

11 TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD

New Agenda and Goals for Sustainable Development

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“We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet. The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives.”¹

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The above quoted words signal the hope and the vision for the future of participants of the United Nations Summit held from 25 to 27 September 2015. The world leaders came together to adopt the post-2015 development agenda and the new sustainable development goals for the next 15 years. The 70th session of the UN General Assembly, while celebrating the anniversary of the creation of the United Nations and of its Charter, took a decision of great historic significance. The General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a global action to change the world, “to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential.”²

The new Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force on 1 January 2016. They are intended to be universally applied to all countries – poor, rich and middle-income –, governments and people, to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. The new Agenda and Goals are expected to govern all the activities and efforts on sustainable development over the next fifteen years “to end poverty fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.”³

The new 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding targets are built on the Millennium Development Goals⁴ and are intended to complete what they did not

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1 United Nations Declaration, Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution of the General Assembly, 70/1, 25, September 2015, Paragraph 50. p. 12.

2 GA Res. 70/1, 25 September 2015. Ibid.

3 www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/ (2016.07.10).

4 Resolution of the UN General Assembly on the Millennium Declaration, GA Res. 55/2, 8 September 2000.

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achieve. However, they are much broader including not only anti-poverty targets, but many economic (agricultural, industrial, energy, and infrastructural) development ones, and environmental goals to protect the earthly ecosystems, the climate and biodiversity. The new goals go further even in that they design to end poverty in its all forms, recognizing that eradication of poverty must go hand-in-hand with economic growth strategies, and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, employment and human settlements. The 2030 sustainable development agenda and the new global goals for sustainable development also seek to realize human rights and gender equality. The resolution states that they are integrated and indivisible, and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental pillars.

11.2 ANTECEDENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The concept of sustainable development has become a prominent agenda for international and national policies, and also an inspiring topic for academic literature, since its inception. Much has already been written about the meaning and various definitions and constituent elements of sustainable development; a kind of ‘sustainability science’ has emerged since the turn of the century,⁵ especially reflecting to the major global UN conferences, such as the Rio+20 Summit on Sustainable Development. The new sustainable development goals are built on the long process of the formulation and further clarification of the concept of sustainable development through several historic international conferences, declarations and programmes.

The long road leading to the present agenda and goals can be traced back to the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference adopting a Declaration on the Human Environment.⁶ The Stockholm Declaration emphasized the interrelated link between human development and the environment, and the need for more prudent care for harmful consequences of humanity’s actions on the environment on which our life depend. It underlined the link between environmental protection, as an ‘imperative goal of mankind’ and the other fundamental goals of peace, and of worldwide economic and social development. “The natural resources of the earth ... must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations....”⁷

The most frequently cited definition of sustainable development was formulated in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission in its report ‘Our Common Future’: “Sustainable

5 UNDESA, *Global Sustainable Development Report, 2015 Edition*, New York, 2015, p. 40. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/2015> (2016.07.24). According to the Report in 2014 alone several tens of thousands of academic papers referring to sustainable development were drafted.

6 Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1, Stockholm, 5-16 June, 1972.

7 Stockholm Declaration, *ibid.*, para. 6, Principle No. 2.

development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁸ The UN General Assembly in its resolution emphasized the need for a new approach to economic growth “as an essential prerequisite for eradication of poverty and for enhancing the resource base on which present and future generations depend”, and that “sustainable development should become a central guiding principle of the United Nations, governments and private institutions, organizations and enterprises.”⁹

Twenty years after the Stockholm Conference in 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – in its informal name the ‘Earth Summit’ – was held in Rio de Janeiro. The goal of the summit was to rethink the relationship between development and the environment and to elaborate strategies to halt destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet, to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries. The Summit aimed also at the establishment of a new global partnership, through new levels of cooperation among states and other stakeholders and to adopt international agreements to protect the environment. The two most important documents adopted were the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and the Agenda 21. The Rio Declaration, reinforcing and extending the former Stockholm principles, established 27 principles for sustainable development.¹⁰ The concept of sustainable development became an established principle of the international environmental policy.

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.¹¹

The Agenda 21 is an action programme for sustainable development, reflecting a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environmental cooperation. The programme aims at the elaboration and implementation of sustainable development patterns to be applied worldwide. The Agenda deals, *inter alia*, with combating poverty, changing consumption patterns, demographic dynamics, protection of human health, conservation of natural resources and biological diversity, action for women, children and youth and various means for implementation and financing.¹² The Earth Summit and

8 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: ‘Our Common Future’ as an Annex to the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly A/RES/42/187, 11 December 1987. For the definition see Chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development.

9 GA RES/42/187, 11 December 1987.

10 Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I) Annex I, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992.

11 Principles 1 and 3 of the Rio Declaration, *ibid*.

12 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf> (2016.07.30).

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related documents, especially the Agenda 21, influenced all subsequent UN conferences, which have on their agenda issues such as the relationship between environment and economic development, human rights, population, social development, vulnerable groups, human settlements and the need for environmentally sustainable development. The Rio Summit decided to establish the UN Commission on Sustainable Development with the task to ensure effective follow-up of the Declaration and Agenda 21. The Commission was subsequently replaced by the High Level Political Forum established by the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

Ten years later the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development was conveyed in Johannesburg to provide for implementation of the goals and agenda agreed at Rio. The main results of the summit are the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development* and the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*. The Declaration confirmed the key commitments from Rio, and further evolved the concept of sustainable development by adding a three pillar approach. Heads of States and Governments assumed

a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at the local, national, regional and global levels.¹³

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation addressed a range of measures; *inter alia*, poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development, health issues, sustainable development of developing states, especially Africa; means of implementation and institutional framework for sustainable development.¹⁴ Both the Declaration and the Plan of Implementation also committed world leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite the efforts and positive results to implement these strategies and programmes, twenty years after the first ‘Earth Summit’ unsustainable trends still existed and there were continuing concerns over unsatisfactory economic and social progress and growing environmental degradation. To find new, more effective solutions and to accelerate changes necessary for attaining sustainable development goals, the second UN Conference on Sustainable Development was conveyed again in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The Rio+20 Conference focussed on two main themes: how to build a ‘green economy’ to achieve

13 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, para. 5, A/CONF.199/20, Johannesburg, South Africa, 4 September 2002, www.un-documents.net/jburgdec.htm (2016.07.30).

