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# Ideas on Governance 'of' and 'for' Sustainable Development Goals



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United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku,

Tokyo 150-8925, Japan

Tel: +81 3 5467 1212

Fax: +81 3 3499 2828

Tokyo Institute of Technology

2-12-1 Ookayama, Meguro-ku,

Tokyo, 152-8550, Japan

**This report is prepared by:**

Norichika Kanie, Ruben Zondervan and Casey Stevens

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# Ideas on Governance 'of' and 'for' Sustainable Development Goals

## Key Messages

- SDGs will need to go beyond MDGs in adopting a systemic approach, having broad inclusiveness and applicability for both developing and developed countries, stimulating innovative and long term thinking, and recognizing that we live in the anthropocene era. One idea to reflect this reality is to follow a "sub-goal" approach - establish SDGs at the global level addressing systemic challenges, supported by sub-goals composed of a set of options for different levels of governance from global to local levels through which systemic challenges could be addressed. They should be crafted in order to facilitate stakeholder participation in the problem-solving activities.
- Governance is a problematic and sensitive term in UN politics. The concept of "governance" is understood very differently and there is no agreement on its meaning and function in the SDG context.
- Social science research does not provide findings strongly supporting a stand-alone governance goal and political experience indicates high potential for disagreement and infeasibility. SDGs could be better implemented when governance is woven into each issue, which does not necessitate using the term "governance".
- There is a strong need for finding incentives for all actors to contribute to the SDG process and to weave that into the UN process in a broader context.
- Governance is important for the process leading to and formulation of the SDGs and governance of the SDGs will be crucial for their implementation. The aspects and forms of governance relevant to governance for and of SDGs are however different and hence need differentiation in the policy discourse and process.

## Note

This summary captures the main outcomes of the International Workshop on Governance 'of' and 'for' Sustainable Development Goals, held 1 February 2014, in New York, USA<sup>1</sup>. This workshop addressed the key issues related to governance and the SDGs. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss key questions relating to the governance of, and governance for, the post-2015 development agenda, with particular focus on the SDGs. It aimed at identifying points where expert consensus emerges and to find new ideas through interactive exercise between governance researchers and policy makers. Discussions addressed four guiding questions. Each question was first discussed in six breakout groups and later in plenary. The ideas included in this report are an outcome of the collective effort of the participants.

<sup>1</sup> The International Workshop on Governance 'of' and 'for' Sustainable Development Goals was organized by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), the Earth System Governance Project and the POST2015 project (hosted by Tokyo Institute of Technology and sponsored by Ministry of Environment, Japan) <http://SDG.earthsystemgovernance.org>. For further correspondence, please contact Norichika Kanie ([kanie@unu.edu](mailto:kanie@unu.edu)).

# PART A – Purpose and Architecture of SDGs

## Question 1 - What functions are SDGs supposed to serve? What issues are suitable as goals, targets and indicators?

### [Functions and Purposes]

Participants in the workshop identified many different functions the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could serve, including: the creation of forums for policy discussion, steering implementation of policies in desired directions, training for actors in new qualitative and quantitative measurements, establishing minimum levels of progress for all countries, nudging global society towards a sustainable path, fostering a community spanning practice and expert communities, and creating compelling visions for progress and hope. Most significantly, the SDGs offer an opportunity at setting the post-2015 global development agenda, inspiring transformation towards sustainable development, and providing a toolkit for changes in governance.

Agenda Setting – The SDGs will provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholders to establish commitments and express their preferences and interests on a broad set of issues under discussion. The formation of SDGs will help countries to 1. **form and coordinate their interests across issues**, 2. **mobilize collective action**, and 3. help **create shared global understanding about the issues and problems**. Indeed, some of these processes may have already begun in the SDG development process driven by the Secretary-General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons and the Open Working Group on SDGs (OWG).

Crucially, the SDGs can help generate coalitions for actors to **work around institutional silos** (national ministries and international institutions) and provide approaches which do not become narrowly focused or controlled by individual institutions. The SDGs offer an opportunity to shift the paradigm and begin connecting dots and **addressing systemic challenges**. Rather than challenging the existing institutions, the most effective SDGs are likely to be those which are able to nudge institutions away from their silo-vision towards more systemic efforts to address poverty.

