



# Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group Position Paper

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## High Level Political Forum 2018

### Summary

For the 2030 Agenda to be truly transformative, urgent action is required to reorient and restructure global systems towards equity and justice. This includes the meaningful and active participation of stakeholders at all stages of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, the NGO Major Group calls for a new development paradigm that prioritizes the flourishing of humans, nature, and animals. Our proposals specific to the SDGs under consideration at the 2018 High Level Political Forum follow below.

Recognizing the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in ensuring human rights, gender equality, and peace, we call for a rights-based approach to **SDG6** that prevents the commodification and privatization of water sources and that ensures transparent, accountable, and fair distribution of services; increases domestic resources and aid for water, sanitation, and hygiene services to ensure equitable and affordable access; protects environmental ecosystems that secure water systems; and strengthens community-based water resource management.



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To achieve **SDG7** and ensure sustainable energy for all, we call for inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaborations in designing and delivering sustainable energy solutions that protect the environment, cultural heritage, and human rights. This includes upscaling investment in renewable energy, through innovative approaches to reach energy-poor communities through end-user-oriented energy services that are truly affordable, reliable, safe, and sustainable.

Recognizing the right of humanity to safe, decent, culturally adequate, and resilient living environments, we call for the implementation of **SDG11** through inclusive approaches that bring together local, national, and international actors, including women and marginalized groups, in urban planning, expansion of technologies, and disaster risk management. Age-, gender-, and disability-sensitive and participatory budgeting and planning are key in urban planning and integrated territorial governance.

We call for increased political will and action to achieve **SDG12**, particularly through regulation of corporate activity and waste, consumer education, and environmental stewardship. Governments have a fundamental role in regulating the private sector and ensuring all-of-society action towards changing consumption and production patterns, moving from an excessive focus on profit and growth to a planet- and people-centered economy.

In the context of the ongoing degradation of our planet's ecosystem, we call for the involvement of civil society, indigenous peoples, women, and local communities in coordinated action to achieve **SDG15**, in line with biodiversity-related intergovernmental frameworks and targets. States must implement policies and effective enforcement systems to hold extractive and polluting industries accountable, prevent further deterioration, conserve and protect biodiversity, and work towards restoration of past damages.

The “means of implementation” of the 2030 Agenda, encapsulated in **SDG17**, must ensure the policy space required for governments to enact regulation, enforcement, and fiscal measures to advance their democratically-owned and rights-based development agendas. We demand the overdue introduction of a financial transactions tax and the establishment of an intergovernmental tax body for international tax cooperation at UN level. Trade must be organized along principles that support policy space and the rights-based implementation of the SDGs, and the global North must provide at least 0.7 percent of GDP in ODA, particularly for least developed countries.

Noting the “**interlinked and indivisible**” nature of the 2030 Agenda, we call for a holistic, coherent, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approach to SDG implementation. Partnerships between governments, intergovernmental institutions, research and academic institutions, and civil society are critical to gaining the comprehensive perspectives, expertise and resources necessary to fully implement the 2030 Agenda, as well as to ensure monitoring, review and accountability. Crosscutting issues must be addressed through a collaborative approach, to enable our collective success in furthering the well-being of humans, nature, and animals and ensuring transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all.



# Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group Position Paper High Level Political Forum 2018

## Introduction

The 2030 Agenda calls for the meaningful and active participation of people and stakeholders at all stages, from the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national strategies, to implementation and national monitoring and review, and highlights the importance of participatory approaches for sustainable development. It seeks to bring about equitable societal transformation, which requires a high level of political commitment. A strong civil society is one of the key factors of democracy, the rule of law, and therefore the implementation of the SDGs. This document aims to bring forward the observations of one constituency of that civil society, non-governmental organizations, as represented by the NGO Major Group.

The 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will focus on SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17, highlighting the progress made so far and the barriers that prevent further actions. In examining these goals and the agenda as a whole, we must not overlook the considerable structural and systemic barriers that - if unaddressed - will prevent the achievement of the 2018 theme, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” For the SDGs to be truly transformative, urgent action is required to restructure global systems to orient them towards equity and justice, to “reflect the most basic relationships that define a purpose-filled existence that would unleash humankind’s full potential” (UNEP 2018). We call for a new development paradigm which prioritizes the flourishing of humans, nature and animals.

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Furthermore, we observe the difficulty of addressing any one goal without addressing the others. For example, thriving and sustainable cities depend on cross-societal partnerships as well as clean water and green energy for all, which are in turn dependent upon care for our ecosystems and the terrestrial planet. At the same time, the SDGs examined this year intersect with SDGs examined a year ago, such as gender equality, and will continue to impact SDGs such as quality education which will be examined in upcoming years. We affirm the indivisibility of the SDG agenda, and perceive in these interlinkages an even greater need for increasing partnerships across sectors and collaboration between member states and civil society.

