



Library Note

Global Development Goals in 2015

On 11 December 2014, the House of Lords is scheduled to debate the following motion:

“that this House takes note of the case for establishing new global development goals in 2015”

In 2001, UN member states adopted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, improving health, and ensuring environmental sustainability. The goals were underpinned by a number of targets, most of which had a deadline of 2015. Several of the targets have already been met—most notably, the number of people living in extreme poverty (on less than \$1.25 a day) has halved—but further improvements are still needed in many of the areas targeted by the MDGs.

The international community began work several years ago on developing a new framework of goals to replace the MDGs after the 2015 deadline. From September 2014, work on this “post-2015 development agenda” was brought together with a separate strand of work begun under the Rio+20 process to draw up a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is expected that after a period of intergovernmental negotiation, one set of global goals will be adopted at a high-level UN summit in September 2015.

The UN General Assembly has adopted a proposed set of goals drawn up by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development (OWG) as the “main basis” for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda. However, the OWG proposals have attracted some criticism for lacking a clear purpose and for including too many goals and targets. The UK Government would prefer to see no more than ten to twelve goals, compared to the 17 currently proposed by the OWG. The task of the intergovernmental process over the forthcoming year will be to achieve global consensus on both an overall framework and on individual goals. Efforts are also underway to bring about a ‘data revolution’ to improve the collection of the data used to monitor progress against the post-2015 targets.

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5 December 2014
LLN 2014/043

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I. Introduction

This Library Note is intended to provide background reading for the debate in the House of Lords on 11 December 2014 on the case for establishing new global development goals in 2015. Section 2 of the Note examines the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the current set of global development goals, introduced in 2001, and considers what they have achieved to date. The international community began work several years ago on developing a new framework of goals to replace the MDGs after 2015, the deadline set for most of the targets under the MDGs. From September 2014, work on this “post-2015 development agenda” was brought together with a separate strand of work begun under the Rio+20 process to draw up a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Section 3 of this Note provides details of key events and contributors to this complex process, and considers what the next steps will be in the run-up to September 2015 when a single new set of goals is expected to be agreed.

The UN General Assembly has adopted a proposed set of goals drawn up by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development (OWG) as the “main basis” for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda.¹ Section 4 of the Note considers some broad responses to these proposed goals, including that of the UK Government. Section 5 outlines efforts underway to bring about a ‘data revolution’ to improve the collection of the data used to monitor progress against the post-2015 targets.

2. Millennium Development Goals to 2015

2.1 What are the MDGs?

In 2000, all 189 member states of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration.² The Declaration set out “within a single framework the key challenges facing humanity at the threshold of the new millennium, outline[d] a response to these challenges, and establishe[d] concrete measures for judging performance through a set of inter-related commitments, goals and targets on development, governance, peace, security and human rights”.³ In 2001, the UN Secretary-General published a road map towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which set out the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁴ These consist of eight goals supported by a number of related targets and indicators. The goals are:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution 68/309, [Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Established Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 66/288](#), A/RES/68/309, adopted 10 September 2014.

² UN General Assembly Resolution 55/2, [United Nations Millennium Declaration](#), A/RES/55/2, adopted 8 September 2000.

³ UN Development Group, [‘The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs’](#), accessed 28 November 2014.

⁴ UN General Assembly, [Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration: Report of the Secretary General](#), A/56/326, 6 September 2001.

- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.⁵

While three further sets of targets and indicators were issued over the decade following the MDGs' introduction, the eight main goals have remained unchanged.⁶ A full list of the 21 targets and 60 indicators in effect since January 2008 is available on the UN's [Millennium Development Goals Indicators](#) webpage. The year 2015 was set as the deadline for achieving most of the targets, although some had earlier deadlines of 2005 or 2010, and one—to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers—had a longer deadline of 2020.

2.2 What have the MDGs achieved?

The UN publishes an annual report on the MDGs, which “presents the most comprehensive global assessment of progress to date, based on data provided by a large number of international organisations within and outside the United Nations system”.⁷ The most recent report was published in July 2014.⁸ It explained that several MDG targets have already been met:

The world has reduced extreme poverty by half. In 1990, almost half of the population in developing regions lived on less than \$1.25 a day. This rate dropped to 22 percent by 2010, reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by 700 million.

Efforts in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis have shown results. Between 2000 and 2012, an estimated 3.3 million deaths from malaria were averted due to the substantial expansion of malaria interventions. About 90 percent of those averted deaths—3 million—were children under the age of five living in sub-Saharan Africa. The intensive efforts to fight tuberculosis have saved an estimated 22 million lives worldwide since 1995. If the trends continue, the world will reach the MDG targets on malaria and tuberculosis.

Access to an improved drinking water source became a reality for 2.3 billion people. The target of halving the proportion of people without access to an improved drinking water source was achieved in 2010, five years ahead of schedule. In 2012, 89 percent of the world's population had access to an improved source, up from 76 percent in 1990. Over 2.3 billion people gained access to an improved source of drinking water between 1990 and 2012.

Disparities in primary school enrolment between boys and girls are being eliminated in all developing regions. Substantial gains have been made towards reaching gender parity in school enrolment at all levels of education in all developing regions. By 2012, all developing regions have achieved, or were close to achieving, gender parity in primary education.

⁵ UN Development Programme, [‘The Millennium Development Goals—Eight Goals for 2015’](#), accessed 28 November 2014.

⁶ House of Commons Library, [The Post-2015 Development Goals](#), 2 July 2014, SN06786, p 3.

⁷ UN, [‘Millennium Development Goals Reports’](#), accessed 28 November 2014.

⁸ UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), July 2014.

The political participation of women has continued to increase. In January 2014, 46 countries boasted having more than 30 percent female members of parliament in at least one chamber. More women are now holding some of the so-called “hard” ministerial portfolios—such as Defence, Foreign Affairs and the Environment.

