



The Norwegian Forum  
for Development  
and Environment

## ForUM's response to OWG final recommendations on goals and targets

The final meeting of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) ended on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2014, recommending 17 new goals and 169 targets to the UN General Assembly. The recommendations contain many positive elements, but also serious shortcomings that risk undermining the goals. Below are some of the most prominent:

### Hard fought positive outcomes

ForUM especially welcomes that combating **climate change and reducing inequalities have been retained as separate and clear goals**, in spite of opposition by several states. Action to combat climate change is a prerequisite for achieving all other goals, while accelerating inequalities risk undermining goals on eradicating poverty, peaceful societies and environmental sustainability.

The inclusion of goals on climate and inequality gives great strength to the framework, and an incentive for NGOs to promote the new development goals. However, we are seriously concerned that the goal on reducing inequality lacks a target to address and measure inequality in income and wealth between the richest and poorest segments of populations. Also, inequality and a focus on reducing the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are not adequately mainstreamed throughout the framework (See the attached table.)

The **inclusion of a goal to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies** for sustainable development, provide access to **justice for all and build accountable and inclusive institutions** at all levels” is also very positive. ForUM would have liked to see separate goals on peace and governance, but in the light of the strong opposition of some states, we are happy to still see targets on peaceful societies, fundamental freedoms, justice, participatory and inclusive decision-making and transparency in the framework.

### Serious loopholes

There are, however, some serious shortcomings in the framework that need to be addressed to make the new goals sustainable and achievable, and to give them legitimacy among NGOs.

**Generally, the targets lack references to human rights and already agreed and signed UN conventions and human rights instruments.** This means that when the targets are interpreted by the various governments that are to implement them, the action that they include risks becoming weaker than what has been already agreed. At a minimum, the goals and targets need to raise common global ambitions.

Furthermore, the **language on both goal and target level is inconsistent and often not binding or action oriented enough.** It varies from, *reduce, strengthen, take action on, endeavor, and promote*, to more measurable targets such as *double, ensure, provide, or reach X %*. It is especially weak in goal 16 on Peaceful, inclusive, just and accountable societies, and goal 17 on Means of implementation and global partnership. To make a difference, the targets need to be clear and measurable on what countries are to achieve, individually and as a group, and targets that require common global action to be met need to specify that action.

Targets to change global economic structures that uphold poverty and injustice, such as illicit capital flight (including tax evasion and corruption) and odious and unsustainable debts, are for example not specific or action-oriented enough to ensure positive action. Experience from Millennium Development Goal 8 shows that targets that require international cooperation need to include specific common action to be successful.

Although all goals are supposed to integrate all three dimensions of sustainability, **particularly the goals to promote economic growth and industrialization do not integrate or take into account the environmental or social dimensions of sustainability at target level** (except a rather weakly phrased target to “endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation”). This means that, when promoting growth, concern for human rights and the environment has been left out, and there is a great risk that this goal will counteract the other goals.

In the framework, **there are no targets to hold companies accountable for their impact on human rights, health and the environment, or to report on this through mandatory non-financial reporting**. Business can either contribute to or impede sustainable development, and to succeed the framework needs to secure that they fall in the first category.

In previous drafts of the OWG-document there was a target on a code of conduct for multinational corporations to secure economic, social and environmental responsibility, and another target on their reporting, but these have been omitted. Also, there are no references to the UN guiding principles on business and human rights, (UNGP) which have already gained wide approval, and should be a minimum target to fulfill.

## **Norwegian ambitions**

Being one of the most equal countries in the world, where peace, transparent institutions and politics, fundamental freedoms and human rights have shaped society, we expect Norway to take a lead to fight for the goals on inequality, peace and good governance in the future negotiations. The same applies to a climate goal, considering Norway’s important and progressive role in climate negotiations.

In the light of the government’s focus on the role of business in development, on policy coherence, and as an important contributor to the UNGP, we expect Norway to take remedial action on the missing corporate accountability mechanisms, and the lack of environmental and social dimensions in the goal on growth.

Norway’s role as co-chair of the Financing for Development Process provides a unique opportunity to influence targets on global economic structures that are weak in the OWG recommendations. ForUM will actively support progressive Norwegian work within all of the areas mentioned above.

Other outcomes from the OWG that we consider important for Norway to take action on, either to retain or adjust, are summarized in the attached table.

