present in the final framework. Apart from ensuring a balanced representation of the three dimensions of sustainability, this is also important for visibility. It is critical that government ambitions are mobilised on all major environmental topics. A balanced number of environmental goals will help keeping environmental topics on the public and political agenda in the development arena for the next 15 years to come.

¹⁸ UNEP (2013)

3. A coherent approach

Coherence is about integrating environmental sustainability into the framework by acknowledging its interactions and interrelations with other social and economic goals. There are several dimensions to this:

Preventing lose-lose: Environmental degradation can act as a barrier to slow or even reverse progress towards other goals such as poverty eradication. However, developing countries should not be penalised in the shift towards sustainable development. One of the aims in achieving coherence in a new framework is therefore to ensure that environmental sustainability is promoted, but in a way that is consistent with the needs and interests of developing countries and the poorest communities within them. It is therefore sensible that a new framework should address issues such as environmental resilience of poorest communities and adaptation strategies in developing countries, to obviate such dangers. It is also important that any new framework must adopt the principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and that where co-benefits are not possible, poor countries and communities must be compensated for any losses incurred in the shift to sustainability.

Preventing win-lose: Governments need to ensure that one objective is not achieved at the expense of or in the absence of another. For example, targets to achieve minimum levels of human and economic development need to sit alongside targets to achieve minimum standards of environmental sustainability. This is in line with the idea of “living within the doughnut”¹⁹ and would ensure pursuing paths to more sustainable consumption and production. It would be reinforced, for example, by using a combined measure of progress that incorporates social, environmental and economic dimensions. There is a danger in separately pursuing social, economic and environmental objectives, as one aspect could be undermined in pursuit of another, or neglected altogether. For example, in the shift to the green economy, it is potentially easy to side-line the poorest groups. Small holder farmers can easily be undermined and further entrenched in poverty if solutions for sustainable agriculture focus on industrialisation, rather than seek to increase their own productivity.

Promoting win-win: Any new agreement should encourage actions that have positive benefits for both environmental and economic and/or social development. Poverty eradication would not put the ecological limits under stress since available data implies that the social foundations could be achieved for every person alive today with strikingly few additional resources. In fact, the biggest source of planetary-boundary stress today is excessive resource consumption by roughly the wealthiest 10 per cent of the world’s population²⁰. Therefore, addressing inequality can also be perceived as such a ‘win-win’ strategy and it has been shown to have benefits for poverty reduction, economic development, environmental sustainability and even well-being²¹. The new framework should encourage active targeting of such win-wins.

¹⁹ Raworth (2012), Can We Live Inside the Doughnut?, Oxfam Policy Discussion Paper

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Bond Beyond 2015 UK paper on inequality and post-2015 (2014)

Win-wins include:

- Introducing energy efficiency measures as a way to promote innovation and improve the competitiveness of industry.
- Identifying opportunities for new green industries and jobs e.g. in the renewable energy sector, the energy efficiency sector (retrofitting buildings), or through appropriate waste management strategies that can create large numbers of low skilled jobs.
- Creating a good investment climate for renewable energy, thus allowing leapfrogging of fossil fuel energy, avoiding future energy insecurity and helping enhance access to energy in rural areas. Carbon finance can potentially be accessed to support such investment.
- Undertaking environmental fiscal reform in a way that saves public money, improves competitiveness, creates incentives for more sustainable development and benefits the poor.
- Developing institutional mechanisms e.g. relating to forest management or tourism sector development, that facilitate access to either public or private sources of conservation finance.
- Assessing impacts of climate change on economic activity and associated risks to development drivers and facilitating appropriate adaptation that targets poor and vulnerable communities.

These measures can all have positive benefits for the environment as well as social and economic development. These benefits are not however always automatic, for example, if new energy solutions are not appropriate or accessible to the poorest groups.

4. Integrated sustainable and equitable economic development

An integrated goal on economic development, for example, will have to include social, economic and environmental objectives; targets for policy changes and other actions to achieve win-wins; and measures to ensure that the needs of the poorest are addressed. In order to ensure coherence, a new framework will have to incorporate a host of elements, as listed in Box 1 of this paper, in a goal on economic development as well as across other goals such as global partnerships or poverty eradication.

Elements for integrated sustainable and equitable economic development*

**rather than delivering ‘growth at all costs’, an integrated goal should focus on economic development that is both sustainable and equitable.*

Currently poverty eradication, economic growth and natural resource management objectives are spread across separate goals.

This raises the possibility that a country could make progress in one without progress – or even undermining progress – in another. There are significant benefits to be derived from a more integrated approach to these objectives. Not only would such clashes be avoided, but the prominence of win-win solutions would be enhanced and possible synergies could be exploited.