Development assistance rebounded, the trading system stayed favourable for developing countries and their debt burden remained low. Official development assistance stood at \$134.8 billion in 2013, the highest level ever recorded, after two years of declining volumes. However, aid is shifting away from the poorest countries. 80 percent of imports from developing countries entered developed countries duty-free and tariffs remained at an all-time low. The debt burden of developing countries remained stable at about 3 percent of export revenue.⁹

However, the report also stated that while “substantial progress has been made in most areas [...] much more effort is needed to reach the set targets”:

Major trends that threaten environmental sustainability continue, but examples of successful global action exist. Global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) continued their upward trend and those in 2011 were almost 50 percent above their 1990 level. Millions of hectares of forest are lost every year, many species are being driven closer to extinction and renewable water resources are becoming scarcer. At the same time, international action is on the verge of eliminating ozone-depleting substances and the proportion of terrestrial and coastal marine areas under protection has been increasing.

Hunger continues to decline, but immediate additional efforts are needed to reach the MDG target. The proportion of undernourished people in developing regions has decreased from 24 percent in 1990–1992 to 14 percent in 2011–2013. However, progress has slowed down in the past decade. Meeting the target of halving the percentage of people suffering from hunger by 2015 will require immediate additional effort, especially in countries which have made little headway.

Chronic undernutrition among young children declined, but one in four children is still affected. In 2012, a quarter of all children under the age of five years were estimated to be stunted—having inadequate height for their age. This represents a significant decline since 1990 when 40 percent of young children were stunted. However, it is unacceptable that 162 million young children are still suffering from chronic undernutrition.

Child mortality has been almost halved, but more progress is needed. Worldwide, the mortality rate for children under age five dropped almost 50 percent, from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012. Preventable disease are the main causes of under-five deaths and appropriate actions need to be taken to address them.

Much more needs to be done to reduce maternal mortality. Globally, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by 45 percent between 1990 and 2013, from 380 to 210 deaths per 100,000 live births. Worldwide, almost 300,000 women died in 2013

⁹ *ibid*, p 4.

form causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal death is mostly preventable and much more needs to be done to provide care to pregnant women.

Antiretroviral therapy is saving lives and must be expanded further. Access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV-infected people has been increasing dramatically, with a total of 9.5 million people in developing regions receiving treatment in 2012. ART has saved 6.6 million lives since 1995. Expanding its coverage can save many more. In addition, knowledge about HIV among youth needs to be improved to stop the spread of the disease.

Over a quarter of the world's population has gained access to improved sanitation since 1990, yet a billion people still resorted to open defecation. Between 1990 and 2012, almost 2 billion people have gained access to an improved sanitation facility. However, in 2012, 2.5 billion people did not use an improved sanitation facility and 1 billion people still resorted to open defecation, which poses a huge risk to communities that are often poor and vulnerable already. Much greater effort and investment will be needed to redress inadequate sanitation in the coming years.

90 percent of children in developing regions are attending primary school. The school enrolment rate in primary education in developing regions increased from 83 percent to 90 percent between 2000 and 2012. Most of the gains were achieved by 2007, after which progress stagnated. In 2012, 58 million children were out of school. High dropout rates remain a major impediment to universal primary education. An estimated 50 percent of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas.¹⁰

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund published their *Global Monitoring Report 2014/15* in October 2014, which also assessed progress towards achieving the MDGs.¹¹ This report concluded that:

In the past quarter century, progress toward the MDGs has been varied across targets and regions. Estimates for the developing world indicate that the targets for extreme poverty reduction (MDG 1a), access to safe drinking water (MDG 7c) and improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers (MDG 7d) have been reached ahead of the 2015 deadline. The targets on gender equality in primary and secondary education and the incidence of malaria are predicted to be met by 2015, although gender disparity remains prevalent in higher levels of education.

On the other hand, progress on the remaining MDGs has been lagging, especially for education and health-related MDGs. Specifically, the primary school completion rate reached 90 percent by 2011, but progress is slightly off track to meet the target of a universal completion rate by 2015. Progress towards MDGs related to infant, child and maternal mortality (MDGs 4a and 5a), and to a lesser extent access to basic sanitation (MDG 7c), is lagging, and these goals will not be achieved without rapid acceleration towards the finish line.

¹⁰ *ibid*, pp 4–5.

¹¹ World Bank and IMF, [Global Monitoring Report 2014/15](#), October 2014.

Progress toward MDGs at the country level continues to show large diversity, but more and more countries are crossing the finish line for various MDGs. Even though hardly more than half of the countries are expected to achieve each MDG, there is significant progress at the country level compared with what was reported in last year's GMR [Global Monitoring Report]. For example, current estimates indicate that around 66 countries have met MDG 7c (access to an improved water source), eight countries more than last year's estimate. The same is true for many of the other MDGs. However, MDG 4a (infant mortality) and MDG 5a (maternal mortality) are exceptions, because the poor progress reported last year (only 18 and 26 countries were expected to reach the MDG 4a and MDG 5a goals, respectively) has deteriorated further (now only 15 and 18 countries, respectively, are expected to achieve these goals). A concerted effort by governments in collaboration with UN agencies, multilateral development banks and other donors is needed to provide technical advice and financing to these countries to assist in the attainment of these clearly difficult MDGs.¹²

Regional overviews on progress towards the MDGs are given in the UN's *The Millennium Goals Report 2014* and *Millennium Development Goals: 2014 Progress Chart*.¹³ More detailed country-level information about progress towards the MDG targets is given in Appendix A of the *World Bank/IMF Global Monitoring Report 2014/15* and in the data section of the UN's Millennium Development Goals Indicators website.¹⁴

A report published by the UN in September 2014 focused specifically on the delivery of commitments under MDG 8, which sets targets for developed countries to support developing countries in achieving the other seven MDGs.¹⁵ Overall, the report found that:

[...] many targets for Goal 8 are close to being achieved, while progress on others continues to be slow. Duty-free and quota-free access to developed country markets was extended for exports from the 49 least developed countries, but agricultural subsidies in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries remain entrenched. Debt relief for the world's poorest countries has increased, but small states continue to face longstanding debt sustainability challenges. Private investment has spurred the greater availability and falling cost of telecommunications across the developing world, but the gains need to be accelerated to reduce gaps with the rest of the world. In addition, the report says too many people continue to lack access to affordable essential medicines.¹⁶

The House of Commons International Development Committee noted in 2013 that the MDGs have had "great influence with policy makers in both developed and developing countries, as well as with civil society" in the field of international development, and that "there is widespread agreement that the MDGs have been, broadly speaking, a success".¹⁷ However, the Committee expressed a note of caution that because of the way achievements are measured,

¹² *ibid*, pp 26–8.

