

United Nations Major Group for  
Children and Youth  
*Sector Paper*  
*High Level Political Forum 2017*



UN Major Group for  
**Children and Youth**  
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

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## Summary

1. The 2030 agenda is intended to be universal and transformative, and change our trajectory towards sustainability. The ambition and the timeline demand the need for drastic changes in our development paradigms.
2. The key to tackling multidimensional poverty and achieving SDG 1 lies in the shift from the neoliberal economic paradigm that pursues profit and growth over people and planet. Multidimensional poverty, understood as a scourge on our planet, requires an end to crippling austerity policies globally, the active implementation of a universal basic income and caps on maximum income.
3. SDG 2 must be understood in the context of food sovereignty, to liberate marginalised communities from their state of external dependence for their own sustenance. Moreover, the aggressive corporatisation of genetic resources and biodiversity must be reversed in line with a sovereignty-focused understanding of SDG 2.
4. The changing context of the national and global health landscape, needs to be well incorporated in policies focused on SDG 3, in order to adequately address emerging issues like antimicrobial resistance, infectious pandemics, and the shifting burden to non communicable diseases that threaten progress on health gains. Additionally, the trend of increasing industry influence, and harsher structural barriers through a more stringent intellectual properties rights regime needs to be reversed.
5. Certain countries still do not recognise women as constitutionally equal to men. The empowerment of girls and women, and the achievement of SDG 5 requires holistic legislative and societal changes, catalysed by targeted state efforts and the inclusion of men and boys in the effort. These include overcoming social, economic, cultural and political barriers that seek to control the bodily autonomy of women, their economic mobility and social participation, while imposing a gender binary view on the society.
6. Infrastructure development should take a regional approach and take into account the needs of different types of territories- urban and non-urban, after community driven assessments of social, economic and ecological impact.
7. To adequately address the complex sustainability challenges of oceans- A planetary boundary, we need an ethic of evidence based stewardship and work towards a global treaty on oceans and plastics, while addressing issues of extraterritorial overfishing threatening biodiversity and the sustenance of populations dependent on oceans.
8. The success of 2030 Agenda requires greater integration and coherence of the various universally adopted sustainable development frameworks. Some of these include the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda, the 10 Year Framework of Programs on

Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, and the Paris Agreement. These must be understood as part of a larger international effort towards the universally applicable sustainable.

9. National and international policies should seek to align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development. Concrete initiatives like UNEP's Ecological Risk Integration into Sovereign Credit (E-RISC), and Ecological Tax Reform (ETR) should be expanded and applied universally, in addition to addressing stranded assets and the transition from fractional to full reserve banking, as a step towards operationalising a framework that views the economy as a subset of the environment and society.
10. We need to apply a science policy interface that seeks the appropriate use of sensible data, while applying context specific technology and purpose driven innovation in synchrony with indigenous knowledge.
11. Member states should convene a process to classify ecocide as a crime against humanity.
12. In order to achieve rights based participation modalities that ensure protected spaces for critical segments of society, the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS), should be formally engaged in all stages and levels of sustainable development policy.

## **Introduction**

This paper details the inputs of the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) to the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development corresponding to its theme, *“Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”*. The content is focused on national implementation, what that means in the context of a ‘changing world’, and how the highlighted priorities could be incorporated into respective avenues.

## **2030 Agenda**

### **SDG 1-End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

Genuine national implementation of SDG 1 will only be impactful if governments enhance their focus on targeting multidimensional poverty.

This requires a deliberate move from a neoliberal economic paradigm that, above all, prioritises growth for the sake of growth, and deems people and planet incidental externalities. In order to make this shift, the pre-analytical vision of the economic system needs to be reoriented to view the economy as a subset of the environment and society, not the other way around.

To incorporate this in national implementation plans, we specifically urge for the imposition of caps on natural resource use, including on the extraction of virgin resources, on a per capita basis in accordance with global scale planetary boundaries and local bio-capacities.

In addition, all progress on economic and social indicators should be discounted by and compared to corresponding ecological footprints (including extraterritorial), through mandatory reporting.

More specifically, national social protection schemes must be tailored to include workers in the informal sector, migrant workers, refugees, marginalised groups, and those living in precarious conditions, including for reasons of legal status, and with insecure access to basic services. Due to several social, structural and political barriers, these groups are disproportionately affected by multidimensional poverty.

