

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A NEW PATH FOR DEVELOPMENT



Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava provides a vision for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the vantage point of his work as President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

I've spent most of my life in Africa, in a region deeply impacted by poverty but constantly surprising in its ability to adapt and innovate. It is a continent that has seen great progress, yet for a variety of reasons still has far to go to realise its limitless potential. It had been hoped that the Millennium Development Goals – a globally agreed plan of action for reducing poverty – would be achieved by the intended deadline of 2015. Still, while they did focus international attention on key areas, many of the goals were not met in many areas of the world. However, with a change in mindset and strong political commitment, I am convinced that the international community will succeed in improving the lives of people living in poverty and generating economic growth.

This optimism stems from the historic agreements we witnessed in 2015 at the Sendai Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in March, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September, and the Paris Climate Change Conference in December. At the Sustainable Development Summit, leaders from around the world agreed to take new, concrete actions towards poverty eradication and sustainable development by 2030. The resulting roadmap, with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflects the best of our collective ambitions to make the world a better place for all.



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The 2030 Agenda’s multidimensional approach towards eradicating poverty, which continues to be the greatest global challenge of our time, gives a new impetus to our collective development aspirations.

Indivisible and interlinked

The SDGs cover a wide range of issues such as poverty, hunger, health, education, gender inequality, sustainable energy, infrastructure, economic growth and employment, inequality, cities, sustainable consumption and production, climate change, forests, oceans, and peace, justice and strong institutions. These goals are indivisible and interlinked and many of the targets cut across and support multiple SDGs, which may facilitate policy integration and synergies across different sectors.

I am confident that the SDGs are achievable if we ensure that our efforts are focused, effective and mutually reinforcing. This is more important than ever given the challenges we face in the world today.

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our generation. If it is left unchecked, our ecosystems will undergo irreversible changes and our development gains will be undermined. To halt global warming and build resilience, developing appropriate policies, resources and tools must be a priority. We must build on the momentum created by the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Despite the promise of technology and innovation for improving lives, global economic prospects remain bleak. Global economic growth is expected to rise marginally to 2.8 per cent in 2017. Global unemployment is also expected to rise to over 200 million people. And more than 1.3 billion people still live in extreme poverty. Increased prosperity and advances in the educational, health and environmental sectors have not translated into benefits for the poorest and most marginalised. The 2030 Agenda provides us with a roadmap to realise a future with an inclusive and sustainable development path for all.

Furthermore, despite the overall benefits of globalisation, poverty and rising inequality have been major causes of disaffection across rich and poor societies, bringing millions of people to the streets calling for change. The rising discontent with

globalisation could threaten economic cooperation and integration. These voices on the streets should inspire us to come up with innovative solutions to implement our commitments. They should also inspire us to work harder to ensure inclusion at all stages of development, so that no one is left behind.

While global trends mask the formidable challenges faced by different regions and countries, the African Union’s Agenda 2063 represents a collective effort to leave no one behind. It has given a voice to the continent on the future they want to realise for their own people and has positioned Africa as a dynamic force for sustainable development efforts globally.

This regional development framework complements the SDGs, and can strengthen wider efforts towards a global transformative change and a sustainable future for all.

Breaking the silos

The same spirit of cooperation and shared values that enabled us to reach an agreement on the SDGs should be used to drive the timely realisation of these goals.

The SDGs differ from previous international development plans because of several distinct, innovative features:

First, the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development is at the core of the innovative approach contained in the 2030 Agenda. This requires a new mindset to pursue the transformative and ambitious path set out. Our success will depend on the extent to which we are able to overcome silo-bound approaches. We will need to utilise different institutional frameworks and governance arrangements, innovative partnerships, and inclusive and integrated approaches to policy-making.

Second, the Agenda is universal in nature and sets objectives across all countries, both developing and developed. One of the most compelling innovations is that the Agenda is now for everyone – not just poor people or developing countries. It addresses access to basic healthcare in Liberia as much as it is concerned with the overuse of plastic containers in London. It is just as much about increasing agricultural productivity for food security in Africa as it is about reducing food waste in the developed world. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals becomes a global aim that all citizens of the world are invested in and can work together to make a reality.

Third, the 2030 Agenda recognises that development and peace are mutually reinforcing and commits countries to work for peace, justice and strong institutions. SDG 16 recognises the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The inclusion of issues related to peaceful societies



in Goal 16 was a significant step towards galvanising global effort against injustice, violence, insecurity and exclusion at both the local and global levels.

Conflict resolution

Development is not possible without peace; and peace without development is fragile and at great risk. The Agenda makes progress towards enhancing the peace and development nexus by emphasising the intricate link between peace and security and development. This represents a new understanding about the changing nature of conflict over the last decades. We live in a world with intrastate wars and complex civil conflicts. They are increasingly intractable and recurring. More resources are being spent on responding to violent conflicts than on sustaining peace.

With the fast pace of change and technological advancements, the fundamental link between development and lasting peace has become more important than ever. The Agenda gives us a unique universal and comprehensive framework to address the major causes of discord, and prevent relapse into conflict.