14 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, UN A/CONF.199/20, www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/WSSD_PlanImpl.pdf (2016.07.30).

sustainable development and lift people out of poverty, including support for developing countries that will allow them to find a green path for development; and how to improve international coordination within a renewed institutional framework for sustainable development. The outcome document of the conference ‘The future we want’ reaffirmed the former commitments, objectives and principles of sustainable development, and the states’ readiness to further develop and implement the Rio Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In assessing the progress and remaining gaps, the outcome document devoted a chapter to the *green economy* in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The Conference decided to establish a universal intergovernmental High Level Political Forum to replace the former Commission on Sustainable Development, and outlined a framework for action and follow up. It listed a series of thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues where implementation gaps should be eliminated to achieve sustainable development. This included, *inter alia*, poverty eradication, agriculture, energy efficiency, sustainable cities and human settlements, transport, climate change, biodiversity, desertification, land degradation, drought, water and sanitation, health care, employment, social protection, education and so on. Heads of States and Governments decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals which should build upon the Millennium Development Goals and integrated into the post 2015 development agenda.¹⁵

11.3 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Despite the promising programmes for sustainable development the international community still had to face several global challenges at the beginning of the new century, e.g., the economic crises in Asia and Latin America; the former Eastern Bloc countries’ efforts to strengthen their economic recovery after the collapse of the Soviet socialist system; the slow economic development in sub-Saharan Africa; health problems due to the increasing HIV/AIDS epidemic, the deepening mistrust towards international economic institutions in connection to adverse effects of globalization on poorest countries and people.¹⁶ Some figures on economic, social and environmental situation, first of all in developing countries, indicate severe obstacles to sustainable development at the turn of the century: 51 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lived on less than one dollar a day; 826 million people were suffering from severe hunger in developing world, 11 million children died

15 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Resolution of the General Assembly on the Outcome Document, *The future we want*, A/CONF.216/L.1.

16 J.W. McArthur, ‘The Origins of the Millennium Development Goals’, *SAIS Review*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, 2014, p. 5. The Author gives an overview of the process lead to the launch of the Millennium Development Goals and explains some myths held by many about the process.

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each year before reaching the age of five, 6.3 million died of hunger; 1 billion people had no access to clean water supplies and 2.4 billion people lacked access to basic sanitation. 97 percent of those 113 million school-age children not enrolled in primary education lived in developing countries, 60 percent of them were girls; the figure in rural areas was particularly low. At the global level, the estimated maternal mortality was about 515,000 each year, 99 percent in developing countries. Nearly 22 million deaths were due to global HIV/AIDS catastrophe by the end of 2000; nearly 2 million people died annually because of tuberculosis, one million died from malaria, and the number was increasing. 13 million children have been orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS; the number was expected to rise to approximately 40 million in the future two decades in sub-Saharan Africa alone. People in developing countries had no sufficient health care lacking even medicines. A quarter of the world's population who lived in cities didn't have adequate housing and basic social services, e.g., clean and safe water and sanitation. Two thirds of those living on less than one dollar per day were woman, the number of woman in rural areas lived in absolute poverty had risen by 50 percent over the past two decades. There were 66 million unemployed young people at the turn of the century; their number was rising to an expected 1.2 billion by 2010. The greenhouse gas emission leading to global warming was increasing; in 1997 the CO₂ emission was 23.8 billion tons worldwide, four times more than the 1950 level. The world's natural forest areas were converted to another land uses; the world's biological diversity continued to decline at an alarming rate; the demand for clean and safe water was increasing; in 2000 1.1 billion people – 18 percent of the world's population – lacked access to safe water. There were severe problems in relation to violation of principles of human rights and democracy in many parts of the world; vulnerable groups needed much more protection and humanitarian assistance: e.g., in the 1990s, more than two million children were killed as a result of armed conflict, and more than six million were permanently disabled or seriously injured; in 2001 more than 20 million persons had to leave their homes, over 12 million were refugees. Poverty in Africa continued to rise; 340 million people – half of the population – lived on less than one dollar a day.¹⁷ Many more figures could be referred to, however, the above list justifies the need for urgent action of the international community to put the world's development on a sustainable pathway.

In April 2000 the UN Secretary General submitted a report to the UN General Assembly on the main global challenges and on how the United Nations could make a useful contribution to solve those problems, in general, on the role of the United Nations in the 21st century.¹⁸ This report was a basic document provided for the UN Autumn Summit, in which Kofi Annan underlined that the benefits and opportunities of the glob-

17 The figures were cited from the UN Secretary General's 'Roadmap' for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, see below.

18 General Assembly Press Release, 3 April 2000, www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000403.ga9704.doc.html (2016.07.19.).

alization were unevenly distributed among nations and peoples. He highlighted three global issues on which states had to work together: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom of future generations to sustain their lives on the planet. The 'Millennium Report' contained concrete proposals on key areas and shared values to be addressed by the international community.¹⁹

Near to the end of the last century, in September of the year 2000, the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly was devoted to a Millennium Summit aiming at the establishment of a new programme and partnership in development cooperation. The Summit was attended by 149 heads of state and government, over 40 high ranking officials from other countries. At the New York Millennium Summit the world leaders unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration, which was a commitment to work together to build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world.²⁰ The Millennium Declaration contained the values and principles and the objectives for the international agenda for the first 15 years of the new century. The declaration contained concrete goals and targets for many collective actions on development and poverty eradication.

In 2001, for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary General submitted to the General Assembly a report, with a programme for the implementation of the Declaration. This 'Roadmap' rearranged the goals into a set of eight goals with their corresponding targets to be reached by 2015. These eight goals and targets became known, as a formal term, the Millennium Development Goals.²¹ From that time, these goals have become the main reference point for the international development cooperation.

