



House of Commons  
Environmental Audit  
Committee

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# **Connected world: Agreeing ambitious Sustainable Development Goals in 2015**

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**Seventh Report of Session 2014-15**

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to the report*

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## Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set for them by Her Majesty's Ministers; and to report thereon to the House.

All publications of the Committee (including press notices) and further details can be found on the Committee's web pages at [www.parliament.uk/eacom](http://www.parliament.uk/eacom)

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### The following members were also members of the committee during the parliament:

Richard Benyon MP (*Conservative, Newbury*) [ex-officio], Chris Evans MP, (*Labour/Co-operative, Islwyn*), Ian Murray MP (*Labour, Edinburgh South*), Sheryll Murray MP (*Conservative, South East Cornwall*), Paul Uppal MP (*Conservative, Wolverhampton South West*)

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at [www.parliament.uk/eacom](http://www.parliament.uk/eacom). A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Simon Fiander (Clerk), Richard Clarke (Committee Specialist), Andrew Wallace (Senior Committee Assistant), Anna Browning (Committee Assistant), and Nicholas Davies (Media Officer).

The photographs used in this report have been provided by organisations that submitted written evidence to the inquiry.

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## Summary

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Poverty and environmental degradation are urgent global challenges. In September 2015 world leaders have a unique opportunity to end extreme poverty and protect the planet, as they agree new global 'Sustainable Development Goals', to be achieved by 2030.

The UK has taken an important role in the international process of agreeing new goals, with the Prime Minister co-chairing a panel of experts in 2012. However, the Government has recently been seeking to reduce the currently proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which risks losing the current international focus on environmental sustainability alongside poverty reduction and economic and social development. In order to reach global agreement on ambitious action next year it is important that the UK respects the status of the 17 proposed Goals when the European Union agrees its negotiating position at the European Council meeting on 18th-19th December 2014.

Achieving the global goals for 2030 will require ambitious action for the UK and other developed countries as well as for developing countries. The UK Government should:

- rapidly phase out subsidies to carbon intensive energy sources;
- demand the highest standards of environmental protection in trade deals, and unequivocally ensure that there is no potential for these to be undermined through trade dispute settlement mechanisms, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP);
- lead international efforts to improve air quality in cities;
- accelerate its work on resource efficiency and find opportunities to fund circular economy approaches through UK aid spending;
- ensure that at all economic development related aid programmes fully safeguard biodiversity and tread a new path which de-couples economic growth from natural resource use;
- report annually on the impact of the International Climate Fund;
- support the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the UK overseas territories; and
- engage young people in the UK with the new goals, and support activities that raise awareness about sustainable development.



Almost 80% of Dhaka's urban poor are migrants. Dhaka's slums are often situated near, alongside or even in rubbish tips as waste handling provides a means of earning a living for the urban poor, especially migrants who move from the countryside to the city in hope of finding more regular incomes - despite the very poor conditions, lower standards of living, high rents and limited space on offer.

*Credit: Bangladesh Christian Aid / Mohammadur Rahma*



Members of a study group do their homework by the light of a D-light solar panel lamp in Lalpur village, Jharkhand. October 2012.

*Credit: Christian Aid / Elizabeth Dalzie*

# 1 Connected world

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## The connected challenges of poverty and environmental degradation

1. Poverty and environmental degradation are urgent global challenges:

- One in five people in developing regions lives in extreme poverty.<sup>1</sup> One in four children under age five has inadequate height for their age,<sup>2</sup> and one in seven is underweight.<sup>3</sup>
- Every day in 2013, 32,000 people had to abandon their homes because of conflict or war.<sup>4</sup>
- One-third of urban residents in developing regions still live in slums, and urbanisation and population increases mean that the number of people living in slums increased from 760 million in 2000 to 860 million in 2012.<sup>5</sup>
- 13 million hectares of forest were lost worldwide each year between 2000 and 2010, either through devastation by natural causes or because the land was converted to other uses.<sup>6</sup>
- Global emissions of carbon dioxide in 2011 increased to 50% above their 1990 level.<sup>7</sup>

Tackling these issues requires a new understanding of the connections between people and planet and a global commitment to pursuing sustainable development.

## The lessons from Rio and the MDGs

2. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, commonly referred to as the Earth Summit, saw the adoption of a number of crucial agreements, including the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and landmark Conventions on desertification, biological diversity and climate change. Twenty years later, however, as we concluded in our report on the *Preparations for the Rio +20 Summit* which took place in June 2012:

The need for action is even more pressing and more urgent than it was in 1992. Approaching environmental ‘planetary boundaries’ will limit our

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1 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p4

2 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p5

3 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p7

4 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p8

5 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#) p46

6 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#) p40

7 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#) p40



ability to use natural resources to support further growth and already require immediate action to avoid further damage to our planet.<sup>8</sup>

3. In the 20 years between the two Rio Summits, the global environment has continued to be degraded. However, there have also been some notable environmental successes through international action: the world is on the verge of eliminating ozone-depleting substances and the proportion of terrestrial and coastal marine areas under protection has increased.<sup>9</sup> One study estimates the impact of another area of progress—removing lead from petrol—at \$2.4 trillion a year, including 1.2 million fewer premature deaths.<sup>10</sup> Although greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, there are hopes that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC] Conference of Parties will produce a binding climate change agreement in Paris in December 2015.