Overleaf are some suggestions to improve the current proposals, which are designed to present an indication of such an integrated approach, rather than a definitive goal design as such.

The suggestions do not intend to encompass all aspects of poverty reduction and economic development, as they are broader objectives and would be addressed across several goals.

EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED APPROACHES BASED ON HIGH LEVEL PANEL PROPOSALS :

Current High Level Panel version	Preferred integrated approach	Examples
Absolute poverty targets	These should sit alongside measures that environmental resources are managed sustainably and shared equitably. These could be supported by suitable targets on 'footprint' per capita ²² that take local circumstances into account.	As discussed, this prevents win-lose outcomes and drives countries towards more equitable and sustainable consumption and production.
No economic inequality targets	Include inequality reduction targets.	This would allow governments to exploit win-win outcomes of tackling inequality.
Generic top-line targets on environmental accounting and safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity	Include targets that incorporate concrete measures that contribute to economic activities operating within safe ecological limits.	This would include measures to go beyond GDP, secure that the economies operate within planetary boundaries, properly apply natural capital valuation and ensure sustainable natural resource management. <i>Example target: develop infrastructure that promotes sustainable and resilient patterns of development and urbanisation, that promotes access for all, and that is consistent with sustainable management of natural resources including land, water and energy.</i>
Job creation targets	Specify targets for decent jobs accessible to the poorest and jobs in the "Green Economy" (i.e. in environmental industries and services, or in sectors with improved environmental performance).	This would encourage governments to develop better jobs that contribute to broader equity and sustainability objectives.
Targets for start-ups, value added and an enabling business environment	Specify targets for environmentally sustainable sectors in particular and sectors that employ large numbers of poor men and women.	A government's business enabling environment is its most powerful tool to ensure that tax, subsidies, regulatory requirements, knowledge management, etc work for and not against industries with a positive social and environmental impact. <i>Example target: create a conducive policy environment to develop sustainable patterns of industrial development, including the promotion of resource efficiency and sound waste management, and the promotion of green industrial sectors such as renewable energy.</i>

²² See Bioregional (2013), One Planet Living: The Case for Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Current High Level Panel version	Preferred integrated approach	Examples
No technology transfer or capacity building targets	Include targets for policy commitments and measurable outcomes for technology transfer to developing countries. Targets to increase investment in research and development in developing countries.	Developing countries need to have access to technologies to improve their environmental outcomes. They also need to be able to develop appropriate, accessible environmental solutions that improve the lives of poor men and women.
Universal access to transport and IT infrastructure target	Include targets for investment in sustainable infrastructure and for structure accessible to the poorest communities (eg rural infrastructure)	Equity and sustainability targets within universal infrastructure objectives would help to target government investment more appropriately.
No targets on government procurement	Include targets for government procurement to benefit the poorest (through contracts with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and small-scale farmers, for example) and to promote environmental sustainability.	Government procurement is a significant tool to help develop industries and to promote sustainability and opportunities for the poorest men and women.
No targets for private sector	Targets for private sector to provide decent jobs, procure from SMEs and environmentally sustainable suppliers, to increase environmental impact and publish accounts on social and environmental impacts.	Some goals for the private sector are included elsewhere, but the private sector contribution to poverty eradication and sustainable and equitable growth is important and should be comprehensively addressed within such a goal. <i>Example target: work in partnership with the private sector to build the capacity of SMEs to meet environmental and social standards and improve productivity down the supply chain, and to ensure that international businesses build linkages with local business and promotes the development of skills in the local labour force.</i>

5. Tackling underlying drivers

As the shortcomings of MDG7 demonstrate, there is a need to be more explicit in what any agreement is trying to achieve and how to get there, if it is to work in practice as well as on paper.

In order to be truly effective, a new post-2015 framework needs to tackle underlying drivers of environmental degradation, not simply state aspirations of environmental improvements and outcomes it would like to achieve.

Such underlying drivers include:

- Practices of private sector companies
- Investment decisions
- Consumer behaviours
- Government capacity and practices



These drivers can be positive or negative, depending on how they behave and how they are managed. In order to maximise positive and minimise negative influences, governments need to undertake five types of action:

1. Governments need to commit to policies and actions that genuinely change behaviours and drivers of environmental degradation at the local, national and regional levels
2. They need to cover the building blocks of a Green Economy
3. They need to increase the voice of the poorest groups and tackle vested interests
4. They need to regulate the private sector and ensure that it is a positive actor and an integral part of any agreement
5. The right measurement tools need to be developed to track progress and to incentivise progress towards environmental sustainability

In practice, this would involve targets for governments to use policy tools at their disposal to tackle these drivers: taxation, subsidies, regulation, public education, trade and investment rules, as well as their own procurement and spending policies. This would not provide a blueprint for government action, but would give countries the guidance that was lacking in MDG7 as to how to go about achieving the desired changes and outcomes.