The Millennium Declaration reaffirmed the fundamental values and principles that govern the UN and its Charter, as well as their future actions towards the more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Participants recognized their collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity, and the world leaders' duty to all people, especially the children and most vulnerable. Among the values the Declaration highlighted, e.g., just and lasting peace, sovereign equality of all states respecting their integrity and political independence, peaceful resolution of disputes, respect for international law, furthermore, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, equal rights of all, without discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, language and religion.

19 Kofi Annan, 'We the peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century', United Nations Department of Public Information, New York, 2000.

20 For the detailed history of the process leading to the Millennium Development Goals – conferences, meetings, documents, other set of international development goals – see, D. Hulme, 'The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World's Biggest Promise', *BWPI Working Paper* 100, Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester, Manchester, September 2009.

21 See the Follow up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, Report of the Secretary-General 'Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration', UN GA, A/56/326, 6 September 2001. The set of eight goals with targets is annexed to the Report, *ibid.*, pp. 55-58.

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The world leaders admitted that the benefits and costs of globalization were unevenly distributed, therefore the central challenge was to ensure that it became a positive force for all the world people. They called for global efforts including policies and measures to meet the needs of developing countries and those with economies in transition involving their effective participation.

The Declaration listed certain fundamental values that are essential to the new century's international relations, such as, freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. Under these bold headings the document shortly explained what should be done to reach the desired outcome.

Under the heading peace, security and disarmament, states promised to spare no effort to free peoples from all forms of war, which claim millions of lives; furthermore, they were resolved to strengthen the respect for the rule of law, and to ensure compliance with the decisions of the International Court of Justice. They also decided to make the United Nations more effective and to provide it with the necessary resources and tools for conflict prevention, peaceful resolution of disputes and peacekeeping, furthermore, to strengthen the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. The summit called on states to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons and to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating all nuclear dangers. As further important commitments, world leaders were resolved to take action against international terrorism, international drug problems and other kinds of transnational crime, e.g., smuggling in human beings, money laundering, and illicit traffic in weapons. They called on all states to accede and implement the convention on anti-personnel mines and on their destruction, and the mines protocol. Participants of the summit were resolved to minimize the adverse effects of the UN economic sanctions on innocent populations, and to review these sanctions regularly.

The following chapters of the Declaration contained those goals and targets for the development and poverty eradication, and for the protection of the environment, which later were grouped into the more easily understandable set of eight Millennium Development Goals. The Roadmap claimed that the goals and targets should be limited in number, be stable over time and drafted in a simple way to allow their clear communication to a broad audience.²²

22 'Roadmap', UN GA, A/56/326, 6 September 2001; Annex, para. 3, p. 58.

The Millennium Development Goals and relevant targets were the following:²³

1. *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day
 - Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2. *Achieve universal primary education*
 - Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
3. *Promote gender equality and empower women*
 - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
4. *Reduce child mortality*
 - Reduce by two thirds the mortality of children under five
5. *Improve maternal health*
 - Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters
 - Achieve universal access to reproductive health
6. *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*
 - Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
 - Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
 - Halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7. *Ensure environmental sustainability*
 - Integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse the loss of environmental resources
 - Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
 - Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
 - Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020
8. *Develop a global partnership for development*
 - Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
 - Address special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States
 - Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt

23 www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ (2016.07.12).

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- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

The Millennium Declaration emphasized that the success in achieving these goals depended, *inter alia*, on good governance at the international level and on an open, transparent, non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system. Participants undertook to address the special needs of the least developed countries, to adopt a policy of duty- and quota-free access for exports from them, and to implement a programme of debt relief for poor countries. They decided to grant more generous development assistance to those countries that also apply their resources to poverty eradication. There were no explicit target for increased aid in the declaration itself; however, the follow up document for its implementation, the so-called 'Roadmap' contained not only the goals and targets but indicators. For the official development assistance (ODA) it set the 0.7% of gross national product for developed countries, and 0.15% for least developed countries.²⁴ This solution was the result of the international conference on financing for development held in Monterrey in 2002. The 'Monterrey Consensus' adopted by the heads of states and governments signalled a landmark global agreement between developed and developing countries recognizing their respective responsibilities in key areas for development, such as trade, aid, debt relief and institution building. Participants acknowledged that the official development assistance plays an essential role as a complement to other sources of development, especially in the least developed countries, without appropriate capacity to attract private investments. They also emphasized that the ODA is a crucial instrument not only for the improvement of productive capacities but for supporting education, health, public infrastructure development, agriculture and rural development and to enhance food security; and that this effective partnership in the implementation of this official aid would help to complete the goals, targets and commitments of the Millennium Declaration.²⁵

The participating states reaffirmed their support for the principles of sustainable development and the implementation of the Rio Agenda 21 and the other international environmental conventions. They were resolved to adopt a 'new ethic of conservation and stewardship' in all environmental actions.²⁶

24 'Roadmap', UN GA, A/56/326, 6 September 2001, Annex, *ibid.*, p. 58.

25 UN Report of the International Conference on Financing and Development, A/CONF. 198/11, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002. For the role and the targeted amount of ODA, see paras. 39-42, pp. 9-10. For the final text of agreements and commitments adopted at the Conference see also, UN, 'Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development', United Nations Department of Public Information, New York October 2003.

26 UN GA Res. 55/2, para. III. 11, *ibid.*, p. 4.

The world leaders promised to spare no effort to promote democracy, to strengthen the rule of law and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. They were also resolved to ensure the protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families; furthermore, to work for more inclusive political processes and to ensure the freedom of the media.

For the protection of vulnerable populations the Declaration called, *inter alia*, for strengthening of humanitarian assistance to children, civilian population, refugees and other groups, suffering from disasters, armed conflicts, or genocide. Special needs of Africa were also highlighted, e.g., support for the consolidation of democracy, political and institutional development in Africa, assistance for poverty eradication and sustainable development through enhanced financial assistance and technology transfer.