4. In 2000, states made an international development commitment through the United Nations, known as the Millennium Development Goals, to be delivered by 2015. The Government told us that “As a short, clear resolution, [the MDGs] have galvanized international action and have driven transformative change.”<sup>11</sup> The number of people living in extreme poverty has reduced by half.<sup>12</sup> The likelihood of a child dying before age five has been nearly cut in half over the last two decades, so that now about 17,000 fewer children die every day.<sup>13</sup> The proportion of undernourished people in developing regions has decreased from 24% in 1990–1992 to 14% in 2011–2013.<sup>14</sup> Between 2000 and 2012, an estimated 3.3 million deaths from malaria were averted.<sup>15</sup> Access to an improved drinking water source has become a reality for 2.3 billion people.<sup>16</sup> 90% of children in developing regions now attend primary school.<sup>17</sup>

5. Despite the good progress on reducing poverty and improvements in health and education, however, there was less progress on the seventh of the eight MDG goals, which focused on environmental protection. Justine Greening told us “When we look back at the progress we have seen under the MDGs, one of the areas where not enough progress was made was on MDG7 in relation to environmental degradation and sustainable use of the environment. Of course, alongside that, climate change did not feature at all in the original MDGs.”<sup>18</sup>

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8 Environmental Audit Committee, Eighth report of session 2010–12, [Preparations for the Rio +20 Summit](#), HC 1026, p3

9 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p4

10 United Nations News Centre, [Phase-out of leaded petrol brings huge health and cost benefits](#) (27 October 2011) accessed 9 December 2014

11 DFID ([SDG 001](#)) para 1

12 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p4

13 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p24–6

14 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p4

15 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p37

16 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p43

17 United Nations, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), p5

18 Q2

6. In 2015, the UN will agree a new set of development goals, following the conclusions agreed at the 2012 Rio+20 Earth Summit. These goals will incorporate and combine two previously separate processes—the Post-2015 Development Agenda intended to replace the Millennium Development Goals, which have helped to focus international aid since 2000, as well as the sustainable development commitments arising from the Rio+20 Summit.<sup>19</sup> These new, joint, ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs) will be universal; encompassing both poverty alleviation and sustainable development, and applicable to developed as well as developing countries. As we noted in our report on the *Outcomes of the Rio +20 Summit*,<sup>20</sup> one of the most significant outcomes of that event was the international agreement on the need for those SDGs.

### Agreeing new goals

7. There have been a series of processes intended to produce this new set of goals, including:

- A High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, whose report was published in May 2013.<sup>21</sup>
- An SDG Open Working Group, established after the Rio+20 Summit, whose outcome report was published in July 2014 and presented to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014.<sup>22</sup>
- Various public consultations, including those set up by the UN System Task Team on the post-2015 Development Agenda.
- The UN Secretary General’s synthesis report, *The Road to Dignity by 2030*, drawing together the work and results of the High Level Panel and the Open Working Group, an initial draft of which was published on 4 December 2014.<sup>23</sup>

### The High Level Panel

8. In July 2012, the UN Secretary-General established a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons to explore the ‘Post-2015 Development Agenda’, to replace the MDGs when they expire in 2015. This Panel was co-chaired by the UK Prime Minister alongside the

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19 Q207

20 Environmental Audit Committee, Second report of session 2013-14, [Outcomes of the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit](#) HC 200

21 United Nations, [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty And Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development: The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#) (May 2013)

22 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014)

23 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014)



presidents of Liberia and Indonesia. The High Level Panel's report set out five "transformational shifts" needed to catalyse human development:<sup>24</sup>

- Leave no-one behind: a shift from reducing to ending extreme poverty, including amongst the most marginalised (disabled people; ethnic minorities, women and girls; remote communities);
- Put sustainable development at the core: integrating efforts to tackle climate change and environmental degradation within the goals;
- Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth: harnessing innovation, technology and the private sector;
- Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all: boosting peace, accountability and good governance; and
- Forge a new global partnership.

