

WATCHING BRIEF WB15-7: UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Summit in New York City, 25-27 September 2015, is expected to adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period ending 2030. The SDGs will replace the Millennium Development Goals which reached their use-by dates this year.

QPLC encourages Friends to become familiar with the SDGs and consider how their Meeting could contribute toward reaching some of the goals within their local communities or even more widely.

What follows is a QPLC resource to assist Friends in commencing such discussions within their Meetings. As well as information about the SDGs, we have included comments from Australian leaders and organisations and links to additional resources, as well as Quaker perspectives.

QPLC will endeavor to provide you with updates following the September Summit.

We are keen to hear if this material is useful to your Meeting and if you or others host a discussion about the SDGs, and any outcomes.

Development Goals

A Sustainable Development Summit in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 – to be attended by around 150 world leaders - is expected to adopt the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period ending 2030, as recommended by 193 nations gathered at the Addis Ababa Financing for Development meeting in July/August:

[1]

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

There are 169 proposed targets for these goals and 304 proposed indicators to show compliance. Full details are available at this website www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

There is consensus within the United Nations system that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped more than 700 million people out of poverty, and shown the value of goal-setting in meeting the aspirations of people around the world. At the same time, the MDGs did not really refer to environmental issues, climate change impacts, and gender equality to the degree that many people felt were important, hence their inclusion with greater prominence in the SDGs.

Comments

Julie Bishop MP, our Foreign Minister, issued a media release on 16 July 2015 welcoming the success of the Addis Ababa meeting and saying that “Australia’s role in the negotiations was to help ensure the outcome was well aligned with Australia’s development goals and the interests of our region, placing a strong emphasis on boosting each country’s self-reliance, the critical importance of economic growth, private sector support and women’s economic empowerment”. She announced Australia’s commitment to an international tax initiative to strengthen tax systems in developing countries, and to moves to use innovation to enhance the delivery and effectiveness of Australia’s aid.

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) issued a media release on 17 July 2015 in support of the Addis Ababa agreement, drawing attention to the range of financial mechanisms (including aid) needed to realise the SDGs, and urging Australia to re-commit to progress towards giving 0.7% of GNI for aid.

In a radio interview on 29 June in Brisbane, Julie McKay (UN Women), Marc Purcell (ACFID), and Julia Newton-Howes (Care Australia) discussed the SDGs. They made the following points:

- The MDGs have been successful in many respects, especially in reducing poverty and enhancing primary education.
- Nevertheless much remains to be done (e.g. regarding water and sanitation).
- Whereas the MDGs focused on social outcomes, mainly in developing countries, the SDGs are more extensive in covering economic, social and environmental challenges, and including all countries.
- In relation to women, the MDGs led to the formation of UN Women and the allocation of more international resources to issues affecting women, and as a result the SDGs have been able to increase the focus on violence against women and on empowering women and girls.
- There will need to be advocates for the SDGs, and NGOs will play an important role in engaging communities in understanding and implementing the Goals.
- Funding sources such as innovative taxation schemes will be needed as part of the support structure for implementing the SDGs.
- Goals like SDGs help countries keep up to the mark, as they are monitored by the international community.
- The Australian Government must explain the Goals and show how Australia is contributing to their implementation.

A forum was held in Parliament House, Canberra, on 10 August, co-sponsored by the UN Parliamentary Group (chaired by Sharman Stone MP), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA). Several hundred people heard addresses by three speakers about the SDGs and their relevance to gender equality. The Ambassador of the EU, H.E. Sem Fabrizi, spoke of the significance of 2015 for the adoption of the SDGs and the climate change conference in Paris, and affirmed that gender equality is a major aspect of the goals for development. The High Commissioner for Pakistan, H.E. Naela Chohan, outlined ways in which her government is supporting gender equality through legislation education, and empowering women at all levels. She spoke of raising awareness among men as an important aspect of creating the conditions for change. A Deputy Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Ewen McDonald, referred to the hard work being done within the Australian government agencies to achieve the SDGs, including the emphasis on gender equality not only domestically but in peace-building and state-building.

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) is being led by Monash University and has held a series of workshops with many stakeholders. As a result there has emerged a suggested list of goals and targets for Australia to adopt as its response to the SDGs. The full details are available at www.ap-unsdsn.org

The Australian National Committee for UN Women has also put out a discussion paper (June 2015) on the implications of the SDGs for gender equality. This is available at www.unwomen.org.au

Quaker Perspectives

The Quaker United Nations Office in New York has been active in offering opportunities for diplomats to meet informally and share concerns about development issues. It has also taken part in some of the meetings at the UN as the SDGs have been formed. For example, QUNO hosted a meeting in 2012 to enable those from places affected by violent conflict to plan how best to influence the SDG debates; and this led to a meeting with diplomats involved in the negotiations for SDGs. Later, Andrew Tomlinson appeared before the UN Open Working Group on 7 February 2014 and spoke about the importance of peace and stability as basic factors necessary for sustainable development. This means stronger governance structures, and a willingness to examine the root causes of violence in human endeavour. Further details of QUNO's work in this area are on their website www.quno.org

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has been actively engaged in promoting conflict transformation approaches in Burundi and Zimbabwe, to show how an alternative model of development can be effective. It emphasizes inclusive, responsible, fair and accountable governments, and commitment to peace.

Quaker Service Australia (QSA) has been engaged in development work to address food and water security, poverty alleviation, child protection, gender issues, environmental sustainability, and in encouraging approaches to reduce the impact of climate change. Within the rural communities with whom it is working, QSA assisted 34,250 people in 2013-4, and will assist communities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal benchmarking wherever possible. This approach is included in QSA's Policy on Development. QSA is an active member of ACFID and will be undertaking advocacy action with them and the Church Agencies Network to ensure Australia's active participation at all levels of achieving the SDGs.

In the Australian context, all political parties appear to be committed to the principles underlying the UN development agenda, even if they do not necessarily feel happy with all the Goals proposed for the SDGs. Quakers can (a) follow up the discussion material on the websites listed above (Sustainable Development Solutions and UN Women), (b) check how Australia approaches the UN Summit in September (watch media reports), (c) press for the extra funding needed to make the SDGs a reality, (d) support the work of QSA, and (e) make their voice heard to MPs and Senators as they are led.

Canberra
August 2015