#### Emerging Issues and Barriers

- The increasing but unsubstantiated focus on austerity is having significant adverse effects on multidimensional poverty, and reversing previously positive trends. We urge all governments to discuss this issue and **abandon austerity programs**.
- In addition, in the context of the interface of a human rights approach with increasing automation and the changing nature of work, governments should have a dialogue on action-oriented measures for implementing a **universal basic income and impose caps on maximum income**.

### **SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

The achievement of this goal in respective national contexts requires the move from food security to food sovereignty as its central pillar. In addition, to make it mutually reinforcing with other elements of the agenda, this needs to be done through harnessing locally appropriate technologies and indigenous knowledge that transitions food production from an ecologically and socially extractive to a regenerative activity.

To comprehensively integrate the nutritional aspect of achieving this goal, the national plans and their monitoring should include specific reporting on progress made in accessibility and uptake of macro and micro nutrient components of food.

#### Emerging Issues and Barriers

- The global epidemic of bee colony collapse disorder is a serious threat to food security and sovereignty. We urge for the immediate agreement of a global protocol to place a moratorium on the neurotoxic chemical pesticides attributed to this, and the destruction of all stocks.
- Another challenging barrier facing farmers is the aggressive corporatisation of genetic resources and biodiversity. This monopolises the commons and forcefully concentrates knowledge in an exclusive private domain, thus limiting its use and positive impact.

### **SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages/World Health Assembly**

To achieve the full scope of SDG 3 and deliberations of the WHA, all national policies need to be broadly delivered through an age friendly and rights based approach. This has implications on a range of topics from point of care, to fiscal, and climate policies.

The contextual background, should be constantly adapting to the changing landscape of global and national health. This includes changing trends, risk factors and the shift from infectious to

noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). This is specifically important, as 78% of the risk factor behavior that causes premature mortality from NCDs start during adolescence.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) should be considered achieved if it includes minimal or no out of pocket expense.

### Emerging Issues and Barriers

- Although not included in the targets in SDG 3, paragraph 26 of the 2030 Agenda highlights Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), further discussed in the special meeting on AMR at UNGA 2016. National plans should make special efforts to include interventions to address AMR.
- The framework for domestic resource mobilisation (DRM) should incorporate health outcomes in financing strategies through mechanism like taxation of harmful substances like sugar.
- The dilution of regulatory frameworks resulting in increased Industry interference with national public health policies is a major barrier to evidence informed and rights based health policy.
- Intentional political and structural barriers prevent countries in need to make full use of Trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) flexibilities. A non-regression based process to overhaul these is needed to provide countries with the sovereignty to invoke compulsory licensing to meet shortages in reliable access to quality medicines.
- The misguided and deliberate denial of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, especially targeted at the ability of young women and girls to control their own bodies, remains a glaring barrier in the achievement of SDG 3.
- The increased occurrence and intensity of global infectious pandemics is a serious threat to our collective resilience, and needs a global action plan with dedicated resources.

### **SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls/CSW**

The empowerment of girls and women requires holistic legislative and societal changes, catalyzed by targeted efforts by States to commit budget towards gender-sensitive policy implementation, with the consultation of women. By 2014, 143 countries committed to equality between men and women in the eyes of law established by their Constitutions, whilst 52 countries have yet to take this step<sup>1</sup>. We strongly urge these 52 states to follow suit and amend their Constitution to reflect the status of equality between men and women.

The persistent violation of gender equality, that poses barriers to women from childhood, is nuanced and embedded within and perpetuated by unfounded cultural and social stigmas. The barriers extend but aren't limited to poor sanitation, health, violence, child marriage, unaccounted for domestic work and unpaid labour that limits access of girls and women to education, economic mobility and societal participation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>

The discrimination and violence against girls, women, the LGBTQI community and non-gender conforming individuals causes severe emotional and physical trauma, enhanced health risks, and diminished economic and social mobility.