¹³ UN, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), July 2014; and [Millennium Development Goals: Progress Chart 2014](#), June 2014.

¹⁴ World Bank and IMF, [Global Monitoring Report 2014/15](#), October 2014; and UN, [Millennium Development Goals Indicators](#) website.

¹⁵ UN MDG Gap Task Force, [The State of the Global Partnership for Development: MDG Gap Task Force Report 2014](#), September 2014.

¹⁶ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, '[MDG Gap Task Force Report 2014 launched](#)', 18 September 2014.

¹⁷ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Post-2015 Development Goals](#), 22 January 2013, HC 657 of session 2012–13, pp 5 and 15.

inequalities between or within particular countries can be hidden beneath apparent progress against a target:

Under the current MDG framework, whilst the UN website tracks progress against each indicator on a country-by-country basis, targets remain global in scope. Progress against MDG targets can thus mask significant inequalities between countries. For example, the MDG target on access to safe water has already been achieved, but this is largely due to rapid progress in China and India. Sub-Saharan Africa remains off track: over 40 percent of all those without access to an improved drinking water source live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Moreover, even if a specific country is said to be making good progress, there may nevertheless be persistent or increasing levels of inequality (for example, income inequality, gender inequality, ethnic inequality, inequality between urban and rural areas) and a complete lack of equality for the disabled within that country. The MDG target for primary education refers to ‘boys and girls alike’, but all other targets are based on national averages and hence mask such inequalities.¹⁸

In recent months, attention has been focused on how to accelerate progress towards the MDGs as the 2015 deadline draws closer. Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary-General, released a statement on 18 August 2014 to mark 500 days until the conclusion of the MDGs at the end of 2015. He highlighted achievements to date and called for “MDG momentum”, including action in four specific areas: “making strategic investments in health, education, energy and sanitation, with a special focus on empowering women and girls”; “focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable countries, communities and social groups that have the toughest road to progress despite their best efforts”; “keeping our financial promises”; and “deepening cooperation among governments, civil society, the private sector and other networks around the world that have helped make the MDGs the most successful global anti-poverty push in history”.¹⁹

The Secretary-General’s MDG Advocacy Group published a report in September 2014 intended to galvanise the international community by sharing “succinct statements of approaches that have worked well”.²⁰ The co-chairs of the group, Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, declared in the introduction to the report that: “All of us, whether in government, business, or civil society, have to keep pushing, not just to December 2015, but beyond. The MDG deadline, after all, is not the finish line of a race, and there will be neither medals nor rest. It is, however, a moment to check in, learn lessons, and then recommit ourselves to the even harder work that lies ahead”.²¹

3. Post 2015: Process

With the MDGs due to end in 2015, work on developing a successor framework for the post-2015 period began several years ago.²² The UN Secretary-General was given a mandate by the UN General Assembly in 2010 to make annual recommendations on “further steps to advance

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 23.

¹⁹ UN Secretary General, ‘[Message on the 500-day Mark to the Conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals—500 Days of Action to Build a Better World](#)’, 18 August 2014.

²⁰ UN Secretary General’s Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group, [Accelerating Action: Global Leaders on Challenges and Opportunities for MDG Achievement](#), September 2014, p 7.

²¹ *ibid*.

²² For more detail on early developments, see House of Lords Library, [Successor Framework to the Millennium Development Goals](#), 19 November 2012, LLN 2012/039.

the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”.²³ Since 2011, he has been leading what is referred to as the “post-2015 development agenda” process, which has been focused on addressing development issues such as poverty eradication, health, education and inequality, in the context of sustainable development. A separate strand of work began under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in 2012 to draw up a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), integrating the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development. From the opening of the new session of the UN General Assembly in September 2014, the two processes have been brought together, and it is expected that after a period of intergovernmental negotiation, one set of global goals will be adopted at a high-level summit in September 2015.

This is a complex process, involving inputs from many different entities within the UN system, as well as public consultations and outreach activities to bring in contributions from non-UN actors such as civil society and the private sector. Figure 1, reproduced in the Appendix to this Note, provides a visual overview of the stages and bodies involved in shaping the post-2015 development agenda, the SDGs and the intergovernmental negotiations. The following paragraphs focus on a chronology of events and the work of key contributors to the process.

3.1 Post-2015 Development Agenda

UN System Task Team

In September 2011, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, established a UN System Task Team “to support system-wide preparations for the post-2015 development agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders, including member states, civil society, academia and the private sector”.²⁴ The UN System Task Team brings together over 60 UN bodies and is co-chaired by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Development Programme. The UN System Task Team published a report, *Realising the Future We Want for All*, in May 2012, which was intended to “serve as a first reference for the broader consultations to take place”.²⁵ The report called for “an integrated policy approach to ensure inclusive economic development, social progress and environmental sustainability and a development agenda that responds to the aspirations of all people for a world free of want and fear”.²⁶

High Level Panel

In May 2012, Ban Ki-Moon announced the establishment of a High Level Panel of Eminent Persons to advise on the post-2015 development agenda, to be co-chaired by Prime Minister David Cameron, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.²⁷ The High Level Panel submitted its report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development* to the Secretary-General in

²³ UN General Assembly Resolution 65/1, [Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals](#), A/RES/65/1, adopted 22 September 2010, para 81.

²⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), [‘Preparing for the Development Agenda beyond 2015’](#), accessed 1 December 2014.

²⁵ UN System Task Team, [Realising the Future We Want for All](#), May 2012, p ii.

²⁶ UN DESA, [‘Report of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda’](#), accessed 1 December 2014.

²⁷ UN press release, [‘Secretary-General’s briefing at informal meeting of the General Assembly’](#), 9 May 2012.