The unique position of NGOs, through our work on the ground and with communities, enables us to provide our governments with best practices. It affords us a perspective on interdependence and local

realities that needs to be seen and heard at the policy level. Therefore, civil society organizations are essential to the achievement of the SDGs. We call on governments to ensure that civil society is guaranteed an active role in SDG decision-making at global and national levels, and offered the support it needs to serve as a critical partner in developing a more sustainable and resilient world. Continued efforts are required to maximize the contribution of all stakeholders, particularly traditionally excluded communities. Strengthening the institutional mechanisms for engagement will ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusivity to enable all voices to be heard, leaving no one behind.

Targeting the theme and focus goals of 2018 HLPF, in the context of the 2030 Agenda overall, the NGO Major Group offers these findings and recommendations for the consideration of the UN, its Member States, and all stakeholders.

## Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

This year's water crisis in Cape Town<sup>1</sup> has given the world a preview of our future if we fail to meet the challenges posed by the detrimental effects of water scarcity and interconnected inadequate water governance structures. Around the world, policy failures have contributed to unsustainable use, unjust distribution, and inequitable access to water to the detriment of human rights and the common good. Inadequate water management obstructs economic development, poverty alleviation, food security, public health and safety, decent standards of living, and the protection of the natural environment. Further, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the burden of water collection, which increases their share of unpaid care work, one of the main obstacles to achieving women's rights and gender equality.

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Water should be stewarded as a global commons, avoiding the privatization and commercialization of water sources.

Ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, mountains and grasslands are vital for securing water resources, but are being degraded, poisoned, and depleted by pollution; mega/high-input irrigation agriculture<sup>2</sup>; and by beverage, mining,<sup>3</sup> and energy industries<sup>4</sup> that demand greater access to increasingly scarce

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<sup>1</sup> A. Cosby, [Cape Town's Water Woes: An Uncomfortable Parable on climate change](#), ISSD; A. Biswas, [Africa's Manmade Water Crisis](#), Project Syndicate; R. Poplack, [What's Actually Behind Cape Town's Water Crisis](#), *The Atlantic*

<sup>2</sup> Agriculture is both the major water user and the major water polluter. The sector is currently responsible for 70% of water abstractions worldwide and 92% of our water footprint. Hoekstra A. Y., Mekonnen M. M [The water footprint of humanity](#), Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 2/28/12 Agricultural impacts on water quality come from industrial livestock systems, the crops grown for animal feed, and from aquaculture systems. Farms also discharge large quantities of agrochemicals, organic matter, drug residues (including antibiotics), sediments and saline drainage into water bodies.

<sup>3</sup> In the context of natural resources extraction, the mining operation needs high flow of water for the mineral processing. This is often at the cost of access to water for the people living at the mining area. At the same time, the polluted water from the tailing and waste rock impoundments are often discharged to the river and sea around the mining area.

<sup>4</sup> Wastewater: the Untapped Resource: The UN World Water Development Report, pp. 38-39

freshwater supplies. As part of holistic efforts to protect freshwater sources, governments should assign groundwater ecosystems as protected areas, as these supply on average 25% of the world population with freshwater, yet one third of the world's largest groundwater systems are in distress.<sup>5</sup>

Further, disasters caused by natural and hydro-meteorological hazards have increased due to climate change, with direct impact on water quality and availability. An estimated 3.6 billion people live in areas that are potentially water-scarce at least one month per year, and this population could increase to some 4.8–5.7 billion by 2050. Already, water shortages and contamination destabilize regions and states, forcing internal displacement, putting additional strain on weak infrastructure, and ultimately fostering protests<sup>6</sup> and even uprisings.<sup>7</sup> As primary caregivers, women and girls are the most affected by water-related disasters.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, policies must be climate-change-aware and gender-sensitive to strengthen the preparedness of regions and communities, enabling them to face these growing threats and to protect their water resources. Environmental human rights defenders have paid a heavy price; in 2017 alone, 197 were killed in defending the right to water and a safe environment.<sup>9</sup>

SDG6 is grounded in the basic human rights to water and sanitation, guaranteed under several international instruments, resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and norms applicable in armed conflict.<sup>10</sup> The two global conventions<sup>11</sup> on freshwater furthermore support equitable and reasonable use of water, especially as safe drinking water and sanitation are crucial for health and good nutrition. On this basis, the obligation of governments to sustainably ensure the human rights to water and sanitation for all without discrimination must be the driving force behind the implementation of SDG6. We therefore exhort governments to renew their political will to urgently address water pollution (SDG 6.3) and water stress (SDG 6.4), and to prioritize equitable access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

We call for a rights-based implementation of SDG6 and other water-related targets that:

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<sup>5</sup> See United Nations World Water Assessment Program/UN-Water. 2018. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-Based Solutions for Water. Paris, UNESCO. Also Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2016 Mitigating Droughts and Floods in Agriculture: Policy Lessons and Approaches. Paris, OECD Publishing. [doi.org/10.1787/9789264246744-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264246744-en). And Richey, A. S., Thomas, B. F., Lo, M. H., Reager, J. T., Famiglietti, J. S., Voss, K., Swenson, S. and Rodell, M. 2015. Quantifying renewable groundwater stress with GRACE Water Resources Research, Vol 51No. 7, pp 5217–5238 [doi.org/10.1002/2015WR017349](https://doi.org/10.1002/2015WR017349)

<sup>6</sup> AP News, [Mexico City: Water cutoffs in capital worsened by sabotage](#)

<sup>7</sup> B. Plumer, [Drought helped cause Syria's war. Will climate change bring more like it?](#) Washington Post, 09/10/13

<sup>8</sup> BBC, [Climate change "impacts more women than men"](#)

<sup>9</sup> R. Cox, [New data reveals 197 land and environmental defenders murdered in 2017](#), Global Witness, accessed 03/08/18. See also the newly launched UN Environmental Rights Initiative dedicated to environmental human rights defenders: <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/?q=en/events/launch-environmental-rights-initiative>

<sup>10</sup> These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. See also General Comment 15 (2002) The Right to Water: Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Other international instruments mentioning the right to water also include: International Labour Organization ILO Convention 161 Concerning Occupation Health Services art 5, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art 28) As to the Convention on Economic, social and Cultural Rights General Comment 15 (2002) The Right to Water: Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Human Rights Council Decision 2/104- Human Rights and Access to Water UN General Assembly Resolutions on the right to water and sanitation include 64/292; 70/169; and 72/178 The recommendations of the High Level Panel on Water and Peace, the High Level Panel on Water and the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security should also be urgently translated into national and regional policies and actions.

<sup>11</sup> Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention/ UNWC) (New York, 1997 – in force August 2014 - 36 parties); UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes [www.unece.org/env/water/status](http://www.unece.org/env/water/status) (1992 Helsinki - Global since 2015 – 41 parties)

1. prevents the commodification and privatization of water sources; effectively regulates and holds accountable any business or individuals which adversely impact water quality and supply;
2. invests in the systems and capabilities to provide and maintain affordable WASH services for all, increases domestic resources and aid for WASH services through taxes, tariffs, and transfers while respecting and recognizing community-led interventions for securing water rights, conservation and re-naturalization of water bodies;
3. institutionalizes environmental measures to address water quality and scarcity issues; enacts local and national laws protecting watershed areas from encroachment for development purposes; and redresses negative consequences of land concentration and destruction of water cycles caused by intensified agriculture; and
4. recognizes, promotes, and strengthens community-based water resource management to empower local and resilient communities, including women, to protect watersheds and ensure an equitable and sustainable distribution of water resources.

## Sustainable Development Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

**W**hile the total number of people with access to energy is growing, there is still a long way to go to reach universal access by 2030. Over 1 billion people have no access to modern electricity, and 3 billion cook with inefficient stoves and polluting solid fuels that lead to major health impacts, particularly for women and children, with over 3 million premature deaths every year from household air pollution. SDG7 is a key enabler for achieving the SDGs by contributing to the eradication of poverty through advancements in health, safety, education, and water supply, and by combating gender inequalities and mitigating climate change.<sup>12</sup>

Global population growth and climate change are putting pressure on policymakers to identify innovative solutions for renewable, efficient, and cost-effective energy sources. While most countries are still powered primarily by fossil fuels and trillions of dollars are spent in subsidies to fossil fuel energy generation and industrial agricultural production,<sup>13</sup> renewable energy (RE) makes up an estimated 19% of total energy consumption and 24.5% of global electricity demand, and investment in RE is scaling up, particularly in the developing world.<sup>14</sup> Renewable energy can provide major opportunities for supplying cleaner and affordable energy,<sup>15</sup> and when applied as part of an environmentally sensitive energy policy, can contribute to more sustainable use of natural resources.

Specifically, decentralized renewable energy (DRE) is considered to be the best solution to reach “last mile” communities as it is faster and has lower deployment costs than grid-based electricity. However,

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<sup>12</sup> Sustainable Energy for All, Power for All and Overseas Development Institute (2017b) *Why Wait? Seizing the Energy Access Dividend* Available at: <https://www.se4all.org/WhyWait>.

<sup>13</sup> These subsidies amount to almost four times the subsidies spent to incentivize renewable energy. See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/aug/07/fossil-fuel-subsidies-are-a-staggering-5-tn-per-year>

<sup>14</sup> REN21 GSR 2017

<sup>15</sup> CBD et al. (2017)

investments are lagging,<sup>16</sup> with reinvestments mainly geared towards big on-grid energy projects, rather than investing in energy access for all.<sup>17</sup> Upscaling investments in DRE and clean cooking is key, along with innovative approaches to reach communities living in poverty and remote areas,<sup>18</sup> especially in contexts with rapid population growth.

