

# Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals





# Contents

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<b>Opening statement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. The Kingdom of the Netherlands and the SDGs</b>	<b>8</b>
How do we meet the challenge?	8
Institutional embedding	8
Implementing the SDGs through inclusive dialogue and consultations	10
Initial results: progress made so far on the SDGs in the Kingdom	10
The Kingdom in the world: our contribution to the SDGs worldwide	11
Partnerships and coherence for sustainable development	14
The way forward	15
<b>2. Current policies with an impact on SDG achievement</b>	<b>18</b>
SDG 1 No poverty	18
SDG 2 Zero hunger	19
SDG 3 Good health and well-being	20
SDG 4 Quality education	21
SDG 5 Gender equality	22
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation	23
SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy	24
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	26
SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	27
SDG 10 Reduced inequalities	27
SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities	28
SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production	29
SDG 13 Climate action	30
SDG 14 Life below water	31
SDG 15 Life on land	33
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	33
SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals	35
<b>3. Partners in the Netherlands</b>	<b>38</b>
Subnational governments: municipalities, provinces and water authorities	38
Private sector	40
Civil society	40
Knowledge institutions	41
Youth	42

This report serves as the Voluntary National Review of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on the occasion of the 2017 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

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# Opening Statement

'The Kingdom of the Netherlands believes in the power of empathy and dialogue,' said King Willem-Alexander in 2015 at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly. 'It is not always the loudest voices that speak the deepest truths. In fact, it is often the small member states that show us the way forward.' His Majesty was speaking on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and of the four autonomous countries that comprise it, each with a different size and location. Each faces its own challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the four ministers who are responsible for overseeing the Kingdom's implementation of the SDG agenda, we are delighted to present its first Voluntary National Review to the United Nations. This review outlines the steps that each of our countries has taken, and shows the progress we have made towards the goals. Our efforts to achieve the SDGs have been, and will continue to be, the subject of a lively, transparent political debate, thus ensuring broad support for our work. We are grateful to everyone in the four countries of the Kingdom who has participated in the consultations and contributed to this first Voluntary National Review.

We believe that the key to success in attaining the SDGs is our willingness to form partnerships at national and international level. Working together across sectors and national boundaries is deeply embedded in our countries' traditions. In organising ourselves to take up the challenges of SDG implementation, we are building on our solid track record of resolving domestic problems by forging partnerships between governments, business, civil society, knowledge institutions, local authorities and youth organisations.

This approach is also central to our strong support for SDG implementation worldwide, as part of our policy combining development aid, trade and investment. Aid from the Netherlands has helped 25 million people in developing countries gain access to clean drinking water, and provided 19 million people with access to clean energy. Thanks to Dutch investments, every year approximately 10 to 20 million people receive improved nutrition, 15 million women and girls obtain access to contraception, and 9 million people gain access to basic infrastructure.

In our view, the report clearly shows that a year and a half after the UN Sustainable Development Summit adopted the 2030 Agenda, all four countries of the Kingdom are on track to meet the challenges in achieving the SDGs. We are meeting these challenges at both national and Kingdom level. We also believe that we have learned lessons that we can share with others, to help them achieve the SDGs. We stand ready to continue this important work in the future, and to report our further progress to the international community once more in a few years' time.

**Mike G. Eman**

Prime Minister of Aruba

**Eugene P. Rhuggenaath**

Prime Minister of Curaçao

**Lianne Ploumen**

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation  
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

**William V. Marlin**

Prime Minister of St Maarten

# Summary

## Introduction

The four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and St Maarten) report jointly to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. While each autonomous country within the Kingdom has its own political reality and is in a different phase of SDG implementation, all of them are committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole and to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at home as well as contributing to their worldwide implementation. Our Voluntary National Review includes the views and positions of all four countries, providing detail on progress made and lessons learned by each autonomous country, as well as by the Kingdom as a whole. Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten are all located in the Caribbean, while ‘the Netherlands’ refers to the Netherlands in Europe and the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius in the Caribbean.

## Achieving the SDGs at home

The four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have chosen an ambitious approach to implementing the SDGs, building pragmatically on existing, relevant policies and institutions. We are all currently integrating the SDGs into our development plans, thus ensuring continued action to achieve them. In January 2017, Aruba established a National SDG Commission consisting of representatives of the Ministry of General Affairs and the Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce and Industry (DEACI), which is tasked with coordinating the implementation of the SDGs in Aruba. St Maarten is currently integrating the SDGs into its National Development Plan, which will focus on human development, good governance, environmental protection and the preservation of cultural heritage. In Curaçao, all parts of society, from government to the private sector and young people, have embraced a vision that combines economic growth, environmental protection and the reduction of inequality. The country has integrated high-priority SDGs into its National Development Plan. In the Netherlands, responsibilities have been assigned to all the ministries concerned, with the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in charge of overall coordination. A first national SDG report has been sent to parliament, drawing on a report by Statistics Netherlands, which is one of the first of its kind in the world.

## Contributing to the SDGs worldwide

By combining foreign trade and development cooperation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands invests in a strong global economy and a safer, inclusive and more stable world, where extreme poverty has been eradicated and inequality reduced. Our aid focuses on the themes of water, security and the rule of law, food security, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. These are the themes on which we have added value and possess specific and relevant knowledge. They also have a direct link to the SDGs. Making global value chains sustainable is another part of our aid and trade agenda. The adoption of the SDGs has reinvigorated our attention to policy coherence for development. To fight inequality and ensure that no one is left behind, we have adopted an action plan on inclusive development.

## Partnerships are the key

All parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have a long history of building partnerships for development, and our pursuit of the SDGs builds on that tradition. National and local governments, the private sector including the financial sector, civil society organisations (CSOs), knowledge institutions and young people are all partners in implementing the SDGs. All partners view the goals as an important framework for guiding and accelerating progress towards their own ambitions and for stepping up their efforts to promote sustainable development.

Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten are working in close collaboration with the UN system in mapping the current situation regarding the SDGs on the islands, and to make plans for SDG implementation. Aruba and St Maarten are using the UN's Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach to ensure full engagement with the 2030 Agenda. Curaçao is stimulating stakeholder involvement in SDG implementation, and has published its first national review using inputs from civil society, its Central Bureau of Statistics, the private sector and the National Platform for Youth Development, including the National Youth Council.

Historically, the people of the Netherlands have forged partnerships between different communities living in the country's river delta as they struggled for mastery over water. The first national SDG report, issued in May this year, sets out the activities and different views of all stakeholders, illustrating the collective nature of SDG implementation in the Netherlands.

For the Netherlands, the European Union is a major partnership. Many current efforts to enhance sustainability reflect common European policies.

## Towards the finish line

In the coming period, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will build on established partnerships, enhance monitoring and reporting, and provide guidance on accelerating progress where there is still scope for improvement. Awareness of the SDGs is growing across the Kingdom. Ensuring broad involvement and collaboration between different sectors is an ongoing challenge for all the countries of the Kingdom, and SDG implementation must be further aligned with each country's existing policies. Stakeholders in society have asked their governments to take an active approach, and we are ready to work with them on achieving the SDGs. One and a half years after the UN Sustainable Development Summit, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is on track to achieve the SDGs. In the race towards sustainable development, the SDGs have taught us to keep in step and advance together towards the same finish line. This is excellent news.

# 1 The Kingdom of the Netherlands and the SDGs

## How do we meet the challenge?

'Our Kingdom welcomes the Sustainable Development Goals, which will focus the efforts of the international community over the next fifteen years, and we will put our hearts and souls into helping ensure their success.' These were the words of King Willem-Alexander at the opening of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015. Prime ministers from all countries of the Kingdom joined him in New York for the launch of the SDGs. Representatives from every country were present for the UN Sustainable Development Summit to deliver addresses, highlighting the importance of partnerships and the role of other stakeholders in a framework that engages many non-governmental actors.

The SDGs are about producing tangible results that improve people's lives. The countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have chosen an ambitious approach to implementing the SDGs, based where possible on existing policies and institutions.

## Institutional embedding

In the Netherlands, responsibilities have been assigned to all the ministries concerned, with the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in charge of overall coordination. An SDG network of focal points with representatives from each ministry and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities has been established and meets regularly. It is chaired by a specially appointed high-level coordinator for national SDG implementation, assisted by a small secretariat. The Netherlands was one of the first countries to conduct a baseline survey of national efforts to achieve the SDGs. The report 'Measuring the SDGs: An Initial Picture for the Netherlands', compiled by Statistics Netherlands, was published in November 2016. In the Netherlands, data are currently available for 37% of the SDG indicators. Statistics Netherlands and other bodies are still compiling data to measure progress on the other indicators.

Aruba is working to adapt the SDGs to its national reality and achieve the SDGs by 2030. To this end a National SDG Commission was established in January 2017 with the mandate to coordinate SDG implementation. Aruba is combining sustainable economic growth, social equity and environmental awareness in order to enhance quality of life and raise living standards for all Arubans, leaving no one behind. One of the Commission's key conclusions is that in Aruba, prosperity must

go beyond material concerns and success or a larger GDP, to encompass quality of life and wellbeing. Sustainable prosperity requires 'doing more with less', so that prosperity for people today does not diminish the quality of life of future generations. Aruba has established an indicators working group with a mandate to assess the relevance of the SDG indicators and localise them.

The global transition from the MDGs to SDGs proved to be a positive shift for countries like Curaçao, where growth and development require an inclusive and sustainable framework. Curaçao has developed a National Development Plan focusing on five priority areas: education, the economy, sustainability, national identity, and good governance and leadership. The plan includes various aspects of nation building and capacity development. This framework has integrated four SDGs that provide measurable targets responding to local challenges: Quality Education; Affordable and Clean Energy; Decent Work and Economic Growth; and Life Below Water. Curaçao's Central Bureau of Statistics is actively involved in monitoring SDG implementation. Its research will enable it to properly define indicators for the four prioritised SDGs. Together with UNDP, the Central Bureau of Statistics is launching a National Socio-economic Database, which will make it possible to monitor SDG indicators that are relevant to Curaçao. The database currently focuses on data collected for priority indicators, but is meant to become a tool to measure progress across all the SDGs. Transparency and data collection are key. In addition, the government of Curaçao is using the SDGs, and particularly the SDG indicators, to enhance cooperation between ministries in drawing up multi-year budgets for policy programmes on youth, safety and economic growth.

In St Maarten, a 'Think and Act' commission has been established, representing the three ministries that are most involved in SDG implementation. This commission will conduct an information and communication campaign in its initial three-year phase, using a bottom-up approach to make the SDGs more widely known and obtain input from several groups inside and outside government. St Maarten will launch initiatives to mainstream and integrate the SDGs into its National Development Plan, as part of the plan's implementation strategy and organisational governance.

## The four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



- 1 Aruba
- 2 Curaçao
- 3 Bonaire
- 4 St Maarten
- 5 Saba
- 6 St Eustatius
- 7 The Netherlands



## **Implementing the SDGs through inclusive dialogue and consultations**

The SDGs should be the subject of a lively, transparent, political debate in order to ensure and safeguard broad support for the goals. Achievement of the SDGs requires support at the highest level, and implementation has to involve all relevant actors in society. A collective process is needed, in which a wide variety of actors contribute according to their strengths and interests. National and local government, private companies (including the financial sector), civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and young people are partners in implementing the SDGs in the Netherlands. All six partners have welcomed the SDGs and are dedicated to achieving them. They perceive the goals as a key framework for guiding and accelerating their own ongoing efforts towards sustainable development ambitions. Various initiatives are being taken across the Kingdom to raise awareness of the SDGs and engage citizens in SDG implementation.

Aruba is actively involving as many stakeholders as possible in implementing the SDGs. The Aruban National SDG Commission has conducted a survey of stakeholder involvement around each of the following pillars: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Aruba will continue to involve the private sector, trade unions and civil society organisations in consensus-based decision-making on major policy issues. To foster awareness in the broader community in Aruba, the website [www.sdgaruba.com](http://www.sdgaruba.com), a Facebook page and a twitter account (SDGAruba) have been established. These are used to share information with the public on the SDGs and on Aruba's implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In Curaçao, the SDGs are welcomed through the National Development Plan, the first step being to inform stakeholders that are working closely with the government. Civil society, the Central Bureau of Statistics, young people and the private sector contributed to the first national SDG review. Youth representatives are actively involved in SDG implementation and are being encouraged to propose solutions, with a specific focus on youth policy. Curaçao established a democratically elected National Youth Council in 2017 to engage young people in policymaking and in shaping their future. More than 300 young people participated in national youth dialogues aimed at ensuring broad support for the National Action Programme for Youth Development, which is also linked to the SDGs. The Action Programme focuses on five priority areas, such as creating jobs, promoting

national identity and encouraging young people to remain in school. The Council has linked their policies to the SDGs, and understands the importance of using the 2030 Agenda to promote their future activities moving forward.

The Netherlands issued its first annual national SDG report in May this year. It provides an overview of existing policies and activities by national and local governments, private companies including the financial sector, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and youth organisations. It gives an excellent illustration of the collective nature of SDG implementation in the Netherlands. After an expert meeting with representatives of these sectors, members of parliament debated the report on this year's Accountability Day. Over the past year and a half, organisations have made considerable progress in building their knowledge of the SDGs and have formed coalitions to achieve them. The SDGs are becoming the guiding framework for many of these organisations' activities. The website [www.sdgederland.nl](http://www.sdgederland.nl) informs the public about the SDGs, the initiatives already under way and ways in which people can contribute to achieving them.

St Maarten has introduced the StMaartenInfo database to compile development data, as well as a user portal for policy development initiatives. It can draw on its experience of organising democratic dialogues with different stakeholder groups, and is currently working to engage these stakeholders in SDG implementation. The country has developed a communication plan to inform the public about the SDGs, focusing especially on reaching young people by including the SDGs in the school curriculum.