The Declaration closed with the participants' determination to strengthen the United Nations and its bodies to become more effective in pursuing all of priorities set by the Millennium Summit. States were resolved to strengthen further cooperation between the UN and other international organizations, bodies and national parliaments, and civil society in the implementation of the millennium process. Participants solemnly reaffirmed that "... the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development."²⁷

In 2002 the Millennium Project – an advisory body commissioned by the UN Secretary General – was established in order to develop an action plan for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In 2005 they presented a report with practical recommendations for the implementation.²⁸ The main recommendation of the Millennium Project was to put the goals at the centre of national and international poverty reduction strategies, and to tackle the practical ground-level challenges for development, with the rigorous assessment of developing countries' needs.²⁹ From 2007 this advisory work was continued by a support team under the aegis of the UN development programme.³⁰

27 UN GA Res. 55/2, para. VIII. 32, *ibid.*, p. 9.

28 UN Millennium Project, 'Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals', New York, 2005. The UN Millennium Project was directed by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals. www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MainReportComplete-lowres.pdf (2016.07.10).

29 For the summary of the UN Millennium Project's work see, www.unmillenniumproject.org/who/index.htm (2016.07.14).

30 M.A. Peeters, 'The Millennium development Goals: Introduction and historical process', Dialogue Dynamics on Human Identity and Global Governance, 2010, www.dialoguedynamics.com/content/forum-d-apprentissage/cours-et-seminaires/the-millennium-development-goals/the-millennium-development-goals/the-millennium-development-goals-69/article/the-millennium-development-goals (2016.07.14). The author criticizes the MDG process because of the lack of leading role of national governments; it was driven instead by UN and other international bodies, experts, and not 'by the people for the people'.

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The year 2015 was set as a final deadline for the achievement of almost all goals, and the year 1990, as a baseline for the targets.³¹ Five years before the set deadline the UN General Assembly welcomed the progress made in poverty eradication, however, it recognized the setbacks, caused partly by the financial and economic crisis started in 2008. The heads of state and governments admitted that the result fell far short of what was needed, e.g., that the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger surpassed one billion and that inequalities between and within countries remained a significant challenge. Despite successes combatting extreme poverty and improving the life of children and healthcare, the result was mixed; progress has been uneven among regions and between and within countries; hunger and malnutrition rose from 2007, and slow progress was made in reaching full and productive employment. They reinforced their commitment to make every effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, through effective implementation and intensified collective action by all member states and relevant stakeholders. The resolution adopted by the meeting contained an action agenda on what had to be done to accelerate progress in achieving all goals and targets by 2015. The resolution emphasized that the national ownership and leadership were indispensable in the process, and that each country had primary responsibility for its own economic and social development; therefore, the role of national policies, domestic resources and development strategies couldn't be overemphasized.³²

In 2013, in the outcome document adopted by a follow up meeting, the General Assembly reviewed again the progress made so far. It was claimed that the Millennium development Goals have contributed to remarkable progress, and that significant and substantial advances have been made in meeting several of the targets. Heads of States and Governments admitted again that there were unevenness and gaps in achievement, and immense challenges have remained. The most urgent action was needed in the poorest developing countries, especially most African countries lagged behind in achieving any of the goals by 2015. The Assembly decided to accelerate the progress and to target the most off-track goals, particularly in relation to poverty and hunger eradication, access to primary education, child mortality, health care, environmental sustainability and access to water and sanitation. The outcome document expressed the need for a strong post-2015 development agenda built on the Millennium Development Goals to complete the unfinished tasks and to respond to the new challenges.³³

31 The Declaration didn't refer to the 1990 baseline; the reason for choosing that year was the fact that the most of the targets set by the Millennium Declaration was derived from the former global conferences that used 1990 as a baseline. See 'Roadmap', UN GA, A/56/326, 6 September 2001, *ibid.*, paras. 6, p. 7, Annex, para. 3, p. 58.

32 UN Resolution, 'Keeping the Promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals', GA Res. 65/1, 22, September 2010. On the importance of national implementation, see para. 10.

33 UN GA Resolution on the Outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, GA Res. 68/6, 9 October 2013.

The final Millennium Development Goals report was presented in 2015.³⁴ It highlighted the successes and acknowledged the gaps remained. According to the evaluation in general, the millennium development process was the “most successful anti-poverty movement in history”, which lifted more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, enabled more children to attend school than ever before, made steps to protect the planet, generated new and innovative partnerships.³⁵ The report gives an overview of the results, stating that at the end of the 15-year period the world community “has reason to celebrate”; the process “has saved the lives of millions and improved conditions for many more”. The data and analysis reported prove that “with targeted interventions, sound strategies, adequate resources and political will, even the poorest countries can make dramatic and unprecedented progress.”³⁶

The report provides figures about all the results in the achievement of each goal and shows the present situation. Some examples: the extreme poverty has declined by more than a half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age has fallen by almost half, to 57 million from 2000. The developing regions have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education; and the number of employed woman increased up to 41 percent from 35 percent in 1990. The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half between 1990 and 2015. Maternal mortality ratio has also declined by 45 percent worldwide since 1990; the most of the reduction has occurred since 2000. The combat against HIV/AIDS, and other diseases was also successful; the new HIV infections fell by 40 percent, the mortality rate from malaria has fallen by 58 percent from 2000, the tuberculosis prevention saved 37 million lives. As for environmental sustainability, the ozone-depleting substances have been virtually eliminated since 1990, 91 percent of the global population has access to improved drinking water, 21 billion people has gained access to improved sanitation, the proportion of urban population living in slums has also fallen by almost 10 percent. The official development assistance from developed countries has increased by 66 percent; the duty free import from developing countries increased by 14 percent between 2000 and 2014. The access to internet facilities increased from 6 percent of the world’s population in 2000 to 43 percent in 2014, enabling 3.2 billion people to use global networks.³⁷

The report points out that despite significant achievements, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, the poorest and most vulnerable people are left behind. Gender inequality still persists, only half of working-age women participate in the labour force, they earn 24 percent less than men globally; the unemployment rate of woman with

34 UN, The Millennium Development Goals Report, New York, 2015.

35 Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary-General’s foreword to the Report, *ibid.*, p. 3.