**Table showing prominent advantages and drawbacks in recommendations from the OWG**

Area	Positive outcomes	Negative outcomes
Poverty (goal 1)	<p>ForUM specifically welcomes the fact that this goal addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>poverty ‘in all its forms’</b></li> <li>- <b>equal access to basic services</b></li> <li>- <b>social protection systems</b> including floors</li> <li>- <b>child poverty</b></li> <li>- <b>national poverty definitions</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>A goal to end poverty in all its forms everywhere must, at a minimum, target people living on less than \$2 per day.</b> Poverty will not be eradicated, and people will still go hungry and sick, when the \$1.25 per day that is targeted in the goal is reached.</li> <li>- It is of great importance that the target to reduce poverty in line with national poverty definitions includes and defines <b>relative poverty</b>. This is <b>presently lacking</b>.</li> </ul>
Goals on hunger and agriculture (2), education (4), marine (14) and land based ecosystems and biodiversity (15)	<p>The goals to end hunger, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, to protect and restore marine resources, and land based ecosystems and biodiversity, are <b>separate goals which are decently targeted</b>.</p>	<p>Concerning <b>nutrition</b> there is however:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of explicit mention of the rate of exclusive <b>breastfeeding</b></li> <li>- no mention of the growing challenges of <b>obesity</b></li> </ul>
Health (goal 3)	<p>This goal is well covered. ForUM especially welcomes the crucial <b>inclusion of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>universal health coverage, including financial risk protection</b></li> <li>- the right of developing countries to use the full <b>provisions in the TRIPS agreement to provide access to medicines</b></li> <li>- a clear target to reduce <b>pre-mature mortality from NCDs</b> and strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)</li> </ul>	<p>The goal does however <b>not include a numerical target in the ending of preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths</b>.</p> <p>ForUM suggests the inclusion of numerical targets or indicators, namely (i) reducing the neonatal mortality rate to 10 or less deaths per 1,000 live births, (ii) reducing the under-five mortality rate to 20 or less deaths per 1,000 live births, and (iii) reducing the maternal mortality rate to 50 per 100 000. Each of these targets must apply to all groups, and global targets or indicators should be added.</p>

	<p>- <b>child and maternal health</b></p> <p>- <b>epidemics</b> of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases</p>	
Gender equality (goal 5)	<p>ForUM especially welcomes:</p> <p>- That this is a clear and separate goal</p> <p>- That the goal targets <b>universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights</b></p>	<p>- The framework <b>does not include sexual rights.</b></p> <p>- Does not acknowledge that <b>sexual abuse</b> is <b>suffered by boys</b> as well as girls</p> <p>- Does <b>not include boys and men in</b> promoting and <b>achieving gender equality</b></p> <p>- Does <b>not refer to CEDAW</b>, which would ensure increased efficiency and accountability</p>
Water and Sanitation (goal 6)	<p>- The proposed goal clearly states the importance of <b>universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water</b> and sanitation and hygiene for all, with a focus on the needs of women and girls in vulnerable situations.</p> <p>- Another crucial step forward is the specific focus on <b>ending open defecation.</b></p>	<p>The target should be strengthened by emphasizing the <b>need for universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene for households, schools and health facilities.</b></p>
Energy (goal 7)	<p><b>Universal access to affordable energy</b></p>	<p><b>Increase in renewables should be specified,</b> preferably tripled.</p>
Growth (goal 8)		<p>- The goal to promote economic growth does <b>not integrate or take into account the environmental or social dimensions</b> of sustainability at target level.</p> <p>- The <b>gender dimension is weak</b> and should be included explicitly at target level</p>
Reducing inequality (goal 10)	<p>Reducing inequalities within and among countries is kept as a clear and <b>separate goal</b></p>	<p>- If the goal is <b>to be measurable</b>, the language should be <b>ensure or implement rather than promote or strengthen</b> which cannot be measured.</p> <p>- There is no target to <b>address and measure inequality in income and wealth between the richest and poorest segments of populations</b>, or between different social groups based on for example</p>

