

The Beyond 2015 Swedish Steering Group's Response to the UN Open Working Group (OWG) Outcome Document

The Beyond 2015 Swedish Steering Group consists of 15 Swedish CSOs. It is the national platform of Beyond 2015, a global civil society campaign consisting of over 1,000 CSOs in over 130 countries. Beyond 2015 has actively been engaged with the work of the Open Working Group by contributing with proposals, participating in meetings, having a regular dialogue with the Swedish government and providing input to the EU positions. This is our response to the outcome document of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Attached is our technical response to each one of the 17 proposed goals.

The Beyond 2015 Swedish Steering group welcomes the outcome document of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG SDG) and recognizes it as an important milestone in the negotiations for a global post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. Now is the time for member states to raise their ambition in the coming intergovernmental negotiations, to adopt more ambitious goals and targets and ensure a truly universal and transformative agenda.

We welcome that the OWG aims at putting sustainability in all three dimensions; social, economic and environmental, at the core of the new development agenda. We strongly agree on the importance of finishing the unfinished business of the MDGs and international development commitments. We support the goals on reducing inequality within and among countries, ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls, ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, taking action to combat climate change and its impacts and to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Additionally we are pleased to see that the OWG has included language on providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and on ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns and achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. These goals are pivotal for a successful sustainable development. We also welcome the open and inclusive dialogue we have had with the Swedish government during the OWG negotiations, and look forward to a continued openness and collaboration in the coming intergovernmental negotiations.

While we congratulate the OWG for a work well accomplished, much remains to be done in order to achieve the best possible post-2015 agenda. The OWG outcome document does not, for example, address growing economic disparities, human rights violations and discriminatory practices around the world, which is essential to target economic inequalities and social division. Nor does it provide for climate change visibility across all goals, which is needed in order to ensure a climate-resilient sustainable development agenda. The question of *how* the agenda will be implemented and monitored is to a large extent left unanswered. The new agenda must provide clear means of implementations and ensure that accountability mechanisms are put in place and that there is adequate financing of the agenda, in order for the targets to achieve the transformational shift that is needed. We additionally support the proposed target on enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development (PCD), although in order to have a significant impact in the new agenda, PCD must be integrated and applied to the framework as a whole. We regret the absence of recommendations for follow-up on the results and progress of the agenda. We now call on member states to be ready to make ambitious commitments on means of implementation, as goals without matching targets pose the risk of becoming empty promises. Business as usual is not an option.

A human rights based approach

The OWG reaffirms the importance of respect for all human rights (Chapeau, para. 7). International human rights legal norms, standards and commitments must form the non-negotiable normative base of any agenda for sustainable development. While we welcome the recognition of all men's and women's equal right to economic resources, access to basic services and ownership and control over land (target 1.4), we regret that the OWG has not gone far enough in integrating a human rights based approach throughout all the goals. We call for clear references to human rights, international commitments and accountability mechanisms for the fulfillment of

universal human right across all goals. We would also like to remind member states of the importance of recognizing migrants as rights holders, and migration as a development factor.

Economic rights and private sector responsibilities

We strongly regret that the OWG makes no commitments that clarify the human rights obligations of the private sector. As the private sector is a recognized actor in the global partnership for sustainable development, its responsibilities and accountability must be clearly spelled out. We wish to see commitments that ensure that the private sector is a responsible partner in sustainable development and, at the very least, “do no harm”. A clear reference to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie Principles) must be made. The final post-2015 framework must reflect current international consensus that governments have a duty to protect human rights through proper oversight and regulation of private actors, to guarantee that they respect human rights and the environment, including in their cross-border activities. This should include a commitment ensuring that that no government allows their territory to be used for illegal or criminal activities elsewhere, such as tax evasion, depositing assets obtained through corruption, involvement in human rights violations or environmental crimes.

Ensuring equality

A separate goal on reducing inequalities within and between countries is essential for the post-2015 agenda to be successful in ensuring poverty eradication and human rights for all. Reducing inequalities can be reinforced by realizing the right to health services, information and education for all without discrimination. We welcome that the OWG underlines the importance of improving the availability of and access to data and statistics disaggregated by a number of factors and recognizes the need to take urgent steps to improve the quality, coverage and availability of disaggregated data, to ensure that no one is left behind (Chapeau, para. 17). To ensure that all goals and targets address inequalities, each goal must be applicable to the entire population. However, the OWG could have gone further in proposing the means to monitor the progress on this. We are pleased that target 1.3 focuses on implementing national social protection systems for all, including floors, especially for the poor and vulnerable. However, the goal should be universal coverage, rather than “substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable”. The best way to ensure that no-one is left behind is to focus on building universal systems to tackle life-cycle risks and guaranteeing non-discrimination.