36 UN, The Millennium Development Goals Report, *ibid.*, p. 4.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

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higher education is higher than of men with similar levels of education. Big gaps still exist between the poorest and richest households, and between rural and urban areas. Millions of poor people still live in poverty and hunger, without access to basic services; their estimated number is 800 million. 57 million children of primary school age are not in school, 16,000 children under five die each day, mostly from preventable causes. More than 2 billion people have no access to proper sanitation. There are conflicts threatening human development; by the end of 2014, almost 60 million people were forced to leave their homes, the number is increasing; half of the global refugee population is children. Climate change and environmental degradation is continuing; global emissions of CO₂ have increased by 50 percent since 1990, 5.2 million hectares of forests were lost in 2002, overexploitation of marine fish stocks threaten the safe biological limits, water scarcity affects 40 percent of people in the world; these environmental challenges require urgent response from the global community. The report closes with reference to the emerging global post-2015 agenda, which building on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, can “transform the world to better meet human needs” and economic development, “while protecting the environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.”³⁸

11.4 THE POST 2015 AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, *The future we want*, considered the eradication of poverty as the greatest global challenge facing the world today, and as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Participants reaffirmed their commitments to achieve the internationally agreed development goals in economic, social and environmental fields, including the Millennium Development Goals.³⁹ They underlined the necessity to accomplish the goals and targets set by the Millennium Declaration: the outcome document referred to them under various headings dealing with thematic areas, such as poverty, water and sanitation, education, gender equality; it discussed practically all those aspects of development that were covered by the millennium documents.

Within the framework for action and follow up, the document emphasized the importance of a further set of sustainable development goals based on former programmes and commitments already made, like the Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, on achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, and that it should contribute to the implementation of the outcomes adopted by the Rio+20 Summit. According to the guidelines to be considered in the drafting of the future sustainable development goals, the document emphasized, *inter alia*, that they should address and

38 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

39 Rio+20, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Outcome of the Conference, ‘The future we want’, A/CONF 2016/L. 1, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012. See Chapter I, ‘Our common vision’.

incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development, and that they should be coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015. Further requirements were that the new goals should be action oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities, levels of development and priorities; the involvement of all relevant stakeholders should be ensured. The conference resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on the development of the new sustainable development goals, and the establishment of an open working group with the task to submit a report to the General Assembly, containing a proposal for the new goals for consideration and appropriate action.⁴⁰

The UN General Assembly established the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.⁴¹ Representing the five United Nations regional groups, the body had thirty seats which were shared by a group of seventy member state representatives. The mandate of the Open Working Group was to prepare a report with a proposal on a set of sustainable development goals, which address the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way.⁴² The final report and proposal of the Open Working Group was completed and submitted to the UNGA in the middle of 2014. The introduction to the proposal referred to the main statements of the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, emphasizing that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives and essential requirements for sustainable development. The proposal listed declarations, programmes and implementation plans and all the commitments in the outcomes of all the major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields that have been based on through the drafting of the new goals. The Open Working Group underlined the importance of integrating the three pillars of sustainable development within and across goals, as a reflection of scientific views of what should be developed and sustained.⁴³ The proposal emphasized the need for the widest possible cooperation by all countries to protect the climate system and to hold the increase of the global temperature below 2 °C. The report underlined the necessity for a global partnership for sustainable development while emphasizing the primary responsibility of each country for its own development and the role of national policies. The

40 UN, 'The future we want', A/CONF 2016/L. 1, Chapter V, 'Framework for action and follow-up', B., 'Sustainable Development goals'.

41 Decision of the UN General Assembly, A/67/L.48/Rev.1, 15 January 2013. Most of the seats were shared by several countries; two co-chairs elected were the representatives of Hungary and Kenya.

42 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html> (2016.07.23).

43 The suggested six categories are: people, economy and society to be developed, and nature, life support and community to be sustained. Various issues under these six areas were discussed in an integrated way. See, UNDESA, 2015, *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

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proposed sustainable development goals were accompanied by targets for which further indicators have to be developed. The proposed goals were built on the Millennium Development Goals while responding new challenges.⁴⁴ The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding 169 targets were adopted according to the proposal, in September 2015.

At the end of 2014 the UN Secretary-General presented its synthesis report for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The report titled *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet* proposed a universal and transformative agenda for sustainable development with a set of six essential elements for delivering the sustainable development goals. These were: (a) dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality; (b) people: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children; (c) prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy; (d) planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children; (e) justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions; and (f) partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development.⁴⁵ The report emphasized that the agenda must be integrated for economic, environmental and social solutions, and must reflect the broader international human rights framework, including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, and the right to development. The report welcomed the outcome delivered by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals emphasizing poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, inclusive growth, equality and a people-centred agenda for sustainable development. The report underlined that facing enormous challenges the international community shouldn't be inactive and continue business as usual, and that the present generation is charged with the transforming of our societies. The Secretary General concluded that "we have an historic opportunity and duty to act ... to achieve a life of dignity for all, leaving no one behind."⁴⁶

The United Nations Sustainable development Summit was held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York. At the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a historic sustainable development agenda, a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The Agenda 2030 sets the course for the next 15 years to build a better future for all, to end poverty, to fight inequality and injustice and to protect the planet. The core of the Agenda is the set of new Sustainable Development Goals, which are universal, applying to all nations and people, pledging that 'no one will be left behind'.⁴⁷

44 Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, UN GA 68/970, 12 August 2014.

45 Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, UN, General Assembly, A/69/700, 4 December 2014, Chapter III. 'Framing the new agenda', Parts C-D.

46 Ibid. Chapter VI, 'Conclusion: together in a universal compact'.

47 UN Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', GA Res. 70/1, 25 September 2015, pp. 2, 14.

The Preamble to the Declaration *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* admits that eradication of poverty in its all forms is the greatest global challenge and indispensable element of sustainable development. However, the 17 sustainable development goals and the accompanying 169 targets seek to realize human rights of all; they are integrated and indivisible, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. They focus on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, as essential and interlinked elements of sustainable development.