## **Initial results: progress made so far on the SDGs in the Kingdom**

Efforts are underway to provide a clear overview of the progress made so far on the SDGs in all parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As mentioned above, Statistics Netherlands has provided a first statistical overview of the SDGs for the Netherlands. The Caribbean countries are preparing to have their statistics bureaus draw up a baseline measurement of their SDG status as well. The results will provide insights into the priorities and challenges for each country.

While a coordinated national effort for implementation still needs to be developed, Curaçao is already taking action on various SDGs. Like many Small Island Developing States (SIDS),

Curaçao faces challenges in gathering usable, up-to-date data to track SDG implementation. Data collection priorities have therefore been set in its National Development Plan. Setting up the National Socioeconomic Database is the first step in making development data more readily available and in enhancing uniformity by taking the SDG indicators as a guide for data collection. The initial focus of data collection for the database will be on indicators related to the four SDGs prioritised in the National Development Plan: Quality Education; Affordable and Clean Energy; Decent Work and Economic Growth; and Life Below Water. While these SDGs will be the primary focus in building the database, indicators for other SDGs will also be tracked and incorporated into it.

In Aruba, a field mission has provided details on the current situation with regard to the SDGs at national level, using the UN DESA Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach. The MAPS mission met with a broad group of representatives from NGOs, the private sector and government. Its report summarises what is required to enhance the country's statistical capability and provides a draft roadmap for SDG implementation. Its preliminary findings show that existing policies address over 80% of SDG indicators. The roadmap for SDG implementation will be finalised by July 2017 and will provide a solid baseline that will allow Aruba to identify areas requiring further attention with regard to SDG implementation.

As a young autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, St Maarten is still making constitutional changes and building institutions. The country is using its experiences with the Millennium Development Goals to assess challenges for SDG implementation, adhering to the overarching goal of achieving a sustainable economy and a good quality of life while managing natural resources and protecting the environment. It has identified the provision of public goods and services and the government's ability to deal with a changing natural environment as key challenges for governance. An initial assessment has linked St Maarten's policy programmes and results to the SDGs. More progress is needed in further reducing poverty among vulnerable groups, enhancing environmental protection of water and land, and improving the effectiveness and accountability of the country's institutions. Specific initiatives include building affordable housing, ensuring sustainable spatial development, and providing the physical and social foundations for long-term sustainable development.

Lastly, the Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) have ranked the Netherlands eighth worldwide among countries on track to achieve the SDGs. The first report presenting SDG data shows that the Netherlands is doing well on many SDG targets and indicators. The country scores particularly high on economic indicators, including per capita GDP, and social indicators. Its residents have confidence in their institutions and corruption levels are low. A majority of the population feels safe in their own neighbourhood and the number of reported crimes is decreasing. Healthy life expectancy at birth has risen. Sense of wellbeing is high and residents are relatively satisfied with their lives. Participation in lifelong learning is high in the Netherlands, where a large proportion of the population is highly educated. Its residents also score well on skills development. The country attaches importance to the contribution that education, science and culture can jointly make to achieving the goals.

The data also show that there is room for improvement in the areas of social inclusion, environmental pressure and biodiversity. In 2015, more people in the Netherlands were living below the national poverty line than in 2006. Although the Netherlands ranks fourth on the EU Gender Equality Index, levels of gender inequality in several areas are still persistently high. Moreover, several groups in the Netherlands experience perceived discrimination. The Netherlands consumes large quantities of fossil fuels and has high per capita greenhouse gas emissions. The share of renewable energy in the total energy supply is low compared to other European countries. The Netherlands also places high environmental pressure on low- and middle-income countries, and food production systems are not fully sustainable. The quality of groundwater, surface water and coastal waters gives cause for concern, as does the sustainability of fisheries. Moreover, natural habitats and biodiversity in the Netherlands are under considerable pressure.

## **The Kingdom in the world: our contribution to the SDGs worldwide**

The Kingdom is committed to helping other countries achieve sustainable and inclusive development. The challenges are immense, especially in developing countries, where one in five people still live in extreme poverty. Specific interventions are needed to reach the poorest and most marginalised people and to make sure that no one is left behind. Inequalities, such

as gender-based income gaps and men and women's unequal access to financial services, must be reduced. We are contributing through aid, trade and investment to a strong global economy and a safer, inclusive and more stable world. We are also contributing to sustainable development worldwide by providing technical assistance and sharing knowledge.

### Leaving no one behind

The Kingdom explicitly supports the overarching promise of the SDGs to leave no one behind. All four countries in the Kingdom recognise the importance of reaching the most vulnerable groups and of promoting the inclusion of all actors in sustainable development.

In Curaçao, the focus on leaving no one behind is central to the government's efforts to build an inclusive, sustainable economy and reduce poverty among the entire population. Aruba's aim is to ensure social wellbeing and good living standards for everyone, in a sustainable and inclusive future. St Maarten embraces its responsibility to provide sustainable and inclusive development while leaving no one behind. Delivering on this promise requires effective and early action to ensure that everyone benefits from economic growth: men and women, rich and poor, straight and gay, young and old must all be involved in creating and sharing the benefits of sustainable development. This also applies to a country like the Netherlands where inequality, albeit relatively low, is on the rise. It applies even more to developing countries, where over 800 million people still live in extreme poverty. The Netherlands has formulated an action plan to support inclusive development, with programmes ranging from giving excluded people a voice and providing SRHR services to vulnerable groups in particular, to lobbying multilateral agencies to refocus their resources and strategies on these groups.

### Combined policy of aid, trade and investment

By integrating foreign trade and development cooperation policy, the government is investing in a stronger global economy and a safer world where absolute poverty is declining and equality is increasing. The introduction of the aid and trade agenda has resulted in a strong focus on responsible business conduct in global value chains. The SDGs also provide a framework for economic diplomacy. The Netherlands' private sector works with knowledge institutions and government in technologically advanced 'top sectors' such as food, water, clean energy and logistics, and on the transition to a circular

economy, in which the country's companies are relatively strong and have a strong international orientation. Other efforts include promoting domestic resource mobilisation in developing countries, promoting innovative financing mechanisms, and building expertise to forge partnerships with the private sector to contribute to achieving the SDGs. To ensure we reach those furthest behind, the Netherlands focuses development aid on least developed countries, while low- and middle-income countries both receive aid and engage in trade, and countries that have largely overcome poverty enjoy a mutually beneficial trade relationship with the Netherlands.

### Targeted aid efforts

The Netherlands' international economic orientation is accompanied by a strong commitment to development cooperation that directly contributes to the SDGs worldwide. The country's ODA contribution is geared to those policy themes where the Netherlands has added value and possesses specific and relevant knowledge. In recent years, the country has been focusing on four priorities: water, security and the rule of law, food security, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, including healthy pregnancies, safe childbirth, freedom to choose one's partner, sexual rights, and access to contraception and safe abortion. In addition, the Netherlands promotes sustainable economic growth by paying extra attention to private sector development, gender equality and climate change. Both in its national policies and within the European Union, the Netherlands advocates opportunities for developing countries in these areas. In recent years, Official Development Assistance from the Netherlands has remained above or close to the international target of 0.7% of GNI. This has yielded many encouraging results (see page 13).

### Policy coherence

Internationally, the Netherlands is a frontrunner in the field of policy coherence for development: aligning non-aid policies with the interests of the poor. The adoption of the SDGs has renewed interest in this important topic. In 2016, the Netherlands adopted an action plan on policy coherence for development, with time-bound goals and actions aligned with the SDGs, focusing on important areas such as climate, remittances, responsible business conduct, access to medicines and food security. This is essential to achieve results for and benefit the poorest and most marginalised. The Kingdom calls on other actors, including EU member states, SIDS, multilateral organisations and developing countries, to make their policies more coherent.

## Results achieved with development funding from the Netherlands in 2015



Support to women's rights organisations helped strengthen the leadership capacities of more than 60,000 women, 4,880 of whom stood for national, provincial or local electoral office.

## Partnerships and coherence for sustainable development

Making the SDGs a reality must be a concerted effort. The four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands agree that the key to success in attaining the SDGs is our willingness and resolve to form partnerships at national and international level. Forming partnerships is a strong tradition throughout the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Working together across sectors and national boundaries is part of our DNA.

Partnerships are imperative for the development of Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten as Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as highlighted by the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. These three countries seek to strengthen partnerships in the region by participating actively in forums where regional challenges and opportunities are discussed. They are working on overcoming the limitations to sustained and sustainable development confronted by SIDS. Curaçao and Aruba focus on forging regional partnerships both bilaterally and through the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories Association, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Stepping up South-South cooperation will remain essential to SDG implementation.

Curaçao's long history of forming sectoral partnerships has paved the way for SDG implementation. Since 2014, Curaçao's national dialogue on the theme 'Kòrsou ta Avansá' ('Curaçao is Advancing') has provided a platform for government, businesses and trade unions to discuss policy paths in line with ILO principles, rules and norms for social dialogue. Despite the dynamic political climate of recent years, the platform continues to provide scope for structured dialogue and consultation between government and civil society. It has advised several successive governments and is widely recognised and accepted as a mechanism for tripartite dialogue. This dialogue played a key role in drafting and launching Curaçao's National Development Plan. The platform's success will have added value in promoting stakeholder awareness of the SDGs and of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, and involvement in their implementation.

St Maarten too acknowledges that it is no longer enough to act at national level. It has therefore taken on responsibility as a Regional Authorising Officer for the EU-funded 11th EDF Regional Programme, in which 12 Overseas Countries and

Territories take joint action to enhance marine biodiversity and promote sustainable energy. This partnership is expected to achieve more than individual territories could by themselves. The programme, which ties in with multiple SDGs, is an example of how the Kingdom supports partnerships for development.

Aruba is recognised as an important partner in sharing knowledge on sustainability, and as a role model for the Caribbean. In 2016 Aruba partnered with the Netherlands, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) and UNDP to establish the UN Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Development for SIDS. The Centre aims to strengthen innovation and resilience by offering a platform for South-South cooperation and exchange of knowledge in areas including renewable energy, public-private partnerships, water management, tourism, the environment and sustainable health practices. The Centre plans to organise high-level training courses on creating sustainable development roadmaps, provide in-country technical assistance, and develop a virtual platform with access to knowledge products and learning tools. Aruba is also working with partners, including the Carbon War Room and the associated Rocky Mountain Institute, on meeting its own energy needs with 100% renewable energy by 2020. It understands that as a small island it is especially dependent on strong partnerships to achieve its goals.

The Netherlands has a solid track record of resolving domestic issues by forging partnerships, for example by involving people from all walks of society in efforts to tackle water-related challenges. In the national Energy Agreement, over forty organisations, private power companies, environmental organisations, knowledge institutions and government bodies committed to reducing energy use and promoting a transition to sustainable energy. The partnership approach is also at the heart of international efforts combining aid, trade, knowledge and investment. For example, through Responsible Business Conduct Agreements different stakeholders undertake collective action at the consumer end of value chains in order to perform due diligence on the most serious risks to people and planet in all parts of their value chains (see textbox on page 16). The Netherlands invests in multi-stakeholder coalitions to meet global challenges on health and food security, such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) and the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative (SUN). In the recent past the Netherlands, as one of the co-chairs of the Global Partnership on Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), led joint efforts to enhance the effectiveness of



**Maeslant Barrier in the New Waterway; the Netherlands has a solid track record in tackling water-related challenges.**

development assistance. In support of the SDG agenda, over 100 organisations have signed up to the Netherlands' SDG Charter, committing to form partnerships to contribute to the SDGs. Individuals and organisations in the Netherlands can showcase their activities online at [gateway.sdgcharter.nl/](http://gateway.sdgcharter.nl/). Charter initiatives to boost investment in sustainable development include Community Life Centres in Africa, the Human Cities Coalition and the financial sector initiative SDG Investing to boost investments in sustainable development.

## The way forward

A year and a half after the UN Sustainable Development Summit, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is on track to achieve the SDGs. In the race towards sustainable development, the SDGs have taught us to keep in step and advance together towards the same finish line, both within the Kingdom and beyond.

While the starting position of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is promising, statistical bureaus across the Kingdom also identified certain gaps in terms of SDG achievement. Most of these are acknowledged in the findings per SDG in chapter 2. In general, the Netherlands needs to accelerate progress in areas where it is underperforming, like renewable energy, climate action, gender equality and biodiversity. Some stakeholders believe that, in implementing the SDGs, more attention should be given to the effects of current national policies on future generations and on communities in other parts of the world. The reports of the statistics bureaus of Curaçao and Aruba underscore the need for more clarity about the indicators, and about the assistance that both countries and their organisations must provide in order to further build SDG infrastructure and finetune the indicators.

Partnerships are the way forward. In the coming period, the Netherlands will build on existing partnerships and forge new ones where needed. The process of jointly drafting the first SDG report encouraged stakeholders to identify their added value for

specific SDGs and for tackling overall challenges in achieving the SDGs. Curaçao, like the Netherlands, has used the momentum created by the Voluntary National Review process to encourage key stakeholders and ministries to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The process of preparing national reports and this HLPF report has helped consolidate networks and increased the breadth and depth of existing relationships across the Kingdom. The challenge, at local, national and international levels, will be to promote exchange of lessons learned between different organisations, stakeholders and sectors.

Although clearly the SDGs are increasingly well known in government, the general public is not yet familiar with them. Many of the Kingdom's organisations, companies, knowledge institutions and local governments have not yet embraced the SDGs as a leading framework.

We also face the challenge of taking policy coherence a step further. This is easier said than done: institutions and support structures are still predominantly organised along mono-disciplinary lines. The SDGs address complex issues, requiring an integrated approach. Collaboration between different sectors is also an ongoing challenge, sometimes requiring external support and an exchange of lessons learned between countries. SDG implementation must be further aligned with existing policies.