Inspire Transformation – Participants emphasized that one of the main added values of the SDGs in international governance is in providing **inspiration for a transformation of the development system**. However, the idea of 'transformation' is abstract and means different things to different actors. What the transformation looks like remained an open question to the participants in the workshop. Some saw the transformation as a change in the basic production and consumption system while others viewed it as changing the narrow development paradigm, and others saw it completely differently. However, it was shared across actors that a desired function of the SDGs would be to start such a transformation. One key aspect of the transformation provided by the SDGs would be in **creating a new meta-narrative of development and sustainability** for the 2015-2030 era. The attempt to create universal targets for sustainable development, not focused solely on the developing countries but focused on all countries, can transform the worldviews of actors. This effort differs from some of the other preliminary discussions on the content of the SDGs which do not emphasize this aspect.

Provides a Toolkit – The SDGs can also provide a toolkit for states and other actors in formulating goals, establishing **interrelational understandings between the different goals**, and creating benchmarks and standards for progress. Participants emphasized that the toolkit can connect different efforts with one another across sector and enable stakeholders to act in a more integrated manner. The goals, targets, and indicators of the SDGs then are not simply an aspirational statement, but include mobilizational aspects. The measures, forums, and focus that come with the SDGs can give stakeholders inside government and outside of it to develop more advanced projects. As a toolkit, the SDGs may complement existing international agreements and treaties, rather than overlapping or duplicating efforts. Attention to the tools that are provided by the specific framing and

articulation of the goals is thus an important issue worth consideration by stakeholders.

### [Difference between MDG and SDG]

There was a widespread view in the workshop that the SDGs will have to be substantially different from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order for them to be most effective (they must thus **go beyond the "MDG-Plus"** articulation). The MDGs were largely a narrative to justify the existing development discourse. SDGs can be an opportunity to propose a new approach to development/sustainability. A fundamental difference in the discussion will be that the SDGs will have to recognize and **explicitly address earth system constraints**, such as those captured by, for example, the planetary-boundary concept. Participants found that systemic thinking is largely limited in the MDGs articulation and implementation. For example, the MDG target on water (Target 7.C) did not capture issues about the hydrogen cycles, extreme events, scarcity and abundance. Targets about access and allocation are important, but not sufficient. Incorporating global systemic issues into access and allocation targets is crucial. Although systems thinking is not new, many participants in the workshop emphasized that we are right now seeing a **critical mass in favor of integrating systems thinking** into the SDGs and have a unique opportunity for introducing systems thinking into governance at all levels.

Relatedly, SDGs can improve on the MDGs by shifting from a focus on input to one on output in terms of the targets. For example, the focus on gender equity in education could shift from focusing on how many girls go to school towards focusing on the education and outcomes which happen when girls leave school (in terms of rights, employment, lifelong education, etc.). To go beyond the MDGs efforts, the formulation of the SDGs then must 1. **introduce interconnectivity of ideas**, 2. **create interconnectivity in problem-solving**, and 3. **change the assessments of progress towards more holistic measures**.

### [Formulation / Articulation]

Multiple participants in the workshop drew attention to the **problem-solving aspects, aspirational aspects, and attractiveness aspects** that the specific formulation of the SDGs will need to be attentive to. These different aspects may sometimes work together, but there will often be trade-offs between the crafting of clear problem-solving goals and targets and their attractiveness aspects. As agenda setting and toolkit opportunities, the SDGs would need to be formed with specific articulations included. However, as aspirational statements aiming for high buy-in by diverse actors, framing may need to be framed in attractive ways. Although not shared by all participants, a problem-solving approach to framing, with attention to implementation roadblocks and opportunities, was emphasized as having advantages for mobilizing diverse actors and achieving the universal focus of the institutions. **Flexibility** and careful construction of targets and sub-goals were seen as opportunities to balance the problem-solving aspects with the aspirational aspects.

### [Interconnectivity]

There was consensus in the workshop that the global change problems being faced today are largely **interconnected** and that policy responses would need to better capture this interconnectivity. Recognizing earth system constraints in the SDGs could be a crucial first step in encouraging more interconnectivity in governance efforts which would follow. In addition, the **interconnectivity of the SDGs with other international governance efforts** was seen as important. It was observed that climate change discussions have been limited in some of the early discussions about SDGs. Integrating the two ongoing governance efforts, the SDGs and the UNFCCC, was seen as highly unlikely—although there may be some connections around the issue of energy. However, SDGs may provide some key nudging potential for these other governance issues and could lead to positive outcomes in these other forums.

