

## Beyond 2015 Reaction to the

UN Secretary General's synthesis report "*The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*"



# Beyond2015

Campaigning for a global development framework  
after the Millennium Development Goals

# Beyond 2015 Reaction to the UN Secretary General's synthesis report "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet"

## January 2015

**Beyond 2015** welcomes the [UN Secretary General's synthesis report](#) - an important contribution to the post-2015 process. Below we present our review of this document. This has two parts: first, we review and reinforce the Secretary General's call for an **ambitious, universal agenda, with equality and equity, participation, people and planet at the core**. In the second part, we review some of the Secretary General's specific proposals on how to achieve this agenda.

### The Secretary General's Call to Action

#### An ambitious, universal agenda

We agree with the Secretary General that "*We are at a **historic crossroads**, and the directions we take will determine whether we will succeed or fail on our promises*" (Para 2). Our campaign has consistently called for a [higher level of ambition](#) and we have raised some [red flags](#) to highlight essential elements for a new global framework aiming to realise an equitable, peaceful and sustainable world. We are pleased to see this ambition present in several aspects of the report.

The Secretary-General highlights universality as a core attribute of human rights and intergenerational justice (Para 48) and this must be reflected in the post-2015 framework. This universal agenda will require changes in all countries based on a sense of the global common good.

#### People at the Core

**On equality and equity**, we strongly support the Secretary General re-affirmation that **no one should be left behind** (para 51) in the post-2015 agenda, in practice, this means that **no goal or target will be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups** (Para 65). If this is meaningfully acted upon, this will be truly transformational.

**On Human Rights**, The Secretary-General reinforces that the post-2015 agenda must **advance human rights equally, for all, in full coherence with international standards** (Para 65) and not fall below international human rights law. We welcome the affirmation that the SDGs must mirror the international human rights framework on economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and the right to development, especially for disadvantaged groups (Para 83).

The recognition of **core human rights** that enable participation, including press freedom and access to information, freedom of expression, assembly and association as enablers of sustainable development (Para 78) is **especially critical** for a people-centered agenda.

Unfortunately, in several instances the language refers only to "access" instead of a "right to" (Para 17, 69, 78).

The report went further than the OWG outcome document by referring to **indigenous peoples** and how their knowledge can positively contribute to sustainable development (Paras 51, 68, 78, 123). The recommendation to reflect the voices of LGBT groups (Para. 78), the need to secure equality and focus on those most in need, 'including those under occupation' (Para 51) are other positive aspects of the report.

Still, we are concerned that persons with disabilities are not visible enough in the report. For example, 'accessibility' seems to be defined as access to technology for women and girls. Persons with disabilities are not included in the sections focused on a people-centered approach neither on means of implementation, including the relevance of education (Paras 69-71). They are also missing from access to fair justice systems, democratic governance, and meaningful engagement of civil society (Para 78). The absence of references to hunger and malnutrition is another striking omission in the report.

**On global inequality**, we strongly support the Secretary General's call for a serious, expeditious strategy to correct international inequities operating to the disadvantage of developing countries. A more equitable multilateral trading system, the conclusion of the Doha round, and better access to technology, to medicines, and to long-term investments for developing countries are crucial to the success of the post-2015 agenda. (Para 95).

Despite a call for inclusive growth, the fundamental issue of **'inequality'**, so clearly referenced in the introductory sections of the report as a common theme and concern in the post-2015 consultations, was **largely absent** from the later sections, notably the "essential elements". The stance **on inequality within and between countries should be strengthened** and reflected in all elements of the upcoming negotiations covering inequality both of opportunity and of outcome. Also absent was the tackling of power imbalances like extreme wealth and other means to reduce economic inequality.

**On justice and peace**, we welcome the inclusion of **justice and peaceful societies** and **strong institutions** in the Report, including attention to gendered protection and relief and recovery issues including early, child and forced marriage (Para 78) and internally displaced people (Para 79). We also welcome recognition elsewhere in the document of how large military spending reduces resources available for public goods (Para 119).

The report makes it clear that the new framework should promote a **broad, preventive, positive vision of peace** founded on reduced violence, public safety, fair access to justice, livelihoods, resources and services, voice and participation, and anti-corruption (Paras 31, 50, 52, 54, 78). The only clear point of weakness of the report in handling peace issues is that it does not promote addressing irresponsible arms trade, the negative impacts of drugs (and the war on drugs), the flow of other 'conflict commodities', or indeed any aspect of organised crime apart from corruption and financial flows.

**On gender equality and women's rights**, we were disappointed that the report lacks ambition regarding a transformative and action-oriented vision of achieving gender equality despite the fact that gender equality and women's human rights were overwhelmingly highlighted as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development throughout the OWG.