### *The Open Working Group*

9. The Rio +20 Summit concluded that:

SDGs should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.<sup>25</sup>

Following the Summit, an 'Open Working Group' was established in January 2013 consisting thirty geographically representative members, including the UK negotiating jointly with Australia and the Netherlands. In July 2014 it proposed 17 goals (and 169 targets) as follows:<sup>26</sup>

- i) End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- ii) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture;
- iii) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- iv) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all;
- v) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;

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24 United Nations, [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty And Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development: The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#) (May 2013)

25 United Nations [Rio + 20 Outcome Document: Future we want](#) para 247

26 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014)

- vi) Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- vii) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all;
- viii) Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- ix) Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
- x) Reduce inequality within and among countries;
- xi) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- xii) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- xiii) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- xiv) Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- xv) Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
- xvi) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and
- xvii) Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Civil society organisations in general were “very pleased with the UN Open Working Group process as that open process and the participation of civil society has been much greater than in other processes.”<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Secretary General’s Synthesis Report***

10. States agreed a resolution at the UN General Assembly on 10 September 2014 that the Open Working Group’s conclusions should be the “main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda.”<sup>28</sup> The UN Secretary General issued an advanced version of his SDGs ‘synthesis report’ on 4 December 2014.<sup>29</sup> This set out the basis for international negotiations in the run up to their agreement in September

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27 Q90 [WWF]

28 United Nations [A/68/L.61, as orally revised, and issued officially as A/RES/68/309](#) (September 2014)

29 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014)

2015. The process for agreeing the final goals involves the EU negotiating as a bloc, rather than individual member states making a direct input. It is expected that the European Commission will reach an agreed position on the Sustainable Development Goals in time for a European Council meeting on 18/19 December 2014 in preparation for international negotiations which will be completed in 2015.

11. The Secretary General used his report to highlight six ‘essential elements’ for delivering sustainable development and “help frame and reinforce the universal, integrated and transformative nature of a sustainable development agenda”: Dignity, People, Prosperity, Planet, Justice and Partnership (Figure 1). He concluded that:

The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and people to end poverty, transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, whilst protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realising human rights.

We are at a historic crossroads, and the directions we take will determine whether we succeed or fail on our promises.<sup>30</sup>

And:

Our sense of empathy and enlightened self-interest should compel us to act. Our responsibilities as stewards of the planet should equally compel us to act. None of today’s boundaries drawn by human beings—whether those boundaries are national borders, or boundaries of class, ability, age, gender, geography, ethnicity or religion.<sup>31</sup>

## Our inquiry

12. Our inquiry has focused on the UK’s aims and ambitions for the SDGs, the extent of co-ordination across Government and consultation with stakeholders in the process of negotiating goals, how the Goals will influence the UK’s domestic policies and aid programmes, the accountability and reporting arrangements for the UK setting its targets and indicators for the Goals, and how performance will be reported. We took evidence from the DFID Secretary of State, development and environment NGOs, business and charities, ministers from Defra and DECC and the Director General of the Environment directorate of the European Commission. We are grateful to them all, and to our specialist

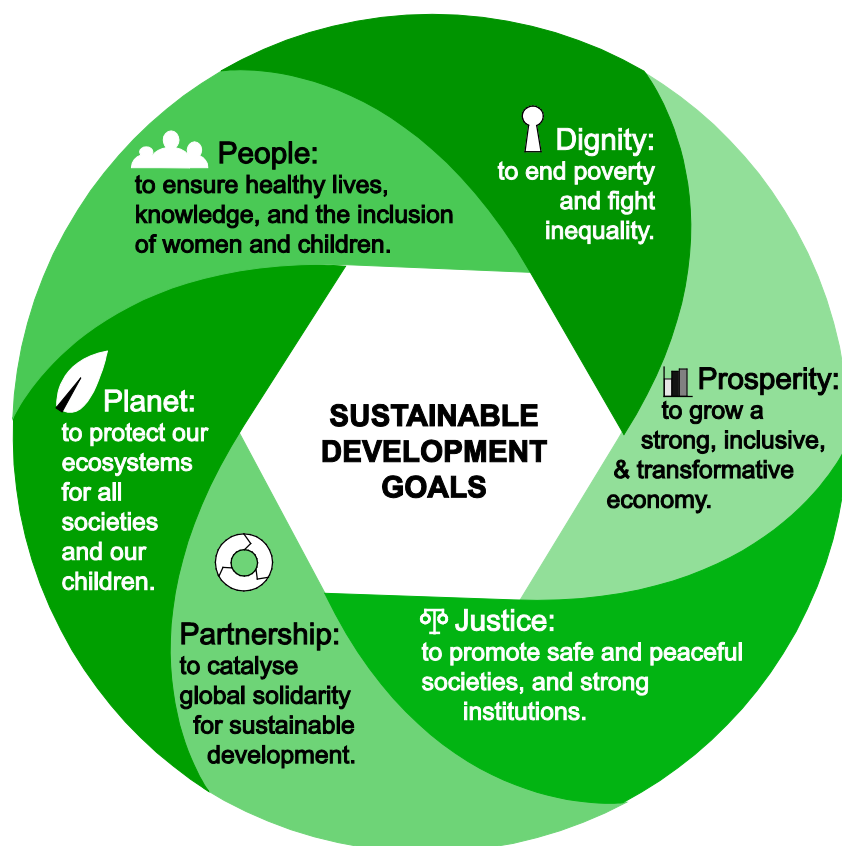
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30 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 1-2

31 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 15

adviser Farooq Ullah.<sup>32</sup> The inputs from all of our witnesses and their evidence were received before the Secretary General's synthesis report was published on 5 December.

**Figure 1**



32 Farooq Ullah declared the following interests: Chief Executive, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future.



