

## Key comments from **Beyond 2015** on the zero draft of the post-2015 outcome document

June 2015

**Beyond 2015** welcomes the Zero Draft prepared by the Co-Facilitators of the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations. Below we share key comments on the document addressing (1) the draft declaration, (2) means of implementation, and (3) follow up and review. A separate paper contains the Campaign's full reaction and textual recommendations.

### **(1) The Declaration: A universal agenda that must leave no one behind**

The zero draft generally communicates a strong level of ambition, addressing the integrated character of global challenges today, the commitment to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency, the need for a new approach towards sustainable and inclusive development and the holistic approach to peace. We welcome the reinforcement of the **universality** of this agenda (**para 5, 14**) and the focus on ending **inequalities**, including between and within countries. We strongly endorse the presentation of this agenda for action as *offering comprehensive and balanced coverage of the three dimensions of sustainable development; as an interrelated and indivisible whole*, and as a pledge to *leave no-one behind*.

*Leaving no-one behind:* The imperative to **'leave no-one behind'** is crucial, and we urge Member States to continue to support this principle (**preamble, para 4**). However 'leaving no-one behind' must go beyond a principle to a firm commitment that no goal or target can be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups, with a commitment to put the most disadvantaged first. The references to vulnerable sections of the population (**para 21**) are key to "leaving no one behind" and should be expanded. We recommend strengthening these elements by including language on the fulfilment of all human rights for all, free from discrimination, oppression and exclusion.

*An interrelated and indivisible agenda:* The zero draft could go further in reinforcing **integration between the various aspects** of development as a coherent and indivisible whole. The presentation of the 9 'headlines' in the Preamble is problematic as it highlights some goal areas over others. If Member States decide to add a Preamble to the Declaration, it must be faithful to the delicate political balance attained by the OWG outcome document by clearly mentioning all SDGs. Additionally, the nine headlines cluster all the environmental and climate goals into one, leading once again to a siloed approach that undermines the coherence of an indivisible agenda for sustainable development.

*A comprehensive and balanced approach to the dimensions of sustainable development:* The recognition of the need to 'heal and secure our planet' (**Preamble, para 7**) is welcome but the section on "the new agenda" also needs a more balanced approach and stronger references to the environmental aspects. In fact, environmental references appear to be secondary components of the text rather than a core element of the overall agenda.

### ***Participation: An agenda 'for' and to be implemented 'with' people***

**Beyond 2015** welcomes the acknowledgement of the wide consultation with stakeholders and the 'special effort to listen to the voices and concerns of the poorest and vulnerable' (**para 5, 43**). However, we are concerned that this acknowledgement has not been translated into a commitment to ensure that the post-2015 agenda is implemented and reviewed through meaningful **participation**. Overall, there are very few references to the ability of people around the world to **participate** as active agents of change, rather than simply as beneficiaries, in this new agenda. The success of the agenda will depend on the continued engagement of **all people**, including children, youth, women and girls, persons with disabilities, older people, the poorest and most marginalized, at all levels of its implementation, follow up and review.

**Paragraph 21**, addressing 'vulnerable sections of the population', should support the active participation for people who are vulnerable or facing multiple intersecting forms of discrimination in

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decision-making processes and implementation across the three dimensions of sustainable development. Overall, the declaration lacks reference to the promotion of a safe enabling environment for civil society, even though the ability of civil society to operate freely is fundamental to sustainable, equitable delivery of progress.

## **Human Rights**

Whilst the SDGs commit to *building upon* the Millennium Development Goals, the zero draft *retreats* from the UN Millennium Declaration in respect of human rights. **Human rights** both enable and constitute sustainable development, and so must be recognised as foundational for planning, implementation and review of the SDGs. The Declaration should pledge that the post-2015 Agenda will be implemented in full consistency and compliance with existing human rights obligations.