**[Agents / Communities]**

Connected to the agenda setting and transformational purposes of the SDGs, the process will hopefully contribute to **norm creation and socialization** between key actors. The MDG implementation was seen as limited to national development aid communities. The SDGs process tries to include a much more diverse set of actors and significant connections between these different actors. While this includes efforts to break the silos in national governments and the United Nations (UN) system, it also must enable connections between emerging communities of practice which link the private sector, civil society, and scientists.

**[Linking Global – Local]**

One particular form of interconnectivity between different agents is the need to bridge action at the local level to action at the global level. SDGs will need to deal with **universality** across different countries and account for **existing national priorities**. In the workshop, it was observed that in many developed countries, policy-makers and stakeholders view the SDGs largely as a continuation of the MDGs with limited influence on their policies. Connections in developed countries, developing countries, and between local governments and global efforts thus need to be considered in the framing. This could include "add on" targets for certain countries, allowing for a shifting hierarchy of goals and sub-goals within different regions or countries. SDGs would then be "universal" – meaning shared responsibilities in which every country will be involved in delivery differently.

**[Unintended Consequences]**

Participants were attentive to **possible transformations of world politics and the global ecosystem** for the 2015-2030 period (including the rise of the BRIC countries, climate change and other global change and transformations) and how these will impact the SDG process. In addition, SDGs may have unintended or secondary consequences which may be undesired. For example, numbers and measurement can take on lives of their own where they limit the policy imagination. In addition, if goals do not include various issues there may be key areas left out of the interconnections between issues. If climate change is left out of the agenda, for example, this could limit efforts on other SDGs because interconnections would not develop necessarily.

**Question 2 - Should governance be treated as a stand-alone SDG or integrated into the issues?****[The Importance and Definition of Governance]**

Governance was viewed by participants as an essential, **enabling feature** for SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Some participants even emphasized governance as **a fourth pillar of sustainable development** (complementing the environmental, social, and economic pillars). There was widespread belief that governance should be integrated into the SDGs and a number of creative attempts to take governance seriously in the SDGs were proposed.

However, there was no common understanding of the components of governance and how it should be articulated for the SDGs. **What do we mean by governance?** Governance could be a variety of things – institutions, norms, implementation procedures, and decision-making and dispute resolution processes. Governance does not simply adhere to government, but includes a range of public actors including some private forms of governance. In addition, governance is multifaceted including, for example, good governance, effective governance, and equitable governance.

Some participants recognized the history of including governance at the international level included political formulations and the use of these formulations to the disadvantage of states (namely developing countries). Returning to the division between aspirational goals and problem-solving goals, governance has a tension between

politically oriented focuses of governance and technocratic focuses. Clarification of terminology, and its relationship to similar concepts like 'good governance,' 'rule of law,' and 'democracy', might assist the inclusion of governance aspects in SDGs. Indeed, a potential opportunity exists in creating serious discussions about the content of governance, rather than focusing on creating and negotiating a standard, that could contribute to the agenda setting and transformational aspects of the SDGs.

The workshop also highlighted that there may be some limits on the knowledge about governance and its interactive effects. In some specific issue areas, the natural science and engineering knowledge is very advanced while governance remains largely abstract or tentative. We know some generic things on how to steer societies towards desired outcomes (i.e.governance), but we might have to think about directing attention towards these broader generalizations.

### **[Do We Need Governance?]**

The use of the word 'governance' itself may not be necessary to achieve desired outcomes. If governance is about the implementation systems, institutions, and steering behavior then these aspects can be included without using the word 'governance.' The remark **that governance as a term should be used only when necessary** and should emphasize mobilization of different actors found broad support.

### **[Stand-Alone Governance Goal]**

There was some support for the creation of a stand-alone goal on governance in the set of SDGs. There are normative reasons for a standalone governance goal (including encouraging democratic transformations, for example), but its inclusion would also prioritize the transformational purpose of SDGs by **sending a clear political signal**. This signaling may come at the expense of setting a tractable agenda or creating tool-kits for policymakers. Similarly, a stand-alone goal could be justified on the basis of a) the promotion of partnership among governments, civil society and private sector and, b) the need for greater international cooperative action in, e.g., environmental sustainability, including climate change; economic sustainability (financial system, equitable trade). In addition, a stand-alone governance goal, even if broadly defined, could set the agenda for future international efforts.