Source: Secretary General's Synthesis Report



Deforestation due to gold mining. French Guiana

Gold mining is one of the major causes of deforestation in the tropical forest and also of river pollution in the French Guiana.

Credit: Roger Leguen / WWF-Canon



Theodor Kouakou, a cocoa farmer from Côte d'Ivoire, holding freshly picked cocoa pods.

Credit: Fairtrade/Éric St-Pierre

## 2 Embedding sustainable development across the goals

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13. The BOND Beyond 2015 group, which is made up of over 100 organisations, have stated that the post-2015 process “creates a vital opportunity to bring development and environment concerns, approaches and solutions together within one integrated framework—one that can deliver mutually reinforcing progress in both areas.”<sup>33</sup> Helen Dennis of Christian Aid told us “the three dimensions of sustainable development—economic, environment and social—should be adequately reflected, both across the targets but also within the goal headlines themselves.”<sup>34</sup> She added

Integration is clearly absolutely critical, given the twin challenges around extreme poverty but also we must ensure that inter-generational justice, sustainability, the eradication of poverty is not just a one-off event, that it is then sustained in the future and is not undermined by the impacts of disasters and climate change.<sup>35</sup>

Dominic White of WWF told us “We see some very well crafted goals [in the OWG report] in terms of the balance of the three dimensions within them, and you could look at the food goal or the water goal for examples of that perhaps. There is always more work to be done; it is not an exact science.”<sup>36</sup> The Secretary General’s synthesis report stated:

All voices have called for a people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda to ensure human dignity, equality, environmental stewardship, healthy economies, freedom from want and fear, and a renewed global partnership for sustainable development. Tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development agendas are two mutually reinforcing sides of the same coin.<sup>37</sup>

### Natural environment and climate change

14. The STEPS Centre told us “the goals should take into account existing scientific evidence regarding a ‘safe operating space’ in which development can proceed without jeopardising development opportunities for future generations. Inter-generational issues should therefore be central to the goals, and their implementation in the UK.”<sup>38</sup> BOND Beyond 2015 called for environmental sustainability to be incorporated as “a ‘green thread’

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33 Beyond2015UK [Environmental Sustainability in a Post-2015 framework](#) (September 2014) p1

34 Q93

35 Q94

36 Q94

37 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 49

38 STEPS Centre ([SDG004](#)) para 4



that is considered and addressed in all goals”.<sup>39</sup> DFID told us “The Government is committed to sustainable development, and ensuring that it is effectively integrated across the post-2015 agenda is a key priority for the UK”. They wanted “to see a green thread of environmental sustainability and good stewardship of natural resources effectively integrated across the framework in key areas, such as food, water, energy and growth as these sectors are the key drivers of environmental degradation”.<sup>40</sup> The notion of a ‘green thread’ echoes the phrase used by the Prime Minister about the importance of a ‘golden thread’ of

conditions that enable open economies and open societies to thrive. These include the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary ...free media and association... good governance and the presence of property rights. In short, the foundations for the sustained economic growth that lifts countries out of poverty.<sup>41</sup>

## **Biodiversity**

15. WWF have calculated that:

Between 1970 and 2008, low-income countries experienced a 60% decline in species populations, while high-income countries avoided any losses. In effect, high-income countries are outsourcing the loss of species and habitats to lower-income countries. For example, the increasing demand for soy products in Europe and the US has resulted in forests being cleared in the Amazon, to make way for soy plantations. Such inequitable degradation of ecosystems will prevent economic, social and environmental sustainability from being achieved within the environmental limits of our one planet. Proportionally, high-income countries would require more than three planets to sustain their current levels of consumption, compared to middle income countries that rely on a little more than one planet and low-income countries that draw on only two thirds of the planet’s resources.<sup>42</sup>

It concluded that “we now take 50% more each year from nature than the planet can replenish. This means we would need 1.5 planets for the world to replenish all the natural resources we currently demand. We would need three planets by 2050 if we keep consuming at the rate that is predicted.”<sup>43</sup>

16. When we spoke to Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee, in November 2014, he explained that he had not been asked to comment specifically on the Sustainable

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39 BOND Beyond 2015 UK ([SDG0015](#))

40 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) paras 10-11

41 [Speech to the Transparency International Post 2015 High-Level event](#) (September 2014)

42 WWF [More than the sum of its parts](#) (2014)

43 WWF [More than the sum of its parts](#) (2014)

Development Goals,<sup>44</sup> but had advised the Government on the risks to natural capital and establishing natural capital accounts. He told us:

We have pushed very hard for the ONS to produce proper accounts and the ONS have produced the first partial natural capital accounts for non-renewables, which show that they are going down and, therefore, show that the Government are not achieving the objective of maintaining natural capital intact.<sup>45</sup>

Karl Falkenberg, Director General of Environment at the European Commission, told us that they are “working to make available in environmental accounts, not just domestic resource use, but global resource use; meaning that we don’t want to just take what has been used domestically in Europe to produce, but to see how and where those resources were sourced abroad and take a global picture into account”.<sup>46</sup> Defra told us that the UK is “having conversations” in the EU and UN about natural capital accounting.<sup>47</sup>