The Secretary-General makes only one reference to women's **rights** (Para 68) yet even this reference falls short of fully guaranteeing **sexual and reproductive health and rights** for all and is less ambitious than the OWG SDG proposed targets. Member states must address this gap by including reference to the full realization of sexual rights. The multiple roles of women are also not recognized including their vital role on food and nutrition security. The report does not recognize commitments to reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work and ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership. The SDGs called for the "elimination of all forms of violence against women" while the synthesis report only pushes for "zero tolerance" (Para 69).

The report lacks a wider analysis of the social norms that influence and perpetuate gender inequality, making it difficult to see how the isolated initiatives it does propose can succeed or deliver a transformative agenda. Throughout the Synthesis Report "women and children" (Para 69 for example) are treated together, and such an approach fails to recognize the distinct strategies required to address the rights, needs and inequalities of each and especially of adolescent girls.

## **Participation at the core**

The Secretary-General recalls the commitment for the **meaningful participation of all** in development (Para 7). Participatory approaches are reflected throughout the report, especially in the mechanism to review implementation at the national, regional and global levels (Para 147). We regret that the report did not refer to **consultations and research efforts led by civil society**.

We strongly support the message that civil society must have the **capacity and be empowered** to perform their critical independent role (Paras 129, 145) in this process and the need for meaningful engagement of civil society and its advocates (Paras 78, 132). The report recognizes the need to "remove obstacles to full participation by persons with disabilities, older persons, adolescents and youth, and empower the poor" (Para 68) but **still treats people more as recipients of development than active agents and drivers of change**.

**Young people** are highlighted in the report; as the “torch bearers of the next sustainable development agenda” (Para 3); in a call for young people’s priorities to be reflected in the agenda; and in that they should participate in, contribute to and benefit from development (Para 68). We were troubled that children appear to be too frequently absent or conflated with youth. The voices of children should also be included amongst those that must be heard (Para 65).

## **Planet at the core**

The Secretary-General provides a clear central narrative of not just "people-centered", but “planet-sensitive” (Para 49) development. Protecting the environment is articulated up front (Para 1) and across the whole agenda” (Para 45). The reference to **planetary boundaries** (Para 75) is also critical for current and future generations. Given that **Beyond 2015** has called for a post-2015 agenda that puts the people and the planet at its heart we are encouraged by the efforts to show this balanced approach. However, an opportunity was missed to more clearly call for absolute **decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation** (Para 75) and to reinforce the crucial advances proposed in the OWG, including a standalone goal on sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

We consider that the final inter-governmental agreement needs to strongly recognize the fundamental risks to food and water security, poverty eradication, livelihoods, human health and equality that stem today from the mismanagement of natural resources and ecosystems and unsustainable and inequitable consumption and production patterns.

**On sustainability and economic growth,** we are concerned that the Secretary-General appears to underscore the need to retain an approach based on economic growth as the solution to our global challenges, rather than recognizing that it has created or contributed to many of those challenges. We recognize though that the report does mention the need for the economy to serve people and planet. The real **transformation of our economies** (Para 54) will only be achieved if we take a path that addresses inequity and environmental and social costs of business-as-usual, measures progress “beyond GDP” and complies with human rights obligations. We expect Member States to use the opportunity of the post-2015 agenda to agree on the implementation of comprehensive and adequate financial regulations in all countries (Para 114).

We agree with the report that blended finance must not replace or compromise state responsibilities for delivering on social needs and that it is important to ensure that these arrangements are subject to safeguards to verify that they contribute to sustainable development (Para 108). However, the report should have spelled out clearly the risks entailed for blended finance especially for the most marginalized.

**On climate change,** the report highlights the need to address the drivers of climate change and its consequences (Para 65) and we join the Secretary-General in urging Member States to adopt a meaningful, universal climate agreement by the end of 2015 (Para 76). We share the Secretary-General's judgment that the **consequences of climate change have only just begun to be felt** (Para 10) and that tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development agendas are two mutually reinforcing objectives (Para 49).

Climate change and its effects epitomize the unavoidable links between our current development model and its social and environmental consequences. These effects are already exacerbating existing inequalities between and within countries, and although the report acknowledges that climate change should be tackled ‘equitably’ (para.75), it does not make a strong point regarding this issue. For instance, a missing element in the report is a discussion on the impacts of climate change on inequalities between countries, as those that contributed less to greenhouse gas emissions are the ones most affected by climate change. At the national level, the need for a human-rights based approach for tackling climate change adaptation should be emphasized.

The report refers to keeping the rise in global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius (Para 53), and we would prefer to see it as 1.5 degrees, although there are no recommendations on how to achieve that. Finally, building resilience of the poor to economic, social and environmental shocks is not mentioned.