In particular, when attention shifts from a focus on goals as outcomes to the drivers of these goals, a governance goal as foundational (as a condition enabling sustainable development) could be valuable. If governance were not a standalone goal it will be more difficult to assign responsibility and demand accountability.

### **[Integrated Governance Goal]**

An alternative to a stand-alone governance goal would be to have governance integrated throughout the SDGs. Governance dynamics (like implementation capacity, finance, participation, accountability and transparency) could be integrated into the other goals. By focusing not on governance in a stand-alone fashion but instead on "what are the governance processes and norms that we want?" governance can be integrated throughout the other goals. To achieve the largest impact, governance would need to be integrated across all of the sustainable development goals in a manner applicable to all countries.

However, efforts at integrated governance goals quickly run into problems unique to each field. First, there may not be political support for inclusion of specific governance aspects in some issues. Second, the governance challenges for each issue have different knowledge levels. Some issues may have advanced understandings of what governance features produce positive outcomes, but others lack such understandings.

### **[Governance as Enabler]**

Another option is to not include governance as a stand-alone goal or in an integrated fashion, but instead to

incorporate it as an **enabler for the entire SDG framework**. Governance would then not be an endpoint or goal sought by states, but instead a tool for the other efforts. The answers varied on how exactly to consider governance as an enabler. The issue could be included as a foundational principle of the SDGs – detailed in the preamble to the SDG document for example. In addition, there could be global efforts to recognize governance in other ways. For example, 2015 could be declared the 'UN Year of Good Governance Principles', discussions could happen in the UN High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) or other organs on the issue, and other discussions could occur. Some were hesitant about the political impact that such efforts would have. In addition, the interaction of governance with some principles of the SDGs, such as universality and possibly common but differentiated responsibility, were considered by the participants.

### **[Governance as Sub-goal]**

It is possible that governance could be included as a sub-goal to a specific formulation of other goals or as a sub-goal connecting different goals. Governance as a sub-goal can focus on creating similar expectations across goals while still being attentive to the unique governance challenges of the different goals. However, the inclusion of auxiliary sub-goals may be counterproductive to other desired aspects of the SDGs. The discussion in the workshop emphasized other alternatives more than this one.

### **[Governance Targets and Indicators]**

Regardless of how governance is included, there will be some targets and indicators that include governance aspects in their formulation. Participants grappled with the difficulty in developing such indicators and targets. Discussion centered around establishing firm quantitative targets (for example, 'achieve X% increase by 2030') or instead developing a dashboard of indicators and targets which would be suitable to states in different contexts. In addition, measurement of progress on governance aspects may present significant challenges, especially if the indicator aims towards significant outcomes. National reporting to international agreements and creative use of indicators were emphasized as useful alternatives.

Despite various issues regarding targets and measurement, verification and monitoring, a focus on governance at **target and indicator levels** instead of at the goal level could help to overcome difficulty of getting all the countries to agree on a single governance goal.

### **[Institutions]**

As discussion moved from the governance for SDGs to the governance of the SDGs, participants discussed various different international institutions. As many different institutions exist with a focus on sustainable development (within the UN this includes UNDP, UNEP, FAO, and others), the participants did not see a need for new institutions. What was needed was creating institutional coherence in the context of fragmentation. Similar to the need for interconnectivity across the SDGs, there was a need for new functions of institutions focused on learning from each other and creating shared financing with a long-term perspective. In addition, existing institutions can be an obstacle to progress on the SDGs. For example member states are overwhelmingly objecting to include climate change as there is a global process on that already.

### **[National and Global Governance]**

The specific national challenges with implementing governance goals and targets were emphasized by many participants. The governance implementation for creating universal access to safe drinking water, for example, means different things in different countries. Cause-effect relationships on governance may be appropriate to specific national contexts and inappropriate in others. Different sectors and arrangement of ministries at the national level thus create unique national challenges important for the formulation of any governance aspects. Similarly, governance impacts and interaction at the international level may be less clear than at the national level.



## PART B – Towards Implementation and Evaluation

### Question 3 - What will it take to move the SDGs from paper to practice? What organizational, administrative, and financial resources will this require?