17. Andrew Scott of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) told us that the Millennium Development Goals were not sufficiently focused on the environment. He believed that:

MDG7 was not achieved because it was a badly conceived goal and the targets underneath it were, let’s be honest, not entirely about environmental sustainability and some of them were pretty unambitious. The message that we got on environmental sustainability was that it is an add-on. The message that we want to convey with the SDGs is that environmental sustainability is an essential component of all development processes.<sup>48</sup>

However, despite the scale of the challenges around biodiversity, global leaders do not appear to be prioritising it. Dan Rogerson MP, Under-Secretary of State at Defra, told us:

We need to make sure that we embed all the aspects of policy for which Defra is responsible. The concern is that, if we put all the environmental goals into a silo, that will be the bit that does not get the funding and does not get the delivery as the programme moves forward. So we want to cut that right the way across, so that wherever people invest and wherever they make progress on development, it will be truly sustainable and we will the outcomes that we want.<sup>49</sup>

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44 Oral evidence [taken on 28 November 2014](#), HC 756, Q51

45 Oral evidence [taken on 28 November 2014](#), HC 756, Q13

46 Q226

47 Q158

48 Q95

49 Q131

He told us that the reason that no Defra Minister had attended a recent UN conference on biodiversity was that only 40 member states had sent ministers.<sup>50</sup>

**18. The Millennium Development Goals gave insufficient attention to environmental protection and sustainable development. The prioritisation of aid resources on vital areas of human development such as health and education, was at the expense of an integrated sustainable development agenda. The Open Working Group's proposals provide a broader framework which better captures the complexity and inter-dependency of the relationship between people and planet. The mix of standalone goals and integrated indicators has the potential to be just as action-orientated as the MDGs, but have the advantage of being more comprehensive. It includes innovative tools such as Natural Capital Accounting which help Governments measure what really matters to support decision making and guide policy. *The Government, despite its innovative work on developing Natural Capital Accounts, is not currently showing sufficient leadership around biodiversity and environmental protection. It should actively champion this area in the Sustainable Development Goals in international negotiations, so that the 'green thread' that runs throughout the Goals leads to real improvements in environmental protection and improved outcomes by 2030.***

### **Climate change**

19. Progress on climate change and poverty alleviation are interdependent. Stakeholder Forum told us:

Eradicating poverty in the poorest parts of the world must... go hand in hand with reducing carbon emissions and pollution in the developed world, and with using finite resources more efficiently. Otherwise efforts to secure development and poverty eradication in the developing countries will increasingly be overwhelmed by the adverse impacts of global changes arising mainly from unsustainable practices in the developed world and middle income countries.<sup>51</sup>

Andrew Scott of ODI told us:

Climate change presents the greatest threat to sustainable development and poverty eradication and if action is not taken on climate change then not only will poverty eradication and the millennium development goal types of goals be more difficult and more expensive to achieve, but in future, and perhaps towards the end of the SDG period, we risk seeing people being impoverished by climate change, a regressing of the gains that have been made.<sup>52</sup>

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50 Q140

51 Stakeholder Forum ([SDG0021](#))

52 Q99

20. The Open Working Group's June 2014 report proposed a separate goal on climate change, whilst acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, inter-governmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.<sup>53</sup> The Secretary General's report explicitly states that the new agenda must "address the drivers of climate change and its consequences".<sup>54</sup>

21. A recent joint article by WWF and Care urged that governments use the fact that there are parallel processes aiming to reach ambitious goals for both sustainable development and climate change in late 2015 to ensure that the two processes inform each other:

Recent negotiations on the SDGs and parallel discussions within the UNFCCC have revealed that governments often view the relationship between the two with caution - and, even, scepticism. ... [We] call for greater cohesion between the two processes. We are convinced that if we are to build ambition for integrated action much stronger cooperation is urgently needed between these two negotiating processes.<sup>55</sup>

Thomas Lingard of Unilever said

business is looking at the state of the international politics, trying to get a read on the level of political ambition to make a shift in the trajectory of business-as-usual. This is particularly true when it comes to climate and decarbonisation and the kinds of shifts that are required in the energy system. I think these international statements of intent to go in a particular direction at a particular level of ambition are incredibly powerful because of that signalling value.<sup>56</sup>

22. Christian Aid told us however that "Despite their support for climate visibility, [the Government] has been ambivalent about inclusion of a 'Climate Change goal'. ... A climate goal is the only way of ensuring visibility and prioritisation, and clearly connecting action on climate change to poverty eradication."<sup>57</sup> Helen Dennis of Christian Aid said

the challenge that is presented to us in terms of remaining below two degrees going forward is absolutely enormous and requires such a seismic shift in terms of our energy supplies, our approach to consumption, carbon emissions and so on. Everything that is possible to be done needs to be done. Therefore, ensuring that climate change is a headline within the Sustainable Development Goals and building that momentum ahead of Paris is one way