Achieving sustainable and inclusive development is essentially a political process. No matter how elaborate the evidence base and policy guidance, or how extensive the number of indicators and targets, achieving the SDGs with limited resources requires trade-offs and tough decisions on allocation. These are fundamentally part of the political process in all four countries of the Kingdom. Elections have taken place recently in two of the four countries. When this report is reviewed at the 2017 HLPF, the process of forming a new government may still be ongoing in the Netherlands. A new coalition agreement may decide on new trade-offs and reconsider previously agreed policies and allocation decisions. In Curaçao, the SDGs will be a key part of the new government's policies and will be integrated into its programme for 2017-2020. St Maarten will integrate the SDGs into its National Development Plan, which is currently being drafted. Aruba's national SDG commission works closely with the government ministries and departments, NGOs and the private sector to ensure mainstreaming of the SDG approach across the board.



The Minister of Finance and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation signing the Dutch Banking Sector Agreement on International Responsible Business Conduct Regarding Human Rights.

The present report outlines where the Kingdom stands at present in SDG implementation. It also gives insight on where we may stand in a number of years, based on the implementation of agreed policies and on the resources that have already been allocated.

We know that SDG implementation is not the sole responsibility of governments, and that a broad range of non-governmental and local government actors are committed to it. It is essential to maintain and strengthen the partnership among all these stakeholders. The annual process of reporting on SDG implementation will provide an excellent framework for this mission. The SDG reports drawn up by the various statistics bureaus in the Kingdom will also help guide future implementation. Not only will they highlight areas where implementation is lagging behind, thus clarifying where political choices need to be made, they will also help to gradually enhance the underpinning of SDG indicators with data. Statistics Netherlands aims to support 50% of indicators with data in 2018, compared to 37% at the present time. Curaçao and Aruba also attach importance to the underpinning of the SDG indicators, although more technical support will be required and financing this process remains a challenge.

The next chapter gives an overview of the status of SDG implementation for each goal, at home and abroad. Within the limitations of the space available, it gives an overview of selected commitments and achievements of our governments and other stakeholders. It also gives a snapshot of where we stand at present. The starting point may differ between countries in the Kingdom, between stakeholders or sectors, and between SDGs. But as our King said in 2015, we all have one thing in common: we are all putting our hearts and souls into achieving the SDGs.

## Text box 1 Knowing and showing

In October 2016 14 banks, the Dutch Banking Association, NGOs, trade unions and the Dutch government signed the Dutch Banking Sector Agreement on International Responsible Business Conduct Regarding Human Rights. The agreement is one of five voluntary agreements on responsible business conduct. The other four concern textiles, plant proteins, forest management and the gold sector. The banking sector agreement is the only one of its kind in the world. Never before have banks, NGOs, trade unions and a national government agreed to take steps – both the banks individually and all parties together – to increase the banking sector's responsibility to protect human rights.

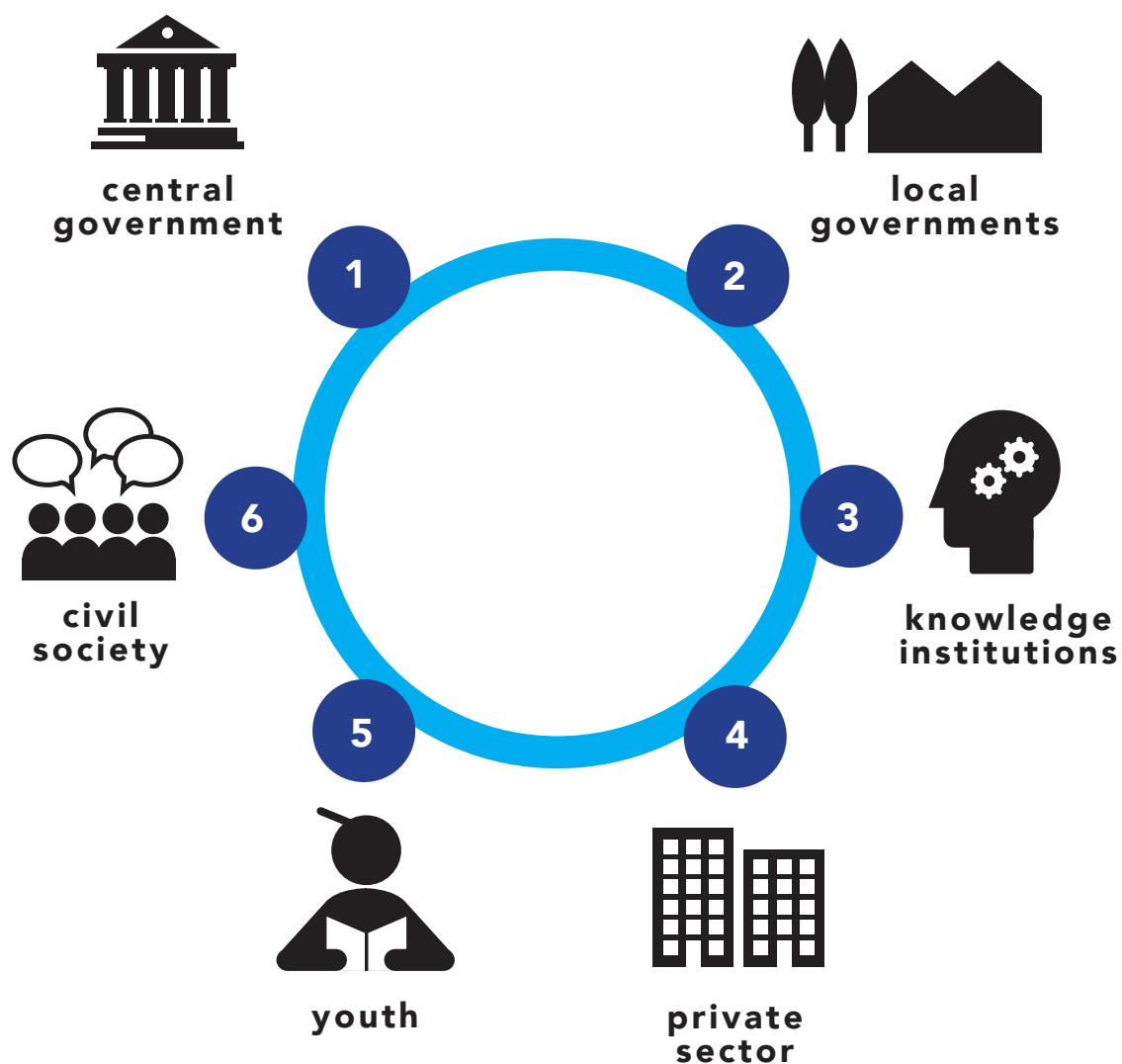
Although the four agreements are brand new – having been signed in 2016 and 2017 – they tie in perfectly with the much older Dutch tradition of consultation and consensus. Known as 'polderen' in Dutch, the term is derived from the polders that were reclaimed from the North Sea. For centuries, all kinds of different parties have had to work together to prevent the country from being flooded. The only difference this time is that it's not just about working together for people in the Netherlands. It's about people all over the world. Anyone whose human rights are threatened as a result of the activities of Dutch banks and their corporate lending and project finance clients. The agreements also stress the importance of knowing and showing.

The agreements are based on the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the United Nation's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). However, they also include an implementation framework, which comprises tangible objectives and measures, based on consensus between the parties. In the case of the banking sector agreement, signatory banks must require project finance clients to follow the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), for example. Other elements of the agreement lay the foundation for a value chain mapping exercise of high-risk sectors, starting with palm oil and cocoa; increasing transparency; conducting and publishing a study on good practices for increasing leverage; and establishing a working group. This group will explore banks' responsibilities regarding access to remedy in accordance with the OECD Guidelines and the UNGPs, and advise banks on taking appropriate steps to incorporate findings.

When signing the agreement Chris Buijink, head of Dutch Banking Association, said 'We have taken the lead worldwide and we will work to achieve similar international agreements'. Farah Karimi, CEO of Oxfam Novib, agreed, saying 'This is only the beginning.'

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## Six stakeholder groups involved in SDG monitoring and implementation in the Netherlands



# 2 Current policies with an impact on SDG achievement

## SDG 1 No poverty

### At home

There is no extreme poverty in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the percentage of people at risk of relative poverty and social exclusion increased slightly during the last economic recession. The risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Netherlands is still well below the EU average: in the EU ranking for 2015 the Netherlands had the third-lowest risk, after the Czech Republic and Sweden. The social security system provides a safety net for people left behind and assures an adequate standard of living. It offers social protection and support to various groups in society, including the elderly, parents with young children, people with disabilities and people who are temporarily or permanently unable to participate in the labour market. Despite these arrangements, circumstances sometimes drive people into poverty, even in a high-income country like the Netherlands. The current government is therefore working to foster financial self-reliance, labour participation and social inclusion. In 2012, the government stepped up policies to prevent poverty and debt, with a structural annual investment of an extra €100 million. To ensure that all children grow up in a supportive environment, another extra €100 million is being invested each year starting from January 2017.

Municipalities are responsible for implementing anti-poverty policies. In addition, the government supports civil society organisations specialised in poverty reduction and debt restructuring. The Netherlands uses resources from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) mainly to help the elderly. Another topic related to SDG 1 is the economic independence of women. In the Netherlands 53% of women are economically independent, compared with 73% of men; gender equality is one of the SDGs on which the Netherlands is lagging behind. The government believes that both women and men should be economically independent, and therefore actively promotes labour participation and equal opportunities for women (see SDG 5).

In its coalition agreement, Curaçao's new government identifies the eradication of relative poverty on the island as a key policy aim. Eliminating relative poverty directly depends on reducing economic and social inequalities, and building bridges between the island's different socioeconomic groups.

St Maarten combines interventions targeting poverty and hunger, including the MDG Acceleration Framework. Pockets of relative poverty have been identified in specific areas and are being monitored through a poverty reduction strategy. St Maarten is developing social protection policies for the elderly and other vulnerable groups, with the aim of ensuring basic protections, providing universal access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, and upgrading slums. The country has conducted a national household budget survey, focusing on social needs that have been identified. This will provide useful statistics for better targeting future initiatives to eradicate poverty.

### Abroad

The Kingdom of the Netherlands contributes to the eradication of extreme poverty and sustainable economic growth in developing countries. Our focus on the poorest is showcased by the fact that 11 out of our 15 partner countries are Least Developed Countries. In addition, other policy instruments target middle-income countries, which is where the majority of the world's poor people live. Curaçao, Aruba and St Maarten set store by eradicating poverty in the Western Hemisphere through collaboration on promoting economic prosperity and growth and on reducing inequality in SIDS and within the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The Netherlands is convinced that the only way to eradicate extreme poverty is to stimulate sustainable and inclusive growth and development. The country subscribes to the five internationally endorsed strategies to achieve inclusive development: create jobs, develop human and physical capital, fight against discrimination and exclusion, use taxation to redistribute wealth, and create inclusive management and institutions. These are included in an action plan with 20 activities that the Netherlands is implementing to support the poorest and most marginalised groups. The plan's focus is mainly on creating employment for young people and women, and on facilitating a political dialogue on inclusive growth and development. The foreign trade and development budget has allocated €350 million to this action plan. The Netherlands' development cooperation programmes mainly focus on the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The Kingdom of the Netherlands advocates closer collaboration between countries and international organisations.

## SDG 2 Zero hunger

### At home

Fortunately, hardly anyone has to suffer from severe hunger or malnutrition in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. For the Dutch, overweight seems to be the problem, although the percentage of the population suffering from corpulence or obesity seems to have stabilised in the past few years. Dutch policies on preventing overweight target children and young people, since obesity is hard to reverse once it occurs. In the Netherlands, Healthy Weight programmes in neighbourhoods and schools are aimed at substantially reducing the percentage of overweight children and young people. In addition, far-reaching agreements are being made with partners in the food chain on reducing the amount of salt, sugar and saturated fat in food products. The government also encourages healthy eating by promoting transparency and public awareness through food product labelling and information campaigns. Other programmes are being launched in partnership with specific industries, for instance the fruit and vegetable industry trade association, and a Healthy School Lunches programme.

The sustainability of food production is one of the main challenges for the Netherlands in achieving the SDGs. In 2016 phosphate limits were considerably exceeded, leading to a package of restrictive measures including a reduction in the number of livestock. The footprint of the livestock farming sector will be further reduced with the introduction of a Phosphate Reduction Scheme in 2018. The Netherlands will continue to focus on reducing phosphate, nitrogen and ammonia emissions.

Both the authorities and market parties are aware of the need for more sustainable food production. Policies are being developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, recycle raw materials and invest in a circular economy. In 2016 central government announced several measures to financially facilitate conversion to organic farming, partly in response to growing demand for organic products. Funding is provided to research and innovation in other forms of sustainable agriculture such as permaculture and environmentally friendly farming, as well as to initiatives promoting short logistic chains and marketing of local products.

The government of Aruba recognises the importance of food security and focuses on ensuring the availability, accessibility, nutritional value and stable supply of food on the island. In collaboration with several international partners, Aruba is expanding skills and knowledge in support of food security by promoting sustainable food supply. A stakeholder from the private sector is conducting a community-supported urban farming project. Once the pilot is getting results, its goal will be to help other neighbourhoods in Aruba, and ultimately to collectively contribute to enhancing the country's food security.

The government of Curaçao is also concerned about food security and about dependence on third countries for agricultural products. A renewed policy focus on agriculture is a step in the right direction, so the government is promoting farming, while also stressing integrated water management as a key project in the coming years.

### Abroad

Food security is one of the main priorities of the Netherlands' foreign trade and aid agenda. Every year between 2013 and 2016, 10 to 20 million people were provided with better nutrition through the Netherlands' efforts and investment in preventing undernutrition. In a number of partner countries the Netherlands has supported productive social safety nets, providing people with money or food in exchange for work. Food security programmes have also been implemented locally. In addition, 5 to 10 million farmers have received support to increase their productivity and income, and to promote more sustainable and efficient use of soil, water, fertilisers and pesticides. The Netherlands' goal for 2020 is to provide 20 million people with better nutrition, to reach 5.5 million farmers with measures to raise their production and income, and bring 5 million additional hectares of land under sustainable management each year.