The Declaration underlines that the Agenda is of unprecedented scope and significance, since it is accepted by and applicable to all developed and developing countries taking into consideration different national realities and capacities. After listing the numerous economic, social and environmental challenges the world faces today, participants of the summit recommit themselves to full realization of Millennium Development Goals, underlying that the new agenda goes far beyond the former; it sets out a wide range of economic, social and environmental objectives, furthermore, it defines means of implementation. It is unique, since “Never before have world leaders pledged a common action and endeavour across such a broad and universal policy agenda.” The Declaration reaffirms the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without discrimination on any ground. The new goals and targets came into effect on 1 January 2016, and will guide the decisions and actions over the next 15 years. The Declaration emphasizes the importance of the agenda’s implementation in all countries, and at regional and global levels, for which it suggests ways and means, through a revitalized and enhanced global partnership. Each country’s primary responsibility for its own economic and social development is recognized and the essential role of national parliaments through their legislative and budgetary decisions is acknowledged. Participants emphasized the importance of international public finance, especially the role of official development assistance with the commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of gross national income for it to developing countries.

The new sustainable development goals and targets are not legally binding, however, world leaders admit that governments at all levels have the primary responsibility for follow up and review the progress made in implementing the goals and targets. While “the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized” national policies and development strategies need to be supported by a revitalized global partnership.

At global level, the High-level Political Forum – working with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council – will have the central role in overseeing a network for follow up and review processes, based on national and regional follow up and review; these will require accessible and timely data collection. The Declaration provides for a detailed explanation on the means of implementation and the working of the global partnership. It emphasizes the essential role and the importance of follow up and review procedures at national, regional and global levels, for which it sets guiding principles.

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Participants called for action to change the world, to build a better future for all people. Referring to the Charter of the United Nations, world leaders treat the Agenda 2030 as of great historic significance, a 'charter for people and planet for the twenty-first century'.

The central part of the document is the list of the new Sustainable Development Goals and targets. They are universal, however, taking into account different national approaches and circumstances, each government has to set its own national targets deciding how global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies.

Sustainable Development Goals – and some of the targets are the following:

- *Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere*
 - Eradicate extreme poverty for all people living on less than \$1.25 a day
 - Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all
 - Ensure equal rights to economic resources and access to basic services for all men and women
- *Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*
 - End hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round
 - Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale producers and equal access to land
 - Ensure sustainable food production systems that help maintain ecosystems and strengthen the capacity for adaptation to climate change and extreme weather
- *Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*
 - Reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births
 - End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age
 - End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases
 - Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse (narcotic drug and alcohol)
 - Achieve universal health coverage, access to quality essential health care services and medicines for all
- *Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*
 - Ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education
 - Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education including university
 - Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy

- *Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*
 - End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
 - Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls, and other types of exploitation
 - Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making
- *Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*
 - Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
 - Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation
 - Improve water quality by reducing pollution; halve the proportion of untreated waste water
 - Substantially increase water-use efficiency
 - Protect and restore water-related ecosystems
- *Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*
 - Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
 - Increase substantially the share of renewable energy
 - Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency
- *Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*
 - Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in least developed countries
 - Achieve higher levels of economic productivity
 - Improve global resource efficiency in consumption and production; decouple economic growth from environmental degradation
 - Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people, and equal pay for equal value
 - Eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery; eliminate child labour in all its forms, and the use of child soldiers
- *Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*
 - Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure
 - Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, significantly raise industry’s share of employment and gross domestic product, double its share in least developed countries
 - Support domestic technology development
 - Significantly increase access to information and communication technology, provide universal and affordable access to internet in least developed countries

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- *Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries*
 - Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average
 - Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
 - Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of income, eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices
 - Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions
 - Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies
 - Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign investments, to states where the need is the greatest
- *Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*
 - Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
 - Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, expand public transport
 - Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization, and integrated human settlement planning and management in all countries
 - Protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
 - Adopt integrated policies and plans for resilient human settlements including adaptation to climate change
- *Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*
 - Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action
 - Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
 - Halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains
 - Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle
 - Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse
 - Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies, and restructure taxation to reflect their environmental impacts

- *Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*⁴⁸
 - Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
 - Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
 - Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- *Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*
 - Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities
 - Sustainably manage and protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems
 - Effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal fishing practices, restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible
 - Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology
 - Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law – UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
- *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*
 - Ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreement
 - Promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
 - Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil
 - Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
 - End poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and illegal trade in wildlife products
 - Integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning

48 In a note on the Goal 13 on climate change the Resolution acknowledges that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. GA Res. 70/1, 25 September 2015, p. 14.

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- *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*
 - Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
 - End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
 - Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
 - Combat all forms of organized crime
 - Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
 - Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
 - Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
 - Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms
 - Prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
 - Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development
- *Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*
 - Strengthen international support to developing countries
 - Implement fully the official development assistance commitments of developed countries, to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 20 percent to least developing countries
 - Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through financing, relief and restructuring of debt
 - Enhance regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing
 - Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms
 - Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals
 - Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization
 - Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports
 - Implement duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries

- Enhance policy and institutional coherence, global and multi-stakeholder partnerships to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
- Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships
- Increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data in developing countries
- Develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

Most of the targets set 2030 as a deadline for achievement, however many of them requires shorter implementation period ending in 2020, 2025, or exceptionally, in 2017. For example, malnutrition of children under 5 should be ended by 2025; protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems should be reached by 2020; the deadline for a substantial reduction of the proportion of youth unemployment is 2020, and for the ending of all forms of child labour is 2025. Most of the targets on the conservation of marine resources set closer deadline, e.g., for the reduction of marine pollution or for the ending of overfishing the year 2025 and 2020 respectively. Halting of deforestation and the loss of biodiversity should be reached by 2020. For many of the targets having more general character the Declaration doesn't specify concrete deadline, e.g., for the creation of sound policy framework at all levels to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions; for the prevention of trade restrictions in world agricultural markets; for the achievement of accession to quality essential health-care services for all; for ensuring women's full and effective participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels; for the achievement of higher levels of economic productivity; for the development of resilient infrastructure; for ensuring of enhanced representation of developing countries in international economic and financial institutions' decision-making, or for the integration of climate-change issues into national policies, strategies and planning, and so forth.⁴⁹

The above list of goals and targets demonstrates their integrated character, the strong inter-relationship and interdependence among cross cutting issues. For example, sustainable economic growth, higher levels of economic productivity and employment will contribute to the eradication of poverty and social inclusion; an increase in agricultural productivity and ensuring sustainable food production systems help to end hunger and malnutrition. Achievement of these goals and targets are necessary to ensure healthy lives, reduce the

49 To avoid a weakness of the Millennium Development Goals, it was noted that the 15 years period for the achievement of the new Sustainable Development Goals should include intermediate objectives and milestones with clear dates, which would ensure closer feedback between policies and outcomes. See J.D. Sachs, 'From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable development Goals', *Lancet*, Vol. 379, June, 9, 2012, p. 2210 <http://jeffsachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/From-MDGs-to-SDGs-Lancet-June-2012.pdf> (2016.07.23).