### Emerging Issues and Barriers

- National plans for achieving SDG 5 should be anchored in intergenerational partnerships with young women at the local level, along with mobilising young men and boys to foster enabling environments for gender equality.
- National frameworks should recognize that gender isn't binary, rather encapsulates equality between people of all genders, and recognises every person's right to self gender identification.
- Enhance scope of national policies to include SRHR.
- Economic empowerment should go beyond entrepreneurship to facilitate support for young women-led cooperatives, vocational training and enable non-formal education initiatives to holistically enrich girls' and women's leadership skills.
- Include tangible initiatives like menstrual hygiene management and ensure that WASH and security indicators are met as priorities toward equal access to and completion of education for young women toward future economic and social opportunities.
- Commit to sharing national records of crimes against women and children, conviction rates and the budgetary allocation on national and state level towards reducing gender based crimes and rehabilitation of victims.
- Ensure and recommit to non-discrimination in terms of financial policies on grounds of gender.

### **SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

Infrastructure, both physical and digital, are foundational for achieving many of the SDGs. Plans for resilient infrastructure should be responsive to changing environments influenced by climate change, disasters, demographic trends, urbanization, economic fluctuations, and changing sociopolitical systems.

In addition, physical infrastructure planning should be subject to life cycle assessment in regards to its short and long term social and environmental impacts, making it people centered and planet sensitive. This involves being environmentally regenerative and socially and economically inclusive, while providing services that promote sustainable livelihoods.

National infrastructure development should be subject to community-based assessment and decision making aimed at addressing local needs across spatial contexts (urban, peri-urban, rural), while promoting integrated fit-for-purpose territorial development.

### Emerging Issues and Barriers

- Net neutrality and the right to privacy are critical issues that will ensure quality access to important technologies. We urge governments to change course from several policies that have sought to undermine these concepts.



## **SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

Oceans cover the majority of our planet and constitute one of the nine planetary boundaries. In addition, their national and global nature presents unique challenges and opportunities. The intersection of the national and global frameworks for oceans should deliberately focus on creating an ethic of stewardship through a commons approach, while creating coherence between SDG14 and other frameworks like the SFDRR, SAMOA Pathway etc.

In this regard it is critical to ensure oceans related capacity building to include not only littoral and island but also landlocked countries to strengthen awareness of the importance of oceans for our, and the planet's wellbeing, beyond the study of natural sciences

### *Emerging Issues and Barriers*

- Some studies estimate that the business as usual scenario could result in more plastic than fish in the oceans by 2050. We urge member states to build on the work of the 2030 Agenda (2015), the G7 (2015) and the UNEA (2016), to establish a timeline and process to agree to a global treaty on plastics (including micro-plastics) and oceans.
- Industrial scale extraterritorial overfishing (questionable under UNCLOS), in some cases, assisted by heavy state subsidies, is causing the rapid decline in the food sovereignty of many communities and denying them their human rights. We urge member states to address such instances.

### **Coherence of Sustainable Development Frameworks**

Greater attention must be given to the integration of respective sustainable development frameworks (the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 10 YFP for SCP, the New Urban Agenda, etc.) in the context of national action plans. This requires that governments formally seek to break silos during the implementation of these frameworks, promoting coherence.

Through dedicated discussions, the HLPF, in line with its mandate, can ensure the integration necessary to achieve the successful and coherent implementation of these frameworks, especially at the national level.

### **Sendai Framework DRR (SFDRR)**

Adopted in 2015, before the 2030 Agenda, the SFDRR lays down the foundation to building resilience. Development that is not resilient cannot be sustainable in the long run. In the current contexts of increased fragility (due to conflict, human induced and environmental disasters), resilience has become an indispensable precondition and planning component of all sustainable development policies, and must be incorporated by governments as such.

### **New Urban Agenda (NUA)**

The New Urban Agenda, adopted in 2016, guides the global community towards the achievement of more sustainable cities and integrated territorial development through greater urban-rural synergies.

Given the pressing economic, social and environmental dimensions impacts of urbanisation, it is essential to avoid a siloed approach and instead integrate planning of sustainable urban and territorial development in broader national plans.

These should seek to build coherence with the NUA and serve to highlight the territoriality of all issues and thus provide a lens to better perceive pressing problems from multiple angles. Moreover, the localization and territorialization of the SDGs can help create enabling environments for member states to interact and learn the best practices required for individual circumstances.

### **Humanitarian Affairs**

We are experiencing the biggest humanitarian crises since World War 2. Given the unprecedented magnitude, and scope of the issue, it is essential to incorporate the humanitarian context (in coherence with discussions at ECOSOC HAS) in the planning and implementation of all sustainable development policies. Member states- source, transit and host need to work together with the international community to best ensure the realisation of the human rights and benefits of sustainable development for all affected people.