The Netherlands actively contributes to the development of international knowledge on sustainable agriculture and on raising agricultural production capacity in developing countries. One example is the launch of the Access to Seeds Index in 2016, which measures the efforts of leading international seed companies to make quality seed available to small-scale farmers in developing countries. The Netherlands is also investing in the work of the Crop Trust to preserve a large variety of agricultural crops in the interests of worldwide food security. Through policies

on agricultural trade and investment, we support emerging and developing countries' efforts to regulate local markets, increase agricultural biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy coherence is important for the European Common Agricultural Policy. Our policy on agricultural trade and investment, especially with regard to emerging and developing countries, contributes to greater coherence as well as economic growth. Our policy also helps emerging and developing countries regulate local markets, enhance agricultural biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.

## SDG 3 Good health and well-being

### At home

Several studies have shown that the Netherlands performs well on SDG 3. The country is in full compliance with the International Health Regulations, and for seven years in a row has topped the European Health Consumer Index. The healthcare system is highly accessible: health insurance is mandatory, with extensive coverage for chronic care. There is a national vaccination programme, and local governments offer youth care and social support. One of the spearheads of the Netherlands' approach, both at home and internationally, is the fight against antimicrobial resistance.

Government policy on sexual and reproductive health is dedicated to reducing perinatal mortality. While there is free and unimpeded access to reproductive healthcare, uptake by certain vulnerable groups of women remains a concern. Maternal, neonatal and under-five mortality in the Netherlands are at or below the EU average. Men have an average healthy life expectancy, while women's is below average.

The National Prevention Programme will continue to promote good health with a focus on health protection and reducing health inequalities. Preventing smoking, overweight, excessive use of alcohol, lack of exercise, diabetes and depression are programme priorities. The Netherlands also aims to improve healthcare in the Caribbean Netherlands, taking account of local circumstances. With regard to reducing early deaths and diseases caused by air pollution, particulates and nitrogen dioxide concentrations have been declining since 1992.

Currently almost all concentrations are within European limits. The estimated number of years of life lost to air pollution is around the European average.

St Maarten is working to ensure access to basic, high-quality physical and mental healthcare and to promote healthy lifestyles. In 2001, Aruba introduced universal healthcare coverage, providing equal health care benefits to all residents. Aruba's vaccination programme covers 98% of all children.

### Abroad

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is the main priority of international healthcare policy. However, progress on SRHR is largely conditional on a well-functioning, accessible healthcare system. The Netherlands therefore also invests in strengthening healthcare systems. Through awareness-raising programmes at schools, prevention of teenage pregnancies and the provision of HIV screening and medication, special attention is given to the position of young people. Around 1.8 million women and girls have gained access to modern contraceptive methods thanks to the Netherlands, working in collaboration with a large number of CSOs and other partners. The goal is to raise this number to 6 million by 2020. Economic missions are helping companies from the Netherlands export knowledge and products in the domain of life sciences and health to partner countries like Brazil, China, India, Kenya, the UAE and the US. The Kingdom also advocates affordable pricing of medicines within the UN, WHO and WTO.

St Maarten, Aruba and Curaçao are partners of the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization and the Caribbean Public Health Agency in improving healthcare policies and services.

## SDG 4 Quality education

### At home

All countries in the Kingdom invest in education. The Netherlands promotes learning, skills acquisition and knowledge through its national education policy and curriculum, which also addresses crosscutting themes such as sustainability, equal opportunities and social inclusion. It also has national policies promoting culture, not only due to the intrinsic value of artistic expression but also to its social importance (for personal development, dialogue, cohesion and historic awareness) and economic value (for creative industries, sustainable tourism, innovation and spatial planning).

St Maarten is promoting access to high-quality education and educators, in the interests of lifelong learning, employment and entrepreneurship. Women and men enjoy equal access to affordable and good-quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. Tertiary and professional education are pillars of the country's commitment to lifelong learning. Educational programmes support the elderly, people with physical disabilities and underprivileged young people, and policies are in place to decrease school dropout rates and to digitalise the education system. Promoting sustainable development, human rights and gender equality requires further attention. St Maarten is transitioning to UNESCO's open Educational Management Information System.

Aruba launched the Green s'Cool after-school programme in 2012 to make Aruban schools more sustainable, self-sufficient in energy and financially independent, by involving and empowering pupils and raising their environmental awareness. The programme is open to participation by public and private schools and involves the private sector to harness its expertise. Green s'Cool's vision is to be at the heart of a social platform connecting, engaging and integrating all sustainability innovation in Aruba, where the community, industry, the public sector and NGOs join forces for a sustainable Aruba. Installing solar panels on school rooftops also directly helps raise awareness of sustainability.

Students at Aruba's local technical institute are conducting a home-visit programme with the Aruba utilities company to raise community awareness of energy conservation. The students are also working with the University of Arizona on testing different solar panel technologies. The Aruba teacher



This woman in Bangladesh visits communities to provide health education and sell contraceptives. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are the main priority of the Netherlands' international healthcare policy.

training college has developed a sustainability curriculum, and the University of Aruba has included an SDG curriculum in several of its programmes.

Primary and secondary school education in Curaçao is free for all legal residents. The government also promotes advanced education and supports programmes for lifelong learning. In addition, the country's National Youth Council is working to enhance young people's role in their school communities, and will organise a dialogue for student councils. They are also developing training courses for job applicants in an effort to reduce youth unemployment.

### Abroad

Globally, the Netherlands supports students in low- and middle-income countries so they can study in the Netherlands. It builds capacity in these countries through the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE). It also supports UNICEF programmes to educate children in conflict areas, and supports skills and entrepreneurship development for young people and women through the Addressing Root Causes Fund and the Local Employment in Africa for Development (LEAD) programme. The Netherlands has legislation on and active national and international policy promoting cultural pluralism and diversity and preserving and ensuring access to natural and cultural heritage (including immaterial, documentary, digital, shared, threatened and (in future) underwater heritage and trade in cultural goods). The Netherlands supports UNESCO policies in these areas.

## SDG 5 Gender equality

### At home

SDG 5 provides a clear example of the challenges that the SDGs pose at national level in the Netherlands. For instance, the average pay of women in the Netherlands in 2014 was 16% less per hour than for men. Women in the Netherlands are more likely to work part-time compared to women in other European countries, and there are relatively few women managers at all government levels. Women are relatively often victims of domestic violence, and, as stated above, healthy life expectancy for women is below the EU average.

The national government aims to eliminate gender inequality by 2030 by increasing women's economic independence and their representation in leadership positions. In 2012, to set an example, the government of the Netherlands has promised to achieve a 30% of leadership positions occupied by women during its term of office, a goal which has been met. In 2013, a statutory target was adopted obliging businesses to do the same. In an effort to accelerate the process, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW) joined forces in a 'Women to the Top' programme.

Eliminating violence against women, at home and abroad, is also a priority for the Netherlands' government. In close collaboration with local authorities, professionals, civil society organisations (CSOs) and knowledge institutions, the government is investing in gender diplomacy and providing financial support to put an end to all forms of domestic violence, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence, forced marriage and abandonment.

Aruba has established a Centre for the Development of Women to promote equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. Aruban women have a high rate of labour market participation and generally a high level of education. The Centre's underlying goal is to make vulnerable social groups more self-reliant by raising their awareness of their rights and by offering guidance and support through informational meetings and workshops.

Figures from 2011 show that sex education remains a challenge in Curaçao. Due to a lack of sex education, 42% of women use contraceptives incorrectly. As a result, one in three pregnancies

end in abortion and one girl in nine becomes a mother before her 20th birthday. In addition, approximately 35% of HIV/AIDS cases are undocumented. This challenge is not unique to Curaçao. Through the National Action Programme for Youth Development, the government aims to develop policies to reduce these figures, using the SDGs as a basis.

In St Maarten, there is room for improving women's participation in judicial and legislative bodies and reducing the gender pay gap. St Maarten is working on these issues with a tripartite committee, regional organisations like the ECLAC, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and ILO.

### Abroad

The foreign trade and development cooperation agenda prioritises women's rights and gender equality. Its main objectives are: to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls; to ensure that women occupy a fair share of political and other leadership positions; to promote economic empowerment and independence for women; and to enable women to participate equally in conflict resolution, peace building and reconstruction.

To achieve these objectives, the Netherlands funds civil society organisations dedicated to women's rights through several frameworks, such as Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) 2016-2020 and the Dutch National Action Plan Women, Peace and Safety. Gender is also integrated into other priority areas, for instance through specific measures to help women benefit from investments in trade and development cooperation. Furthermore, the Netherlands promotes women's rights through diplomacy. In the UN and EU, the Netherlands advocates the implementation of international agreements regarding gender equality and takes new initiatives. Finally, the country is campaigning for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls. The widely supported initiative 'She Decides' initiated by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation is an example of this policy.

The joint efforts of the government and its partners have enabled around 100 civil society organisations in developing countries to do their work more effectively. The Netherlands' goal is to increase this number to 350 by 2020. The programme Leading from the South invests in gender equality and women's empowerment through women's organisations across developing countries.

## SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation

### At home

Safe drinking water is generally available to everyone in the Netherlands, as is good sanitation. Extraction of groundwater for drinking water is high compared to other EU states, and there is a relative abundance of good quality ground and surface water. Water quality has improved in recent years in both chemical and ecological terms, due to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. The high quality of drinking water may come under pressure in the future due to climate change or contamination. To meet future challenges for drinking water and groundwater quality, government and the water authorities are working closely with a wide range of partners. Over 30 parties have signed a declaration of intent to jointly improve water quality further.

Aruba and Curaçao also provide excellent quality drinking water to its people and visitors. Their desalination technology is a success. Aruba achieves seawater desalination at the lowest cost in the region, despite the expensive technology. Aruba also has three wastewater treatment facilities, where around 95% of the island's wastewater is fully treated. These advanced treatment plants use tertiary filtration and UV disinfection technologies, which allow a large proportion of wastewater to be reused for irrigation and internal plant operations. Virtually no untreated wastewater is disposed of in the sea.

Wastewater management and sewage treatment are challenges for St Maarten. Investment in sewage treatment has increased in recent years but is still insufficient. A wastewater management project plan has been in place since 2014 for water and sewage facilities, including plans for drainage and sewage collection. St Maarten considers proper water distribution and sanitation a basic human need and right, and nearly every household is connected to the drinking water supply system. The country aims to establish fair, efficient and sustainable water supply and sanitation services by 2035, in cooperation with regional and international partners. It is currently receiving technical assistance from the EU via the European Development Fund to improve water supply and sanitation.

### Abroad

As water management is deeply rooted in the Netherlands' history and culture, it is hardly surprising that it is one of the priorities of its

trade and development cooperation agenda. Too much, too little or polluted water presents a major threat to many people around the world. The Netherlands focuses its efforts on increasing water security and safety in urban deltas and on sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in both urban and rural areas. This approach includes facilitating flood prevention and desalination and supporting the installation of water pumps and latrines. Hygiene education is also part of the policy, and relates directly to health: better hygiene can end the vicious cycle of malnutrition and intestinal infections. To achieve these objectives, the government has joined forces with water companies and water authorities, knowledge institutions, CSOs and the private sector. The Sustainable Water Fund (FDW) is a good example of a water-related public-private partnership. The involvement of local private partners in the programme guarantees the sustainability of results.

Thanks to these joint efforts and investments, between 2013 and 2016 some nine million people obtained access to clean drinking water and 15.5 million people obtained better sanitation facilities and received education on hygiene. The Netherlands' goal is to increase these numbers by eight and 12 million respectively by 2020. The aim for urban deltas is to reduce flooding and water shortages and improve water quality in at least eight deltas by 2021. Finally, the UNESCO-affiliated water institutions Institute for Water Education (UNESCO-IHE) (based in Delft) and International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) provide important input for the international fresh water agenda, for example through the International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP).

## SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy

### At home

At present the Netherlands has one of the lowest rates of renewable energy production in Europe, but this will change rapidly by 2020. Still, SDG 7 remains a challenging goal.

In 2013 over 40 organisations in the Netherlands, including local and national governments, companies, trade unions and environmental organisations, signed an Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth, aiming to increase the share of renewable energy from 5.8% in 2015 to 14% in 2020 and 16% in 2023. The revised tendering system for offshore wind energy has been a major success, leading to sharp cost reductions and a substantial increase in wind energy production from 2020 and 2023. Moreover, besides existing European targets on energy savings, the Energy Agreement included an extra energy savings target for 2020 of 100 petajoules (PJ). The target includes 9% energy savings in energy-intensive industry by 2020.

Government and knowledge institutions are working with energy-intensive industry to find innovative ways to reduce their energy use. Industry is setting out their goals in multi-annual plans, and in exchange receives financial support from the government to reduce their energy consumption. The Energy Agreement also sets targets for a transition to zero-emission vehicles: by 2035, all newly sold cars should be emission-free (electric, hydrogen or hybrid), and in 2050 all cars on the roads must be emission-free. The Electric Transport Green Deal for 2016-2020 sets the target for 2020 at 10% of newly purchased cars, and several signatories have promised to work on achieving the goals, for instance by developing 'living labs' to seek new solutions. The national government will invest in enabling legislation, infrastructure for electric cars and the sustainability of its own vehicle fleet.

In the national Energy Agenda, the government has outlined an energy transition for the Netherlands for the years after the Energy Agreement. It includes new targets for 2030 in keeping with the Paris climate goals for 2050, with the aim of making the country carbon neutral by 2050. Energy transition paths are now being examined in order to reach these long-term goals in a cost-effective manner.

Over the past few years, Aruba has made a flying start in its transition to 100% renewable energy by 2020. With over 5,000 wind and 2,500 solar hours annually, the country has tremendous potential for sustainable energy generation. It has already completed a number of projects, with several others under development. As a direct result of these efforts, there has been a sharp reduction in the use of fuel oil, and Aruba has been able to lower electricity prices. The island is currently looking at other renewable energy options in addition to wind, solar and energy storage technologies, to ensure grid stability. Using the 'Renewable, Affordable and Sustainable' framework, Aruba is making sure that the advancements made are affordable for the entire population.