Enabling policy commitments by governments

Whilst each country's path to sustainable development will be unique, there are shifts in policy and practice that are recognised as effective in promoting sustainable development. Countries could commit to work towards some of these shifts as part of a new framework, either as enablers for SDG implementation, for example to increase the proportion of government procurement that is geared towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP), or as part of a good governance approach, for example to review how far national and international regulatory frameworks support the shift to sustainable and inclusive development.

Governments could include in their national implementation plans for SDGs the following elements:

- **Shift government procurement and infrastructure investment towards SCP**
- **Support large and rapid improvements in resource efficiency and energy efficiency by producers and challenge unsustainable production.** Governments can support research and investment in sustainable production and drive improvements through regulation and standards, voluntary agreements and changes in subsidies and taxation.
- **Help consumers towards sustainability and challenge unsustainable consumption.** This can include 'nudge'-type policies, information campaigns and fiscal incentives and disincentives which encourage people to buy more sustainable products and services. State subsidies for unsustainable products should be withdrawn.
- **Build a coherent and enabling legal, policy, financial and institutional environment for private and public sector innovation and technology transfer.** Strategically link national science, technology and innovation policies and systems to education policy, intellectual property and trade policies. Governments should also promote open access to knowledge, create awareness about environmentally sound technologies (ESTs), provide trustworthy standards, and promote fair, competitive and open markets for ESTs.
- **Targets for private sector companies must also be included in any new framework.** The behaviours of private sector companies are a key driver of environmental change. An agreement could set direct targets to influence those behaviours as well as seeking to influence them via government interventions, such as incentive structures and regulation. The private sector will certainly play a role in the successful implementation of goals and objectives, so actively including them within the agreement would be a real dividend²³.

- **Directly involve poor communities through participatory approaches, as it has been successful in linking science and technology innovations with the interest of excluded communities²⁴.** While it is too easy for the needs of poor men and women to be marginalised, their active participation is essential to ensure that environmental ambitions are achieved equitably (and to avoid win-lose outcomes).

6. Trackable indicators and targets for environmental sustainability

While progress towards targets for policy actions by governments will be relatively easy to track, the paucity²⁵ of environmental data means that it will be harder to track, for example, whether we are successfully protecting ecosystems or shifting towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. In order to have trackable targets, right measures are needed to know if progress is being achieved. The implementation of the SDGs will need to provide for the timely and accurate collection of the relevant data.

For countries to safeguard their environmental resources on which sustainable and sustained economic development depends, they will need to know the state of these critical resources, how much their citizens are consuming, and what impact the consumption has in the respective contexts (for example, one cubic meter of water consumed in a high rainfall temperate country does not have the same impact as one cubic meter in an arid country).

Further, safeguarding the environment can be supported by ascertaining the per capita footprints for natural resources such as freshwater, forests, farmland, fisheries, raw materials and climate stability (i.e. per capita carbon emissions on a consumption basis) that take into account – if appropriate – the different local circumstances.

The Global Footprint Network²⁶ estimates that our global footprint is about one and a half times the Earth's total area of land and sea. To sustain us in the long term, we would need one and a half planets. If everyone lived in the same way as people in the average developed nation, we would need three planets.

But more than a billion of the earth's poorest people lack a basic level of human needs²⁷.

Tracking footprints would allow us to know not only how sustainably, but also how equitably the earth's resources are being used. Governments need to commit to work on natural capital valuation, as well as on mapping resource scarcity and risks.

Integrated goals will also require more integrated measures

This means a need for broader changes to measurement and accounting systems. Governments have already acknowledged the need to go beyond GDP in national accounting to know environmental and social progress, in addition to changes in economic growth. Governments should develop accounting systems which measure critical natural capital and use sustainability indicators that report the status of critical natural capital. They should give measures of human development, equity and well-being equal importance as GDP growth.

To know whether companies are having a more positive impact on society or the environment requires knowing their social and environmental performance in relation to their economic performance. Governments need to work with business to ensure natural resources are safeguarded and managed in a way that allows them to continue providing the services on which both nature and business depends. This could be supported by introducing footprints of products and services taking global supply chains into account. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounts promoted and developed by the UN Statistics Division can assist governments in this²⁸.

²³ For further discussion on possible actions and behaviour change of private sector actors see Bioregional (2013)

²⁴ University of Sussex cited in Bioregional (2013)

²⁵ For more on the problems with environmental data, see UNEP (2014) pp24

²⁶ <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/>

²⁷ Cited in Bioregional (2013)

²⁸ Cited in Bioregional (2013)



Society Building
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
UK

+44 (0)20 7837 8344
bond@bond.org.uk
bond.org.uk