May 2013.²⁸ The Panel concluded that “the post 2015 agenda is a universal agenda” that “needs to be driven by five big, transformative shifts”:²⁹

1. **Leave no one behind.** The Panel argued that: “After 2015 we should move from reducing to *ending* extreme poverty in all its forms. We should ensure that no person—regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability race or other status—is denied human rights and basic economic opportunities”.³⁰
2. **Put sustainable development at the core.** The Panel concluded that: “Only by mobilising social, economic and environmental action together can we eradicate poverty irreversibly and meet the aspirations of eight billion people in 2030”. Developed countries would “have a special role to play, fostering new technologies and making the fastest progress in reducing unsustainable consumption”.³¹
3. **Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth.** The Panel called for “a quantum leap forward in economic opportunities and a profound economic transformation to end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods”. They argued that this would require “a rapid shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production” and “diversified economies, with equal opportunities for all”.³²
4. **Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all.** The Panel declared it was “calling for a fundamental shift—to recognise peace and good governance as core elements of wellbeing, not optional extras”.³³
5. **Forge a new global partnership.** In the Panel’s view, “perhaps the most transformative shift is towards a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability that must underpin the post-2015 agenda”. The partnership should include “people living in poverty, those with disabilities, women, civil society and indigenous and local communities, traditionally marginalised groups, multilateral institutions, local and national government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy” and should be “built on principles of common humanity and mutual respect”, with full transparency and accountability.³⁴

The Panel also put forward an illustrative set of twelve new goals underpinned by 49 national targets. Their suggested goals were:

1. End poverty.
2. Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality.
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning.
4. Ensure healthy lives.
5. Ensure food security and good nutrition.
6. Achieve universal access to water and sanitation.
7. Secure sustainable energy.

²⁸ High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development](#), May 2013.

²⁹ *ibid*, Executive Summary (unnumbered page).

³⁰ *ibid*.

³¹ *ibid*.

³² *ibid*.

³³ *ibid*.

³⁴ *ibid*.

8. Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth.
9. Manage natural resource assets sustainably.
10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions.
11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies.
12. Create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance.³⁵

Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning

Amina Mohammed, a development expert from Nigeria, was appointed as the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Post-2015 Developing Planning in June 2012.³⁶ She served as an ex-officio member of the High Level Panel and has worked closely with the Open Working Group (see below).³⁷

Consultations

In 2013, a number of public consultations were also run to seek inputs on a country, thematic and global basis:

- 50-100 country consultations in developing countries, led by UN Development Group (UNDG) teams in each participating country. These reported in March 2013. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted, including NGOs, universities and research institutions, private sector entities, interest groups and political decision-makers.
- Nine thematic consultations, led by the relevant UN agency, on: inequality; health; education; growth and employment; environmental sustainability; food security and nutrition; governance; conflict and fragility; and population dynamics. These reported in June 2013.
- [MY World 2015](#), a global UN-led survey aiming to capture public opinions on which six of 16 possible issues they think would make the most difference to their lives.³⁸

3.2 Sustainable Development Goals

In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+20, marking the twentieth anniversary of the 'Earth Summit' held in Rio in 1992) took place. In the conference outcome document, entitled *The Future We Want*, UN member states agreed to develop a set of goals for "pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development".³⁹ These 'sustainable development goals' (SDGs) were conceived of as separate from the MDGs—member states agreed that "the development of these goals should not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals".⁴⁰ However, it was intended that

³⁵ *ibid*, pp 30–1.

³⁶ UN press release, '[Secretary-General Appoints Amina J Mohammed of Nigeria as Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning](#)', 7 June 2012.

³⁷ House of Commons Library, [The Post-2015 Development Goals](#), 2 July 2014, SN06786, p 6.

³⁸ *ibid*, pp 5–6.

³⁹ UN General Assembly Resolution 66/288, [The Future We Want](#), A/RES/66/288, adopted 11 September 2012, Annex, para 246.

⁴⁰ *ibid*.

they “should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. Rio+20 established various bodies to work on drawing up the SDGs:

- **Open Working Group.** An open working group (OWG) was given the task of preparing a proposal on the SDGs. Its 30 members were selected using a constituency-based system of representation, which means that most of the seats on the OWG are shared by several countries.⁴¹
- **Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.** A committee of 30 experts nominated by regional groups was tasked with preparing a report “proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilisation of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives”.⁴² The committee published its report in August 2014.⁴³
- **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.** The Forum provides political leadership and guidance; follows up and review progress in implementing sustainable development commitments and addresses new and emerging sustainable development challenges; enhances the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It meets every year under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council and every four years at Heads of State and Government level under the auspices of the General Assembly.⁴⁴

3.3 A Single Framework

There was significant crossover between work on the post-2015 development agenda and on developing a set of SDGs. For example, Amina Mohammed, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning, gave evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee in October 2012 that one secretariat was supporting both the High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda and the OWG on the SDGs.⁴⁵ The International Development Committee noted in January 2013 that a debate had emerged “as to whether the post-2015 ‘development’ agenda should be merged with the ‘sustainability’ agenda”, which would effectively entail merging the post-2015 framework with the SDGs.⁴⁶ Although some organisations were reportedly reluctant that the core focus on poverty could be lost by merging the two sets of goals, the Committee observed that “the majority view is that the end result should be one combined set of global goals”, a position with which the Committee agreed.⁴⁷

⁴¹ UN, ‘[Open Working Group on Sustainable Development](#)’, accessed 1 December 2014.

⁴² UN, ‘[Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing](#)’, accessed 1 December 2014.

⁴³ UN General Assembly, [Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing](#), A/69/315, 15 August 2014.

⁴⁴ UN, ‘[High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#)’, accessed 1 December 2014.

⁴⁵ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Post-2015 Development Goals](#), 22 January 2013, HC 657 of session 2012–13, Ev 2–3.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p 16.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pp 16–7.