The international community must support countries affected by conflict in their efforts to build institutions and address root causes of poverty and inequality. We need development that is holistic, inclusive and beneficial to all for it to be sustainable and conducive to peace.

This is why the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission are looking for ways to enhance their collaboration to break down the silos at the intergovernmental level. Coherence and complementarity between the UN's peace and security efforts and its development and humanitarian work is imperative for sustaining peace and achieving the SDGs.

Key objectives for the future

A more inclusive and equal world for future generations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, pledges to reduce inequality and provides a vision of a shared future with equality and opportunities for all. Inequality is a universal challenge faced by all countries and encompasses gaps not only in income and wealth, but also in access to and outcomes in health, education and other essential human needs. The objective of reducing inequality is not only a stand-alone goal, but also a crosscutting issue in the Agenda. While SDG 10 seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries, other SDGs address several different aspects of inequality. To achieve this goal, we need to make young people a priority for a more equal world for future generations.

Young people have been among the most excited and passionate about the 2030 Agenda and have from the beginning been actively working to shape its contours. They set themselves not only to hold their governments to account to achieve the youth-

related targets in the various SDGs, but also to be in the vanguard in the monitoring and review of implementation of this Agenda as a whole.

There is a clear reason for this. Globally, many young people experience immense development challenges, including poverty, lack of access to decent jobs, limited access to political participation, healthcare and quality education, as well as gender and racial discrimination, lack of respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, violent conflict and forced migration.

In particular, the time since the global financial and economic crisis has proved a challenging one for youth globally. Since 2009, global youth unemployment figures have remained persistently around 13 per cent. Currently, more than 71 million young people around the world are unemployed, and in low and middle income countries underemployment in the informal sector poses a primary employment challenge. Meeting this requires greater investment in skills and quality education, as well as increased support for entrepreneurial environments and financial literacy, and safeguarding the working conditions and labour rights of youth.

At the same time, youth participation and representation in institutional political processes and policy-making is relatively low and has been decreasing in many countries. Young people are not adequately represented within formal political structures, as evidenced by the low rates of parliamentary involvement, political party participation and electoral activity among youth worldwide. In lieu of formalised participation, many young people are turning to protests, demonstrations and online engagement to have their voices heard. Harnessing the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the Sustainable Development Agenda is central to not only finding solutions to some of our key development challenges, but to ensuring the active and meaningful engagement of youth in development efforts.

The development of national youth policies is a key way in which member states can ensure the engagement and inclusion of youth in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, and in creating a more equal world for future generations.

The United Nations has been partnering with the Commonwealth Youth Programme to encourage evidence-based youth policies, including by promoting youth indicators, youth participation and inter-sectoral dialogue. Three regional training events have been organised so far (Anglophone Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) including more than 40 countries. These policies can be discussed at the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum, which is a platform created by the Council for young people to engage with member states of the United Nations and discuss among themselves their collective ideas, solutions and

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innovations. Young people also have the opportunity to influence global policy-making on issues of interest to them at this annual forum.

Other vulnerable groups

Young people are not the only group that must receive special attention. The achievement of a more equal world and our aspirations for inclusion will entail prosperity that is shared among future generations of people of all ages, ethnicities, cultures, minority groups, nationalities, abilities, genders and religions. Yet this vision is still far from being realised. For instance, in old age, people confront distinct vulnerabilities in economic and other aspects of well-being. They experience inequalities in income, wealth, employment, access to financial services, as well as healthcare. In many countries, people aged 60 and above disproportionately live in poverty and cannot afford to retire.

Women and girls continue to face specific challenges in many parts of the world, including my own, such as systemic discrimination, unequal access to education and economic opportunities, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage. Gender stereotypes, norms, and consequent expectations prevent millions of girls from pursuing their interests and reaching their full potential. We can no longer ignore the value of unpaid care and domestic work. Around the world, women are still not as visible as men in leadership positions. With equal access to land, credit, natural resources, education, health services, decent work and equal pay, the contributions of women and girls can accelerate the achievement of all the SDGs.

In order to fully realise equality of opportunities and outcomes for future generations, without leaving anyone behind, it is necessary to harness the commitment and actions of people from all segments of societies today. Equality and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing.

Building societies where everyone can thrive: the case for infrastructure and industrialisation. By agreeing on infrastructure development and industrialisation (SDG 9), countries have recognised the need to lay the groundwork for economic growth and shared prosperity. SDG 9 calls for building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation. As is the case with all SDGs, progress on SDG 9 will translate into progress on the other Goals.

Infrastructure enables the basic services and daily needs of economies and societies to flourish. Sustainable industrialisation drives economic growth and creates jobs: as much as 500 million jobs worldwide, representing about one-fifth of the world's workforce. It is a fact that no country has developed without industrialisation. Increased employment, especially employment associated with manufacturing, has positive impacts on increasing incomes and reducing poverty. The essential catalyst to all this is innovation. It makes all of this possible, connecting people and places through technology and developing new skills and solutions to existing and emerging problems. For those countries on the cusp of industrialisation, technological innovation in sectors like agriculture that are rich in potential for employment and income growth can create diverse backward and forward linkages with other parts of the economy.