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53 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014) Goal 13

54 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 65

55 Huffington Post [UNFCCC and Post-2015 Development: More Than the Sum of the Parts](#) (1 October 2014) Accessed 9 December 2014

56 Q112

57 Christian Aid ([SDG0009](#)) para 2.4

in which we can try to drive the change that is needed in low carbon investment, climate resilient development and so on.<sup>58</sup>

Andrew Scott of ODI believed that the SDGs should “retain a separate climate change goal but we also make sure that climate change mitigation and adaptation and resilience are weaved through the targets of the other goals, particularly those related to the other environmental challenges and natural resource uses.”<sup>59</sup>

23. DFID told us that:

The [SDGs] framework must include measures to fully and visibly integrate climate change action, including:

(a) Ambitious, climate-smart goals and targets in goals such as energy, water, agriculture deforestation, disaster resilience, natural resource management, and others as relevant;

(b) Clear language on the need to hold the increase in global average temperature below a 2°C rise in accordance with existing international agreements.<sup>60</sup>

The Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening MP, did not directly answer our questions about having a separate climate change objective in the SDGs, but told us: “We certainly would not want to see the issue of climate change or, indeed, any broader sustainability in any way minimised in the framework that we get for 2015.”<sup>61</sup> Amber Rudd MP, Under-Secretary of State at DECC, told us that she would “be disappointed if the words ‘climate change’ did not appear in one of the goals” but would leave it to the international negotiations.<sup>62</sup> DECC officials emphasised how the UNFCCC and Sustainable Development Goals negotiations should complement each other:

Through the UNFCCC negotiations, we are trying to agree a set of commitments from countries; they are going to set targets for emission reductions. What we are looking at through the sustainable development goals is something that is going to help countries to look at what they have signed up for, in terms of their obligations and the direction of travel, but how are they going to deliver on the targets that they have agreed as part of the UNFCCC.<sup>63</sup>

24. Justine Greening told us: “I can be absolutely categorical that we see this whole area of sustainability as key. It is one of the reasons why we are doing so much work on climate

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58 Q98

59 Q99

60 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 16

61 Q8

62 Q136

63 Q163

change, but in my department we work hand in hand with DECC and also Defra very much on adaptation.”<sup>64</sup> Andrew Scott of ODI told us “what we should be aiming for is the levels of ambition that the UK has in its own legislation being taken forward and promoted in the international field.”<sup>65</sup> Amber Rudd told us that for DECC “our leadership, and our role in delivery on climate change, which is surely the most important thing, is focused on the UNFCCC endeavour to reach an international agreement in Paris next year. That is where our leadership, determination and focus are being played out.”<sup>66</sup>

### *Community Energy and fossil fuel subsidies*

25. Our previous inquiries have identified two areas where such leadership could be demonstrated—on community energy and ending fossil fuel subsidies. In our March 2014 report on *Green Finance*, we highlighted the importance of support for community-scale energy projects and policy stability to help tackle climate change.<sup>67</sup> Amber Rudd told us:

Community energy is a vital part of producing and encouraging renewable energy locally, which is why my Department launched its community energy strategy earlier this year. We are very engaged and supportive of local communities, providing them with information and financial guidance about how to set schemes up. Community energy is an essential part of delivering on our targets and on local energy supplies.<sup>68</sup>

She highlighted how the Government has promoted shared ownership schemes, which have been successful in Germany, and will continue to learn from other successes. However, the Government’s statements of support for the enormous potential of community energy has been undermined by the decision of the Financial Conduct Authority not to register new community energy co-operatives.<sup>69</sup> In response, DECC simply told us that it is “working with community energy stakeholders and the FCA to ensure the right balance is struck between consumer/investor protection and realising the full potential of community energy.”<sup>70</sup>

26. The Open Working Group outcome document addressed the need for rationalising inefficient fossil fuel subsidies as part of the actions needed to tackle climate change. Our December 2013 report on *Energy Subsidies* highlighted the extent of fossil fuel energy subsidies in the UK, which we concluded were “inconsistent with the global effort to tackle climate change”.<sup>71</sup> In 2009, the G-20 pledged to phase out “inefficient” and “harmful” fossil

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64 Q7

65 Q101

66 Q170

67 Environmental Audit Committee, Twelfth report of session 2013-14, [Green Finance](#) HC 191

68 Q166

69 The Guardian [Green energy co-ops blocked by government regulator](#) (August 2014)

70 DECC ([SDG0036](#))

71 Environmental Audit Committee, Ninth report of session 2013-14, [Energy Subsidies](#) HC 61



fuel subsidies as part of a wider strategy for combating climate change,<sup>72</sup> which was reiterated in the November 2014 G-20 Brisbane summit.<sup>73</sup> The Secretary General's synthesis report similarly states that "Harmful fossil fuel subsidies, both direct and indirect, should be phased out."<sup>74</sup> A recent paper by ODI on energy subsidies highlights that some \$600 billion is spent to support carbon-intensive energy, including \$1.2 billion in the UK, principally in the form of tax breaks for North Sea oil exploration.<sup>75</sup> In its Response to our report on *Energy subsidies*, the Government stated that it "does not believe that it has any harmful energy policies ... The North Sea regime should not be considered a subsidy".<sup>76</sup> Amber Rudd told us that energy subsidies:

is a question that we will go on debating. We have to make sure that we keep our electricity coming and our lights on. There are various subsidies for various elements of fossil fuels at the moment, but we are focused on renewables as a replacement as far as possible, and will continue to be so.<sup>77</sup>