Governments should implement increased capacity building, planning, and delivery services, focused on meeting the real demands of energy-poor communities and enabling a decentralized and proactive citizen-oriented organization of the energy sector. This entails a systematic transformation of the energy sector to enable pro-poor, gender-aware, and end-user-oriented energy services that are truly affordable, reliable, safe, and sustainable, with high shares of renewable energy. Policy should also be put in place to facilitate a transition to new, decent jobs and a just transition to renewable energy.

Integrated planning around SDG7 is crucial to ensure high social and economic benefits, as well as to prevent harm, e.g. the huge amounts of energy used — and wasted — in industrial agriculture and the impact on water quality and the environment by the energy sector and extractive industries at large. We call urgently for all actions under SDG7 implementation to protect and guarantee the right to water and sanitation by taking all necessary legal, political, economic and other measures to prevent water sources from being overexploited and contaminated by the energy production sector.<sup>19</sup>

To increase social and economic development, energy access targets should be integrated in planning for all relevant sectors (e.g., environment, health, education, and agriculture) and a multi-stakeholder approach should be followed, including participation of civil society organizations and local and small and medium enterprises. Public participation is key, particularly to end the trafficking and dumping of nuclear and other hazardous waste under the guise of “renewable energy.”

Greater and more targeted use of public and private finance is needed, as well as innovative uses of finance and social protection approaches. As market-based approaches alone are unlikely to deliver DRE products and services to “last mile” communities, universal energy access depends on cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation, with inclusive and participatory renewable energy decision-making to ensure services are designed and delivered to

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*Tracking and reporting should take into account quality, reliability, affordability and safety, and civil society organizations should be enabled to co-design and deliver energy solutions with communities to ensure sustainable, long-term development impact.*

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<sup>16</sup> Global finance flows in 2013-14, as estimated by SE4All, into the 20 countries with the highest levels of energy poverty averaged \$19.4 billion a year - less than half the estimated \$45 billion annual investment needed to meet the 2030 objective of universal electrification (2015). Only 1% of this amount went to decentralized electricity and even less to clean cooking.

<sup>17</sup> IIED, Hivos 2016. Unlocking climate finance for decentralized energy access.

[https://www.hivos.org/sites/default/files/unlocking\\_climate\\_finance\\_for\\_decentralised\\_energy\\_access.pdf](https://www.hivos.org/sites/default/files/unlocking_climate_finance_for_decentralised_energy_access.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> ECDPM Discussion paper 218. EU's Financial Instruments for Access to Energy. Support in remote and poor areas in Africa.

<http://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/DP218-EU-Financial-Instruments-for-Access-to-Energy-ECDPM.pdf>

<sup>19</sup>E.g. by unsustainable hydropower- see the hydropower sustainability assessment protocol at

<http://www.hydrosustainability.org/>



meet the needs of all people. Tracking and reporting should take into account quality, reliability, affordability and safety,<sup>20</sup> and civil society organizations should be enabled to co-design and deliver energy solutions with communities to ensure sustainable, long-term development impact.

## **Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

**S**DG11, in focusing on homes, communities and cultures, is wide-ranging and therefore challenging to achieve. Success will require progress on the 2030 Agenda and other intergovernmental initiatives such as the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The transformation of damaging environmental trends presents major challenges but also great opportunities for cities to enhance sustainability through their properties of scale, integrated spatial planning, connected infrastructure, existing cultural and natural resources, and organizational and social dynamics. Cities can directly improve the quality of life of their residents, while offering smarter alternatives for energy, transportation, food systems, and building standards, all of which affect large populations.

Decent housing must be a right before it is an investment commodity. Skyrocketing rents, lack of security, poor quality housing and homelessness create misery and division. Coordinated, people-focused solutions are needed; slum clearances, for example, must guarantee that those rehoused have better lives. The cultural heritage of historic city centers, as well as the broader realm of tangible and intangible cultural and natural resources inherent in urban and rural landscapes, has enormous importance to the wellbeing of their inhabitants,<sup>21</sup> and must be protected from inappropriate new constructions and profit-driven investor projects.

Government must be integrated and accountable at all levels, including empowering local councils to mobilize resources and take coherent action. Cities are dependent upon peri-urban and rural ecosystem functions (clean water, soil, biodiversity and agrobiodiversity). Strengthening urban-rural linkages and integrated territorial governance is critical for urban sustainability and resilience. Spatial flows of people, food, fiber, water, and other vital services for cities of all scales must be more equitably and inclusively managed. Changes in political governance and in business practices require new strategies and conditions in towns and urban areas, to counteract segregation and social rootlessness as parts of attempts to reinforce identity. Open government principles should be adopted at all levels, and regular, open, multi-stakeholder engagement platforms established. The Habitat III process, along with the biannual World Urban Forum, provides a valuable model as thousands of civil society groups participated in developing the New Urban Agenda, the “operating manual” for SDG11.

