

POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2000, world leaders made a promise to end poverty by 2015 with a global plan called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Massive efforts and progress have been made but there is still a long way to go to reach the goal and many people have been left behind in the process, including indigenous peoples. The post-2015 development framework refers to the process that will follow the MDGs.¹ In 2012, the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development decided to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will address the challenges and shortcomings of the MDGs.² It is widely agreed that indigenous peoples were not given enough attention in MDG-related processes. They were excluded from the process and are mentioned in neither the goals nor their indicators. Dealing with issues directly related to indigenous peoples, such as ending poverty, ensuring human rights and inclusion for all, ensuring good governance, preventing conflict, ensuring environmental sustainability and protection of biodiversity and climate change, the post-2015 development framework and the SDGs will, over the next decade, set the standards for global sustainability and development aid and will directly influence the lives of millions of indigenous peoples. In the post-2015 development process, indigenous peoples aim to ensure that the SDGs reflect indigenous peoples' rights and their relationship with their lands, territories and natural resources, and take their special vulnerabilities and strengths into consideration.

Processes and reports leading to the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will target the whole world and not only developing countries, as the MDGs did. In accordance with the Rio outcome document, the SDG discussions will include civil society and invite Major Groups and other stakeholders to take part in the deliberations.³

In 2013, indigenous peoples' Major Group (IPMG) engaged in many post-2015-related development processes and contributed to the development of the SDGs which will, however, be drafted in 2014 and not negotiated before 2015.

The Open Working Group

The Rio+20 outcome document "The Future we Want" stipulated the creation of an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG)⁴ with a specific mandate to propose actual goals, targets and indicators. The OWG has been commissioned to submit a report to the 68th (2014) session of the UN General Assembly containing a proposal for Sustainable Development Goals, for consideration and appropriate action.⁵

In accordance with the Rio+20 outcome document, the OWG has decided that its working methods, including the development of modalities, should include the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the UN system, in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience. In practice, this means that all nine UN Major Groups and other stakeholders have been able to participate and engage in the eight OWG sessions held in 2013.

As a Major Group, indigenous peoples have had access to contribute directly to the OWG discussions during 2013. These discussions have been thematic and have discussed potential goals, targets and indicators for the SDGs. The IPMG has participated in the OWG sessions, intervened in the daily Major Group morning hearings with the co-chairs, nominated and presented IP speakers on relevant topics such as governance, environmental sustainability, human rights and inclusion for all, etc. During the OWG sessions, the IPMG has also lobbied member states and other stakeholders such as the Women's Major Group to include indigenous peoples' rights in the SDGs.

In the beginning of 2014, the co-chairs (from Kenya and Hungary) of the Open Working Group drafted and circulated two documents to be further discussed during the spring of 2014. One is a stocktaking document⁶ that reflects on the previous eight discussions. The other and perhaps the most interesting one is the focus area document,⁷ which highlights 19 focus areas that will serve as the basis for the SDGs in the final report to be completed in June 2014 and presented to the UNGA in September 2014.

Global thematic consultations

During 2013, the United Nations Development Group was mandated by UN member states to initiate an inclusive dialogue on post-2015. They therefore organized⁸ a set of 11 thematic consultations on conflict and fragility; education; environmental sustainability; governance; growth and employment; health; hunger, food and nutrition; inequalities; population dynamics; energy; and water.⁹ Each thematic consultation was led by two or more UN agencies, working closely together with representatives from civil society, the private sector and academia as well as with the co-hosting government. The consultations were aimed at exploring what role each theme could play in the SDG framework, different ways in which they could best be addressed, and the interlinkages between them. The IPMG participated in the consultations on inequality, governance and environmental sustainability.