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number of deaths and illnesses and promote well-being. Sustainable production and consumption and resource efficiency will foster decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, which helps to preserve ecosystems and reduce degradation of natural habitats, and the loss of biodiversity.⁵⁰ All these aims require protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, promotion of the rule of law, accountable and transparent institutions, responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels and a global partnership for sustainable development.

11.5 EARLY CRITICISMS AND THE WAY FORWARD

After the Rio+20 Conference various opinions, evaluations, suggestions and critiques of the drafts have emerged as for the lessons learned from the implementation of Millennium Development Goals and for the content, organization and number of the future sustainable development goals and targets. According to a quite bold criticism, the 2030 agenda is too broad, the new promises, the 17 new goals including 169 development targets contain everything; they do not reflect effective prioritization, which would be critical, since resources are limited for completing all targets. Considering some development targets, the author's opinion is that e.g. universally accessible green and public spaces for woman, children, older persons and those with disabilities is a nice goal, however is not really a top priority when 1.2 billion people still live in abject poverty, 2.5 billion lack access to water and sanitation, and almost a billion people go to bed hungry each night. The same can be said about ensuring that by 2030 all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development, when research shows that more than one third of all school-age children – a quarter billion in all – currently fail to learn even the fundamentals of reading and mathematics. Thus, resources shouldn't be diverted from basic education to promote sustainable development in schools.⁵¹ The authors' opinion is that returning home, participants of the UN conference recognize that they cannot work on 169 targets simultaneously, but they will choose a smaller number on which to focus. He advises to work on less number of key development targets, namely those 19 ones that an expert panel of university professors identified in a

50 On the integration of development and environmental considerations in sustainable development goals and targets see Griggs et al., 'An integrated framework for sustainable development goals', *Ecology and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2014.

51 B. Lomborg, 'Unsustainable Development Goals', Project Syndicate, Sustainability & Environment, Sept. 15, 2015, www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/unsustainable-development-goals-by-bj-rn-lomborg-2015-09 (2016.07.03).

project of a research group, the Copenhagen Consensus Center.⁵² The expert panel states that the elimination of extreme poverty remains an important, focal aspiration for the entire post 2015 agenda, and that many of the targets they propose would help to achieve reductions in poverty, such as more free trade, educating pre-schoolers in Africa, nutrition and ensuring greater gender equality for women. They find that the 19 targets represent the best value-for-money in the development over the period 2016 to 2030, and would do much more good than to spread it across the 169 targets the UN identified.⁵³ In contrast to opinions putting poverty eradication and environmental protection as two priorities for sustainable development goals, there are arguments for organizing them around a single priority on the top of the goal-system hierarchy, which should be the protection of the integrity of Earth's life system, subordinating other interests under this goal.⁵⁴

Another sharp criticism claims that the real problem is the contradictory character of the sustainable development goals: the core of the programme relies on the old model of industrial growth, an ever increasing level of extraction, production and consumption, when the planet's capacity has already been overshot by 50 percent yearly. Thus, the solution would be to reduce consumption by the world's wealthy and to change production patterns. According to this opinion the drafters of the new goals fail to accept the fact that mass impoverishment is due to the extreme wealth accumulation and overconsumption by a few, and that they avoid to address the deeper causes of poverty. It is also claimed that for the eradication of extreme poverty is impossible with the target of 1.25 dollars a day, since it isn't adequate for human subsistence: targeting instead at least 5 dollars a day would be needed to achieve normal life expectancy and meet the basic needs of humans. Conse-

52 F. Kydland, N. Stokey, T. Schelling, 'Smart development Goals'. The 19 smart development goals are grouped around three broad themes: people, planet and prosperity reflecting the three pillars of sustainable development, economic and social development and environmental protection. They are the following: People: Lower chronic child malnutrition by 40%; Halve malaria infection; Reduce tuberculosis deaths by 90%; Cut early death from chronic disease by 1/3; Avoid 1.1 million HIV infections through circumcision; Reduce new-born mortality by 70%; Increase immunization to reduce child deaths by 25%; Make family planning available to everyone; Eliminate violence against women and girls; Planet: Phase out fossil fuel subsidies; Halve coral reef loss; Tax pollution damage from energy; Cut indoor air pollution by 20%; Prosperity: Reduce trade restrictions (full Doha); Improve gender equality in ownership, business and politics; Boost agricultural yield growth by 40%; Increase girls' education by two years; Achieve universal primary education in sub-Saharan Africa; Triple preschool in sub-Saharan Africa. www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/outcomedocument_bw.pdf (2016.07.30).

53 The Expert Panel claims that reaching these global targets by 2030 would return more than \$15 of good for every dollar spent for the benefit of people, planet and prosperity. *Ibid.*

54 R.E. Kim, K. Bosselman, V. Mauerhofer, 'Planetary Boundaries in Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals: Safeguarding Ecological Integrity as a Priority Goal and a Grundnorm of International Law', discussion paper, <http://planetaryboundariesinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Kim-Report-September-2013.pdf> (2016.07.31).