For everyone to benefit from economic and social opportunities in their communities, universal access to information is required. Education and training, notably in the skills needed for the jobs of the future, is a priority. Equal access to technology must be ensured, particularly targeting populations living in poverty. Connecting diverse perspectives through effective stakeholder engagement ensures that citizens have a say in the development of policies that impact their lives. For example, ATD Fourth

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://gtf.esmap.org/downloads>

<sup>21</sup> As highlighted in UNESCO's study "Culture: Urban Future".



World's Street Libraries create a space of peace in neighborhoods that often face poverty and isolation, and opening minds beyond the challenges people young and old encounter.

Resilience is not a choice, it is an imperative. Because of climate change, more and more communities are at risk of disasters. Nature-based solutions to the challenges of urban wellbeing that draw on indigenous knowledge and culturally relevant practices enable safe and resilient human settlements.

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*The Canadian Cities Indicator Portal provides a model of how city governments worldwide can help track progress, and through GIS, residents can engage in local data gathering.*

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Effective disaster early-warning systems will help, as can comprehensive, partnership-based, community-focused risk management strategies integrating (local) economic, social, environmental and cultural concerns for physical and psychosocial resilience. Furthermore, the needs of women, children, families, older persons, people with disabilities, racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, LGBTQIA people, and other marginalized groups must be at the forefront of planning.

A lack of age-, gender-, and disability-disaggregated data and analysis makes many groups invisible in policy-making; therefore, governments should invest in analysis based on broad stakeholder consultation to ensure informed and relevant data collection, to inform policy-making and citizen-

action.<sup>22</sup> The Canadian Cities Indicator Portal provides a model of how city governments worldwide can help track progress, and through GIS, residents can engage in local data gathering.

No one should feel unsafe, insecure, or unwelcome in their community. By incorporating Universal Design principles into planning, governments can ensure everyone can travel, work and live without fear or undue difficulty, such as disruptions caused by disasters. Age-, gender-, and disability-sensitive and participatory budgeting and planning are key. We recommend city-level adoption of CEDAW and the WHO Age-Friendly Cities initiative.<sup>23</sup> Actors at all levels must also tackle disaster risks, as well as air and water pollution through regulation, enforcement and improved planning.

## **Sustainable Development Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

**T**ransformation toward a sustainable world requires fundamental changes in how our societies produce and consume goods and services. Worldwide, especially in the global North, over-consumption and mass resource waste negatively impact caring for land, wildlife, water, and humanity. Achieving SDG12 requires an increase in political will and consumer education to tackle unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, which lie at the root of environmental degradation, species extinction, and the violation of fundamental human rights in many communities worldwide.

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<sup>22</sup> From CSO ECE Meeting, Round Table 2, Summary of Key Points, 28 February 2018, Geneva.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Cities for CEDAW campaign see: [www.citiesforcedaw.org](http://www.citiesforcedaw.org)

. For the WHO Age-Friendly Cities initiative see: [http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_network/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/). As an additional example, the Canadian Cities Indicator Portal provides a model of what city governments worldwide can do to help track progress.

Governments must prioritize SDG12 in their national action plans, embedding sustainable consumption and production priorities within all aspects of development, trade, industry, science, environmental stewardship, research, and technology. SDG12 must also be integrated into sectoral plans and sustainable business practices, supported by educational programs which enhance consumer awareness by providing greater transparency and information on products and services.

We call on governments to regulate the private sector and enforce the provision of accessible information for consumers on the social, animal protection, and environmental impacts of a product and its packaging throughout its lifecycle. A transformative approach to production-consumption systems will require intensive coordinated negotiated changes, product line by product line, in line with existing cooperative supplier-buyer, adapted consumer-producer, and multi-actor policy council models. City, territorial and even some national governments are beginning to join academic, civil society, and private sector actors to convene these transformative efforts in all regions, to ensure educated consumers and increased brand focus on ethics and sustainability.

We call on governments to conduct a thorough review of food and farming systems in the context of sustainable production and consumption, human rights for all, and protection of living creatures and their habitats. Policies must shift from facilitating excessive meat, dairy, and fish production and consumption towards plant-based and cellular alternatives. Policies must also include agro-ecological solutions that are humane, sustainable, and interlinked with the principles of food sovereignty and the right to adequate and nutritious food. Government policies that support socially and environmentally harmful production and lifestyles must be stopped and reallocated towards incentives for more humane and sustainable alternatives.

The private sector has a major role to play in achieving SDG12. However, far too often governments and companies fail to follow through on lofty social and environmental commitments, which mask the reality of their impacts on people and the planet's resources.<sup>24</sup> Existing voluntary guidelines have failed to hold corporations accountable, and stronger measures are needed. For example, by 2030, the chemical industry should provide comprehensive information on adverse effects for all chemicals in commerce.<sup>25</sup> Micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) play a major role, as the primary business sectors in cities and territories.<sup>26</sup> As markets of many types connect production to consumption, it is important

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<sup>24</sup> The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights stated in 2015 in regards to the SDGs, “We are concerned that there is not sufficient recognition of the fact that business activities can also have negative effects on human rights, environmental protection and animal welfare.”