		<p>gender, ethnicity, religion and disability. If the accelerating differences between the top and the bottom 10-20% of populations are not addressed, it will not be possible to achieve the new development goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beyond the goal, it will be imperative that progress is monitored through an equity lens <b>across all of the goals and targets. ForUM suggests that targets are set to reduce inequalities/gaps among social and economic groups.</b></li> <li>- ForUM further suggest that the post-2015 framework introduces <b>interim equity targets to close the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups,</b> and ensure everyone is on track to achieve 2030 targets.</li> </ul>
Climate change (goal 13)	Action to combat climate change has been <b>retained as a separate goal.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While it is mentioned in the introductory text, there is <b>no commitment within the targets to holding the increase in global average temperature below 2° C, or 1.5° C</b> above pre-industrial levels.</li> <li>- Climate change considerations should be mentioned more clearly under the <b>goals on economic growth and industrialization.</b></li> <li>- The <b>gender dimension</b> of climate change and the importance of the inclusion of a gender perspective in adaptation and mitigation is completely lacking.</li> <li>-There is <b>no target to ensure an inclusive and equitable DRR framework</b> and strategies for increased <b>resilience.</b></li> </ul>
Peace and good governance (goal 16)	<p>ForUM especially welcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That targets on peace, good governance and fundamental freedoms are recommended under a <b>separate goal</b> (although two separate goals would have been optimal).</li> <li>- The inclusion of a target to <b>reduce all forms of violence</b></li> <li>- The inclusion of a target to end abuse, exploitation,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The target on public access to information and to protect fundamental freedoms is weaker than in the previous draft. It <b>no longer specifies free and easy access to information and the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly</b> (16.10)</li> <li>- The target to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” has <b>lost</b> the text of the previous draft to <b>“ensure prior informed consent of indigenous and local communities in decision making</b> and natural resources management, and promote the use of their traditional knowledge and culture”</li> </ul>

	<p>trafficking and all forms of <b>violence against children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The inclusion of <b>birth registration</b> to guarantee the fundamental rights of children to an identity.</li> <li>- That reduction of illicit financial flows is mentioned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The target to ensure equal access to justice should <b>specify independent and effective justice systems</b> as in previous drafts.</li> <li>- The inclusion of the word “<b>free</b>” in the target on <b>birth registration</b> is needed to strengthen it.</li> <li>- There is <b>no target on collective action to reduce illicit capital flight/financial flows</b>. Experience from Millennium Development Goal 8 shows that targets that require international cooperation need to include specified common action to be successful.</li> <li>-There is <b>no target on disarmament</b>. Taking into consideration the dangers to peace, health, development and the environment from the overflow of weapons of more and more sophisticated types, this is vital to include. Reference to ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) would be an important tool.</li> <li>- There is <b>no target to reduce military spending</b>. ForUM suggests a yearly worldwide 10% reduction in military expenditure until 2030 to benefit the SDGs.</li> <li>-There is <b>no target on training in non-violent handling of conflicts or education in peace</b>, non-violence, intercultural and inter-faith understanding to build a peaceful culture.</li> <li>- There is <b>no target to ensure women’s equal participation and women’s leadership</b> in decision-making bodies <b>for the prevention and resolution of conflicts</b>, with reference to UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions.</li> </ul>
<p>Means of Implementation and Global Partnerships (goal 17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The target to assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability is <b>strengthened</b> with “coordinated policies aimed at <b>fostering debt financing, debt relief, and debt restructuring</b> and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The concrete proposal from G77 to establish a transparent and <b>independent mechanism to prevent and address debt crises did not go through</b>, which makes the target on debt less action-oriented.</li> <li>- There is <b>no target on collective action to reduce tax evasion</b>. Targets in previous drafts stated global cooperation for transparency to reduce tax evasion and avoidance, but this is lost in the final recommendations. What remains is a target on</li> </ul>

	<p>- The target to <b>develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complements GDP</b> is crucial for coherence and success.</p>	<p>international support to developing countries to improve domestic capacity for tax collection, which is good, but not enough to stop illicit capital flight.</p> <p>- The target to develop <b>measurements of progress on sustainable development that complements GDP needs to define that natural, social and human capital should be included</b>, as in previous drafts.</p> <p>- In the framework, <b>there are no targets to hold companies accountable for their impact on human rights, health and the environment, or to report on this through mandatory non-financial reporting.</b></p> <p>The previous target on a multilateral code of conduct for multilateral corporations to secure economic, social, and environmental responsibility has been omitted, and there is no reference to the UN guiding principles on business and human rights (UNGP).</p> <p>- There are <b>no recommendations for any mechanism to follow up on the results.</b> The target in the previous draft to “undertake regular monitoring and reporting of progress on SDGs, led by governments, within a shared accountability framework, including means of implementation” is lacking in the recommendations.</p> <p>Moreover, the development of new accountability mechanisms must be integrated with already human rights commitments and instruments. Otherwise, UN Member States and partners risk developing new sets of accountability mechanisms that are both inefficient and expensive.</p>
<p>Human rights (generally in the document)</p>	<p>The text in the <b>Chapeau</b> (which introduces the goals) <b>contains some language on human rights</b> and refers to agreed conventions.</p>	<p><b>Generally, the targets lack references to human rights and already agreed and signed UN conventions and human rights instruments.</b> This means that when the targets are interpreted by the various governments that are to implement them, the action that they include risk to become weaker than what is already agreed.</p>