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# Rio +20: Sustainable Development Goals

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## Summary

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an opportunity to link together environmental, social and economic global challenges.
- SDGs should be integrated with the Millennium Development Goals.
- SDGs need to be universally applicable, holistic, inclusive and equitable.

## Results for Rio +20

Rio +20 is an opportunity to agree the principles and process for establishment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an important part of the framework for development after 2015 when the MDGs reach their end date. The original proposal for the SDGs came from the governments of Colombia, Guatemala and Peru. SDGs have gained traction and many countries, including the UK, see the support for a process leading to SDGs as a realistic outcome from the Rio Conference.

A commitment to SDGs and a process for preparing them would help secure renewed political support for sustainability; can bring countries together to build a green and a fair future globally; and set out steps to measure progress. Therefore a good outcome from Rio +20 would include:

- definition of the vision of Sustainable Development Goals which ensure social and environmental safeguards;
- commitment to a global mandate;
- agreement of a process for establishing a clear set of goals with targets, a support structure, and a timeframe for agreement by 2015.

Sustainable development is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”<sup>1</sup>. Although the underlying principles were agreed internationally twenty years ago, the intervening period has seen the challenge increase rather than decrease.

**Concept**

SDGs need to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, social and economic. The goals should promote equitable access to natural resources, taking into account the needs of future generations and keeping within planetary boundaries so that resources are not overexploited. The goals need to reduce

- Reduce environmental damage and degradation;
- Address drivers of poverty, human deprivation and inequity;
- Promote development which lies within social and environmental limits.

**Relationship to the MDGs**

The current global development framework of the Millennium Development Goals expires in 2015. The establishment of SDGs should be complementary to and support the attainment of the MDGs and should build on the experience of the MDGs. The SDGs need to provide the development framework from 2015 but in the meantime the MDGs remain vital development objectives. In particular the MDGs have illustrated the value of having measurable targets which has helped focus global attention on progress towards the eradication of poverty, improvement of health and universal education.

**Principles for the SDGs**

- Holistic – the goals need to incorporate balanced environmental, social and economic objectives which meet the global development challenges, such as reducing poverty and maintaining and restoring natural habitats.
- Inclusive – the process through which the goals are formed must be open and participatory, recognising access to information and decision-making as the foundation of good environmental governance.
- Equitable – ensuring that the targets achieve reductions in inequality both within and between nations.
- Universally applicable – all countries, whether developed or developing, have interests, obligations, and accountability through a global framework.

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1961-2011: 50 years of conservation. WWF works in over a hundred countries to protect the natural world, tackle climate change and promote sustainable consumption.

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<sup>1</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987