<sup>25</sup> Recommendation from UNEP consultations with IPEN and other civil society partners.

<sup>26</sup> For a very strong report on the importance of the private sector role in city region food systems see <http://www.ruaf.org/sites/default/files/Private%20sector%20engagement%20in%20city%20region%20food%20systems%20Analysis%20report-final%282%29.pdf>

also to include the concept of “territorial markets” articulated by the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on Food Security.<sup>27</sup>

We call for binding accountability and due diligence mechanisms for transnational corporations to ensure adherence to strengthened environmental and social standards throughout production and value chains. Governments must support current initiatives towards stronger global accountability frameworks, including a binding UN Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights, which aims to regulate the social and environmental impact of transnational corporations, as well as the Global Pact for the Environment intended to establish a universal right to a healthy environment and a duty to take care of the environment.

Changing consumption and production patterns requires systemic societal and cultural change, moving from a profit-centered and monetary growth economy to a planet- and people-centered economy. Effective action involving all of society - including government, the private sector, civil society, education and the media - is needed to achieve a new development model that supports harmony between people, animals and nature.

## **Sustainable Development Goal 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**

Scientists have identified nine boundaries that maintain a stable state on Earth, four of which have already been crossed: extinction rate, deforestation, atmospheric carbon dioxide (an indicator for climate change), and nitrogen and phosphorus flows.<sup>28</sup> A third of the earth’s land is already severely degraded,<sup>29</sup> and climate-sensitive ecosystems such as coral reefs and glaciers are shrinking at alarming rates.<sup>30</sup> There is an urgent need, therefore, for action to implement SDG15 through policies and effective enforcement systems to prevent further deterioration, conserve and protect biodiversity, and work towards restoration of past damages. Efforts to achieve SDG15 should include disaster risk reduction, in line with commitments under the Sendai Framework towards the substantial reduction of disaster risk.

Primary obstacles to the implementation of SDG15 are (1) lack of political will; (2) an inability to address root causes, including an economic model relying on unlimited growth; (3) insufficient reflection of the values of geodiversity, biodiversity and ecosystem services in the economy and public decision-making processes; and (4) corporate control and power, particularly in agricultural, forestry, fishery, munitions, hunting and outfitters industries.

Market-based conservation mechanisms marginalize key actors in biodiversity conservation: Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women. Further, public-private partnerships and blended finance instruments can create conflicts of interests and constrain transformative change. Fulfillment of the

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<sup>27</sup> See: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/cfs43/CSM\\_Connecting\\_Smallholder\\_to\\_Markets\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/cfs43/CSM_Connecting_Smallholder_to_Markets_EN.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> [European Commission, Science for Environment Policy: Four of nine “planetary boundaries exceeded.”](#)

<sup>29</sup> World Meteorological Organization. [“2017 is set to be in top three hottest years, with record-breaking extreme weather.”](#)

<sup>30</sup> UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/XII/1, para 8; Global Biodiversity Outlook 4, p. 20; <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-01-en.doc> and <https://www.cbd.int/gbo4/>

commitments made in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>31</sup> and at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014) can enable effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the protection and restoration of sustainable ecosystems. Full ratification and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Geneva Conventions, and ILO Conventions are essential to achieve SDG15. Likewise, several of the other SDGs and targets, particularly sustainable agriculture (2.4 and 2.5), sustainable consumption (SDG12), and peaceful societies (SDG 16) can help to achieve SDG15; implementing SDG15 will in turn contribute to achieving SDG1 (End poverty), SDG2 (End hunger), SDG3 (Ensure healthy lives), and SDG6 (water) especially for the poor who heavily rely on nature.<sup>32</sup>

To achieve sustainability for all forms of life on land, governments should pursue community-based participation and partnerships with civil society organizations, universities, and local governments. Validated, low cost, scalable good practices must be replicated and exchanged among stakeholders. Governments should provide educational programs in schools and communities that reduce demand for wildlife products and promote harmony with nature. Programs encouraging consumptive use of nature, without balancing use against actual human need, must be reevaluated, especially the application of “sustainable use” to sentient, living animals. Effective, participatory, and human rights-based approaches to the management of land, coasts and conservation areas are necessary.

The precautionary principle<sup>33</sup> is critical for successful implementation of SDG15. States must hold extractive and polluting industries and large infrastructure projects accountable for harmful activities, and products must reflect the full costs of their production and implementation, and transnational corporations (TNCs) must be held accountable for their subsidiaries in other countries. Subsidies supporting activities and practices with detrimental social, environmental or animal welfare impacts must be repealed and ecosystem-friendly practices incentivized. Local and national policies and strategies must be developed to support the implementation of environmental agreements, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In accordance with international conventions, governments and IGOs must work to close legal trades in wildlife – such as trophy hunting, wildlife farming, and auctions of confiscated stockpiles – which make illegal trade impossible to distinguish and enforce. Furthermore, the proposed Global Pact for the Environment should be supported.