#### [Moving from Paper to Practice]

Getting the SDGs from paper to actually changing practice is based upon the specific national context and the context of the goal itself. Participants were clear that the SDG implementation processes would depend on efforts from agencies of the UN system but also actors outside of the UN system. Some of this would include turning existing institutions and financial resources towards different ends articulated by the SDGs, while others would require some changes in the existing organizational, administrative, and financial context.

#### [Mobilization for Implementation]

The **mobilizational aspect** was emphasized by some participants as of critical importance to the implementation challenges. Implementation and mobilization were argued to be easier if the diverse actors necessary saw that they have ownership within the system of governance. Including various national level actors early in policy discussions would grease the wheels for the creation of organizational, administrative, and financial resources for the SDGs. This could **extend beyond state actors** to including the private sector and civil society.

#### [National Implementation]

To articulate universally applicable goals for countries dealing with different sustainable development challenges, diverse organizational and financial resources will be required. Some participants emphasized the creation of a high-level national focal point for implementation in order to organize these diverse actors. These high-level national focal points could coordinate activity across the silos of national government and help plan and establish diverse new governance processes. **New and innovative financing** and inclusion of actors can be utilized for a variety of SDG process, including: national plan formulation, evaluation and re-evaluation, financial assessments, accumulation of best practices, and assessments of governance aspects.

Monitoring and assessment were highlighted as key challenges for national implementation. Many countries are nervous about extensive monitoring systems while others will lack the capacity for significant adoption of advanced indicators for assessing progress. Creative suggestions for these monitoring and assessment challenges include: developing reviews based around specific challenges (drought prone cities, declining river basins, etc.) which could facilitate best practices for evaluation and focus attention across countries, developing more monitoring capacity at the global level (utilizing remote sensing or an Ombudsperson), and development of new monitoring concepts. In addition, it was emphasized that monitoring and assessment should not be irregular events, **but ongoing systems of evaluation and re-evaluation.**

#### [Implementation in the UN]

Within the UN system, participants recommended that no new institutions should be created for the SDGs, but instead the efforts should focus on augmenting the current UN system. This may include partnerships and interactions with other international institutions (such as the World Bank, World Trade Organization, and global civil society). More about these issues was expressed in response to Question 5 below.

### [Creating an Adaptive System]

One final point during discussion was that SDG implementation will necessarily require re-definition procedures so that as problems and technology change, goals can be altered. The organizational and administrative aspects and interfaces with science for this are currently lacking at international and national levels and would have to be augmented for the SDGs.

## Question 4 - What should be monitoring, evaluation and financial mechanisms for SDGs?

### [Importance and Politics of Monitoring]

The selection of indicators may have contributed to the success or adoption of efforts for the MDGs. Indicators for the SDGs will need to be carefully selected and deployed in order to ensure that progress is made and that the purposes of agenda setting, transformation, and useful tools are maximized. Reliable and transparent monitoring of indicators is seen by many to be a crucial part of the SDG process. As noted above, there are questions by many states about the politics of monitoring. Getting buy-in into the monitoring systems is thus crucial for effective monitoring to be deployed for the SDGs. Making measures which are useful to the international community but also which help national policymakers better target their various efforts can help satisfy different interests.

### [What and How to Monitor?]

A systematic approach to monitoring is needed which is complemented by an annual administrative review process. There was strong agreement that monitoring should make use of **existing monitoring mechanisms** rather than bringing something new and that best practices should be explored and highlighted. Many businesses and economic sectors already have sophisticated monitoring and reporting structures that could be embedded. Nation-based monitoring was recognized as the current dominant approach, but it was criticized by some. Regardless of the focus, the scale of monitoring should be carefully crafted aware of political and scientific issues. As SDGs are related to environmental aspects, Earth system observation is necessary for improving human well-being, which is a different feature from the MDGs.

### [Who Should Monitor?]

Monitoring could be undertaken by a variety of (or combinations of) actors. National governments usually undertake monitoring and are the source of data for aggregated monitoring on UN level (which raises questions on reliability of data). Regional organizations could have potential and necessary trust to be part of SDG monitoring processes. NGO monitoring and assessment of efforts offers one option, but legitimacy concerns may be significant for these actors. While peer-review mechanisms were considered effective, it was noted that on inter-state level there is insufficient trust to have states reviewing other states and, domestically, most states will not delegate authority for monitoring to NGOs. A scientific panel / advisory group within the UN could serve as support unit for monitoring and advance methodologies, and could act as a **data or best practice repository**. Alternatively, a third party-specialized institution responsible for monitoring like ISO could be charged, and obviously the HLPF would need to be linked to monitoring efforts.