Like most SIDS, Curaçao faces a challenge finding the right energy mix. Despite its small size, it is working to build a green energy infrastructure. More than 25% of the energy it produces already comes from renewable sources, primarily wind energy. Ensuring the use of sustainable energy remains one of Curaçao's most pressing priorities.

St Maarten has a National Energy Policy to increase the use of renewable energy sources like solar power and energy from waste.

### Abroad

To attain the climate goals, the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy needs to be accelerated worldwide. Preventing fossil-fuel dependency in the developing world by engaging them in the rapid emergence of renewable energy would be a big step in the right direction – particularly if large numbers of people who currently have no access to reliable and affordable energy could be reached at the same time. An estimated one billion people currently have no access to electricity, and three billion are still using traditional biomass for cooking, resulting in high emissions and serious health problems.

In 2015, the Netherlands' government set the goal of giving 50 million people access to renewable energy by 2030, and helping the poorest countries in particular to control their emissions while at the same time stimulating development. To finance these efforts, the Netherlands is working with development banks like the World Bank and the Netherlands' development bank FMO, and with private and institutional investors.

In the meantime the renewable energy business is booming, and the Netherlands is helping to develop the sustainable energy

market through public-private partnerships. Examples include the programmes 2g@there and Partners for International Business (PIB), through which the government and wind energy industry have successfully collaborated to put the Netherlands on the map in countries with an emerging wind energy sector, such as Japan, Korea and China.

## **Text box 2 A smart and sustainable community on Aruba**

The Aruban flag flutters proudly from the wooden roof of the house being built in Kibaima, near Oranjestad. Today, 21 May, is the ‘topping off’ ceremony marking its completion. Politicians, builders and scientists have gathered to celebrate this milestone in the construction of Smart Community Aruba. The community, made up of several housing groups, aims to showcase innovative and sustainable products and ideas in a real-world setting. Its twenty sustainable and innovative homes, fifteen of them traditional and five futuristic, will be completed by the end of the year. The community’s construction forms part of Aruba’s radical transition to renewable energy.

The fluttering flag is a good sign. It shows it’s windy today. That’s no surprise, since it’s often windy on Aruba. And sunny. Annually, the tropical island has over 5,000 wind and 2,000 sun hours. Smart Community Aruba will not only generate its own solar and wind power but will also be connected to a smart grid. This intelligent power network will fuel things like electric cars. The houses will be sustainable, with water being recycled. Residents will be supported in adopting and using these new technologies. The government of Aruba has set itself an ambitious goal: it wants to become fully reliant on renewable energy by 2020. Since 2009, the government has been mobilising its citizens and seeking international partners to help it reach this goal. Gradually, the island is becoming a ‘living lab’, where new technologies are being implemented and tested at the same time. Residents are learning how to use these new technologies efficiently. The ‘Green’S’Cool’ programme aims to make Aruban schools more sustainable and make students aware of energy efficiency.

The average Aruban household uses 9,000 kWh of electricity a year. That’s almost double that of the average Dutch household. This is mainly due to the island’s heavy use of air conditioning and the production of drinking water. At the moment, the island

Within the boards of multilateral banks, the Netherlands explicitly promotes renewable energy and opposes the most carbon-intensive energy projects, such as new coal-fired power plants. Its programmes and partnerships gave over 16.7 million people access to solar power, biogas and clean cookstoves between 2004 and 2014.



Wind turbines in Aruba. By 2020 Aruba aims to be energy neutral.

depends mostly on imported oil, which is risky and expensive. Arubans spend about 20% of their income on energy. So apart from making the island energy independent, the transition will also help increase the islanders’ purchasing power.

The policy to become sustainable is laid down in the Sustainable Aruba 2020 Roadmap. The government designed it together with TNO, the non-profit Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research. TNO is also one of the partners of Smart Community Aruba. Local and international businesses are being invited to test new technologies as part of this project, so it functions as an open innovation platform. The main Aruban organisations involved in Smart Community Aruba are Utilities Aruba (comprising the companies WEB and Elmar), telecoms company SETAR and the housing development foundation FCCA.

‘Aruba may be small, but it has great vision when it comes to innovation’, the government stated in a Smart Community Aruba press release. Head of the TNO Caribbean Branch Office Jan Ebbing is a firm believer in the project. ‘It can help attract companies that want to carry out real-life tests for new wind turbines or solar panels,’ he says. ‘And it’s helping local actors like WEB and Elmar gain practical knowledge about sustainable energy and export it to other countries,’ he stated in local newspaper *Amigoe*.

## **SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth**

### **At home**

By international standards, employment rates are high in the Netherlands and employment conditions, such as minimum wages and salaries laid down in collective labour agreements, are effectively implemented and maintained. A legal framework that applies to all employees in all sectors, regardless of background, gender or other status, allows the Netherlands to create decent work for everyone. Special efforts are being made to fight youth unemployment. Over a period of two years, the youth unemployment rate has decreased from 13.8% in February 2014 to 11.3% in February 2016. Although this compares favourably with other countries worldwide, the Netherlands will keep youth unemployment high on the agenda. The majority of the population has access to at least one account at a bank or other financial institution, many of them online.

St Maarten is promoting sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products, a shared cultural identity, diversity and tolerance. Heritage activities are also included in the educational curriculum. The country is strengthening legislation to enhance employment opportunities, improve relations between employers and employees, and support access to financial services. St Maarten plans to stimulate economic growth and business development through innovation, SME promotion, the development of telecom and other services, and the creation of an enabling environment.

### **Abroad**

Worldwide sustainable and inclusive growth is our main objective, along with increasing the Netherlands' earning capacity abroad. Combining aid, trade, development and investment presupposes a strong commitment by the private sector and knowledge institutions. The private sector takes part in bilateral relationships with countries that receive Dutch aid. In international trade agreements, the Netherlands emphasises the importance of inclusive and sustainable growth.

Strengthening the local business climate and creating an entrepreneur-friendly environment stimulates innovation and production in low- and middle-income countries. Through private sector development programmes, 400,000 jobs were created or secured in developing countries between 2013 and

2016. The Netherlands' goal is to add another 180,000 jobs to that total by 2020. As mentioned above, the Netherlands is also committed to making supply chains more sustainable, for example in textiles, palm oil and minerals. The Netherlands supports and facilitates partnerships with producing and manufacturing countries in which stakeholders commit to work towards living wages, better working conditions and better water and waste management, with specific attention to gender equality (see SDG 5).

Since 2015 the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a donor member of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, which brings partners and resources together to support least developed countries in using trade for poverty reduction, inclusive growth and sustainable development. An appropriate level of protection and legal certainty is essential to attract foreign investment and ensure economic growth. The Netherlands therefore works bilaterally and multilaterally to promote rules on investment protection. It supports entrepreneurs that are interested in doing business in low- and middle-income countries through the circular economy programme and the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF), which focuses on financial inclusion. The DGGF provides loans, guarantees and/or insurance to companies that would like to invest in or export to developing countries, and supports local investment funds that want to offer finance to local SMEs.

The Netherlands also contributes substantially to the development of the financial sector and access to financial services for SMEs, including farmers in developing countries. This includes support to multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Financial Corporation (IFC), and to the FMO. In 2016, together with partners including the One Acre Fund, the Netherlands provided 1.2 million people with health and agricultural insurance and gave half a million SMEs access to small loans for productive purposes. The Netherlands also actively contributes to the work of the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.

## **SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure**

### **At home**

A key objective of the Netherlands' economic policy is strengthening capacity for innovation. In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, it aims to spend 2.5% of GDP on research in 2020. The Netherlands is also promoting sustainable innovation and investment. Green innovations, such as a biobased, circular economy and electric transport, raise our earnings.

Curaçao is working with the UN Office for Project Services on an Evidence-Based Infrastructure Development Framework. This tool is used to develop infrastructure plans that anticipate different scenarios, including disasters, climate change and its effects, population growth and other changes in the region. Based on the results of this research, an infrastructure investment plan will be drawn up in accordance with the SDGs.

The government of Aruba is working to diversify its economy by investing in infrastructure and promoting the island as a regional knowledge hub. The government has developed a unique system of public-private partnerships (PPPs) that adapts the concept to small-scale economies. The concept could serve as a model for other SIDS. It has been and is being used successfully to finance a four-lane road project linking the island's west and east side. The Bureau of Innovation, a creative think-tank within the government of Aruba, is working according to the triple helix concept and the sustainability paradigm at the interface of technology, economy and society to build a sustainable economy. The Bureau works closely with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the private sector and academia to this end.

St Maarten is currently expanding its transport hub facilities, including its port and international airport, to support the economic development of the broader region while expanding production on the island itself.

### **Abroad**

The Netherlands offers low- and middle-income countries financial support to design, budget for and successfully implement infrastructure projects, while giving companies commercial and knowledge-brokering opportunities. Together with the private sector, the Netherlands' government promotes electric transport in both developing and developed countries. Promoting high quality, sustainable and resilient infrastructure is also a keystone of Dutch water policy.

## **SDG 10 Reduced inequalities**

### **At home**

Income inequality in the Netherlands is relatively low. At the same time, as mentioned above, more people were at risk of poverty in 2015 than in 2006, and the income gap has grown since 2012. The government is committed to combining a solid social security system with progressive taxation. Specific policies to raise low-income employees' living standards appear to be successful.

The Netherlands has a broad set of policies aimed at contributing to the empowerment and participation of disadvantaged groups, for instance policy encouraging women's labour and social participation, policy on the safety of women and LGBT people, and policy promoting gender equality in education.

St Maarten will concentrate on using fiscal, wage and social protection policies and reforms to ensure sustained income growth for the bottom 40% of the population, at a rate higher than the national average, including through fiscal, wage and social protection policies and reform. Policies are being adjusted to empower groups like women and girls and to promote social, economic and political inclusion among the entire population. An action plan to implement St Maarten's Integrated Youth Policy aims to reduce youth unemployment and promote young people's health. St Maarten supports youth organisations that are working to reduce high-risk behaviour among young people.

### **Abroad**

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is convinced of the need to address inequality within countries in order to achieve the SDGs. At the UN High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in 2016, the Netherlands formed a coalition with Kenya to start fighting inequality at an early stage. In September 2016, the Voice programme was launched with a budget of €50 million to support civil society organisations in empowering disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) and the Leading from the South programme are tackling gender inequality.

Since tax revenues give governments the resources they need to run facilities aimed at the poorest people, the Netherlands is investing in programmes to strengthen tax systems. In line

with the trade and aid approach, it is also encouraging private investment in the least developed countries.

Inequality is one of the main causes of migration. One of the Netherlands' policy goals is to provide refugees with adequate and sustainable shelter in their region of origin by investing in infrastructure, job creation and basic services. These activities supplement the necessary humanitarian aid in the region. The Netherlands also plays a guiding role in the EU's Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) in the Horn of Africa, which seeks innovative ways to strengthen protection, social cohesion and livelihoods for refugees as well as in host communities.

## SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities

### At home

The Netherlands' government believes that cities are an important driving force for the economy. Of the country's population, 75% live in urban areas, and this is only expected to rise in the coming decades. Urbanisation has a downside, however. The social and physical quality of life is under pressure in many cities. That is why it is important to use the economic potential of urbanisation to offset its disadvantages where possible.

With the City Deals, the Netherlands' government, municipalities, the private sector, civil society and knowledge institutions share insights and resources to solve problems linked to urbanisation and promote innovation in the urban environment. Another example of how the government, together with municipalities and civil society, is fostering growth, innovation and liveability in cities is the City Agenda. This agenda focuses on twelve priorities: inclusion of migrants and refugees, local employment, air quality, urban poverty, housing, circular economy, climate adaptation, energy transition, sustainable land use and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, digital transition, and innovative and responsible public procurement.

St Maarten provides universal access to safe, inclusive, public green spaces through its land use plans. The government of Curaçao has developed an implementation strategy for its New Urban Agenda for Curaçao, which has been approved by the



Tending to crops on the roof of a high-rise building in the centre of Rotterdam. Nature-based solutions is one of the 12 priorities of the City Agenda in the Netherlands.

Council of Ministers. Currently, the Ministry of Traffic, Transportation and Spatial Planning is developing a national urban policy strategy based on the principles of the New Urban Agenda.

The government of Aruba has adopted the concept of smart growth for community development and has developed programmes for the renovation of the urban centres Oranjestad and San Nicolas and 20 other neighbourhoods on the island. The Bo Aruba (Your Aruba) and Bo Bario (Your Neighborhood) community enhancement programmes have created more parks and public spaces to promote physical activity and walking and bring people together, thus linking the promotion of health, happiness and wellbeing.

### Abroad

The HABITAT III conference adopted the New Urban Agenda (NUA), a political document with guidelines for implementing the SDGs in urban areas, based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris climate agreement. The Netherlands pressed successfully to have gender taken into account in the NUA, especially in regard to issues of participation, decision-making and the design of public spaces. The Netherlands also ensured the inclusion of references to urban governance and comprehensive and inclusive urban planning. The private-public urban stakeholders' platform – one of the partnerships formed under the SDG Charter – was also present at this conference and plans to contribute to sustainable cities and communities and the NUA.