After a UN special event held in September 2013 to follow up efforts made towards achieving the MDGs, UN member states agreed to bring the two agendas together into a single set of goals:

We are resolved that the post-2015 development agenda should reinforce the commitment of the international community to poverty eradication and sustainable development. We underline the central imperative of poverty eradication and are committed to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency. Recognising the intrinsic interlinkage between poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development, we underline the need for a coherent approach that integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development [economic, social and environmental]. This coherent approach involves working towards a single framework and set of goals, universal in nature and applicable to all countries, while taking account of differing national circumstances and respecting national policies and priorities. It should also promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all.⁴⁸

3.4 Next Steps

In July 2014, the OWG published its proposal for SDGs, which contained 17 goals and 169 targets.⁴⁹ The OWG declared that the goals in its outcome document “build on the foundation” laid by the MDGs, while seeking to “complete the unfinished business of the MDGs and respond to new challenges”.⁵⁰ The Group believed that the goals it had drawn up constituted an “indivisible set of global priorities for sustainable development” which would “integrate economic, social and environmental aspects and recognise their interlinkages in achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions”.⁵¹

The UN General Assembly decided on 10 September 2014 that the OWG’s outcome document would be “the main basis” for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, “while recognising that other inputs will also be considered, in the intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly”.⁵² The sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly opened on 16 September 2014. Sam Kuhamba Kutesa, the Foreign Minister of Uganda and President of the current session of the UN General Assembly, appointed David Donoghue and Macharia Kamau, the UN Permanent Representatives (ambassadors) of Ireland and Kenya respectively, as co-facilitators “to lead open, inclusive and transparent consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, including the organisation and modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations”.⁵³

Intergovernmental negotiations will continue into next year, and the final post-2015 development agenda is scheduled to be adopted by UN member states at a summit attended by

⁴⁸ UN General Assembly Resolution 68/6, [Outcome Document of the Special Event to Follow Up Efforts made towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals](#), A/RES/68/6, adopted 9 October 2013.

⁴⁹ UN, [Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#), July 2014.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, para 18.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² UN General Assembly Resolution 68/309, [Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Established Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 66/288](#), A/RES/68/309, adopted 10 September 2014.

⁵³ President of the UN General Assembly, [Letter to All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, New York](#), 17 October 2014.

Heads of State and Government in September 2015.⁵⁴ Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for International Development, has repeatedly said that the UK will play “an active role” in the intergovernmental negotiations.⁵⁵ David Donoghue and Macharia Kamau envisage that the outcome document to be agreed at the final summit next year will contain the following components: an introductory declaration; sustainable development goals, targets and indicators; means of implementation and a new Global Partnership; and a framework for monitoring and review of implementation.⁵⁶

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, undertook to publish a synthesis report by the end of 2014 to “support member states” in their negotiations leading up to the summit and to “outline a broad vision for a post-2015 development agenda”.⁵⁷ This report is one of the ‘other inputs’ that will be considered along with the OWG proposals during the intergovernmental negotiations.⁵⁸ Mr Ban presented an advance, unedited version of his synthesis report, entitled *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, to the UN General Assembly on 4 December 2014.⁵⁹ In it, he welcomed the OWG’s outcome document and took “positive note” of the General Assembly’s decision “that the proposal of the Group be the main basis for the post-2015 intergovernmental process”.⁶⁰ He also noted “in particular, the possibility to maintain the 17 goals and rearrange them in a focused and concise manner that enables the necessary global awareness and implementation at the country level”.⁶¹

He put forward six “essential elements” that he believed would “help frame and reinforce the universal, integrated and transformative nature of a sustainable development agenda and ensure that the ambition expressed by member states in the outcome of the Open Working Group translates, communicates and is delivered at the country level”.⁶² These were:

- Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequalities
- People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children
- Prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy
- Planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children
- Justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies, and strong institutions
- Partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development.⁶³

Eighteen former members of the High Level Panel (not including David Cameron) published an open letter on 22 September 2014, in which they acknowledged the OWG’s proposal for universally applicable goals and the Intergovernmental Expert Committee on Sustainable

⁵⁴ UN General Assembly Resolution 68/6, [Outcome Document of the Special Event to Follow Up Efforts made towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals](#), A/RES/68/6, adopted 9 October 2013.

⁵⁵ eg HC Hansard, 21 July 2014, [col 898VV](#).

⁵⁶ President of the UN General Assembly, [Letter to All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, New York](#), 17 November 2014.

⁵⁷ UN, [‘Secretary-General’s remarks to High-Level Segment of ECOSOC and High-Level Political Forum’](#), 7 July 2014.

⁵⁸ President of the UN General Assembly, [Letter to All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, New York](#), 17 November 2014.

⁵⁹ UN News Centre, [‘Road to Dignity by 2030: UN Chief Launches Blueprint towards Sustainable Development’](#), 4 December 2014.

⁶⁰ UN Secretary General, [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet](#), advance unedited version, 4 December 2014, p 17.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p 19.

⁶² *ibid*, p 20.

⁶³ *ibid*, pp 20–4.

Development Financing’s “vital contribution to identifying how to make them happen”.⁶⁴ The former Panel members proposed a seven-point plan for the year ahead:

- First, global leaders need to turn their attention to the new development agenda well ahead of next September.
- Second, there needs to be a clearer emphasis on a new Global Partnership, based on a spirit of collaboration.
- Third, preparations for implementation must start now.
- Fourth, multi-stakeholder monitoring and accountability mechanisms are needed.
- Fifth, all stakeholders need to take advantage of improved data as a central part of the Post-2015 Agenda.
- Sixth, it is essential to harness the power of the private sector for sustainable development.
- Finally, governments will need to take a coherent approach to the negotiations [on finance, development, climate and trade], recognising that progress—or its absence—in one process will in turn affect the others.⁶⁵

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a UK-based think-tank, identified four major challenges for the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiation process at the UN General Assembly:

- First and foremost is the politics of shaping and sharpening a coherent vision while maintaining the strong level of member-state support generated during the OWG process.
- Second (and almost as foremost...) is the challenge of intellectual and policy coherence. It is going to be hard to find a perspective to drive the 2015 goal set in the same way the human-development paradigm drove the 2000 set. But the beginnings of this are there—in the strengthening of understanding of sustainability and the global challenge it poses.
- Third is the challenge of getting the goal and target sets into a shape where they work both individually and together, so that each goal and its accompanying targets are sufficiently clear, measurable and coherent in and of themselves.
- Fourth is working out how it all works in practice. The notion of targets set at the national level (in line with the goal framing) is now so firmly embedded in the key texts (the High Level Panel report as well as the OWG outcome document) that it is hard to see that changing.⁶⁶

Writing on the *Guardian* website in November 2014, Amina Mohammed, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning set out her current priorities. She argued that the sustainable development agenda should not be about “a handful of poor countries”, but must instead be universal, “concerned with the rights of all people and the

⁶⁴ UN, ‘[One Year On: An Open Letter from Former Members of the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda](#)’, 22 September 2014.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Andrew Norton et al, [Taking the Sustainable Development Goals from ‘Main Basis’ to Effective Vision—What’s the Roadmap?](#), ODI, September 2014, p 1.

actions of stakeholders everywhere”.⁶⁷ She clarified that “universality does not mean uniformity”; rather, the targets and indicators should be tailored to ensure they are relevant and responsive to every country and region, both developed and developing. She took the view that the huge resources required to implement the new goals would have “serious implications” for existing business models at the UN; thought would have to be given to “how the UN and the multitude of actors deliver value and remain a relevant and effective partner to support member states”. Governments, donors, civil society and the private sector would all have to find new ways of working to develop partnerships rather than working in silos, and to involve young people and other marginalised groups.

