



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is sustainable development?

- Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.
- For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies.
- Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. To this end, there must be promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

- The 193 Member States of the United Nations officially adopted a new sustainable development agenda entitled, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at the Sustainable Development Summit held at UN Headquarters in New York in September 2015. This agenda contains 17 Goals and 169 targets. The complete list of Goals and targets are available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- This universal, integrated and transformative agenda aims to spur actions that will end poverty and build a more sustainable world over the next 15 years. This agenda builds on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted in 2000 and guided development action for the last 15 years. The MDGs have proven that global goals can lift millions out of poverty.
- The new Goals are part of an ambitious, bold sustainable development agenda that will focus on the three interconnected elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets are global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. They are not independent from each other—they need to be implemented in an integrated manner.
- The SDGs are the result of a three-year-long transparent, participatory process inclusive of all stakeholders and people’s voices. They represent an unprecedented

agreement around sustainable development priorities among 193 Member States. They have received world-wide support from civil society, business, parliamentarians and other actors. The decision to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs was made by UN Member States at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

When will the Sustainable Development Goals start and end?

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) start on 1 January 2016 and are expected to be achieved by 31 December 2030. However, some targets that build on pre-set international agreements are expected to be achieved sooner.

Are the Sustainable Development Goals legally binding?

- No. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not legally binding.
- Nevertheless, countries are expected to take ownership and establish a national framework for achieving the 17 Goals.
- Implementation and success will rely on countries' own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes.
- Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, with regard to the progress made in implementing the Goals and targets over the next 15 years.
- Actions at the national level to monitor progress will require quality, accessible and timely data collection and regional follow-up and review.

What are the elements underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals?

- The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.
 - **People** - to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
 - **Planet** - to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.
 - **Prosperity** - to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
 - **Peace** - to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.
 - **Partnership** - to mobilize the means required to implement this agenda through a revitalised global partnership for sustainable development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of

the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

Civil society has participated in the process of negotiations for the new sustainable development agenda. How can we quantify its contribution to the final document?

- The negotiating process on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involved the unprecedented participation of civil society and other stakeholders, such as the private sector and mayors.
- During the negotiations, civil society and other stakeholders were able to speak directly to government representatives.
- Many young people were also involved from the beginning on social media platforms and the UN's global My World survey received more than 7 million votes from around the world, with approximately 75% of participants under 30 years of age.

How will the Sustainable Development Goals be implemented?

- [The Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) that came out of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development provided concrete policies and actions to support the implementation of the new agenda.
- Implementation and success will rely on countries' own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes, and will be led by countries. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be a compass for aligning countries' plans with their global commitments.
- Nationally owned and country-led sustainable development strategies will require resource mobilization and financing strategies.
- All stakeholders: governments, civil society, the private sector, and others, are expected to contribute to the realisation of the new agenda
- A revitalized global partnership at the global level is needed to support national efforts. This is recognized in the 2030 Agenda.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships have been recognized as an important component of strategies that seek to mobilize all stakeholders around the new agenda.

How will the Sustainable Development Goals be monitored?

- At the global level, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets of the new agenda will be monitored and reviewed using a set of global indicators. The global indicator framework, to be developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEA-SDGs), will be agreed on by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly will then adopt these indicators
- Governments will also develop their own national indicators to assist in monitoring progress made on the goals and targets.
- Chief statisticians from Member States are working on the identification of the targets with the aim to have 2 indicators for each target. There will be approximately 300 indicators for all the targets. Where the targets cover cross-cutting issues, however, the number of indicators may be reduced
- The follow-up and review process will be informed by an annual SDG Progress Report to be prepared by the Secretary-General.
- The annual meetings of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development will play a central role in reviewing progress towards the SDGs at the global level.

The means of implementation of the SDGs will be monitored and reviewed as outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to ensure that financial resources are effectively mobilized to support the new sustainable development agenda.

How much will the implementation of this new sustainable development agenda cost?

- The means of implementation—including how to mobilize the financial resources to achieve the sustainable development agenda—are a core feature of the new agenda.
- In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), substantial investment will be required, in both developed and developing countries. This agenda will require the mobilization of significant resources—in the trillions of dollars.
- But these resources already exist. There are far more than enough savings in the world to finance the new agenda. How to direct investment so that it supports sustainable development will be crucial for achieving our Goals
- Resources need to be mobilized from domestic and international sources, as well as from the public and private sectors.
- Official development assistance is still necessary to help the countries most in need, including the least developed countries, to achieve sustainable development.

How does climate change relate to sustainable development?