In its 2014 Autumn Statement, the Government announced further tax breaks for oil and gas exploration.<sup>78</sup>

**27. The similar timing of the SDG and climate change negotiations presents an important opportunity to embed climate change thinking throughout the SDGs—to avoid development that exacerbates climate change while also building decarbonisation and adaptation into development. However, at the same time as stating a commitment to ambitious action on climate change, the Government is pursuing contradictory policies by effectively giving subsidies for fossil fuels. *The Government should publically support a separate climate change goal in the SDGs given the importance of reaching an ambitious global climate change agreement in Paris next year. It should also re-consider and rapidly phase out its continued subsidies to carbon intensive energy sources in line with the commitments made at Rio +20 and the Secretary General's call to phase out "harmful subsidies". The Government needs to do more domestically to support the transition to a low carbon economy, including urgently working with the FCA to make it easier for community groups to register as energy co-operatives. The Government should clearly set out the steps it is taking to achieve this.***

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72 [G20 Leaders Statement: The Pittsburgh Summit](#)

73 [G20 Principles on Energy Collaboration](#) (16 November 2014)

74 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 102

75 [ODI paper](#)

76 [Government response](#) Para 9

77 Q165

78 HM Treasury, [Autumn Statement 2014](#) para 1.125

## Economic considerations

### *Trade and poverty*

28. The Open Working Group report highlighted trade as an important element of the ‘means of implementation’. It set out indicators for promoting “a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system”, to significantly increase exports from developing countries.<sup>79</sup> Michael Gidney of the Fairtrade Foundation told us

if you organise trade in a certain way, then trade can be the most incredible vehicle for fighting poverty and achieving sustainability. To do that you need good standards, standards across the range of sustainable goals, so environmental and social and economic standards, but you need also the highest standards of accountability and transparency—accountability to both ends of the supply chain, to consumers and to producers.<sup>80</sup>

CAFOD highlighted the impact of “unfair trade rules”... “on the lives of people living in extreme poverty”<sup>81</sup> and suggest that “DFID needs to have a stronger role on looking at development impacts of other UK policies, whether these are implemented through bilateral relationships or in multilateral trade deals.”<sup>82</sup> Karl Falkenberg of the European Commission observed:

With the opening of world trade, we have seen that a lot of developing countries have discovered substantive economic growth. To the extent that that growth is equally distributed within those countries, it has certainly been a useful element of addressing those concerns [about poverty].<sup>83</sup>

The Global Sustainability Institute warned that “the UK Government should ensure that its involvement in... any trade agreements, such as the proposed [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership], are in line with commitments on sustainable development.”<sup>84</sup> Karl Falkenberg from the European Commission told us that “If the EU and the US could agree on and set joint standards, that process would certainly be strengthened”,<sup>85</sup> but cautioned that this would depend on the outcome of the negotiations:

The EU’s negotiating mandate clearly states that the outcome should not in any way limit or downgrade environmental or social legislation in the respective partners, so TTIP should not lead to a watering down in the

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79 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014) 17.10

80 Q110

81 CAFOD ([SDG0012](#)) para 3

82 CAFOD ([SDG0012](#)) para 28

83 Q238

84 Global Sustainability Institute ([SDG001](#)) para 13

85 Q241

United States or the EU. But that is our negotiating mandate, not the outcome of the negotiations.<sup>86</sup>

**29. International trade has played an important role in reducing extreme poverty. But such gains often come at the expense of the environment. It is equally important that the poorest and most vulnerable groups are not further impoverished by changing trade rules and agreements. *The Government's renewed focus on income poverty should not view economic development in isolation, but equally consider the environmental and social impacts of this economic activity and promote low carbon growth. It should demand the highest standards of environmental protection in trade deals, and ensure unequivocally that there is no potential for these to be undermined through dispute settlement mechanisms.*** We intend to look into TTIP in a future inquiry.