4. Post 2015: Content

The OWG’s proposed SDGs, published in July 2014, contain 17 goals underpinned by 169 associated targets. The goals are as follows:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.*
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for 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.
- Goal 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.

⁶⁷ Amina J Mohammed, [‘The New Development Agenda: Six Priorities from Amina J Mohammed’](#), *Guardian*, 25 November 2014.

- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

*Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.⁶⁸

Indicators to measure progress against the targets would have to be defined. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has estimated that the OWG targets would probably translate into around 250–300 indicators, almost ten times the number of sustainable development indicators that the ONS currently publishes.⁶⁹

The draft goals proposed by the OWG have come in for some criticism for lacking a clear purpose and for trying to cover too much. Charles Kenny and Casey Dunning of the Center for Global Development, a US think-tank, characterised the OWG proposal as trying to be all things to all people, “thereby doing nothing really well”.⁷⁰ They argued that the MDGs had a clear purpose—setting a framework for global aid discussions—which was lacking for the new goals proposed by the OWG. They posited that possible purposes could include setting out a shared vision for where the world should be in 2030 and a roadmap for how to get there; a way of prioritising the most pressing sustainable development challenges over the next 15 years; outlining global challenges that could be addressed only by the global community; or a way of holding governments to account. However, in their opinion, the document as currently drafted “is essentially useless for prioritising anything, goes far beyond global public goods (and excludes key ones), is very weak on ‘how do we get there’, is full of unrealistic targets, and yet fails as a complete vision of where we’d love to see the world in 2030”. They expressed a hope that the Secretary-General’s synthesis report would lay out “the rationale and purpose of the post-2015 goals in a way that *doesn’t* suggest they are designed to be all things to all people”.

Others maintain that the fact the OWG’s proposal lacks the simplicity and clarity of the MDG framework may not matter. Andrew Norton and Elizabeth Stuart of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a UK-based think-tank, have argued that the new goals “are written for a different age” and “cannot just be conceptualised as MDGs with extra ambition and a new timeline”.⁷¹ Rather, they believe that because the successor goals are “something quite different”, bringing together development and climate, tackling both global and national issues, and having universal application to rich and poor countries, it is “obvious that they are going to be much more complex to describe, implement and monitor”. Norton and Stuart accept that 169 targets risk being “unimplementable”, but they propose instead that: “It may be possible to have a smaller set of normative statements or imperatives that would sit alongside (or above, chapeau-like) the official goals, acting as a summary of their vision and clustering issue areas. Easy to communicate and therefore inspire, the imperatives could act as a glue that brings together the sprawling narrative”.

Similarly, in a report for the ODI, May Miller-Dawkins warned that “SDG-fatigue” could lead to the international community “settling for practical, achievable goals and targets over ambitious

⁶⁸ UN, [Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#), July 2014.

⁶⁹ ONS, [Written Evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee](#), 26 November 2014.

⁷⁰ Charles Kenny and Casey Dunning, ‘[What’s the Point of the Post-2015 Agenda?](#)’, Center for Global Development Blog, 13 August 2014.

⁷¹ Andrew Norton and Elizabeth Stuart, ‘[SDGs: Why 17 Goals and 169 Targets Might Not be Such a Bad Thing](#)’, *Guardian*, 26 November 2014.

principles that strengthen norms and give national groups a further point of leverage”.⁷² She suggested that “while a lot of the debate on the shape of the SDGs has used the MDGs as a jumping off point, international human rights and environmental agreements provide better analogues as they reflect similar features to the proposed SDGs: highly declaratory, universalist agreements”.⁷³ She urged that “‘practicality’ should not blunt ambition in the final stages of the SDG negotiations”, believing that “the high ambition and non-binding nature of SDGs could increase, rather than diminish, their overall and long-term impact”.⁷⁴

The UK has expressed concerns that having 17 goals is too many. Speaking at a side event at the UN General Assembly in September 2014, David Cameron, the Prime Minister, said that, while he appreciated the work of the OWG, there were “too many [goals] to communicate effectively”, with “a real danger they will end up on a bookshelf, gathering dust”.⁷⁵ Mr Cameron called for not more than twelve goals (twelve was the number of illustrative goals in the report of the High Level Panel co-chaired by Mr Cameron), preferably ten.

Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for International Development, has said that the OWG proposal “reflects many of the UK priorities for the post-2015 agenda, including on poverty eradication, gender, sustainable development and open societies and open economies”.⁷⁶ However, whilst giving evidence in October to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, she also voiced concerns that 17 goals was too many.⁷⁷ Ms Greening described the challenge as being to take “the essence of what the Open Working Group’s report is saying and then condense it down into a framework that can drive action”.⁷⁸ She feared that “if everything is a priority, then nothing gets prioritised at the end of the day”. However, she made no specific suggestions as to which of the OWG’s goals might be dispensed with.⁷⁹ She also stressed that although the OWG report was “incredibly important”, it provided a “working basis”—there would be other elements to consider as well, and the Government was waiting to see what the proposals in the Secretary-General’s synthesis report would be.⁸⁰

Ms Greening praised the simplicity of the MDGs, concluding they owed much of their success to the fact that they were “very simple, they were extremely compelling, and they were very clear cut in terms of the targets”.⁸¹ The limited number of targets meant that countries could not simply cherry-pick a few, and this had “channelled efforts, investment and focus in a way that has been very positive”. However, she also felt that the original MDGs had had some shortcomings which would need to be addressed in the post-2015 agenda, namely: an insufficient focus on sustainability; no focus on climate change; too great a focus on developing countries alone, rather than on universal application; and not enough work on inclusive economic growth and good governance.⁸² She assured the Committee that “alongside eradicating poverty, sustainable development should be at the core of the next framework”.⁸³

⁷² May Miller-Dawkins, [Global Goals and International Agreements—Lessons for the Design of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), ODI, November 2014, p 3.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p 18.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Liz Ford, [UN Begins Talks on SDGs. “Carrying the Hopes of Millions”](#), *Guardian*, 24 September 2014.