## Moving Forward: The Secretary General's Proposals

### The six elements

It was not clear to us how the proposed six essential elements (Section 3.3) would be linked to the final SDG framework. We are concerned that the current proposal may reintroduce a ‘silo’ approach to the agenda. The proposed six elements do not seem to adequately capture the integrated vision proposed by Member States at the OWG and do not reflect the human rights-based, transformative approach to development that governments, civil society and individuals have been calling for the post-2015 agenda.

For instance, having **inequalities** subsumed into the ‘dignity’ element not only seems to water down what was proposed in the OWG but also misses the interconnections with all the other goals. Another strong concern is that the six elements could lead to the “MDG 7 syndrome” where all issues considered to be related to the environment would fall under one element, again, jeopardizing an interconnected approach to the post-2015 agenda.

### Goals, Targets and Indicators

Beyond 2015 has stated that the outcome document of the OWG is a [good starting point](#) for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development. Nevertheless, the OWG’s **goals** must represent the floor, not the ceiling of the ambitions for a truly transformative and people-centered framework. We agree with the Secretary-General that the quest for effective solutions to an increasingly complex global agenda demands a far-reaching set of goals and targets (Para 58).

We consider that any potential technical review of the proposed **targets** should be done in an **open and participatory manner** and with a view to **improve and strengthen the intergovernmental proposal, not weaken it**. Efforts to make targets ‘concise’ and ‘achievable’ should maintain the highest ambition in order to be truly transformative in all countries and not diminish the interdependent and integrated character of the goals and targets.

We concur that **indicators** will need to be broadly disaggregated across all goals and targets (Para 83). Progress must be measured in ways that “go beyond GDP and account for human well-being, sustainability and equity” (Para 72). Availability and **access to data**, including disaggregated information (Para 46) are key concerns, and the report still misses the active participation of people. Instead of referring to **a world where everyone counts**, the vision is a world where everyone ‘is counted’ (Para 31). The report could have been stronger and clearer in calling for the creation of universal and common indicators shared across countries to guarantee cross-comparison of progress.

We expect that Member States task the UN System to lead a **truly participatory and inclusive process, including experts from civil society, to develop the draft post-2015 set of indicators**.

### Means of Implementation and Global Partnership

We welcome the report’s recognition of the need to **mobilize all resources** – public and private, domestic and international – and all financing streams to realize the ambitious goals set out in this agenda (Paras 41, 80, 87). National fiscal, macroeconomic and procurement policies must be aligned with the SDGs (Paras 102 and 103) and strong national ownership for implementation (Paras 93; 101) is also necessary.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is still the central not-for-profit resource for poverty alleviation. We support the clear recommendation that all developed countries should meet the 0.7% target for ODA (Para 98). Also welcomed are the calls for a framework for Foreign Direct Investment (Para 92); to set up an expert group to discuss a coherent framework that accounts for climate finance and ODA (Para 110), for fair representation of emerging and developing countries in international financial and economic decision-making as well as for the use of innovative ways to raise additional public resources to fund sustainable development (Para 95). The call for the establishment of an **intergovernmental committee on tax cooperation** (Para 115) should be closely considered by Member States. We were also pleased to see

that non-financial MoIs - for instance volunteerism - are recognized as powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation (Para 131).

**Access to technologies** will be crucial in the post-2015 path towards sustainable development. Therefore we hope that the post-2015 negotiations finalize the arrangements for a technology facilitation mechanism, including for the LDCs (Para 126). Also important will be to ensure that the global intellectual property regimes and the application of TRIPS flexibilities are fully consistent with and contribute to the SDGs (Para 126, e). The report also proposes an “online, global platform building on and complementing existing initiatives, and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders” (Para 125). It is important to reflect that an ‘online’ platform may not be the best tool for the engagement of the poorest and most marginalized.

On **Global Partnership**, this should be focused on the needs of the most vulnerable and the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society (Para 81). We agree with the Secretary-General that every multilateral organization should follow internationally agreed **standards for labour, the environment, human rights, equality and sustainability** (Para 95). Equally important was the call for measurements to focus on social progress, justice, security, equality and sustainability and capture the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (Para 135) and for mandatory reporting for private companies (Para 104).

### **A Participatory accountability, monitoring and review mechanism**

**Beyond 2015** concurs on the need for a rigorous and participatory monitoring (Paras 23, 142) and accountability framework (Para 148) for the SDGs. Meaningful accountability would, as emphasized in the Report, be rooted at the national level as ‘**closest to the people**’ (Para 149, i). The accountability framework must also be supported by an enabling environment of strong civic education, civil and political rights, and access to and participation in the collection of disaggregated data. The section on monitoring, evaluation and reporting falls short on citizens' (including children and youth) participation and presents citizens largely as beneficiaries than active actors in the implementation and accountability.

