



Independent Commission on Multilateralism

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Executive Summary

2015 was a watershed year for the United Nations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change were adopted with an unprecedented sense of ownership by member states, and both are universally applicable. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction also form part of the new policy framework.

In 2016, the UN has the opportunity and the challenge to operate under the most comprehensive sustainable development agenda in its history. The open and inclusive nature of the process that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has renewed the international community's faith in multilateralism. However, to implement these outcomes, the UN needs to change its working methods and update its structures from 1945.

The 2030 Agenda breaks manifold paradigms. First, the three fundamental pillars of development—economic, social, and environmental—are integrated. Second, it is universally applicable; all countries, from north and south, signed up to implement it. Third, it includes issues that had remained outside the scope of development, particularly peace and climate change. The implementation of such an integrated framework is an opportunity for the UN to renew the way it works. The implementation of seventeen universal goals requires a change of mindset that needs to permeate the entire UN system.

This is also the first time that the UN development agenda fully incorporates climate change. It makes the intrinsic link between climate change and poverty eradication. Moving forward, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement need to be implemented as a single vision. Public and private funding for coherent implementation is in demand. Piecemeal funding flows would break the integrated nature of the agenda and reinforce the “siloes” approach previously applied to development. The use and transfer of sustainable technologies can also accelerate implementation.

This discussion paper highlights the key opportunities and challenges for the UN system in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It also examines the links between sustainable development, climate change, and peace and security.

This paper puts forward the following preliminary recommendations. Among them are the following:

1. **Build a common vision:** The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are two universal agreements that constitute a new world vision. They can be one powerful agenda for global transformation. However, these two outcomes require integrated planning at all levels. National plans and strategies can become more holistic and more effective in the long term if they take both outcomes into account: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).
2. **Keep the momentum going:** Although the Paris Agreement and the SDGs have already gained the attention of world leaders and top media outlets, awareness of these outcomes needs to be more widespread. These normative frameworks need to be locally owned. In developed countries, a shift toward implementing internationally agreed global goals domestically is a new challenge. Champions of the SDGs, from political to business to academic leaders, should be enlisted to support implementation. The recent appointment of “eminent advocates” to increase awareness and implementation of the SDGs is a step forward, and these kinds of champions should also be identified at the regional, national, and local levels.
3. **Promote long-term political leadership:** Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement is possible only with political leadership sustained beyond terms of office. Constant attention to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement is needed. Citizens, civil society, and youth can keep the pressure on and hold leaders accountable for timely implementation. This new vision requires a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach**. Several member states are putting in place inter-ministerial arrangements in order to encourage integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the government level. Involvement of ministries of finance is key to unlock domestic resources. Breaking the silos is a challenge not only for the UN but also at the national level. As member states start to prepare to implement the Paris Agreement, the SDGs and the INDCs should become core priorities of national plans.
4. **Transcend “siloed” structures:** The UN’s siloed system has reached a crisis point. Structures created in 1945 are not functioning in 2016. The 2030 Agenda recognized that the UN can no longer work in separate compartments with little cooperation, or

even interaction, between them (General Assembly, ECOSOC, Human Rights Council, and Security Council). The main intergovernmental structures need a new modus operandi. The revitalization of the General Assembly is a priority. The work of the six committees of the General Assembly—particularly the work of the Second and Third Committees—needs to be evaluated to reduce duplication, augment impact on the ground, and support the implementation of the new outcomes. The sheer number of resolutions adopted in the Second and Third Committees (forty-three resolutions and fifty-seven resolutions, respectively) highlights the need to reflect on and discuss the adoption of coherent and strategic work programs.

5. **UN top leadership must show the way:** The Chief Executives Board (CEB), the special adviser on the 2030 Agenda, and the assistant secretary-general on climate change have unique capacities to align the system toward effective implementation. The new secretary-general should make implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement her or his top priority.
6. **Create a dynamic and inclusive follow-up of the 2030 Agenda:** The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) has the universal participation of all member states. Its meetings should be dynamic and should carry on the spirit in which the 2030 Agenda was negotiated. It should include participation of “movers and shakers” of civil society and the private sector. The HLPF also needs to be the bridge between communities of policy makers and practitioners that are not used to working together, such as by discussing the links between the SDGs and INDCs. The HLPF also needs to remain true to the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda. As the discussion on the follow-up and review moves forward, it will be tempting to pragmatically repackage the SDGs into discrete categories. This would go against the integrated design of the SDGs. The overarching theme of the HLPF should be on implementation at all levels.
7. **Review funding strategies (assessed and voluntary contributions):** The work of the UN development system largely follows the nature of the funding it receives. The lack of core and flexible funding in the UN development system has increased fragmentation and competition.¹ Assessed contributions from member states should reflect greater balance between the three main pillars of the UN: peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

¹ Secretary-general’s report on the QCPR (advanced unedited version, 28 December 2015).