## SDG 12 Sustainable consumption and production

### At home

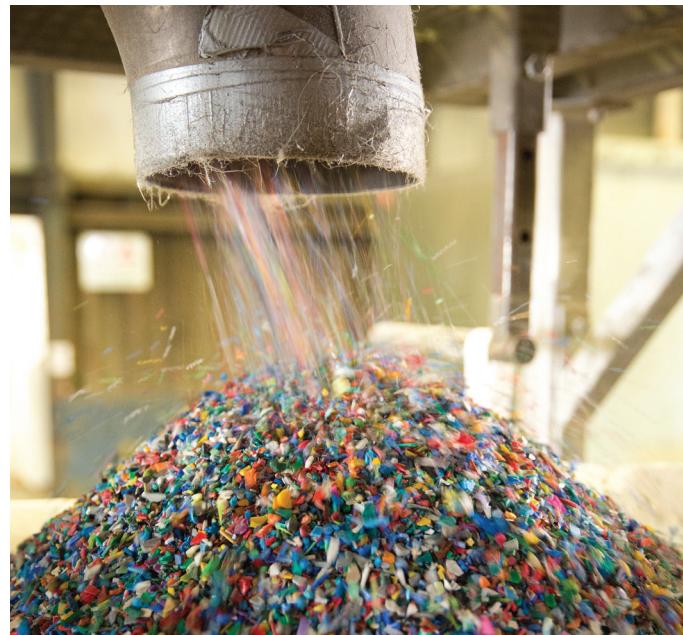
The government of the Netherlands recognises that the country produces relatively large volumes of food waste and hazardous waste, although comparisons with other countries are difficult because of the lack of proper definitions. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production has not yet been integrated into national policy. However, various policies, such as the Fertilisers Act and the Nitrogen Control Programme, reflect efforts to implement the framework. Programmes to prevent food waste, a National Waste Management Plan and the National Raw Materials Agreement are all part of a Government-wide Programme for a Circular Economy. In line with EU guidelines, over 100 large companies and organisations will be required from 2018 to report on their sustainability level. All companies are encouraged to apply the OECD Guidelines for responsible business conduct. The government will present a prize called The Crystal each year to the company that publishes the most transparent report. To act as a role model, the government has committed itself to climate-neutral government operations by 2030.

The first waste-to-energy plant to be built in the Caribbean or Latin America is located in Aruba. Owned and operated by a private company, it uses innovative technologies to reduce waste while simultaneously generating energy. The plant will generate 2 MW in its first phase and up to 8 MW in its second. The water and electricity company WEB Aruba will feed all the power generated into the grid. All recyclable material will continue to be extracted from the waste and exported.

St Maarten's waste policies aim to substantially cut the production of chemical and other waste through sound management. Enforcement capacity is limited, however. St Maarten is reducing the adverse per capita environmental impact of urbanisation by paying special attention to air quality and waste management.

### Abroad

In view of the great significance of foreign trade for the Netherlands' economy and the fact that economies are increasingly interwoven, an international effort to realise the transition to a sustainable economy is vitally important to the Netherlands. Inter-



Plastic waste is processed into useful raw material in Biddinghuizen, the Netherlands (at Kunststof Recycling Van Werven).

national trade puts considerable pressure on the environment, particularly in mineral-rich developing countries. The Netherlands' carbon footprint is relatively high, and has increased slightly in recent years. Through the Sustainable Trade Initiative, and in partnership with Solidaridad and other concerned organisations, the Netherlands is striving towards more sustainable production of raw materials. It is working with commodity-exporting countries like phosphate producer Morocco to promote sustainable economic growth, and promoting socially responsible procurement of goods, for instance through the Circular Procurement Green Deal and the 'Infranature' Green Deal. It is also investing in the transition to a circular economy in other countries by exporting useful knowledge. In the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture and the Postharvest Network, the Netherlands has joined forces with the World Bank and FAO to promote food security and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As parties to the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals, the Scaling Up Mineral Traceability initiative and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Netherlands and its public and private sector partners are committed to increasing the world's supply of conflict-free tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold.

## SDG 13 Climate action

### At home

The Netherlands has relatively high emissions of SD<sub>G</sub> and other greenhouse gases per capita because of its high density of energy-intensive industry. The country's two main current climate policies, the Climate Agenda (2013) and the National Adaptation Strategy (2016), set targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in line with EU targets, to 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. The implementation of the Paris Agreement will probably require these targets to be raised.

The European Emissions Trading System (ETS) covers all the greenhouse gas emissions of large energy-intensive companies such as power plants, chemical industries and the cement industry. Together these account for half of the Netherlands' greenhouse gas emissions. To further reduce emissions, the government advocates a tightening of the ETS combined with better price incentives. For non-ETS sectors, the European Commission has proposed a binding target for the Netherlands of a 36% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 2005 levels. To reach this national non-ETS target and make sufficient progress in decarbonising the ETS sectors, additional national efforts will be unavoidable. The Energy Agenda (see SDG 7) will therefore be updated in 2017 with transition paths, targets and actions for 2030 and 2050. This Agenda will lay the foundation for the draft plan on energy and climate to be submitted to the European Commission before 1 January 2018.

The effects of climate change are already manifest in the Netherlands, for instance in greater rainfall, rising sea levels and an increase in extreme weather events. Since 2010, all authorities in the Netherlands have been working together in a Delta Programme to develop adaptation strategies and take adaptation measures on flood control, water supply and resilience to extreme rainfall and drought. In 2016 the government adopted an updated version of the National Adaptation Strategy, which elaborates on the impact of climate change and the preventive measures to be taken. The EU member states and the European Commission have set criteria for adequate national adaptation strategies and plans.

Like its fellow SIDS, Aruba and Curaçao are on the frontline of climate change and are already experiencing challenging effects.



PHOTO: MARC VAN DE BILT, INDIGO BAY DEVELOPMENT

Indigo Bay, St Maarten. Small Island Developing States face specific challenges from climate change, such as rising sea levels.

Climate change directly affects the oceans, causing a rise in sea level, water acidification and disruption of marine ecosystems. For SIDS, ecosystems play a central role in food security, social cohesion, habitat protection, culture and their economies. In responding to these challenges, Aruba has introduced incentives for businesses and individuals to obtain energy-efficient and renewable energy products.

St Maarten protects the environment and preserves its natural heritage and resources through an Environmental Policy Plan. There are policy initiatives on sustainable spatial planning, environmental protection, nature conservation, building and construction quality and the provision of safe physical infrastructure. St Maarten is also investing in disaster management.

### Abroad

The Paris Agreement largely determines the Netherlands' international climate actions. It is encouraging the private sector, local and national governments and CSOs to form partnerships and coalitions in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and make adjustments to cope with the effects of climate change. One of the spearheads of this approach is global carbon pricing. In close collaboration with the World Bank, the Netherlands is working to double emissions coverage by 2020 and increase coverage fourfold by 2030.

The Netherlands supports developing countries' efforts to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and enhance their resilience. Climate action and development cooperation are integrated, in particular regarding energy supply, access to water and food security, thus ensuring that efforts in these areas reinforce each other. Through programmes on Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) and Geodata for Agriculture and Water, the Netherlands provided a total of €472 million in public finance in 2016 and mobilised an additional €209 million in private climate finance. It is also promoting climate-smart agricultural methods, innovations and technology through international networks to increase food production and reduce climate change vulnerability.

## SDG 14 Life below water

### At home

To significantly reduce North Sea pollution, the Netherlands has developed a marine strategy based on the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Its goals include reducing toxic substances, marine litter and microplastics to acceptable levels. Alongside its national strategy, the Netherlands supports the European Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter, and other European and global efforts to reduce litter in the oceans. The Natura 2000 sites to be created in the North Sea occupy 19% of the Netherlands' Exclusive Economic Zone: 10,260 km<sup>2</sup>, or over a million hectares.

In the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, a commission for marine biodiversity and fisheries is responsible for the management of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around the islands. Currently Saba, St Eustatius, Bonaire, Curaçao and the European part of the Netherlands are represented in the commission. Aruba and St Maarten are expected to join by 2020. In 2012, in consultation with Saba, sustainable management began of the Saba Bank (2,400 km<sup>2</sup>), ensuring sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity.

The Caribbean Netherlands has established the Yarari marine mammal and shark sanctuary in the waters around Bonaire and Saba. These waters are also protected as national marine parks. Together the national marine parks and the Saba Bank programme ensure the protection of 11% of all Caribbean Netherlands waters. The report Natuurambitie Grote Wateren 2050-2100 ('Goals for the Natural Protection of Major Bodies of Water') outlined a national vision on the sustainable management of the Netherlands' major bodies of water.

Aruba is proud of its beaches and its clean sea, as virtually all wastewater is treated before being discharged into the sea. The country recognises the ecological importance of marine life and the need for responsible management of species by protecting and preserving the marine environment, wildlife and the coral reef.

The reefs that line Curaçao's coast are in relatively good condition, though under threat from the adverse effects of climate change and pollution as elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Two Ramsar sites now surround the island to protect its reefs and marine environment. The waters around Curaçao have extensive coral reef systems, which are an international focal point for marine biology research. The Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity foundation conducts studies in the region in cooperation with international institutes, promoting scientific tourism. More than 300 researchers visit Curaçao every year to study its unique ecosystems, including one of the three coral reefs in the world that are still growing. The country hosts the Smithsonian Institute's Deep Reef Observation Project and Substation Curaçao, and is home to the oldest marine biology institute in the Caribbean. In 2016, collaboration among marine partners resulted in the discovery of several new species of marine flora and fauna. At the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017, the government of Curaçao made two voluntary commitments for the further development of marine research, involving an investment of about \$5 million over three years. It also committed to codifying a sustainable ocean policy by the end of 2018. These commitments will help protect the waters around the island.

St Maarten financially supports the Nature Foundation, in order to significantly reduce marine pollution and sustainably manage and protect the island's marine and coastal ecosystems. As a board member of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), the Foundation protects coral reefs and combats natural habitat degradation and biodiversity loss. Since 2016, St Maarten's Mullet Pond has been listed as a protected Ramsar site. St Maarten adheres to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (the SPAW Protocol).

### Abroad

Through its national knowledge and innovation programme on water and climate, the Netherlands aims to minimise the impact of ocean acidification by increasing scientific knowledge of the phenomenon. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions seems to be the most effective approach in the long run. Implementing the Paris Agreement will contribute to that goal.

The Netherlands is also helping to restore the natural absorption capacity of the seas and oceans, for instance through projects in Bangladesh. In the UN negotiations on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), we advocate the protection of biodiversity in marine areas through legally binding agreements, compulsory Environmental Impact Assessments prior

to new activities on the high seas, and effective international agreements on a fair and honest way of sharing the benefits of exploitation of marine genetic resources. In addition, the Netherlands supports technological innovation to increase food production from the sea and enhance climate resilience.

As a Regional Authorising Officer for the 11th EDF Regional Programme, St Maarten takes responsibility for enhancing marine biodiversity and promoting sustainable energy. It is managing a cross-boundary nature park jointly with other governments in the region.

### Text box 3 Great hammerhead shark shows up near St Maarten

The researchers did a double take. Was it really a great hammerhead shark? The ones that normally live in the Atlantic Ocean? Yes it was. And it was an intact specimen about 3.5 metres long! They managed to catch it, took some DNA and then released it.

The special catch, in March of this year, was part of an ongoing monitoring programme by the St Maarten Nature Foundation. The NGO's researchers regularly sail out to examine the shark population. They organise monitoring dives, do fish counts, collect DNA and tag sharks, all to examine the development of the species.

Sometimes Tadzio Bervoets, the director of the foundation and the Save Our Sharks Project, is among the divers. 'I personally attach great importance to the presence and management of sharks,' he says. The Nature Foundation manages the Dutch Caribbean's newest protected area, the Man of War Shoal Marine Park, which includes St Maarten's most important reefs and provides a safe haven for sharks.

At the beginning of June, the foundation organised Shark Week on St Maarten. It included children's activities like a shark game and shark face painting, as well as scuba diving 'to count our friendly sharks and participate in the Kingdom Shark Count'. The key message was that, as top predators, sharks play a crucial role in maintaining a balanced and healthy aquatic ecosystem. They are our best friends, rather than our enemies. But unfortunately, sharks are victims of poaching, finning and overfishing, including in the waters around St Maarten. Shark meat is being sold in supermarkets on the French part of the island.

The Nature Foundation is working hard to try and change the image of sharks as man-eating monsters. Sharks occasionally bite when they feel threatened. But no unprovoked attack has

ever been recorded on St Maarten. 'It's more likely that you'll be killed by a falling coconut than by a shark,' says the foundation's Melanie Meijer Zu-Schlochtern.

Sharks – and biodiversity in general – are also high on the government of St Maarten's agenda. In 2011 it issued a temporary moratorium on shark fishing. It prohibited the taking of sharks and required any sharks caught by accident to be released immediately. Those who breached the rules risked a penalty of 500,000 Antillean guilders or three months in prison. In 2016 the moratorium was replaced by a permanent ban. All the waters surrounding St Maarten are now a shark sanctuary.

Sharks are not the only animals the Nature Foundation wants to protect. The NGO, established in 1997, also actively manages St Maarten's sea turtle population. It is currently conducting a Marine Mammal Monitoring Project, as well as fighting dump fires and trying to prevent the coral around the island from bleaching. This year, director Tadzio Bervoets won a prize for his work: the Euan McFarlane Environmental Leadership Award, issued by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. He was praised, among other things, for his tireless work to protect the island's sharks.

## SDG 15 Life on land

### At home

Although the proportion of nature areas is stable and woodland areas are in fact expanding, natural habitats in the Netherlands are still under pressure. The number of plant and animal species in particular is declining, and the country's European rankings for both woodland and nature areas and for conservation are rather low. Studies show that current policies on the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of nature will not yield satisfactory results. The national government has therefore announced extra measures, especially to protect meadow birds and promote environmentally friendly agriculture.

Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba have a unique natural environment, particularly their distinctive coral reefs. The conservation of this precious environment is the subject of a special nature conservation plan for the Caribbean Netherlands for 2013-2017

Aruba has a large nature reserve, Arikok National Park, which covers nearly 33% of the island and includes the protected wetlands site Spanish Lagoon. It also has several important bird habitats recognised by Birdlife International. Indigenous flora and fauna are regularly monitored and studied on the island as part of ensuring the preservation of its rich natural habitat.

St Maarten is working to prevent the extinction of endangered species and the introduction of land-based invasive alien species. Through the MDG Acceleration Framework, the country has initiated an inventory of its terrestrial flora and fauna.

The Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity foundation manages Curaçao's nature parks. Christoffel Park, declared a national park in 1978, is home to a wide range of land-based flora and fauna.

