



**POSITION PAPER**

# **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA POST-2015**

*EUROPE IN THE WORLD: PROMOTING  
SOLIDARITY, FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND  
EQUALITY*

*The EU on the world stage*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set up a framework for global efforts to improve people's lives worldwide by addressing extreme poverty in its many forms and promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability.

At the threshold of the 2015 deadline, many achievements can be reported: global poverty has been halved ahead of schedule, 90% of children in developing regions attend primary education, and remarkable improvement has been witnessed in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. Still, the majority of the eight goals are not met, and we are facing a set of growing inequalities and new challenges: poverty and abuse of human rights are still pervasive, 58 million children are out of school, and climate change, long lasting conflicts, epidemics and new forms of terrorism are threatening to wipe out much of the progress made.

The United Nations Special Summit on Sustainable Development will take place in September 2015 in New York. The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should not just try to build on the work started with the MDGs, but to take a step further. The development agenda post-2015 must be universal, transformative and inclusive in nature with a strong objective leaving no one behind. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to establish measurable goals both in qualitative and quantitative terms, and to improve the availability of disaggregated data.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains crucial. Commitments need to be fulfilled. Ensuring aid effectiveness while mobilizing domestic resources and innovative financing, such as Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), are of great importance. We need to reinstate global partnership, shared responsibility and improve.

Governance on all levels to create synergies and increase efficiency, for a better future. In that sense, the EU should play a leading role, also as a model in promoting Policy Coherence for Development on a global level taken into account its own achievements. Sustainable and development-friendly agriculture and fisheries policies will play an important role in the new SDGs. Investing in the agricultural and fisheries sector can address not only hunger and malnutrition but also other challenges including poverty, water and energy use, climate change, and unsustainable production and consumption.

## **1 S&D PRIORITIES FOR THE SDGS**

The starting point of the ongoing negotiations is the outcome report of the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs setting up 17 goals underpinning 169 targets. Although some clustering may be considered, we need to be careful not to tear open the package as it portrays many valuable steps forward, including the more universal nature of targets and some ambitious and innovative goals that would be the first at risk to be lost. However, as a compromise text, the proposal has its weaknesses, and we want to push for more ambition:

1. No target should be considered met unless it is met for all social and economic groups, as stated in the UNSG Synthesis Report. With the MDGs significant progress has been made, but often it was unevenly distributed.
2. A stronger human rights-based approach to development is needed. Not just as a target among others, but as a basis for all sustainable development.
3. The work of the OWG included extensive consultation of NGOs. This should be better reflected by emphasising civil society's role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the SDGs, as well as the strengthening of local communities and marginalized groups' ownership of the new goals, and the still unexplored possibilities regarding a genuine contribution by the private sector.

A large consensus seems to prevail on many important issues, such as the need for poverty eradication through, among others, universal education and health care coverage. However, the S&D Group considers that, on the basis of our values, certain issues deserve special attention.

## **2 FIGHTING INEQUALITIES**

Fighting inequalities should be considered as a top priority of the new agenda, together with eradicating poverty and the three dimensions of sustainable development. (social, economic and environmental). Reducing inequality is a self-standing goal in the OWG proposal and we want to see it as such in the final package. However, more emphasis should be given to addressing the imbalances in the concentration of both power and wealth. The new agenda must address the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, including the elimination of child labour, decent work for young people, and labour rights for all. Targeted support to the most vulnerable, building effective social protection systems and providing universal access to all levels of education and health

care are ways in which development policies can contribute to more inclusive societies. As income and wealth imbalances are a growing concern, especially in middle-income countries, special attention should be given to monitoring and accountability mechanisms to be established in order to ensure that inequality is not hidden behind statistics. Discussion should also consider whether the 1, 25\$ threshold as a definition of extreme poverty reflects reality, or the bar should be raised to 2\$ as suggested by many NGOs and in the European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2014 on the EU and the global development framework after 2015.

Besides income disparity, inequality is also a question of unequal rights and access to basic services. We need to ensure that women are empowered and see their role as genuine drivers for development acknowledged. We need to ensure equal pay for women and that their sexual and reproductive health and rights are clearly stated and protected in the future development agenda. While recognizing the sensitivities around this issue, simply integrating universal access to family planning into primary public health care could have a tremendous impact on women's lives.

### **3 GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR GENUINE ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE**

The main arena for discussion on climate change action will be the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Paris in December 2015. Agreements to be reached in Paris and in New York are to be seen as complementary and mutually re-enforcing with clear benefits to be gained in areas of green energy, climate adaptation, and resilience building. In the SDG's context, the most crucial step should be the recognition of the fact that, while climate change is causing the greatest threat and burden to the least developed countries, the responsibility for genuine action needs to be fully shared in the global community. Greater efforts are needed in order to build resilience of local communities by enhancing prevention and disaster risk reduction, and by reducing their vulnerability through development cooperation.

Despite the obvious linkages, carrying responsibility means that the financial needs rising from climate change need to be met outside Official Development Aid (ODA), the focus of which is to be maintained on poverty eradication. In this context, sustainable energy is essential for fuelling growth and development, and energy has to be recognised as a key development challenge since access to modern energy services is a necessary precondition to achieving development goals.

## **4 NEW APPROACH TO MIGRATION**

The SDGs need to give due attention to the reality that globally one out of every seven people is a migrant. Exponential rise of irregular migration resulting from human-made and environmental crises has become an acute political issue, which can only be effectively tackled at its root causes through development assistance for building resilience of local communities and supporting inclusive and democratic institutions. Coordination of migration policies on all levels as well as a strong commitment to full respect for human rights and human dignity are essential to combat human trafficking. Alongside fighting forced migration and criminal activities involved, we want to see regular mobility promoted as an engine of development and a sign of economic activity profiting both the countries of origin and of destination. Principles of decent work are to be applied to migrant workers globally, and we need to search ways to better leverage remittances – which is over triple the amount of official ODA – to sustainable development. Development policies should contribute to building return-friendly conditions in post-conflict regions, as the return of skilled and qualified nationals can make an indispensable contribution to recovery.

## **5 FIGHTING TAX EVASION AND TAX AVOIDANCE**

A strong and credible outcome from the Addis Ababa conference on financing for development in July is a prerequisite for any success to be achieved in New York in September 2015. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to tax evasion and avoidance, as well as to losses in other illegal capital flows. The problem needs to be recognized and dealt with on national, regional and global levels.

Building stable and fair tax systems on national level is essential for governments to be able to gather revenues needed and for ensuring accountability. The principle to be adopted is of taxes to be paid at the location where the economic activity is taking place. As part of the SDGs on global partnership and of their means of implementation, we want to see a clearly pronounced global commitment to block illicit financial flows and to shut down tax havens. Moreover, participation of developing countries in the decision-making on global tax rules shall be strengthened, for example by the establishment of an intergovernmental body dealing with global norm-setting in tax matters, under the auspices of the United Nations.