⁷⁶ House of Commons, [International Assistance: Written Question—207140](#), 4 September 2014.

⁷⁷ House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, [Oral Evidence: Sustainable Development Goals](#), 29 October 2014, HC 452 of session 2014–15, Q3.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, Q6.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, Q16 and Q17.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, Q13.

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*, Q5.

In written evidence to the Committee, the Department for International Development outlined the Government's five key priorities for the goals in the post-2015 framework as:

- a) A simple, inspiring, relevant framework centred on poverty eradication.
- b) A framework that finishes the job on the Millennium Development Goals.
- c) The integration of environmental sustainability across the goals, and targets that ensure visibility for climate change.
- d) A strong, standalone goal on gender equality.
- e) A goal on the critical issues left out by the MDGs: peace, good governance and economic development.⁸⁴

The debate about how best to incorporate tackling inequality into a new set of goals serves as an illustration of the difficulties inherent in achieving a global consensus on both an overall framework and on individual goals. Goal 10 in the OWG proposal is to “reduce inequality within and among countries”. The UK Government has advocated for embedding efforts to reduce inequality across the whole set of goals, rather than having a specific goal on inequality. Speaking in a House of Lords debate on the post-2015 development agenda before the publication of the OWG outcome document, Baroness Northover, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for International Development, explained that “tackling inequality must be at the heart of the new agenda”, but that it was not clear “that a separate stand-alone inequality goal would achieve as much as a cross-cutting push”.⁸⁵ She said that the Government's approach was that “whatever goals and targets are agreed, be they on health, education, sustainable development, peace, or water and sanitation, they need to have ‘leave no-one behind’ embedded within and throughout them”. In response to a parliamentary question in June 2014 about whether there should be a commitment in the new goals to tackling extreme economic inequality, David Cameron explained that at the heart of the goals should be “a vision of eradicating extreme poverty”, and that this had to “come before issues of inequality”.⁸⁶

Others have argued in favour of setting a standalone goal on inequality. For example, Bond Beyond 2015 UK—a coalition of over 100 UK-based agencies, and part of the Beyond 2015 global campaign that brings together more than 1,000 civil society organisations worldwide—maintains that it would be “the most effective way to set inequality as a priority within the agreement and to ensure that governments set as a priority to implement the necessary changes and reach the relevant targets”.⁸⁷ Bond Beyond 2015 UK said that it stood with the UK Government in calling for the “leave no one behind” narrative to be integrated throughout the framework. However, it also sought to convince the Government prior to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 that “a post-2015 framework should specifically aim to reduce inequalities within and between countries and tackling their underlying causes if it is to truly eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development”, and that the “best way of demonstrating this commitment and communicating this objective would be by retaining a standalone goal on inequality as proposed by the Open Working Group”.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, [Written Evidence submitted by the Department for International Development](#), 15 October 2014.

⁸⁵ HL Hansard, 2 April 2014, [cols 1025–6](#).

⁸⁶ HC Hansard, 11 June 2014, [col 564](#).

⁸⁷ Bond Beyond 2015 UK, [Inequality in a Post-2015 Framework](#), September 2014, p 35.

⁸⁸ Bond Beyond 2015 UK, [Bond Beyond 2015 UK Messages to the UK Government ahead of the UN General Assembly](#), September 2014.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee sought to press Justine Greening on whether the Government supported the OWG's Goal 10 and the inclusion of a specific goal on inequality, but she did not give a direct 'yes' or 'no' answer.⁸⁹ When asked whether she believed it was "an achievable goal" to reduce inequality between different societies, she explained that: "Our focus is on reaching to the very, very poorest people in the world and eradicating extreme poverty. How their circumstances relate to other people is a secondary consideration from my perspective".⁹⁰ She felt that the focus should be on "reaching to the very poorest rather than simply equalising people but possibly reducing the prospects for some people".⁹¹

5. Post 2015: Monitoring

Attention has also been focused on developing new and better ways of monitoring progress towards achieving goals in the post-2015 framework. As the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported, there is "wide consensus" in the academic literature that "the MDGs' monitoring requirements have created a significant challenge for statistical communities".⁹² Producing high-quality, internationally comparable data against the MDG indicators to measure progress against the targets has been difficult for many countries. Many countries lack comprehensive civil registration systems: only a quarter of South Asian countries and less than half of Latin American and Caribbean countries have complete civil registration systems. It is thought that in 2012 alone, 57 million infants—four out of every ten babies delivered worldwide that year—were not registered with civil authorities.⁹³ Household survey data has been used to produce estimates where other data is missing or incomplete, but data from surveys is not ideal for all indicators, and is "insufficient to collect enough granular and timely data on the circumstances of disadvantaged and marginalised groups".⁹⁴

A UN expert group on data for the new goals identified two main problems with the current data available. Firstly, there is not enough high quality data. It found that "too many countries still have poor data, data arrives too late and too many issues are still barely covered by existing data".⁹⁵ It noted that data on age and disability is routinely not collected, and a great deal of data is not available until several years have passed since collection. It found that there is no five-year period when the availability of data against the current MDG indicators exceeds 70 percent of what is required.⁹⁶ It also noted that "entire groups of people and key issues remain invisible".⁹⁷ A significant problem is the lack of disaggregation at sub-national level, "making it hard for policy makers or communities to compare their progress with that of other communities or the country as a whole". For example, single national estimates of access to clean and safe water in rural areas, produced on the basis of household survey data, does not show how access varies between districts. The second major problem was data that were unusable—the group found that comparability and standardisation were affected by data produced to different standards (eg household surveys asking different questions, or geo-spatial

⁸⁹ House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, [Oral Evidence: Sustainable Development Goals](#), 29 October 2014, HC 452 of session 2014–15, Q50–55.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, Q51.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, Q52.