### Abroad

The European Union has integrated the UN Convention on Biological Diversity into the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. The Convention's goals are closely aligned with the targets set in SDG 15. Major points of the EU policy agenda include Natura 2000 – a European network of protected nature areas – the regulation of trade in endangered species and products derived from them, and the control or eradication of invasive alien species.

The Netherlands also promotes improved legal rights for women and men regarding access to and the use, ownership and management of land. Because cooperation among all stakeholders is essential for sustainable, inclusive economic development, the Netherlands facilitates a multi-stakeholder dialogue on land governance. In addition, it invests in international networks like the Global Land Tool Network and the International Land Coalition, and in partnerships with CSOs, knowledge institutions, financial institutions and the private sector. At the same time, Dutch embassies in developing countries support partner countries' implementation of improved land policies and promote fit-for-purpose land administration through the Land Administration for National Development (LAND) partnership with the Netherlands' Land Registry. As a result, the government and its partners successfully supported 1.5 million people in 2014 and 2015 in obtaining land rights, with a special focus on women.

## SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

### At home

The separation of powers, the rule of law and due process are embedded in the Constitution and the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and apply to all four countries. The defence and protection of all four countries' territorial integrity is a Kingdom affair. The Kingdom is subject to international law, and international agreements signed by the Kingdom may apply to the Kingdom as a whole or to one or more of its individual countries.

Crime rates in the Netherlands are about average for the EU and show a downward trend. A vast majority of its inhabitants feel safe in their own neighbourhood, and there is little corruption. Spending on public safety has risen in recent years and is relatively high compared to other EU member states. Confidence in institutions is relatively high and stable. It is fair to say that the Netherlands is performing reasonably well on SDG 16.

With respect to SDG 16, the Netherlands has two priority areas: combating human trafficking and fighting the exploitation of children in child sex tourism and child pornography, both at home and abroad. In recent years, the country has invested

in capacity building to ensure professional law enforcement. The Netherlands also refuses to be a safe haven for those who have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide elsewhere. It is committed to seeing justice done. The Netherlands will bring suspects residing in its territory to trial, and supports prosecution by other countries and international organisations if necessary.

The Netherlands also actively advocates a multilateral Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the extradition of persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Finally, the Netherlands is committed to combating corruption, confiscating criminal assets and fighting illicit flows of arms at home and abroad.

In both Aruba and Curaçao, an independent Financial Intelligence Unit monitors and reports on suspicious financial transactions as a means of preventing the financing of terrorism and transnational crime. The government of Aruba protects human rights in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is committed to protecting the rights of women, minorities and workers and combating human trafficking. Aruba is also committed to close cooperation with the Kingdom and international partners to enhance security, peace and prosperity within the region.

In cooperation with UNDP and UNESCO, Curaçao has designed a Media Development Programme to build journalists' professional capacity. To this end, a series of five interdisciplinary master classes were organised to equip media workers to fulfil their role as watchdogs for the Curaçao community. The project also aimed to promote dialogue between the public and the media, striking a balance in which they kept each other accountable and constructively and critically observed community developments.

St Maarten is improving the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of its police force and Court of Guardianship and upgrading its prisons. Its National Security Strategy addresses issues relating to immigration, border protection and the prevention of human, drugs and arms trafficking. The country is improving its governance, promoting public accountability and strengthening the democratic election of representatives.



Judges considering a case at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Peace and justice is one of the central themes of the Netherlands' foreign trade and development cooperation agenda.

## Abroad

Peace and justice is one of the central themes of the Netherlands' foreign trade and development cooperation agenda. Particularly in countries afflicted by violence, lawlessness and exclusion, the Dutch take an integrated approach towards peace, security and the rule of law. In Mali, for instance, the Kingdom provides soldiers, police and civil experts to MINUSMA and EU missions in the region, as well as giving financial support to other peace initiatives. Its policy helps reduce acute security threats and eliminate the root causes of conflict.

Many refugees flee their country because of lawlessness. The Netherlands therefore gives priority to building or strengthening legitimate legal systems that enable problems to be resolved before they escalate into conflicts. In 2015, these programmes expanded access to justice for 35,000 individuals in ten countries, including 15,000 women and children. Approximately 50,000 victims of human rights violations have been supported in countries such as Tunisia, Colombia and Yemen. Through a financial contribution to the UN Peacebuilding Fund, 500 women in Burundi have been trained to mediate in local conflicts. Over 43 million m<sup>2</sup> of land in nine countries was demined in 2013-2016 thanks to our efforts and those of our

partners. Local communities were able to rebuild their homes and lives in mine-free areas.

Through the IFC programme on Conflict Affected States in Africa, the Netherlands is investing in developing and strengthening the private sector in fragile African states to create jobs, particularly for young people, thus avoiding irregular migration and radicalisation. The Netherlands is convinced that in an inclusive society all groups must participate and be heard, and therefore supports capacity building, mainly through CSOs. In addition, €1 billion has been invested in the Dialogue and Dissent programme (2016-2020), involving 25 strategic partnerships between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and selected CSOs aimed at strengthening partner organisations' capacity for lobbying and advocacy in developing countries. Part of the funds (the Accountability Fund) are reserved for direct engagement by Dutch embassies, and another part (Voice) for reaching the most deprived and hard-to-reach groups in society.

The Netherlands is also working to protect an enabling environment for CSOs, which allows them to play their role as independent development actors in their own right. Since 2016, the Netherlands has supported the work of CSOs in ten fragile states through the Addressing Root Causes Fund (ARC). The programme addresses the root causes of instability, armed conflict and irregular migration. ARC projects in Ethiopia, Lebanon and Afghanistan, for instance, focus on equal access to employment for young people. Projects in Somalia, Mali and Sudan are aimed at improving the security situation by encouraging women to play a role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. A total of €126 million will be disbursed through ARC in 2016-2021.

The SDGs are also motivating countries to build stronger and more representative governments. Recently, the Netherlands has been host country for UN Public Service Day, with a focus on innovation in public services. Finally, the Netherlands is contributing to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and journalists' safety through the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

St. Maarten is stepping up intelligence and information sharing with other islands in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. The region's police forces have good working relations, and several cross-border agreements are in place.

## SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals

### At home

As mentioned above, achieving the SDGs requires a concerted effort. Partnerships, which are an intrinsic part of Dutch culture, are key to our approach to the SDGs.

Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten have all signed the UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF) for the Caribbean. The Framework guarantees national ownership while promoting regional synergies in implementing the SDGs. It primarily focuses on the priority areas for the Caribbean, which are the basis for regional collaboration with the UN system. The UN MSDF gives countries a platform to access the UN system's global expertise and experience at both country and regional level.

Tackling Global Challenges through Use-Inspired Research is a joint SDG research initiative by seven of the Netherlands' universities and NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development, with a budget of €7 million.

### Abroad

The leverage created by partnerships at home facilitates work on the SDGs in producing countries. In particular, the Netherlands supports multi-stakeholder initiatives in producing and manufacturing countries, in which international and local stakeholders support decent work, the formation of labour unions, the prevention of child labour and better waste management. Examples include the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Pakistan Buyers' Forum in the textile industry, and the Sustainable Trade Initiative's Malawi Tea 2020 project. The Netherlands actively seeks cooperation with like-minded countries on these initiatives.

Through the bilateral domestic resource mobilisation programme and several multilateral initiatives (including initiatives by the IMF, OECD and the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), the Netherlands is working to improve tax policies and tax services in developing countries. It is implementing the OECD/G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Package and the newly adopted international transparency measures to curb tax avoidance and evasion.

Under the Addis Tax Initiative which the Netherlands helped to launch, technical assistance must be doubled by 2020 at

the latest. The Netherlands hopes to reach this goal in 2018. It has also withdrawn its requests for tax-free delivery of goods and services for newly financed government-to-government aid programmes. The Netherlands has already agreed with 10 developing countries that bilateral tax treaties will be revised to avoid potential misuse.

A task force on innovative finance is looking for new ways to increase the private sector's financial contribution and add new donors to the SDG agenda. Dutch knowledge institutions conduct international research on trade, aid and investment. The Netherlands advocates the free dissemination of information on aid activities and of the results of research financed from aid funds. It is also trying to develop instruments to guarantee open access for low- and middle-income countries to knowledge and technology that are currently protected by intellectual property rights.

Cooperation in the interest of achieving common development objectives is key to public-private partnerships (PPPs). Combining and reinforcing one another's knowledge and capabilities can enhance the effectiveness of aid. Forming new alliances with business, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and others is at the heart of the modernisation of development cooperation, which the Netherlands is promoting through several PPP initiatives on food security and access to clean drinking water. These PPPs show that aid can leverage additional private resources for development.

Within the EU, the Netherlands advocates sustainable trade agreements that encourage economic growth, job creation and investment for all the parties. The Netherlands assesses new agreements' impact on developing countries before signing them, to promote agreements that stimulate development. For example, the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) includes the Everything but Arms initiative, which grants duty-free and quota-free market access to all products from least developed countries except arms and ammunition. As one of the main donors to trade facilitation, the Netherlands supports several organisations and programmes that facilitate trade in line with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) that entered into force in February 2017. Eliminating trade barriers allows low-income countries to make their markets more efficient and helps them achieve sustainable economic growth (SDG 8). The Dutch Good Growth Fund, TradeMark East Africa

and the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) are among the programmes that ease developing countries' access to international and regional markets.

The Netherlands promotes international principles on effective development cooperation, for instance through the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, an international platform of 161 countries and 56 organisations, including CSOs. Between 2014 and 2016, the Netherlands co-chaired this platform and helped modernise development cooperation by sharing knowledge and establishing agreements on multi-stakeholder partnerships, increasing involvement by young people and monitoring SDG implementation.

The Netherlands has identified nine top economic sectors where it occupies a leading position internationally, including life sciences, water management, creative industries and agri-food. To maintain this leading position and ensure sustainability, companies, researchers, CSOs and government representatives are working together to stimulate innovation and find creative solutions to existing challenges.

The five Knowledge Platforms (on Security and the Rule of Law, Inclusive Development, Food and Business, Water, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) contribute to CSOs' academic knowledge and practical know-how and to innovative ideas for business. Government, the private sector, academics and civil society, from the Netherlands, developing and other countries, join forces in these platforms to bridge the gap between research and policy on development challenges.

Green Deals, cross-sector partnerships on themes like energy, transport, biodiversity, water, resources, climate, food and construction accelerate economic growth while promoting energy saving, sustainable fuel use and a clean environment. To date more than 200 Green Deals have been concluded, involving over 1,500 companies and CSOs.

## Text box 4 Curaçao's whole of society approach

Curaçao sees the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a chance, rather than a burden. They offer the opportunity to connect ministries and stakeholders to common objectives. From a very early stage, interministerial collaboration was seen as vital for achieving these objectives. The Ministry of General Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Governance, Planning and Public Service therefore started working towards programme-based financing for the Curaçao government's multi-annual budgets.

To do this, the three ministries invested in strengthening policy-makers' capacities in the area of results-based management. Through various interministerial workshops, the team worked to ensure policy officers were all on the same page, making future programme financing more feasible. As an initial step, three thematic policy areas were chosen: economic growth, safety and youth.

Moving from a whole of government approach to a whole of society approach. That's Curaçao's aim when it comes to the SDGs. The government believes the challenge lies not only in joining up policies but also in stimulating collaboration between government and stakeholders. The strategy behind this involves making sure all parties are involved and that streamlining connects silos.

In collaboration with the National Dialogue Platform and captains of industry, the Ministry of Economic Development and the United Nations Development Programme designed a framework for implementing the economic pillar set out in the National Development Plan (NDP). This included the creation of six 'tiger teams', whose task is to focus on this implementation. The NDP's economic pillar is linked to SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

In early 2017 the government and UNDP started building the socioeconomic database, as a way to localise and monitor SDG implementation in a transparent way, linked to the global agenda but also taking into account the situation in Curaçao. This database will provide the foundations for maintaining momentum and establishing links, as well as measurement and strategic coherence.



A girl in Curaçao asks the youth delegates a question during the election of the National Youth Council.

The government of Curaçao is already well on its way to implementing the SDGs. The challenge does not lie in implementation, but in identifying issues and challenges concerning communication and international collaboration and in raising awareness of the importance of the international agenda. We need to keep doing what we are doing, but also make sure that we are linking what is happening on the ground to the international agenda.

Earlier this year, the National Action Programme for Youth Development linked its results-based framework to the SDGs, using a series of charts and tables. This inventory of policies is a pilot project that can be used across ministries and with countries working with the data available, based on the SDG indicators.

# 3 Partners in the Netherlands

All sectors of society in the Netherlands have welcomed the SDGs, although there is still scope for raising awareness. Among governments (both national and local), private companies, the financial sector, CSOs, knowledge institutions and young people, there is enthusiasm about the SDGs and a desire to help achieve them. All parties view the SDGs as a unique opportunity to accelerate progress towards their own goals. Sustainability and social responsibility are top priorities for many sectors, and the SDGs' holistic and global character dovetails with these sectors' own views and strategies. Different partners contribute in different ways to the SDGs, sometimes on their own and sometimes in collaboration with others. Sometimes support to the SDGs is explicitly mentioned in their efforts, but in most cases it is more implicit. Sometimes sustainable development efforts focus on the Netherlands, while in other cases they aim to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in other countries, particularly developing countries, or to progress worldwide. The following sections detail the involvement with the SDGs of the six partners that contributed to the first national SDG report for the Netherlands.

## **Subnational governments: municipalities, provinces and water authorities**

In the Netherlands' decentralised system, subnational governments are key actors on all SDGs. The 388 municipalities bear primary responsibility for implementing policies on poverty reduction and social security, labour market and other participation, and the organisation of basic healthcare. Provincial governments play the leading role in the areas of land use, infrastructure, transport, nature and the environment. The water authorities have key mandates for ensuring the quality and quantity of surface water in the Netherlands and reducing water-related risks. The challenge of sustainable development highlights the need for integrated approaches and close cooperation within and among governments, as well as with civil society institutions and the private sector. This requires new skills and mindsets. A number of experiments are under way to revitalise local democracy and expand citizens' involvement in decision-making.