### **Environmental Assembly**

The United Nations membership should systematically work towards establishing a time bound process to classify and recognise *ecocide* as a *crime against humanity*.

### **Science Policy Interface**

The science-policy interface has become increasingly important within the UN system. It provides the foundation for evidence-informed policies, facilitates the use of science, technology, and innovation (STI) as enablers in the implementation and review, and provides a scientific lens into monitoring impact.

Living in an increasingly sociotechnical world, context-appropriate applications of STI are crucial in maintaining development efforts. Determining the impact of technology depends on the targets used to measure it, highlighting the importance of avoiding misappropriating technological advance as social or economic progress.

Technology shapes behaviors by influencing perception and action, making it important for all stakeholders to actively engage in defining gaps for which technologies are appropriate solutions and the eventual design, development, and use of such objects. Recommendations for doing so include the following:

- Technologies should not be developed in vacuum but in a context and for specific objectives that fill gaps in SDGs implementation;
- Moving away from a "one size fit all" mentality, national frameworks should promote innovation that integrates traditional knowledge and reflects local contexts;
- Strengthening evidence-informed approach to policy processes, making effective science communication crucial to translate technical information into practical STI, effective policies, and positive behavior change;
- Promoting open science, democratizing software/hardware, and enhancing the role of citizen

data is key to enable conducive environments for knowledge transfer, capacity building, and reproducibility;

- Community-driven ICT skills and digital literacy that contribute to sustainable livelihoods, and decent jobs, not simply to serve market demands;
- Perform *ex ante* and *ex poste* community driven technology assessments through design, development, deployment, scaling, use, and discard.
- Develop frameworks to track the positive and negative, primary and secondary, short-term and long-term, intended and unintended effects of technologies.

## **Means of Implementation: FfD and SDG 17**

### **Financial Frameworks**

National and international policies should seek to align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### Emerging issues and barriers

- Concrete initiatives like UNEP’s Ecological Risk Integration into Sovereign Credit (E-RISC), and Ecological Tax Reform (ETR- shifting base from value addition to extraction and pollution) should be expanded and applied universally, as a step towards internalising externalities
- Addressing the issue of stranded assets and the carbon bubble
- Under the Basel convention, member states should add a clause to incorporate ‘ecologically sound’ banking practices, and facilitate a transition from fractional to full reserve banking,
- Convene a process to implement the *Financial Transaction Tax (FTT)*

### **Data**

Data has also become a central feature of the development agenda that requires a purpose-driven data revolution in order to turn “big data” into impactful and relevant bits. Numbers are often used to justify policy action and demonstrate effects of policy decisions. However, this can often be politicized to influence the allocation of limited resources under the false impression of “evidence-based” practices. The notion of “objectivity” in data is difficult to defend, as there is always a degree of subjectivity, whether in establishing inclusion/exclusion principles in data or its interpretation.

Data, nevertheless, remains a powerful tool with the potential to provide unique insights into complex systems. To fully reap the benefits of data and avoid the perpetuation of uncertainty that can arise, below are several recommendations:

- Establish best practices for the appropriate collection, interpretation, and reporting of data to minimize bias;
- Promote transparency and openness to allow users to assess the saliency, legitimacy, and credibility of the process and tools used for collecting data, as well as designing technically-informed policy recommendations;
- Complement data from various sources, including citizen-generated data, and that from different knowledge streams, including traditional indigenous and non-formal knowledge systems, including both quantitative and qualitative variables;

- Validate the source of data to screen for conflicts of interest and potential bias;
- Enhance the statistical capacity at all levels

### *Good Practice at National Level*

- Integrate robust science and technology roadmaps within national SDG plans to support the implementation, monitoring and review.
- Promote coherence between the science-policy dimension of different sustainable development agendas to promote effective resource use and knowledge sharing.
- Provide enabling environments for STI by developing policies conducive to incentivizing innovation that address community-identified needs.
- Remove structural, financial, and sociocultural barriers leading to uneven access to technologies.

### **Engagement of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS)**

National sustainable development councils or structures are critical to the effective and coherent implementation of sustainable development policies. As part of their institutional mechanism, these should integrate rights based modalities through the participation of MGoS in all their deliberations.