Industrial agriculture is one of the main causes of deforestation,<sup>34</sup> land degradation,<sup>35</sup> climate change,<sup>36</sup> and biodiversity loss.<sup>37</sup> Further, the production of monoculture crops for animal feed, food, and biofuels

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*Fulfillment of the commitments made in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>31</sup> and at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014) can enable effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the protection and restoration of sustainable ecosystems.*

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<sup>31</sup> A/61/295, 2007

<sup>32</sup> Christine von Weizsäcker, SDG 15. “Policy choices for helping or hindering the poor.” pp 110-114, in *Spotlight on Sustainable Development 2016. Report by the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/17298>

<sup>33</sup> Wingspread Alliance Consensus Statement on the Precautionary Principle, <http://sehn.org/wingspread-conference-on-the-precautionary-principle/>

<sup>34</sup> Livestock Policy Brief 03: Cattle Ranching and Deforestation. Food and Agriculture Organization. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-a0262e.pdf>

is dependent on destructive pesticide and fertilizer chemical inputs, which negatively impact all forms of life. Policies must ensure that agricultural practices are ecologically friendly and shift towards agro-ecological solutions and plant-based diets, which bring about a more sustainable use of land, soil, and water.

Healthy ecosystems form the basis of all life on earth, and are indispensable for the achievement of all SDGs. It is therefore essential that governments speed up the implementation of their SDG15-related commitments, and take concrete and decisive action that protects all ecosystems and the life they sustain.

## **Sustainable Development Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

**A**dvancing SDG17 is crucial for the implementation of all other SDGs. It is essential to firmly locate this goal within the human rights framework, reaffirming the centrality of the State as duty-bearer of human rights. The “means of implementation” must ensure the policy space required for governments to enact regulation, enforcement, and fiscal measures to advance their democratically-owned and rights-based development agendas.

Implementation of SDG17 can only advance if the systemic, structural obstacles that impede the socio-economic transformation of developing countries are addressed. It is critical that the center of gravity of economic, financial, trade, and monetary decisions be shifted away from the international financial institutions toward the United Nations, and that the UN is enabled to respond to the urgent call for democratization of global economic governance. Pursuing democratic and fair global economic and financial systems is required to achieve SDG17 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole. This must include restricting harmful speculation, curbing illicit financial flows generated by tax evasion and avoidance, suppressing the illegal flow of capital and harmful tax competition, and regulating conduit banks and derivatives, among others.

We demand the overdue introduction of a financial transactions tax and the establishment of an intergovernmental tax body for international tax cooperation at UN level. Trade must be organized in multilateral fora along principles that support the rights-based implementation of the SDGs, ensuring policy space for environmental and social regulation at national level, towards socio-economic transformation.

We call on countries in the global North to meet their historical commitment to the global South, providing at least 0.7 per cent of GDP through a publicly available plan for official development assistance (ODA). ODA should reach the most vulnerable people and those primarily affected by

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<sup>35</sup> Steinfeld, H., Gerber, P., Wassenaar, T.D., Castel, V., Haan, C.d., 2006a. Livestock's long shadow: environmental issues and options. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>.

<sup>36</sup> Global Land Outlook. UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).  
[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5694c48bd82d5e9597570999/t/5979f3b217bffc7e459bd120/1501164476248/GLO\\_Part\\_2\\_Ch\\_7.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5694c48bd82d5e9597570999/t/5979f3b217bffc7e459bd120/1501164476248/GLO_Part_2_Ch_7.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Machinova, B., Feeley, K.J., and Ripple, W.J. 2015. Biodiversity conservation: The key is reducing meat consumption. *Science of the Total Environment*. [http://www.cof.orst.edu/leopold/papers/Machovina\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cof.orst.edu/leopold/papers/Machovina_2015.pdf)

development challenges, ensuring their agency to transform conditions of discrimination, poverty and marginalization. It is essential that humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees be designated additional to existing ODA, and that ODA is not allocated to the expansion of militarization. To counteract decreasing amounts of aid to least developed countries (LDC), states should allocate at least 0.20 percent of GDP of ODA to LDCs.

We are deeply concerned with the expansion of blending, leveraging and other private sector instruments, as these redirect scarce public resources towards the private sector. Equally concerning is the continued promotion of public-private partnerships despite the mounting evidence of their negative impacts.<sup>38</sup> We underline the call to realign private finance toward implementation of the SDGs, including through strict rules to redirect private finance away from unsustainable investments in polluting/extractive industries. Private finance can only complement, not replace, national and international public resources; standards, benchmarks and accountability mechanisms for private sector involvement are crucial. Further, we note with concern the continuing closure of civic space, which undermines the role of CSOs as partners in implementing and monitoring the implementation and accountability of the SDGs.