The national-level umbrella organisations for each of the three types of subnational government lobby for and support their members with suitable tools and approaches. They frequently work in tandem. Under the recently adopted joint public investment agenda, for instance, they have agreed that their

public investment, totalling billions of euros a year – mainly in infrastructure – will be in line with the goals of climate adaptation, the transition to clean energy and a circular economy. Subnational governments are active stakeholders in national-level agreements and programmes in these areas.

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) has launched the Municipalities4GlobalGoals campaign to promote awareness of the SDGs among municipalities and help them contribute to the goals. Local governments can be instrumental as policymakers, investors and implementers, and in facilitating and linking other local actors. Several municipalities have proactively embraced the SDGs (see text box 5 on page 39). Many more are engaged in efforts and networks for sustainable development. Others are still less familiar with the SDGs or have difficulties in introducing the agenda effectively in their community. Though efforts vary from one municipality to another, there is always a base to start from. In addition, citizens' initiatives everywhere are setting visible examples in areas such as renewable energy, waste reduction, revitalising public spaces, sustainable food production and inclusive health.

To address regional differences in employment and income levels, provinces and municipalities often promote regional economic development on the basis of a region's specific strengths. In a densely built and populated country like the Netherlands, they face complex challenges for spatial planning. They must strike an appropriate balance between economic development and ecosystem protection, aided by national and EU policies that set and promote clear sustainability targets. In the social domain, local governments are confronted with growing inequality of opportunity between some social groups. To effectively address issues related to household indebtedness, unemployment, affordable housing and health and education, they lobby at national level for more financial and discretionary space to pursue integrated approaches.

Local governments have a long tradition of engaging in capacity development and peer-to-peer projects across the globe. This is done in part through the VNG, which represents all municipalities in the Netherlands in international policy dialogues, including on the SDGs, through United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Individual local governments also participate in international networks to exchange experiences with sustainability.

## Text box 5 How Dutch municipalities localise the SDGs: the cases of Utrecht and Oss

'Eating connects people and fosters solidarity', says Gijs Werschkull. In 2016 Gijs, who already owned three organic restaurants, opened a new venture – Syr – in Utrecht city centre. Run by refugees, the restaurant serves Syrian dishes with a European twist. In May 2017 Syr won one of the city's first U awards. This award is presented by the Utrecht4GlobalGoals campaign to inspiring initiatives that are helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In January 2017, as part of the Municipalities4GlobalGoals campaign, Utrecht and Oss were jointly designated 'Most Inspiring Global Goals Municipality in the Netherlands' by VNG International, the international branch of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities. Oss and Utrecht were praised for involving civil society organisations, companies and the general public in steps to achieve the SDGs. The jury especially liked the way Utrecht shares experiences with other municipalities.

Utrecht has a long tradition of sustainability. It was declared the first Dutch human rights city in 2012, features high on the national monitor of sustainable municipalities and has a sustainable procurement policy. In addition, it has set itself some ambitious new targets. It wants to have the lowest unemployment rate in the Netherlands by 2018, increase the number of solar panels from 4,000 in 2015 to 15,000 by 2020, and make 75% of its residents aware of the SDGs by 2030.

HeelUtrechtU, a digital information platform, lets residents share SDG-related stories, as well as share, nominate and get in touch with SDG initiatives. The Utrecht4GlobalGoals online platform allows people to request a grant for local initiatives online. Currently, the municipality is focusing on Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. To measure progress, the municipality has developed local indicators and a baseline. In addition, a pilot for areas undergoing urban development will be launched, with Goal 11 acting as a decision-making framework.

Oss has its own way of involving citizens. The secret of its success is Global Goals Oss, a platform that comprises 35 representatives of local organisations like churches, NGOs, schools and businesses, as well as representatives of all Dutch political parties. It organises a range of events, including an annual 'world dinner',

and promotes fair trade products. 'By playing different roles, the platform and the municipality strengthen each other,' says chair Maartje Aarts.

Aarts considers her platform a real people's organisation, a way of sharing knowledge and, sometimes, a way of holding the municipality to account. Rather symbolically, the platform's office overlooks the municipal hall and displays a banner that reads: 'The 17 Goals are for the whole world, for all people'.

Mayor of Oss Wobine Buijs-Glaudemans, who holds the Global Goals portfolio, plays an important role in promoting the SDGs. Her municipality is busy drawing up a list of all the things Oss has to offer and is already doing when it comes to implementing the 17 SDGs.

Both the platform and the municipality strongly believe that the debate around the Global Goals should not be politicised. 'We don't want to be divided. So instead we look for shared interests and passions. We believe in connecting with one another and in the power of enthusiasm', says Aarts.

VNG International supports and advises municipalities on the global goals and fosters exchange through activities such as Expeditie Juttersgeluk (Expedition Beachcombers' Delight). A total of 27 coastal municipalities participated in the April 2017 edition of this beach clean-up along the entire Dutch coastline to contribute to Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. Participants collected over 1,000 kilos of waste.

## Private sector

Many companies in the Netherlands have embraced the SDGs in the interests of sustainable growth. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Unilever CEO Paul Polman as one of 17 global SDG Advocates. Even before the official adoption of the SDGs by the UN, several major Dutch companies signed the Business Manifesto, underlining the private sector's role in making the world economy more sustainable and inclusive. Eight major Dutch companies founded the Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition (DSGC). As frontrunners in sustainability, they are sharing their experiences in sustainable entrepreneurship and urging companies to integrate the SDGs into their long-term business models.

Partnerships (SDG 17) are the key to achieving the SDGs. Good examples of such partnerships include Sector Agreements on Responsible Business Conduct, which emphasise the international responsibilities of private companies, and NL Next Level, a private sector initiative aimed at working together for a prosperous, sustainable and inclusive Netherlands. In spite of all these initiatives, more clearly needs to be done to familiarise the whole of society, including companies, with the SDG agenda. Businesses are actively implementing international principles of business conduct such as the OECD Guidelines, the ILO conventions and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Companies' contributions to the SDGs can be summarised under five headings. First, through the Global Challenges, Dutch Solutions approach, corporate research and innovation addresses global challenges in the cluster of SDGs on hunger, accessible healthcare and water (SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 6). Second, corporate initiatives contribute to the cluster on growth, employment and opportunities for all (SDGs 8, 10, 4 and 5), for example through programmes that target groups in society that have difficulty securing jobs. Abroad, the private sector has created 400,000 jobs in cooperation with government development programmes. Third, the private sector has much to offer to the cluster on innovation and investments (SDGs 12, 11 and 9). Dutch companies can solve challenges in river deltas worldwide, which are vulnerable to flooding, have high population density and are of great economic importance. Financial institutions have published the report 'Building Highways to SDG Investing', which gives practical examples of how investment can promote sustainability. Fourth, the private sector plays an important role

in the cluster on climate and energy (SDGs 7, 13, 14 and 15). The NL Next Level programme on energy for the future aims at accelerating the transition in the Netherlands towards sustainable energy and zero emissions by 2050. Private companies are also working in the Dutch Climate Coalition to create zero-emission enterprises by 2050. Lastly, the private sector contributes to the fifth cluster of SDGs on peace, security and equity, international perspectives and partnerships (SDG 16 and 17) by promoting an integrated approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships. A good example is the Working Place, a public-private partnership in which the government of the Netherlands, the private sector and knowledge institutions identify challenges and opportunities in the global South to which companies can provide solutions.

## Civil society

The Netherlands has a strong civil society. Countless non-governmental, non-profit organisations are concerned with sustainable development, in the Netherlands or abroad. Several CSOs have been involved in developing the 2030 Agenda, and even more organisations are playing a role in SDG implementation.

In keeping with their role as watchdogs, CSOs are sometimes critical of the Netherlands' progress on the 2030 Agenda. They criticise the government's 'pragmatic' attitude towards the SDGs, which focuses on adapting current policies rather than drastically stepping up efforts and building a stronger institutional framework. They also argue that the government's self-defined role as merely 'one of the actors' in the area of sustainable development falls short of the level of ambition needed to succeed on the path towards 2030. These CSOs would rather see the government adopt a more ambitious, proactive attitude and embrace fundamental reforms in some areas. This role, they argue, would require additional funding, including a return to the official threshold of 0.7% of GDP for Official Development Assistance (ODA). The 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda should also be taken into account, including other forms of finance like the mobilisation of private capital and tax reform, both national and international.

In 2015 CSOs launched the advocacy campaign Ready for Change: Global Goals at Home and Abroad, focusing on policy coherence and the SDGs, and in 2017 its successor Building

Change: Global Goals at Home and Abroad. To promote policy coherence for sustainable development, CSOs have called on government to introduce an SDG check to determine whether new regulations and policies are in keeping with the SDGs. By providing an appraisal of negative, neutral and positive effects on global sustainable development, the SDG check would enable the positive effects to be maximised.

CSOs contribute in various ways, often in partnership with other stakeholders, to the 2030 Agenda. For the purposes of this report, five themes can be highlighted:

## **1 Children's rights (all SDGs)**

CSOs campaign for better policies, sound information, gender equality and access to education and healthcare, and against poverty, violence, abuse, neglect and abandonment. Special attention is being given to the millions of children living on the margins of society, for example as a result of war or displacement.

## **2 Health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (SDGs 3, 5 and 6)**

CSOs support gender equality and SRHR in the Netherlands through research and advocacy. They also provide the public with information about gender stereotyping, sex education and the economic position of women. Several organisations work internationally on these SDGs. The limited and shrinking political space for women's rights activists is one specific focus.

## **3 Climate, nature and the environment (SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 15)**

A wide range of CSOs in the Netherlands are actively involved in fighting climate change and its consequences, as well as in nature conservation, nationally and internationally.

## **4 Migration and security (SDGs 10 and 16)**

Several CSOs are engaged in advocacy for a fair and generous immigration policy in the Netherlands and across Europe. Insecurity is an important push factor for migration. CSOs can be found working in fragile states on programmes designed to enhance security and the rule of law, women's participation in politics and peace processes, press freedom and occupational safety for journalists.

## **5 Value chains (SDG 12)**

Sustainable and fair value chains are of great concern to many CSOs. In order to promote them, CSOs often work in partnership with other stakeholders, for example on sector agreements on international corporate social responsibility. Here, CSOs provide technical assistance and help formulate specific targets and indicators for sustainable value chains. CSOs specifically champion the position of small farmers and workers in value chains. Addressing land rights issues and environmental degradation in commodity sourcing is also high on their agenda.

## **Knowledge institutions**

Many universities, other academic organisations and research institutes in the Netherlands generate knowledge and promote the use of existing knowledge about sustainable development. In the five Knowledge Platforms, government, the private sector, academics and civil society (in the Netherlands and abroad) join forces to bridge the gap between research and practice and make effective contributions to reaching specific SDGs.

A Knowledge Coalition between knowledge institutions and business organisations has adopted a National Research Agenda with research pathways addressing specific scientific, social and economic challenges. Almost all the pathways relate to the SDGs, and one is aimed specifically at a holistic approach to the goals ('Sustainable Development Goals for Inclusive Global Development'). This pathway will provide insight into cohesion, synergy and possible trade-offs between the SDGs.

Although attention to the SDGs is growing, they are still not often addressed explicitly. One exception is a research programme by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and seven other knowledge institutions to generate knowledge and tangible outputs to help achieve the SDGs in low- and middle-income countries. Some knowledge institutions are also starting to map and focus their contributions to the SDGs, leading for example to the Delft Global Initiative.

Generally, Dutch knowledge institutions are making contributions to all the SDGs. They are most effective in:

- **Health and wellbeing**

The scientific community has specialised institutes such as the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development

and the Rotterdam Global Health Initiative. Major research areas in the Netherlands include ageing, Alzheimer's disease, sexual and reproductive health, and malaria immunisation worldwide.

- **Quality education**

Education is the core business of knowledge institutions, and most universities have a substantial number of international staff and students. They also target a global audience through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

- **Food and nutrition security**

Knowledge institutions in the Netherlands are particularly strong on agricultural value chains and food systems, and are contributing to sustainable production and consumption.

- **Sustainable energy and climate change** is considered to be a major topic for future research.

Linkages between research disciplines and partnerships with actors outside academia are preconditions for contributing towards the SDGs. All SDG-related studies focus on policy and practice and are aimed at enhancing the impact of research, whether by concentrating on specific SDGs or on the system as a whole.

## Youth

The SDGs are important for young people. Not only because they will shape the world of 2030, but also because young people are specifically involved in SDG implementation. The government of the Netherlands pays special attention to young people's role in achieving the SDGs, and has appointed youth representatives. These youth representatives and the National Youth Council (NJR) of the Netherlands organise workshops and events that reach about 30,000 young people each year and raise awareness of the SDGs. SDGs which young people in the Netherlands feel are especially relevant to them include:

- **Quality education**, which they see as a top priority. This includes quality education for young people with disabilities.
- **Climate action and sustainable development**. Political youth organisations have issued a manifesto calling on political parties to step up their efforts on sustainable development and sustainable education. Climate change is one of young people's main concerns, and they believe this challenge is linked to other SDGs like poverty, hunger and peace and security.
- **Health, wellbeing and healthy cities**. Most young people are satisfied with healthcare in the Netherlands, but consider mental health a major concern. One example of youth involvement in health issues is the NJR-initiated project 'I Am Great', which focuses on healthy cities and communities.
- **Equality**. Young people in the Netherlands believe that equal opportunities cannot be taken for granted. Specific concerns include the rights of LGBT people, abused children, young people with disabilities, young people in need of special care (including mental healthcare), ethnic minority young people and gender equality.
- **The labour market**, especially job opportunities for young people.

Young people believe that the Netherlands could step up involvement in SDG implementation. They emphasise that all stakeholders can and should contribute: CSOs, the private sector and government. It would be a missed opportunity not to take full advantage of young people's growing sense of commitment.