- Climate change is already impacting public health, food and water security, migration, peace and security. Climate change, left unchecked, will roll back the development gains we have made over the last decades and will make further gains impossible.
- Investments in sustainable development will help address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience.
- Conversely, action on climate change will drive sustainable development.
- Tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development are two mutually reinforcing sides of the same coin; sustainable development cannot be achieved without climate action. Conversely, many of the SDGs are addressing the core drivers of climate change.

Why were new goals adopted in 2015?

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were launched in 2000 set 2015 as their target year. The international community started thinking about a successor framework for the MDGs in 2010.
- In 2012, at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), countries agreed to establish an open working group to develop a set of sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.
- Within a few months after Rio+20, UN Member States agreed that there should be only one agenda going forward—a sustainable development agenda, based on sustainable development goals.
- In July 2014, after more than a year of negotiations, the Open Working Group presented its recommendation for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- In early August 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations reached consensus on the outcome document of the new agenda “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

- Member States adopted the new sustainable development agenda, with the SDGs at its core, at a UN summit held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015.

Why are the Sustainable Development Goals so broad in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals, which were very specific?

- There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets, in contrast to the 8 Millennium Development Goals with 21 targets. The complex challenges that exist in the world today demand that a wide range of issues be covered. It is also critical to address the root causes of the problems and not only the symptoms.
- The SDGs are the result of a negotiation process that involved the 193 UN Member States and also saw unprecedented participation of civil society and other stakeholders. This led to the representation of a wide range of interests and perspectives. On the other hand, the MDGs were produced by a group of experts behind closed doors.
- The SDGs are broad in scope because they address the interconnected elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The MDGs focused primarily on the social agenda.
- The MDGs targeted developing countries, particularly the poorest, while the SDGs apply to all countries, developed and developing.

How are the Sustainable Development Goals different from the MDGs?

- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets are broader in scope and will go further than the MDGs by addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. The goals will cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.
- Building on the success and momentum of the MDGs, the new global goals will cover more ground, with ambitions to address inequalities, economic growth, decent jobs, cities and human settlements, industrialization, oceans, ecosystems, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, peace and justice.
- The new Goals are universal and apply to all countries, whereas the MDGs were intended for action in developing countries only.
- A core feature of the SDGs is their strong focus on means of implementation—the mobilization of financial resources—capacity-building and technology, as well as data and institutions.
- The new Goals recognize that tackling climate change is essential for sustainable development and poverty eradication. SDG 13 aims to promote urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

What have the MDGs accomplished?

- The MDGs have produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history and will serve as the springboard for the new sustainable development agenda.
- *Poverty and hunger*: only two short decades ago, nearly half of the developing world lived in extreme poverty. The number of people now living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015.
- *Gender equality*: gender parity in primary school has been achieved in the majority of countries. More girls are now in school, and women have gained ground in

parliamentary representation over the past 20 years in nearly 90% of the 174 countries with data.

- *Child mortality*: globally, the under-five mortality rate dropped from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015.
- *Maternal health*: the maternal mortality ratio shows a decline of 45% worldwide, with most of the reduction occurring since 2000.
- *Fighting diseases*: new infection rates from HIV fell approximately by 40% between 2000 and 2013. Over 6.2 million malaria deaths were averted between 2000 and 2015, while tuberculosis prevention, diagnosis and treatment interventions saved an estimated 37 million lives between 2000 and 2013.
- *Sanitation*: worldwide, 2.1 billion have gained access to improved sanitation and the proportion of people practicing open defecation has fallen almost by half since 1990.
- *Global partnership*: official development assistance from developed countries saw an increase of 66% in real terms from 2000 to 2014, reaching \$135.2 billion.

What are the remaining gaps left by the MDGs?

- About 800 million people still live in extreme poverty and 795 million still suffer from hunger.
- Between 2000 and 2015, the number of children out of school declined by almost half. However, there are still 57 million children who are denied the right to primary education.
- Gender inequality persists in spite of progress in many areas, including improved representation of women in parliaments and more girls going to school. Women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets and participation in private and public decision-making.
- Economic gaps still exist between the poorest and richest households, and rural and urban areas. Children from the poorest 20% of households are more than twice as likely to be stunted as those from the wealthiest 20% and are also four times as likely to be out of school. Improved sanitation facilities are only covering half of the rural population, as opposed to 82% in urban areas.
- While the mortality rate for children under five dropped by 53 per cent between 1990 and 2015, child deaths continue to be increasingly concentrated in the poorest regions and in the first month of life.