



## 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

### Introduction and description of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was endorsed by the UN General Assembly at the UN Sustainable Development Summit 2015 (New York, 25-27 September 2015), following a three-year process of discussion, consultation and negotiation. The agenda includes the Declaration (which replaces the Millennium Declaration as the overall chapeau), the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets (17 goals and 169 targets)<sup>1</sup>, the Means of Implementation and Global Partnership<sup>2</sup>, and the Follow-up and Review mechanism. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development replaces the Millennium Development Goals (which reached their established deadline) and integrates their re-formulation with the outcomes of the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

Following its formal adoption, each UN member country is expected to develop a national action plan, showing how it will pursue the SDGs and how it will measure their progress. The implementation of the SDGs will be monitored through a set of global indicators<sup>3</sup> to be adopted by the UN General Assembly in the first half of 2016. The monitoring process will be articulated at national, regional and global levels, as well as around thematic reviews. The global monitoring will be centred on the newly established High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which meets annually in New York.

### Initial Assessment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda & SDGs

An initial assessment outlined a number of positive dimensions of the SDGs as well as a number of gaps and concerns. In terms of the positive aspects:

- a) The 2030 SD Agenda provides a universal framework for sustainable development for the next 15 years, highlighting the need for action by all countries, not just a focus on developing countries.
- b) The agenda includes some ambitious goals, such as **Goal 2**, which refers to the elimination of hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030; **Goal 3**, which includes a number of fairly ambitious health targets; **Goal 5**, which refers to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; and, **Goal 6**, which refers to ensuring access to drinking water and sanitation to all by 2030;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics>

<sup>2</sup> This also refer to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, outcome of the Third Financing for Development Conference, which forms an integral part of the agenda.

<sup>3</sup> These indicators are being developed by an Inter Agency and Expert Group for final agreement by the UN Statistical Commission and thereafter adoption by the UNGA.

- c) Goal 2 includes a focus on people in vulnerable situations (women, children, indigenous people, and smallholders/peasants), explicitly targets the doubling of smallholder incomes on a sustainable basis to hedge against the widespread poverty of small-scale farmers and landless agricultural labourers and proposes to ensure their equal access to land. It also aims to ensure that food systems are sustainable and resilient and maintain the genetic diversity of seeds and livestock;
- d) Many other Goals address important dimensions from a RTFN perspective (e.g., Goal 1 aims to eradicate extreme poverty and addresses the need of access to and control over land and natural resources; Goal 6 with its targets on sustainable water resource management; Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns; Goal 14 on the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources; Goal 15 on the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; Goal 17 and its target on policy coherence for sustainable development; just to name a few);
- e) The agenda explicitly states that “[Member States] will devote resources to developing rural areas and sustainable agriculture and fisheries, supporting smallholder farmers, especially women farmers, herders and fishers in developing countries, particularly least developed countries”;
- f) If compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are more elaborate and inclusive of many development concerns and constituencies.

Despite these positive dimensions, the assessment identified significant areas of concern:

- a) While stating to be grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties (para 10), the SDGs lack a human rights based approach, and the right to food and nutrition, as well as food sovereignty, are not mentioned under the specific Goal 2. On the contrary, the SDGs promote significant shifts in governance: a shift away from the centrality of Human right-holders in favour of stakeholders; a shift away from sovereign spaces in favour of multistakeholder platforms; and, a shift away from the role of the State as the duty-bearer to a concept of the State as “just one among many actors” and an enabler of private sector action;
- b) The SDGs remains centred on the flawed assumption that economic growth will solve the world’s problems. Therefore, the implementation of the SDGs risks to promote a conventional model of development without addressing the root and structural causes of hunger and malnutrition, resulting in a “doing more of the same” rather than promoting real political change and deep transformation of the currently unsustainable and hegemonic form of economic globalization. The new agenda is profoundly biased in favour of the unchecked action of the corporate sector and many of its implementation mechanisms will be based on

multistakeholder partnerships, with the risk that these could be heavily driven by the vested private sector interests;

- c) The emphasis given to the so-called “Data Revolution” and the push for a new set of development indicators could lead to technocratic approaches and a new generation of statistics that shift away from the direct engagement of those primarily affected in the actual monitoring of development progress.

### **What possible implications for the social movements and the GNRtFN?**

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda does not embody the spirit and vision for radical transformation of our social, productive, ecological and political realities that is promoted and practised by CSOs and social movements. It is a conventional development agenda that appropriates many concepts and words, possibly only to embellish the maintenance of the status quo and its existing power structures, if not actually consolidating and even strengthening them.

However, governments at all levels (from the local to the intergovernmental one) will make reference to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in most, if not all, political processes that matter to social movements and CSOs. While the temptation to bluntly oppose the SDGs will be extremely high, it may be appropriate to evaluate in each situation if and how to strategically use some of its positive language to the advantage of our common struggles.