

BEYOND 2015 EUROPEAN TASK FORCE REACTION TO THE FINAL DRAFT OUTCOME DOCUMENT FOR THE POST-2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

13 July 2015

As a contribution to the EU's current discussion on the final draft outcome document for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (Transforming Our World: the 2030 agenda for global action), the Beyond 2015 European Task Force would like to underline some key issues which we believe could be improved.

Integrate fully the three dimensions of sustainable development and ensure that universality means all countries, all goals

The post-2015 sustainable development agenda can only be truly transformative if it is an integrated and universal agenda and very different from the MDGs which did not tackle root causes and structural issues and did not recognise the interlinkages. The five "Ps" set out in the first page gives the impression of silos when in fact they are interdependent and have to be approached in a holistic way. A proposal would be to include in the Preamble the references to interlinkages, integration and universality which are already included in other parts of the text, for example in paragraph 5 of the introduction. For example, *"The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing **are integrated and indivisible** and demonstrate the scale and ambition of the new **universal agenda**. They will stimulate action **by all countries** over the next 15 years in the following areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet."*

The integrated nature of the agenda is weakened by the mention in paragraph 3 of the introduction that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge. An integrated agenda means that no one priority should be singled out. This also ignores the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty such as voice, empowerment and access to resources.

We also suggest adding to paragraph 50: **"All governments should (or will) work towards the delivery (or achievement) of all goals and targets"**. This is important to avoid the danger of cherry picking. The SDGs are not a menu of options but a complete dish. In this regard, we would like to see stronger ambition in paragraph 60 to emphasize the need for governments to show political leadership for national level implementation based on an overarching sustainable development strategy incorporating all SDGs.

Empower people through participation

We welcome references to securing the participation of all people in the Preamble but the rest of the text falls short of recognising the active contribution people will make to the agenda. Participation could be strengthened throughout by recognising people as actors in their own development. More emphasis should be placed on the responsibility of states to ensure that the SDGs are adequately communicated to people everywhere in order to promote their engagement with the new framework.

Equality

We welcome the strong wording on human rights, fundamental freedoms and non-discrimination in paragraph 18, and in particular the addition at the end of 'other status', through which the exclusion of any other vulnerable groups can be avoided.

We welcome the mention of ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’ as a distinct ambition. This highlights the centrality of achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment to any agenda aimed at tackling poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. It is important that rights-based language is used in relation to the ambition to achieve gender equality and it is suggested that the text in the Preamble is strengthened to read: *Achieve gender equality, and empower **and realize the human rights of** all women and girls.*

We also welcome the inclusion of paragraph 19 and we would want to strongly endorse the need for a stand-alone paragraph expanding upon gender equality, women’s rights and sustainable development. This could possibly be moved higher up. We would like stronger language on women’s rights, changes to guard against any ‘instrumentalisation’ of women in the achievement of sustainable development, and greater focus on damaging social norms and structural inequality.

While it is positive to see the commitment in paragraph 23 to providing quality education, it misses the commitment to ‘*free and public*’ education which we feel is the intention of the targets within goal four and the key to ensuring equity in education provision.

We welcome the commitment made by this agenda to achieving universal health coverage, recognition of the importance of tackling non-communicable diseases. We suggest the following addition to paragraph 24: *We shall ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive **health and rights**, including health care services, including for family planning, information and **comprehensive sexuality** education.*

Alternative measures of progress

It is positive to see a reference to alternative measures of progress that go “beyond GDP” in paragraph 43. A straightforward focus on measuring progress through an economic indicator does not capture equality, well-being and environmental degradation and therefore cannot reflect a holistic vision of sustainable development. However, at the same time, throughout the text, there are regular references to “sustained economic growth” which contradicts the ambition to create a people and planet-centred agenda and fails to address systemic change. The concept of growth being constrained within ecological or planetary boundaries is not mentioned, nor that the function of the economy should be to serve people and the planet and not the other way round. Business as usual is not an option.

Nor do we see any references to the need for low carbon development and to eliminate environmentally harmful subsidies such as fossil fuel subsidies. We are on a trajectory to world where the impacts of climate change will be felt by all, in particular the most vulnerable and poorest communities, and where the foreseen impacts will severely impede and undermine progress towards delivering the sustainable development goals. For example in paragraph 32, could be added: “ *a wide range of other supportive policies and measures **such as the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies***”

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

It is very positive to see policy coherence for sustainable development mentioned in paragraph 40 and we know this is also a priority for the EU. We would however propose that policy coherence for sustainable development merits a separate paragraph to emphasise its importance, at all levels and across all sectors, as a critical enabling condition for the achievement of sustainable development.

Measuring up to commitments: Accountability

We broadly welcome the principles for follow-up and review in paragraph 57, including the additions of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the emphasis on transparency, inclusion and participation.

However, we would point out the in principle “c”, coordination should be across all UN and multilateral agencies and not just the international development system in order to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development.

In addition, for follow-up, review and accountability at the **national level**, it seems that earlier recommendations on timelines and participatory processes have disappeared from the text (paragraph 61). It is at the national level, and even more so, at the local level, that the results of these international decisions will be felt and impact on people’s lives and their environment. Therefore reviews should be inclusive and multi-stakeholder. Accountability to citizens as referred to in paragraph 56 is key. After all, paragraph 47 refers to “an agenda of the people, by the people, for the people” – therefore this objective should be embedded in the follow-up and review.

Clarify the Global Partnership

The text relating to the global partnership, for example in the Preamble, remains somewhat abstract and lacks concrete detail. The very specific role of States as primary duty bearers is not stated and the respective roles of civil society, the private sector and other major stakeholders are not defined. The text has little to say about how the asymmetries in power, wealth, resources and expertise between the developed and developing countries that constitute the global partnership will be addressed.

Responsibilities assigned to non-state actors must be carefully thought through so as to avoid an abdication of responsibility by States, whilst at the same time balancing that against the need to ensure all actors are held accountable for any roles in implementing the framework. This raises further questions about the accountability of the private sector – which is mentioned in several places – given that their interests are inherently different from public sector interests and that there are few appropriate and rigorous mechanisms in place. For example, we propose an addition to paragraph 32 where the contribution of business, private sector and philanthropic organisations should be accompanied by references to international standards, guidelines and principles on human rights and environmental sustainability. An over-reliance by the international community on private finance to implement the Post 2015 agenda should also be avoided, as this could have the effect of weakening political resolve to develop robust accountability mechanisms for the private sector.