We were particularly concerned to see 'closed' or limited lists with regards to discrimination – we expect the post-2015 agenda to commit to ending all discrimination *without distinction*, and to fulfil, protect, and respect all human rights of *all* people, reflecting the equal worth and dignity of all human beings.

In addition to the UN conferences and summits listed in **paragraph 10**, the Declaration should reaffirm commitments on the part of Member States to fully implement the outcomes of all major UN conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, among others. **Paragraph 12 of the Follow up and Review section** should also include the core international human rights treaties as part of the overall guiding frame for implementation and follow up of the new agenda, and reaffirm the relevant obligations of States.

We welcome and strongly support a standalone paragraph on **gender equality (para 18)**. However, this paragraph has to be strengthened by including **all target areas under SDG 5** as well as the commitment to increase women's participation and leadership at all levels. The outcome document also lacks a reference to the structural barriers to achieving gender equality. As a whole, the Declaration needs a stronger focus on the human rights of women and girls; on the importance of a human rights based approach; and more emphasis on gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.

A paragraph recognizing the **right of indigenous peoples** to free, prior and informed consent and overall decision-making over natural resource extraction in their lands and territories should be part of the post-2015 Declaration.

## **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability**

We are worried by the lack of strong references to climate change, sustainable practices of consumption and production, and sustainable energy access in the zero draft. **Climate change** is not connected to its social and economic causes and impacts; instead, it is framed as an environmental issue. The lack of connection between climate change and inequality is a key concern. The outcome document does not recognize the profoundly gendered impacts of climate change or acknowledge that those who have contributed the least to climate change are the most vulnerable to its impacts. References to **sustainable or renewable energy** as a tool to eradicate poverty and combat climate change are missing in the current text.

Despite the positive references to 'harmony with nature', the text does not commit to decoupling economic growth from ecosystem degradation or respect for planetary boundaries. It is positive that the Zero Draft aims to address unsustainable behaviours; however, the document weakens language around **sustainable consumption and production (SCP)** and makes no reference to the responsibility of high income countries to ensure that they are using their fair share of global resources and goods. The terminology of sustainable 'lifestyles' or 'use of resources' does not sufficiently address the systemic and overarching nature of SCP. The text could be strengthened with references to low-carbon development, resilience-building, and human rights-based adaptation, and a commitment to phase out fossil-fuel emissions by 2050 at the latest.

## **(2) Means of Implementation**

**Beyond 2015** is concerned about the lack of clarity in the section on Means of Implementation, in particular regarding the global partnership; the need for an enabling global economic environment; the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism; and the concrete responsibilities of the Global North in these respects.

The opening paragraph (**para 30**) should state explicitly that national governments have leadership, responsibility and ownership in respect of their own national sustainable development plans and their means of implementation, and should define their own policy frameworks for dealing with donors and other external actors according to their national priorities. Paragraph **32** should explicitly state that ODA should be targeted at ending multidimensional poverty and promoting the wellbeing of the poorest people. A clear commitment from donor countries to meeting their ODA commitments should be made in the text.

This section lacks detail - for example, it should reference the wide range of different funding sources that could be leveraged by governments to implement the sustainable development agenda, such as innovative financing mechanisms including a financial transaction tax.

We are pleased that the Zero Draft recognises the role of technology, innovation, and knowledge transfer as important levers of sustainable development and this recognition should be strengthened by including references to 'accessible' technologies in fulfilling the SDG commitments. We call for the post-2015 outcome document to contain concrete commitments on the establishment of a **technology facilitation mechanism**.

The concept of the Global Partnership for development, as referenced in the text (**para 36**), is also vague. Reference should be made to the UN Guidelines on Business and Human Rights, which should form part of the criteria for involvement of the private sector.

## **(3) Follow up and Review**

The Zero Draft recognizes that follow up and review is a *responsibility* of Governments (**Declaration, para 38**) and notes the need for 'accountability'. However, this section of the outcome document sets only a minimal standard for a 'systematic', three-level approach to review and follow up (Declaration, para. 38). For example, the HLPF Resolution (A/RES/67/290) commits to reviewing 'implementation of sustainable development **commitments** and **objectives**' (**para 9**). However, the current proposal aims only to review '**progress**'. For this to be a genuine *follow up* framework, there should be clear feedback mechanisms supporting the reviews conducted at each level.