⁹² OECD, [Strengthening National Statistical Systems to Monitor Global Goals](#), undated.

⁹³ UN Data Revolution Group, [A World that Counts](#), November 2014, p 13.

⁹⁴ OECD, [Strengthening National Statistical Systems to Monitor Global Goals](#), undated; and Emma Samman and Jose Manuel Roche, 'A Data Revolution to Match the Ambition of 'Leaving no one Behind'', Post2015.org Blog, 30 October 2014.

⁹⁵ UN Data Revolution Group, [A World that Counts](#), November 2014, p 11.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p 12.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p 13.

data using different geographical definitions).⁹⁸ It also argued that the effective use of data was limited by technical or legal barriers, or by data-owners fearing too much transparency.

The High Level Panel report called for a ‘data revolution’ that would improve data collection by harnessing new technologies, and would produce more meaningful data by ensuring a greater level of disaggregation:

The revolution in information technology over the last decade provides an opportunity to strengthen data and statistics for accountability and decision-making purposes. There have been innovative initiatives to use mobile technology and other advances to enable real-time monitoring of development results. But this movement remains largely discounted from the traditional statistic community at both global and national levels. The post-2015 process needs to bring them together and start now to improve development data.

Data must also enable us to reach the neediest, and find out whether they are receiving essential services. This means that data gathered will need to be disaggregated by gender, geography, income, disability, and other categories, to make sure that no group is being left behind.⁹⁹

The Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, also known as the UN Data Revolution Group, reported to the UN Secretary General in November 2014. The Group urged the UN and its member states to “dramatically speed up their work in this field”.¹⁰⁰ The Group made several key recommendations for actions to be taken in the near future, such as: developing a global consensus on principles and standards; creating mechanism through which technology and innovation could be shared for the common good; identifying new funding resources for capacity development; providing leadership at the UN level to mobilise and coordinate the actions and institutions required; exploiting quick wins on SDG data, which could include developing a first wave of SDG indicators, an SDG analysis and visualisation platform, and a dashboard of data sources.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p 15.

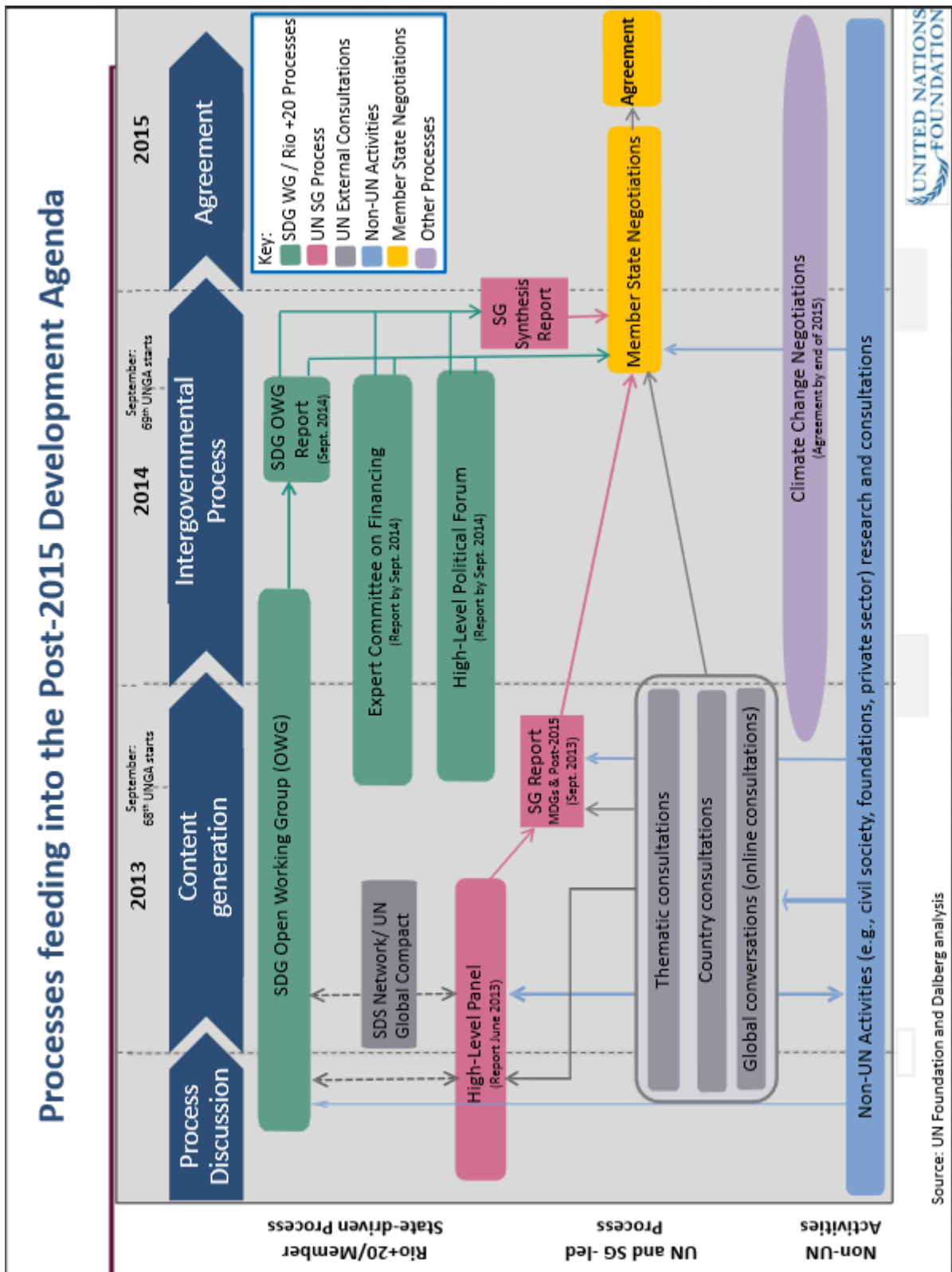
⁹⁹ High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development](#), May 2013, p 23.

¹⁰⁰ UN Data Revolution Group, [A World that Counts](#), November 2014, p 20.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, pp 2–3.

Appendix

Figure 1: Processes Feeding into the Post-2015 Development Agenda



Source: UN Foundation, 'Post-2015 Process', accessed 28 November 2014