To achieve gender equality, women and girls rights have to be fulfilled

We support a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality that includes the empowerment of all women and girls. We strongly support the inclusion of the elimination of discrimination of all women and girls, the elimination of all forms of violence and harmful practices, women’s leadership and participation at all levels of decision-making and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. However, we call for a stronger human rights based approach.

A transformative goal on gender equality requires the full inclusion of, and clear commitment to, the realization of women’s and girl’s universal human rights, CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Security Council resolutions 1225, 1325 and 1889. We fully support gender equality to be mainstreamed into all SDGs, however we wish to see this perspective strengthened by; the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education within the education goal; the inclusion of gender separated sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities in non-household facilities within the water and sanitation goal and the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health services in the context of conflict and emergency settings.

Economic growth vs. sustainable and inclusive development

We welcome that the proposed goal on economic growth recognizes that growth must be inclusive and sustainable. This is however poorly reflected in the proposed targets. Climate change must also be made visible across all the goals in order to ensure a low-carbon and climate-resilient approach. Sustaining economic growth per GDP without taking sustainability into consideration is incompatible with poverty eradication and sustainable development. For forthcoming negotiations, we propose a goal that focus on promoting inclusive, pro-poor and sustainable economic development (rather than growth), focusing on positive impacts for the poorest and most marginalized and on reducing the inequality gap between the richest and poorest. Evidence suggests that high levels of income

inequality reduce the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction, and undermine the sustainability and robustness of economic growth in the long run. To ensure long term economic development, member states should move beyond GDP as the measurement of growth and progress, and agree on a common measurement that is based on the well-being of the people and the planet and reducing inequalities. Additionally we call for reinsertion of language on the need to curb illicit financial flows and tax evasion, which is pivotal to economic development and to finance sustainable development. Developing countries' efforts to finance their own development are often undermined by illicit outward flows of finance. The best independent estimates conservatively suggest that over \$850 billion flow out of developing countries each year illicitly mostly through tax dodging, costing at least \$100 billion in lost tax revenues.

Peace and freedom from violence and democratic governance at all levels

We welcome the goal on "peaceful and inclusive societies" as peace is a precondition for sustainable development and poverty eradication. In order for the post-2015-agenda to also ensure secure, non-violent societies, we ask member states to consider a stand-alone goal on building peaceful and stable societies, including targets on disarmament and reduction of global military spending, as well as women's equal participation and leadership in peacebuilding processes and the protection of human rights defenders. We support the current inclusion of "*providing access to justice for all, building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*" in goal 16 and target 16.3 on promoting the rule of law and equal access to justice. This is a first step in tackling some of the issues of governance, but member states must go further by proposing a separate goal on "ensuring democratic governance". We fully support Sweden and other member states that continually have been pushing for this as a separate goal. The Rio+20 document recognized democracy and good governance as crucial for a society and as a foundation for sustainable development. A goal on democratic governance must include a target to guarantee and protect important political rights and civil freedoms such as freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, the right to peaceful protest, the right to organize, meaningful political participation of all social groups, the right to information, and freedom of religion or belief.

Ensuring people's participation and the role of civil society

We welcome the OWG commitments to a people-centered framework. However, regretting the absence of any guarantees on people's participation and the promotion and participation of civil society, we emphasize the importance of including such a guarantee. An open, active and free civil society and people's participation and right to obtain information at all levels are key components of democratic governance. We therefore propose a target to "promote an open, active and free civil society" and an explicit recognition and commitment that sustainable development will be based on the perspectives of people living in poverty and vulnerability, and ensure people's full participation at all levels and in all processes that have an impact on their lives. People are human rights holders and must be involved in planning, implementation and follow-up and evaluation. Marginalized people and young people in particular must be strengthened and become key actors in their own right and in the development of society.

Raise the ambition on combatting climate change

We fully support the stand-alone goal on climate change, as well as the paragraph on climate change in the Chapeau. This is a step forward, although much remains to be done in order to adequately drive climate action. The post-2015 agenda must address the four pillars of the UNFCCC; mitigation, adaptation, technology development and transfer, and finance. We recommend the reinsertion of the target on limiting the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C. Climate change needs to be made visible across all the goals of the post-2015 agenda and all actors must be called upon to take responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We call on member states to raise the ambition and develop and implement low-carbon, climate-resilient development strategies and actions plans including disaster risk reduction. The agenda must include more specific and quantified targets under the climate change goal and make references to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The eradication of poverty will not be possible without also finding a way to deal with climate change.