We support the drive to ensure that the results of local and national level accountability processes are incorporated at the regional and international levels, thereby creating a robust, multi-faceted global monitoring and accountability framework that tracks the compliance of all development actors to their commitments. Although the report stresses the need for “agreed universal norms”; “global commitments” and “shared rules” (Para 146) those are not reflected in the recommendations that follow.

We expected more clear recommendations regarding the role of the **High Level Political Forum (HLPF)** in oversight and monitoring the implementation of the new goals. We would like to see clear suggestions that bridge the gap between ‘gauging progress’, ‘knowledge sharing’ and accountability of all actors to all people and that make accountability to people the foundation of the review and monitoring mechanism (Para 56).

### **In conclusion**

**Beyond 2015** echoes the words of the Secretary-General that “**transformation is our watchword**” (Para 4). We expect no less than **leadership and courage** from our leaders in the next and crucial phase of the post-2015 negotiations. Change will only be possible if the post-2015 process is truly transparent and inclusive and creates the necessary ownership by all actors, especially of peoples and civil society.

*Having now opened the tent wide to a broad constituency, we must recognize that the **legitimacy** of this process will rest in significant measure on the degree to which **the core messages that we have heard are reflected in the final outcome**. This is no time to succumb to political expediency, or to tolerate the lowest common denominators. The new threats that face us, and the new opportunities that present themselves, demand a **high level of ambition and a truly participatory, responsive and transformational course of action**.*

*Secretary-General synthesis report, Para 20*

## The status of this document

This paper is issued on behalf of the **Beyond 2015** Task Force on the SG Synthesis report.

The process for preparing the Beyond 2015 Reaction to the SG Synthesis report was as follows:

- An open call was issued in early November asking Beyond 2015 participating organizations to join the Task Force. 62 organizations joined the TF.
- A webinar was organized on November 26 to agree on timelines and on the focus of the response.
- A google doc was open from December 5 to 12 to collect inputs from the participants of the Task Force.
- Another webinar was held on December 9 to review key comments and positions from participants.
- Inputs were reviewed by the Secretariat, with the support from volunteers from the Task Force.
- A paper summarizing the inputs were opened for comments from December 16 to 18.
- The Secretariat finalized the paper on December 18.
- All comments and recommendations were checked, compared to the Beyond 2015 Vision, Purpose, Values and Criteria (VPVC) and Red Flags and edited for consistency and sense by the Beyond 2015 Secretariat.

Thanks go to the individuals from the following organisations who commented on the paper, and contributed to the Beyond 2015 reaction and recommendations:

- Academic Researcher, Mexico
- AGSP, Peru
- Asia Development Alliance (ADA), Korea
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- B2015 Regional Coordinator, Europe, Belgium
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- Belgian NGO platform, Belgium
- Beyond 2015 Philippines, Philippines
- Beyond 2015 Sweden, Sweden
- Bioregional, US
- CAFOD, UK
- Campaign2015+ International, Nigeria
- CAN International, Mexico
- CCC, Cambodia
- Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa, Nigeria
- CEPEI, Colombia
- Child Fund Alliance, US
- Civicus, US
- CNOGD, Congo
- Concern, UK
- Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, Canada
- Coup de Pouce ONGD, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Development Indian Ocean Network (DION), Mauritius
- Development Reality Institute, Zimbabwe
- Diakonia Bangladesh Country Office, Bangladesh
- FANSA (Freshwater Action Network South Asia), India
- Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD), Germany
- Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development(FENRAD), Nigeria
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- IFP, France
- INFID, Indonesia
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, US
- Islamic Relief, UK
- IWHC, US
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- Participate, Kenya
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- The Advisor.com, Switzerland
- Universal Rights Group, Switzerland
- Voice Africa Future, Uganda
- VSO, UK

- WaterAid Uganda, Uganda
- World Vision, US

- World Youth Foundation, Malaysia
- WWF, UK

### **Diversity of opinion within civil society**

Whilst Beyond 2015 participating organisations have a range of views regarding the content of a post-2015 framework, the campaign is united in working to bring about the following outcome:

- A global overarching cross-thematic framework succeeds the Millennium Development Goals, reflecting Beyond 2015's policy positions.
- The process of developing this framework is participatory, inclusive and responsive to voices of those directly affected by poverty and injustice

There was a high degree of consensus over the priority issues to be highlighted in the Beyond 2015 Reaction to the SG synthesis report and no substantive differences of opinion emerged during this process – the challenges were around keeping recommendations short and concise.

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