The Zero Draft does not address mechanisms for reviewing the contribution of stakeholders other than states, including civil society, the private sector, and public-private partnerships. Such reviews should monitor compliance of all stakeholders with human rights, gender equality, labour and environmental standards.

Monitoring, review and accountability, like the SDG agenda itself, must be "**by and for the people**". The guiding principle on participation in the review section (**3c**) is welcomed and should be strengthened through clear commitments to transparent, participatory and accountable institutions and decision making (SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7). This principle should be reflected by stronger language on participatory components and resource allocation at each level of the review and follow up mechanism. It should also involve a recognition of the value of participatory monitoring and review at sub-state levels.

More broadly, the guiding principles for the review and follow up framework should include compliance with human rights principles, and a commitment to review the framework as a **comprehensive, balanced and indivisible** whole which must **leave no-one behind**. The role of existing human rights

bodies and mechanisms at national, regional and global levels is not currently recognised in the text, despite their importance for monitoring and review.

*National level* –The recommendation of a national-level review every four years is insufficient for the purposes of the framework. It should occur every **two years**. National review is the foundation for regional and global review, and infrequent national review and reporting undermines the ability of other levels to function effectively. Considering that the national level is where States' accountability to their people will be measured, the commitment to a "publicly available" government report and "contributions" from stakeholders and rights-holders (**Follow Up, para 5**) falls short of a transparent, responsive, and participatory public review process. Instead, national scrutiny should – as proposed in the Secretary General's synthesis report – be based on formal inputs from the UN system and national stakeholders alongside the government report. It must ensure the contribution of those most likely to be excluded.

*Regional level (para 6)* – This currently lacks substantive commitments. Clear guidance, reflecting states' responsibility for systematic, multi-level review and follow up, must be included for a proper roadmap for a system of regional review to be established.

*Global Level* – The HLPF needs to ensure that global means of implementation and global trans-border issues, which escape national and regional level processes, are effectively reviewed. **Para 11** should be much more explicit on this. The resourcing and capacity of the HLPF and its accompanying secretariat, and how it might operate as a hub for inter-agency and stakeholder expertise, is not currently addressed.

The diagram on page 32 of the zero draft document specifies that the HLPF review should draw on reports from civil society and other stakeholders, and from the UN system. This proposal should be included in the text of the outcome document. We welcome the request for the UN Secretary-General to prepare more detailed guidelines for national and global level reviews (**para 16**) but we remain concerned that the weak current commitments on review, follow up and accountability will undermine the UN SG's capacity to make meaningful progress in this task.

## **Indicators**

It is important that the post-2015 outcome document highlights that the global set of indicators should cover all goals and targets and be faithful to the ambition of the new Agenda. We welcome the call to 'strengthen statistical capacities of developing countries' (**para 39**) and recommend that the outcome document also affirm the crucial role of civil society, the scientific community and other stakeholders as actors in developing and monitoring indicators and benchmarks at all levels.

We were concerned by the proposal of tasking the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG) with preparing annual global progress reports (**para 12**). The IAEG was set up to draft the proposal for the global set of indicators and does not have the proper capacity to monitor progress. Member States should task the United Nations, including its Technical Support Team, with collecting and preparing global reports.

## **The Role of the United Nations**

Contrary to the UN Millennium Declaration and its follow up resolutions in 2005 and 2010, and despite the fact that 2015 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations, the Zero Draft does not provide any guidance from Heads of State about how the UN and its Development System should adapt, coordinate, harmonize and align itself to provide the most effective support to governments in the implementation and monitoring of this universal agenda. It is imperative that Member States recognize the role of the UN and also task the organization with developing an integrated approach towards the new sustainable development agenda.