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quently, changing the rules of the global economy would be required to make it fairer for the world's majority.⁵⁵

According to another analysis of the new sustainable development goals and targets they address key systematic barriers to sustainable development, such as inequality, unsustainable production patterns, weak institutional capacity and environmental degradation, however, a follow up document with specification of key trade-offs and complementarities among goals and targets would be needed. This analysis considers 29% of the targets as well developed, 54% as to be further strengthened to be more specific, and 17% as requiring further significant work. Most goals are interlinked and many of the targets may contribute to several goals, but some goals and targets may conflict, e.g., ensuring the food security needs an extended land use to increase agricultural food production, but it can result in biodiversity loss and in overuse and pollution of water resources. According to this analysis the level of integration among goals is lower than it would be justified; they addressed as separate elements, in isolation from each other. One overarching goal should be formulated showing how the 17 goals and targets would contribute to achieving this end; this could be "a prosperous, high quality of life that is equitably shared and sustainable". This would make the full list more understandable to a broader community.⁵⁶

In others' opinion however, there are reasons for hope that the 2030 Agenda and the new sustainable development goals can lead to a more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable future for people and the planet. This hope is expressed by highlighting their four defining features: First, they were discussed and shaped during a 2 year long, wide intergovernmental negotiation process, involving almost 200 states, with a considerable participation by civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. Participants reached a consensus on the necessary changes in economic and social development patterns, while recognizing the planetary boundaries. This consensus is a key factor for the successful implementation of the new agenda. Second, the new agenda for change is comprehensive, placing equity and sustainability at its core. It goes further than the Millennium Development Goals, since it combines the economic, social development with environment and climate concerns into a much more holistic and ambitious agenda, with the aims e.g., to make economic growth more inclusive and equitable, to decouple growth from environmental degradation creating a low carbon, climate resilient economy. Third, the new goals are more integrated than the Millennium Development Goals; they put economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development on an equal footing. The future

55 J. Hickel, 'The Problem with Saving the World, The UN's new Sustainable Development Goals aim to save the world without transforming it', *Jacobin*, 2015, www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/global-poverty-climate-change-sdgs/ (2016.07.23).

56 International Council for Science, 'Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: the Science Perspective', International Social Science Council, Paris, 2012, pp. 5-12, www.icsu.org/publications/reports-and-reviews/review-of-targets-for-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-science-perspective-2015 (2016.07.24).

sustained changes require more integrated approaches and solutions in decision-making in all sectors. Fourth, the new agenda is truly universal; it requires action from all countries and all sectors of society. The call for a renewed Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Goal 17) signals a shift from the former model of development cooperation, emphasizing the principle of shared responsibilities, based on equitable and fair contributions by all countries, even the poorest ones, according to their national capabilities and circumstances. This, of course, requires greater and more effective multi-stakeholder partnerships among all participants.⁵⁷

For the achievement of the new development agenda, the new goals and targets several challenges have to be met. The success depends on whether countries will be able to integrate this ambitious program into their national policies and priorities at governmental level, central, regional and local. This will necessitate, on one hand, a strong cooperation between various ministries responsible for financing, economic development, planning, environment, social affairs, and so on. On the other hand, local authorities and organizations have to be empowered with the necessary competences, resources and capacities, including appropriate incentives, to accomplish their part of the job at that level. Similarly, incentives for the business sector, for the enterprises and other stakeholders have to be created to encourage them to integrate and support sustainable development, as opportunities for their operation. Furthermore, effective utilization of financial resources, public, private, domestic and international ones has to be ensured for the accomplishment of economic, social and environmental goals and targets, as well as appropriate transparency and accountability in monitoring the implementation at all levels.⁵⁸

After coming into effect of the new agenda and goals for sustainable development on 1 January 2016, the attention is already on its implementation. The 2015 Declaration itself deals with the means of implementation within the framework of a global partnership and lays out guiding principles for follow up and review procedures at national, regional and global levels, however further clarifications are needed. Responding to the mandate given by the Declaration the Secretary-General submitted a report to the UN General Assembly on follow-up and review at the global level.⁵⁹ The report includes a proposal for the organizational arrangements for review of country reports at the High-level Political Forum

57 P. Hazlewood & M. Bouyé, 'Sustainable Development Goals: Setting a New Course for People and Planet', World Resources Institute, 18 September 2015, www.wri.org/blog/2015/09/sustainable-development-goals-setting-new-course-people-and-planet (2016.07.16).

58 These challenges were put as five big questions for the translation of the agenda and goals into practical changes on the ground. See P. Hazlewood & M. Bouyé, 2015. For the central role of national governments, parliaments and local governments in implementation see A. Persson, N. Weitz & M. Nilsson, 'Follow-up and Review of the Sustainable development Goals: Alignment vs Internationalization', *RECIEL*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2016.

59 Report of the Secretary-General on 'Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level', UN General Assembly, A/70/684, 15 January 2016.

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on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. It clarifies institutional responsibilities and provides guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews and on options for periodic reviews for the High-level Political Forum. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, as a central forum for the follow up and review of the new agenda and goals for sustainable development will meet annually, furthermore four yearly under the auspices of the General Assembly. The Forum provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the 2030 Agenda's implementation and follow-up, evaluates progress made and addresses new and emerging issues. The report proposes possible themes for the Forum, provided by the member states, e.g., governance for sustainable development, integration of sustainable development into plans and processes and so on. For the first forum in 2016, the theme suggested is 'implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to result.'

The report explains the role of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and of its functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies in the implementation of the agenda, achieving a balanced integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

One of the core elements of the follow up and review is voluntary national reviews which will address progress in implementing the universal goals and targets and the means of implementation. Each country would be expected to regularly carry out up to two national reviews at the High Level political Forum during the 15 year long implementation period. The report proposes common reporting guidelines for the content and arrangements of national reviews.

The High-level Political Forum held its first session in July 2016. The session is devoted to discussion of voluntary reviews of 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress in the first year implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Reviews by other commissions and inter-governmental bodies and forums on various issues were also presented. The forum was accompanied by a range of side events, including e.g., a partnership exchange. Launching the first ever report on the new agenda, the Secretary-General stated that "We are off to a good start," and called on the international community to "pledge never to rest until we have achieved a world of peace, dignity and opportunity for all."⁶⁰

60 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf> (2016.07.10).