Other relevant work streams and documents contributing to SDGs

Apart from the OWG, there are several other relevant work streams and documents that will contribute to developing the SDGs. In May 2013, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons established by the UN Secretary-General to provide guidance and recommendations on the post-2015 development agenda launched its **High-level Panel Report**¹⁰ with a vision and recommendations on a global development agenda beyond 2015. Indigenous peoples participated, among other meetings, in a regional consultation “Realizing the Future We Want in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a post-2015 development agenda”.¹¹

Another report that has received attention is the report of the **Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** published in June 2103. It presents ten priority challenges for sustainable development.¹² Unfortunately, indigenous peoples were only mentioned once in the report under the heading of achieving gender equality, social inclusion and human rights for all. There are no direct goals, targets or indicators related directly to indigenous peoples. At the beginning of 2014, the SDSN will add a long list of indicators to the report which, for a short period, will be open for comments from the general public.

The UN Secretary-General has also established a **Task Team** to support the process by providing analytical thinking and substantial inputs. For example, the

Task Team published its first report entitled “Realizing the Future We Want for All”¹³ in June 2012. The report outlined the vision of the UN system for the global development agenda beyond 2015. Moreover, the Task Team is currently engaged, as an inter-agency technical support team (TST),¹⁴ in providing technical support to the OWG, including analytical input, background material and expert panelists.

Indigenous peoples’ contribution to developing the SDGs

During 2013, the IPMG actively contributed to the OWG sessions and has also developed targeted inputs to the process in order to push for indigenous peoples’ rights and inclusion. A technical workshop in New York (January 2014), arranged by the IPMG organizing partners (Tebtebba and International Indian Treaty Council) and IWGIA, led to the development of an **indigenous peoples’ position paper** and a matrix defining ideal goals, targets and indicators, which will be widely distributed for further comment and feedback during 2014.

The position paper defines eight focus areas for indigenous peoples: end poverty; ensure human rights and inclusion for all; ensure good governance and effective institutions; prevent conflict and promote peaceful societies; ensure environmental sustainability and protection of biodiversity; climate change, energy and disaster risk reduction; create and maintain global partnerships; and ensure cultural diversity in sustainable development.

In collaboration with indigenous partners and experts, IWGIA has closely followed the SDG process and drafted a number of **informative briefing** notes on specific themes related to the SDG process and indigenous peoples’ rights and situation. The briefing notes are a valuable resource in the work of raising awareness of indigenous rights in the SDG and post-2015 development process. The notes are intended for member states, UN agencies, relevant Major Groups and other stakeholders.

Next steps towards post-2015

There is much work ahead for indigenous peoples if they are to ensure that their concerns and contributions are taken into consideration in the post-2015 development framework and their rights reflected in the SDGs.

Looking beyond 2013, there are new work streams worthy of note. In order to encourage the global community to work towards building a consensus and elaborating concrete actions for the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the **President of the UN General Assembly** has decided to host a series of high-level meetings and thematic debates during the course of 2014. The indigenous Major Group intends to participate in these meetings.

Another process that will provide political leadership and recommendations for sustainable development is a universal intergovernmental **High-level Political Forum (HLPF)**. The HLPF is another critical outcome of Rio+20. The forum is something completely new that will ensure that sustainable development remains high on the agenda of world leaders and, ultimately, stimulate timely and effective follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference. The modalities for participation will be agreed between now and the first session, under the auspices of ECOSOC in summer 2014 (June, to be confirmed). ○

Notes and references

- 1 More on the general process of the post-2015 development process here: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1561>
- 2 <http://www.unctd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf>
- 3 Read more about the SDGs here: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1300>
- 4 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>
- 5 The reports and relevant documents resulting from the OWG session can be downloaded from: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>
- 6 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3238summaryallowg.pdf>
- 7 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>
- 8 Apart from the thematic consultations, the United Nations Development Group has initiated consultations at the national and regional level.
- 9 <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/>
- 10 <http://www.post2015hlp.org/featured/high-level-panel-releases-recommendations-for-worlds-next-development-agenda/>
- 11 <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article4283>
- 12 <http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/an-action-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>
- 13 http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/report.shtml
- 14 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1528>

Ida Peters Ginsborg is a Danish sociologist working for IWGIA, following and supporting indigenous peoples' full and effective participation in the post-2015 development process.