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Sustainable Development Goals

Background on the goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty. The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases, and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities.

For 15 years, theÂ [MDGs drove progress](#)Â in several important areas: reducing income poverty, providing much needed access to water and sanitation, driving down child mortality and drastically improving maternal health. They also kick-started a global movement for free primary education, inspiring countries to invest in their future generations. Most significantly, the MDGs made huge strides in combatting HIV/AIDS and other treatable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.

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Key MDG achievements

- More than 1 billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty (since 1990)
- Child mortality dropped by more than half (since 1990)
- The number of out of school children has dropped by more than half (since 1990)
- HIV/AIDS infections fell by almost 40 percent (since 2000)

The legacy and achievements of the MDGs provide us with valuable lessons and experience to begin work on the new goals. But for millions of people around the world the job remains unfinished. We need to go the last mile on ending hunger, achieving full gender equality, improving health services and getting every child into school beyond primary. The SDGs are also an urgent call to shift the world onto a more sustainable path.

The SDGs are a bold commitment to finish what we started, and tackle some of the more pressing challenges facing the world today. All 17 Goals interconnect, meaning success in one affects success for others. Dealing with the threat of climate change impacts how we manage our fragile natural resources, achieving gender equality or better health helps eradicate poverty, and fostering peace and inclusive societies will reduce inequalities and help economies prosper. In short, this is the greatest chance we have to improve life for future generations.

The SDGs coincided with another historic agreement reached in 2015 at the COP21 Paris Climate Conference. Together with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, signed in Japan in March 2015, these agreements provide a set of common standards and achievable targets to reduce carbon emissions, manage the risks of climate change and natural disasters, and to build back better after a crisis.

The SDGs are unique in that they cover issues that affect us all. They reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are ambitious in making sure no one is left behind. More importantly, they involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for all humanity.

Result of a participatory process

Establishing post-2015 goals was an outcome of the Rio+20 summit in 2012, which mandated the creation of an [Open Working Group](#) to come up with a draft agenda.

The open working group, with representatives from 70 countries, had its first meeting in March 2013 and published its final draft, with its 17 suggestions, in July 2014. Member state negotiations followed, and the final wording of the goals and targets, and the preamble and declaration that comes with them, were agreed in August 2015.

Alongside the open working group discussion, the process to design the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was informed by a public consultation at a scope unprecedented in UN history. It is the result of a three-year-long transparent, participatory process inclusive of all stakeholders and people’s voices. The UN system facilitated 88 national consultations starting in 2012 on the future that people want; 11 thematic consultations on a wide range of issues related to sustainable development; 6 dialogues on implementation; and door-to-door surveys. The UN also launched an online My World survey asking people to prioritise the areas they’d like to see addressed in the goals. These consultations shaped deliberations of the [High-Level Panel](#) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the open working group on Sustainable Development Goals, contributed to the regular reports from the Secretary-General, and ultimately informed the official negotiations that culminated in Member States’ adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

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