Infrastructure and innovation also have a crucial role to play in advancing social inclusion. The degree to which transport systems are available, affordable, efficient as well as accessible affects people's ability to meet basic needs and participate in society. A lack of transport and public services is associated with poverty and social isolation, in particular among older people and those with disabilities.

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Although infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation are widely understood to be essential for poverty eradication and sustainable development, persistent gaps in investments, institutional capacities and policy frameworks have held back their potential in many countries. The scale of the challenge is significant.

The World Bank estimates that the unmet demand for investment in infrastructure in developing countries amounts to more than US\$1 trillion a year. Basic and key infrastructure, such as roads and bridges and ICTs, sanitation, energy and water, remains scarce in many developing countries. Worldwide, 2.5 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, and almost 800 million people do not have dependable access to safe water.

The 2030 Agenda provides a roadmap for addressing these challenges, complemented by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which provides a framework to overcome barriers to investments in infrastructure and capacity-building. As part of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, it was agreed that developing countries should be supported with financing and through efforts to build the human and institutional capacities necessary to guide and spearhead national efforts.

These Agendas are also being supported by a range of regional and sub-regional initiatives in the areas of infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation. In my own region, Agenda 2063 – ‘the Africa We Want’ – calls on African countries to transform, grow and industrialise their economies and modernise agriculture and agribusiness. These initiatives are crucial given the level of action needed. For example, the cost of closing Africa's infrastructure gap has been estimated by the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) to require US\$360 billion between 2011 and 2040, with significant investments needed by 2020.

These efforts are critical in the countries that are furthest behind. During my tenure as President of the Economic and Social Council, I will put the spotlight on infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation through a Special Meeting of the Council in May 2017, preceded by two preparatory meetings in Africa. Collectively, these events will enable ECOSOC, UN member states and institutional partners to develop viable proposals and opportunities for infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation to ensure that we are building societies in which everyone can thrive.

Mobilising international support. Significant additional financial resources will have to be mobilised to achieve the SDGs. Closing this investment gap in a global environment of slow growth, low commodity prices and volatile capital flows will be challenging. It requires a comprehensive approach that considers all sources of finance, the policies that create an enabling environment for sustainable development investments, as well as inclusive partnerships at all



levels. World leaders committed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to mobilise resources from public and private, domestic and international sources, and to align all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities, ensuring that financing is both stable and sustainable.

Private finance, business investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity growth, employment and structural transformation. Yet, despite growing pockets of socially conscious investors, most private capital remains driven solely by the profit motive, implying that social responsibility and negative externalities such as climate change are generally not incorporated into individual risk/return analyses. This calls for policy measures and strengthened regulatory frameworks that align private investments with long-term sustainable development, and that enhance the coherence of the international financial, monetary and trading systems with the SDGs.

Changes in public policies and regulatory frameworks have to be accompanied by increases in and more effective use of public finance. Domestic public revenue has grown steadily in developing countries over the last 15 years, yet remains insufficient to meet public investment needs, particularly in the poorest countries. The international community is working to increase support for capacity building for taxation in developing countries, reduce tax evasion and close opportunities for tax avoidance, including by strengthening the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

International development cooperation has to be prioritised where needs are greatest and

capacities weakest. It will be critical to meet existing commitments on Official Development Assistance and improve the quality and effectiveness of all development cooperation and its contribution to sustainable development. We need not only to tap the full diversity of actors in development cooperation, but also to bolster developing country efforts with different mixes of financial and policy support, knowledge sharing, technology transfer and capacity building. The ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum provides the most inclusive platform for such work.

The growing diversity of needs and capacities of countries calls for a more specific and tailored approach to country priorities on the ground. Some countries continue to require traditional technical assistance and expertise. Many others have leaped to new levels of economic and social development, but remain vulnerable to global and regional volatility, and have mixed domestic capacities. This requires the international community to focus more on supporting countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

The United Nations will continue to be a global champion for action to galvanise both governments and civil society to work towards poverty eradication, shared prosperity and a healthy planet.

His Excellency Frederick Musiwa Makamure

Shava was elected 72nd President of the Economic and Social Council on 28 July 2016. Ambassador Shava is currently the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations in New York. Until his appointment in 2014, he was Ambassador to China since 2007. From 2003 to 2004, Ambassador Shava was a consultant on Zimbabwe's Parliamentary reform. As an elected official, he was Minister of State for Political Affairs in 1987 and Minister of Labour, Manpower Planning and Development from 1981 to 1986. Mr. Shava holds a Doctor of Philosophy and a Master of Philosophy in parasitology from Royal Holloway College; a Master of Science in nematology from Imperial College; and a Bachelor of Science in biology from University of Zimbabwe.

The **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

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