### [Beyond Monitoring]

Countries are in various states of transition and socio-economic situations. Some participants emphasized that we need to look at the dynamics of interaction between all forms of capital (natural capital, human capital, social capital, built capital, and financial capital). Moving from simplistic, single-issue measurement towards more advanced systems of evaluation requires the need to aim for "**knowledge ecosystems**" which take the inferences from understanding systems into the formulation of usable knowledge. Big data developments can be used to harness capacity to get data, but require assessments and careful aggregation.

## PART C – The Role of UN Institutions and Beyond

### Question 5 - What can UN do with High Level Political Forum? How should the institutions be institutionalized?

#### [HLPF as a Political Forum]

There is a lot of potential and hope in the HLPF, not least in its ability to bridge environmental and development efforts at the international level. However, there are some challenges which may limit the impact of the HLPF. This includes the lack of a bureau and governing body/advisory board, the lack of a strong independent secretariat but instead one assigned to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), a very wide agenda, and a weak representation of the environmental dimension. It was discussed that the weaknesses of the HLPF is not a mere oversight, but that there is strong opposition to the forum attempting to bureaucratize the process. HLPF is what member states could agree upon at that point in time – e.g. HLPF is not an institution or body but a **forum** – it is a process and platform for discussion. It falls way short of the more significant idea for a Sustainable Development Council.

#### [What can the HLPF Contribute?]

HLPF then may play a primary role in **orchestrating** different action by various actors. As a hybrid organization, bringing together different actors in the UN system, the organization can play a key role in helping with agenda setting. The potential to achieve these are limited, but the HLPF can develop such a system gradually. In the future it is possible that the HLPF will develop some role in allocation of means of implementation, influencing policy developments, performing review, or even implementing some aspects. However, it was observed that ECOSOC's new mandate is very similar to the HLPF mandate, thus weakening the status of the new HLPF. Key decisions on this issue, such as the creation of a separate HLPF budget, are being discussed currently.

#### [HLPF: Accessibility]

Participants noted that the HLPF has allowed multiple stakeholders, such as the Major Groups, to have more access than other UN bodies. The need to retain the inter-governmental nature (as stressed by the member states opposed to strong policy on sustainable development) means that this aspect could be diluted in the future. Similarly, to be effective in the UN system **the HLPF needs to be truly high level**, but this could come at the risk of losing some of the connections with social actors.

#### [The UN System]

Some participants saw the HLPF as a limited agent within the UN system and the global order more generally. Although HLPF was an improvement over the Commission on Sustainable Development which preceded it, the HLPF remains significantly constrained in its efforts. In more general terms participants also addressed the issue of **qualified majority voting** as an approach to improve decision making processes in the UN system. Here a clear difference emerged between researchers and practitioners. The UN Secretary General's Scientific Advisory Body has recently been established but seems composed along distributional criteria rather than quality criteria. It also is again an initiative of the UN Secretary General that circumvents existing structures and institutions (e.g. ICSU, UNESCO) and institutionalizes issues.

## **Question 6 - How can the UN System engage with other actors, both public and private, to enhance to fulfillment of the SDGs?**

### **[Outside the UN System]**

The UN should involve a wide range of actors in a meaningful way that also can incentivize participation and convince actors that they have something to gain from participation. For example, large companies may be motivated by the need to have common enforcement (for example, of environmental standards) and the UN is the best suited to do this through either promotion or standardization. There would be an added value for SDGs of having a pluralistic of actors. For the SDG system it may turn out simply that: **pluralism is good**.

### **[Who gets Included?]**

The selection of such actors is complicated. For example, which epistemic communities can be included as there is nothing resembling a coherent network of SDGs experts, but there are viable networks organized around specific sustainable development questions. Additionally, the legitimacy of non-state actors is a persistent question. The selection could be different for each SDG, with regional sub-divisions. With its comparatively wide mandate regarding involvement of major groups and other stakeholders, the HLPF is the "most inclusive" setup in UN system for participatory approaches but there could be parallel processes in the Global Compact, and other venues like the regional organizations (as for example the civil society preparatory meetings in the Asia Pacific region).

