

One Year On: An open letter from former members of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda.

22 September 2014

The countdown has begun in earnest. There is now just one year until the summit where – we hope – heads of state and government will agree on a new global agenda for inclusive, sustainable development to build upon the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The stakes are huge: for eradicating poverty, for global sustainability, for human rights, and for the world's ability to address shared global challenges.

Two years ago, we came together as a group of 27 women and men from diverse backgrounds: business and government, civil society, science, and more. We recognized that business as usual would deliver neither the eradication of poverty, nor environmental sustainability. Instead, we argued in our report, a paradigm shift is needed, driven by five transformative shifts.

- First, to **leave no one behind**. To keep faith with the original promise of the MDGs, and finish the job – by ensuring that by 2030, the world has ended extreme poverty in all its forms.
- Second, to **put sustainable development at the core**. To realize the integration of social, economic, and environmental sustainability that has eluded every country in the two decades since the Earth Summit in Rio.
- Third, to **transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth**. Achieving a quantum leap in economic opportunities, spurring rapid and equitable growth while moving to sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Fourth, to **build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all**. Freedom from fear and violence is the most basic human entitlement, and people demand peace and good governance as a core component of their well-being, not an optional extra.
- And finally, and as an overarching principle, to **forge a new global partnership** based upon a new spirit of solidarity, mutual benefit and mutual accountability, involving not just governments but also all other stakeholders, from civil society and the private sector to academia and faith communities.



One year on from our report, there is much to celebrate. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) has made a proposal for universally applicable goals. The Intergovernmental Expert Committee on Sustainable Development Financing, meanwhile, has made a vital contribution to identifying how to make them happen.

Nonetheless, there is more work to do. If 2015 produces no more than soaring rhetoric, with no basis in strategies for practical action or accountability, then it will rightly be dismissed as hot air. Yet the opportunity to move, at last, to a globalization that works for all the world's people and for the planet that they inhabit is not one to pass up lightly. With that in mind, we propose a seven-point plan for the year ahead.



First, global leaders need to turn their attention to the new development agenda well ahead of next September, when they are expected to sign up to it. So far, the post-2015 agenda has unfolded primarily in New York. Now, it is in capitals that the real breakthroughs will need to be made on turning ambition into action. The opportunity of the post-2015 agenda will only be realized if it is driven by political resolve at the highest levels.

Second, there needs to be a clearer emphasis on a new Global Partnership, based on a spirit of collaboration. Business as usual will not suffice, and all countries and all stakeholders have work to do in ensuring the implementation of the five shifts. Developed countries must honor their commitments to developing countries, but also reform their own policies and lead the way on sustainable development. Developing countries must continue to bear primary responsibility for their own sustainable development, especially as incomes rise, and make smart choices to manage their resources effectively.



Third, preparations for implementation must start now. Goals can only be successful if they inspire action and are properly localized. The Rio +20 outcome document and our own report point to the need for goals to be concise, easy to communicate, and limited in number. Their success requires coordination not just between Finance, Planning, Health, Education, Energy, Agriculture, Environment and other Ministries, but also local governments; civil society groups; the private sector; academia; multilateral organizations, local communities, and youth, each have a fundamental role to play. Post-2015 is not merely a whole of government agenda, but a whole of society agenda.

Fourth, multi-stakeholder monitoring and accountability mechanisms are needed. Implementation of the post-2015 agenda requires the engagement of many partners. Accountability mechanisms must be flexible enough to adapt to different national realities and the changes that will inevitably arise between now and 2030, and inclusive enough to ensure mutual accountability of all actors. Regional peer-review mechanisms could complement global monitoring efforts.

Fifth, all stakeholders need to take advantage of improved data as a central part of the Post-2015 Agenda.

Policymakers and citizens can track, monitor, and improve the implementation of goals if they have high-quality, timely, and easily accessible data. We recall our proposal that targets should only be considered achieved if met by all relevant social and income groups - disaggregating data by gender, geography, income, disability and other categories to ensure that no one is left behind. Work to identify indicators, improve data and statistical systems and take advantage of new technologies and approaches must begin now.

Sixth, it is essential to harness the power of the private sector for sustainable development. Business provides 60% of GDP in developing countries, 80% of capital flows to them, and 90% of jobs – so responsible private sector partnership is key to sustainable development.

Finally, it is worth stressing that, as finance, development, climate, and trade negotiations culminate simultaneously in 2015, governments cannot ignore the many overlaps and feedback loops. Governments will need to take **a coherent approach to the negotiations, recognizing that progress – or its absence – in one process will in turn affect the others.**

These seven areas for action involve significant challenges, and achieving serious breakthroughs means genuinely committing to a future in which cooperation and shared action drive the emergence of a more sustainable and inclusive world.

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