“Policy coherence for sustainable development” is key to ensure that governments align all policies with sustainable development and the human rights framework. As an alternative funding source and as a regulatory measure to protect public goods, governments should raise taxes substantially on harmful or polluting products (including junk food, sweetened beverages, tobacco, alcohol, weaponry, and greenhouse gas emissions) and remove related subsidies.

Governments should develop and use measures and indicators of SDG progress that complement GDP, covering social, economic, environmental and governance factors which focus on the well-being of people, animals and planet. Inadequate age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data across the lifecourse is a significant challenge to the implementation of all the SDGs. We call for the end to all age caps, and for much more investment in data collection across the life course, its analysis and its use for SDG monitoring. Furthermore, SDG monitoring must be well-funded and ensure the direct participation of those most affected by development challenges in the actual assessment of development progress, including through independent monitoring and evaluation by civil society.

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*We call on countries in the global North to meet their historical commitment to the global South, providing at least 0.7 per cent of GDP through a publicly available plan for official development assistance (ODA).*

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Full implementation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights will enable achievement of SDG17. In line with the recent submission by Chile of a draft resolution to the Human Rights Council on operationalizing the synergies between Human Rights and the SDGs, further integration between the Universal Periodic Review process under the UN Human Rights Council and Voluntary National Review reports under the HLPF should be promoted.

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<sup>38</sup> For examples, see Public Services International (2015), *Why Public-Private Partnerships Don't Work*. Available at [http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/rapport\\_eng\\_56pages\\_a4\\_lr.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/rapport_eng_56pages_a4_lr.pdf).



## Interlinkages amongst the Sustainable Development Goals

Noting the “interlinked and indivisible” nature of the 2030 Agenda, sustainable and resilient societies can only be achieved through a holistic, coherent, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to SDG implementation. The web of SDG interlinkages is complex and depends on policies and direct interventions. Therefore, addressing cross-cutting issues accelerates SDG implementation, facilitating progress on multiple SDGs at the same time.

Equitable and effective SDG implementation requires collaboration and connection between all stakeholders. Government departments should coordinate their efforts, avoiding silos that become obstacles to achieving the SDGs. Local governments and CSOs must take a more holistic approach to implementing the SDGs, particularly at the local level where interlinkages are best identified and addressed. Moreover, governments must set targets and expectations in an inclusive and collaborative manner, to ensure that achieving one target does not hinder the achievement of another target, and that realistic goals are set.

Through a holistic, non-silo approach, governments should:

- Organize cross-ministerial consultations and collaborative efforts to implement the SDGs;
- Incorporate the SDGs in an integrated and holistic manner into national social and economic planning as well as national monitoring and evaluation systems;
- Develop multi-stakeholder relationships with diverse civil society participation, including for monitoring and evaluation as well as information-sharing, leveraging and encouraging citizen-driven data;
- Invest in inclusive programs that promote a culture of peace; social cohesion; empowerment; transparency; social equity; justice reform; and education, particularly for girls; as well as civil society participation in decision-making processes;
- Validate internationally acceptable modelling tools to map policy interventions, assessing them for impacts on other SDGs;
- Prioritize the rights of people and well-being of animals and the environment over industry and transnational corporation special interests;
- Stimulate legislative developments and budgets to implement the SDGs, particularly by addressing cross-cutting issues and policy coherence; and
- Advance effective, accountable and transparent institutions to deliver on all SDGs, including those under review in 2018.

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*Governments should develop multi-stakeholder relationships with diverse civil society participation, including for monitoring and evaluation as well as information-sharing, leveraging and encouraging citizen-driven data.*

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Civil society is best suited to translate the SDGs into the daily life of communities, providing them an opportunity to link to local priorities, while boosting participatory democracy and the sensitization of citizens to the importance of the SDGs. Civil society has a role in monitoring governments’ progress in achieving development, and in holding governments accountable for their actions. With our varied experience and constituencies, CSOs are a valuable source of technical expertise in the development of interlinked, inclusive policies.



Opportunities to address emerging cross-cutting issues and accelerate SDGs are constantly arising. In 2018, emerging issues identified by CSOs include: capacity building for the water crisis; migrants, refugees and human mobility; benefits of technological innovation in digitized electric grids; rising conflict, intolerance and economic inequality; increasing understanding of animal wellbeing and conservation, and its relationship to human and environmental wellbeing; and climate-related disasters.

Interlinkages and cross-cutting issues must be seen by all stakeholders as opportunities to collaborate for SDG implementation. Partnerships between governments, intergovernmental institutions, research and academic institutions, and civil society are critical to gaining the comprehensive perspectives, expertise and resources necessary to fully implement the 2030 Agenda, as well as ensure effective monitoring, review, and accountability. Through a holistic and collaborative approach, we will succeed in furthering the well-being of humans, nature and animals and ensuring transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all.