Digital platforms (**e-governance**, etc.) were mentioned as a promising option but warnings were voiced that social science research on existing digital decision and consulting processes calls for caution (digital divide, technological obstacles, democratic challenges).

### **[Transformation]**

A major question was how to transform the system and create more robust linkages between the various actors outside the UN system. The Global Compact and other partnerships offer some significant efforts to build on. In addition, **the Major Group system** offers some strong aspects (legitimacy), but it was recognized that this system may have reached its limits and has systemic shortcomings in inclusiveness and accountability. This system, as sub-optimal it may be, is holding the line for non-state participation in the UN system as quite a number of member states would like to use a reform of the Major Group system to reduce non-state involvement.

The SDG process could be the initial step towards creating new global partnerships – leaving MDG donor-recipient relation behind towards much wider array of relations and catalytic processes.

The International Workshop on **Governance 'of' and 'for' Sustainable Development Goals** was attended by the following participants (in alphabetical order):

- Steinar Andresen** – Research Professor, Fridtjof Nansens Institutt
- Steven Bernstein** – Associate Chair and Graduate Director, Department of Political Science and Co-Director of the Environmental Governance Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto
- Frank Biermann** – Professor, Institute for Environmental Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; Guest Professor, Earth System Governance, Lund University; Chair, Earth System Governance Project
- Mathilde Bouyé** – Post 2015 Task Force Coordinator, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France
- Guy Brendan** – Global Fellow, Natural Resources Defense Council
- Olivia Caeymaex** – Associate, United Nations University Office at the United Nations
- Sakiko Fukuda-Parr** – Professor, Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy, The New School for Public Engagement
- Joyeeta Gupta** – Professor, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam
- Peter Haas** – Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Yuka Hayakawa** – Researcher, Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology, Tokyo Institute of Technology
- Masahiko Iguchi** – Researcher, Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology, Tokyo Institute of Technology
- Ngeta Kabiri** – JSPS-UNU Postdoctoral fellow, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
- Norichika Kanie** – Senior Research Fellow, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability; Associate Professor, Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology, Tokyo Institute of Technology; and Project Leader of the POST2015 Project
- Rakhyun Kim** – Postdoctoral Fellow, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
- Yuto Kitamura** – Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo; Project Theme Leader of the POST2015 Project
- Marcel Kok** – Department of Nature and Rural Areas, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
- Csaba Kőrösi** – Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations
- Marc Levy** – Deputy Director, Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Earth Institute, Columbia University
- Maja Messmer Mokhtar** – First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations
- Mans Nilsson** – Deputy Director and Research Director, Stockholm Environment Institute
- Ian Noble** – Chief Scientist, Global Adaptation Institute
- Kate Offerdahl** – Writer/Editor, Earth Negotiations Bulletin, International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Simon Høiberg Olsen** – Senior Policy Researcher/Task Manager, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
- Tomoko Onishi** – First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations
- Lazlo Pinter** – Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy, Central European University
- Barbara J.Ryan** – Secretariat Director, Group on Earth Observations
- Mayumi Sakoh** – Policy and Partnerships Advisor, Millennium Institute
- Masahisa Sato** – Associate Professor, Faculty of Environmental and Information Studies, Tokyo City University
- Yasukuni Shibata** – Senior Coordinator, Biodiversity Policy Division, Japanese Ministry of the Environment
- Jan-Gustav Strandenaes** – Senior Policy Advisor, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability
- Anne-Sophie Stevance** – Science Officer, International Council for Science; Future Earth Interim Secretariat
- Casey Stevens** – JSPS-UNU Postdoctoral fellow, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
- Zoltán Szentgyörgy** – Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary
- Farooq Ullah** – Executive Director, Stakeholder Forum
- Arild Underdal** – Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo
- Peter Veit** – Acting director, Governance Centre, World Resource Institute
- Tancrède Voituriez** – Programme Director Governance, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations at Sciences Po Paris
- Takahiro Yamada** – Professor, Faculty of Urban Liberal Arts, Tokyo Metropolitan University
- Oran Young** – Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara
- Dongyong Zhang** – Associate Professor, Hennan Agricultural University
- Ruben Zondervan** – Executive Director, Earth System Governance Project; and Lund University
- Irena Zubcevic** – Senior Sustainable Development Officer, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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