### **Air Quality**

30. Justine Greening told us that:

We have seen with development in China just how much broad-based growth can lift people out of poverty. In 1981, over 80% of people in China were living on \$1.25 or less a day. By 2009, that had fallen to 12%.<sup>87</sup>

But she also acknowledged that this has come at an environmental cost:

When growth happens, it has to be sustainable because if it is not, you then have to retrofit the growth that has taken place so that it is one that people can live with. I have also been to Beijing and seen some of the air pollution challenges there. Of course here in the UK we have some of our own air pollution challenges as well. ...this whole area is so important to make sure that it is going right the way through the next development framework.<sup>88</sup>

Our reports on *Air Quality* have highlighted the importance of understanding the environmental impacts of transport emissions in the UK,<sup>89</sup> but such concerns are even more acute in developing countries, where industrial export activity and road traffic emissions combine to adversely affect urban air quality. The United Nations Environment Programme estimate that more than 1 billion people are exposed to outdoor air pollution annually, and causes up to 1 million premature deaths each year.<sup>90</sup> Karl Falkenberg pointed to 400,000 premature deaths a year in Europe from poor air quality, and highlighted the link between high economic growth in China over the last 20 years and its air pollution. He concluded that:

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86 Q241

87 Q13

88 Q73

89 Environmental Audit Committee Sixth report of 2014-15 [Action on Air Quality](#) HC 212; Environmental Audit Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2010-12, [Air quality: a follow up report](#), HC 1024

90 United Nations Environment Programme [Urban Air Pollution](#) Accessed 9 December 2014

Similar problems occur in many other emerging economies with economic success. At the moment, a lot of environmental problems are rapidly growing, and I think there is also a rapidly growing understanding by the responsible governments that they need to find answers to these challenges.<sup>91</sup>

Justine Greening told us that “this Government will take the issue of air pollution incredibly seriously, including in relation to development.”<sup>92</sup>

**31. As we stated in our recent report on *Action on Air Quality*, air pollution is an “invisible killer” in the UK. However, poor air quality is also a major issue and cause of premature death in cities in many developing countries. *The UK should lead international efforts to improve air quality in cities in developing countries, where an increasing number of people live. This could include international knowledge sharing around effective low emissions zones, low-emissions transport, and vehicle and fuel standards to save lives.***

### ***Sustainable Consumption and Production***

32. While trade has helped to reduce poverty, its benefits may not be as widely shared as they should be. Helen Dennis of Christian Aid highlighted that “it is 20% of people who consume 80% of the world’s resources, so there is massive inequity in the way in which we consume.”<sup>93</sup> The Open Working Group outcome document included a goal—‘Goal 12’ on ‘sustainable consumption and production’—with indicators on ‘Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources (12.2)’, reducing food waste and food losses (12.3), and companies adopting sustainable practices and integrating sustainability information in their reporting (12.5).<sup>94</sup> The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) believed that “a truly universal SDG agenda requires a shift from a North-South development model to a universal global compact ... [and] equitably shared responsibilities for all development partners.”<sup>95</sup> Dominic White of WWF thought it “imperative that sustainable consumption and production stays in this [SDGs] framework, because I think developing countries will frown upon the developed nations if we do not find a way to look at ourselves and our actual consumption of resources”.<sup>96</sup> The Royal Society stated:

The SDGs and the Government’s contribution to them should not overlook the environment or the implications of population and consumption patterns for a finite planet: (i) Future projected changes in climate and demography must be considered when developing policies in all areas of Government;

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91 Q237

92 Q73

93 Q96

94 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014)

95 International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) ([SDG0017](#))

96 Q96

and (ii) Socio-economic systems and institutions must be developed which are not dependent on continued material consumption for growth.<sup>97</sup>

33. Dominic White of WWF believed that the approach in the Open Working Group's draft SDGs of "decoupling environmental degradation from economic growth ... is the right direction of travel and ... the onus is on developed countries to start looking at how we use fewer resources to still maintain a good standard of living".<sup>98</sup> The Secretary General's recent draft synthesis report notes that "the longer we wait to take action towards sustainable production and consumption, the more it will cost to solve the problem and the greater the technological challenges will be."<sup>99</sup>

34. Sustainable consumption and production requires action by businesses as well as Government. As we noted in our report on *Outcomes of the Rio+20 Earth Summit*, corporate sustainability reporting has the potential to help incentivise businesses "to fully address the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development".<sup>100</sup> The Government initiated emissions reporting by UK-listed large companies at the time of the Summit. The Global Sustainability Institute told us that the SDG process

provides an opportunity to link corporate sustainability reporting with the goals, setting a framework for action by governments, intergovernmental institutions, and also companies....It will also require the development of corporate reporting indicators which are clearly linked to the SDGs and their targets.<sup>101</sup>

Karl Falkenberg told us that "we feel that environmental reporting needs to go beyond simply carbon emissions and energy use."<sup>102</sup> Dieter Helm of the Natural Capital Committee told us that his view was "if you really want to mainstream these natural capital issues, then you have to mainstream them right through normal corporate decision-making. The only way to do that is to stick them in the accounts."<sup>103</sup> Aviva Investors have made a number of recommendations for improving sustainable development investment. They advocated governments ensuring that "national corporate governance codes ... integrate sustainable development."<sup>104</sup>

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97 The Royal Society ([SDG0019](#)) para 1.b)

98 Q96

99 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 76

100 Environmental Audit Committee, Second report of session 2013-14, [Outcomes of the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit](#) HC 200 para 41

101 Global Sustainability Institute ([SDG001](#)) para 5

102 Q227

103 Oral evidence [taken on 28 November 2014](#), HC 756, Q34

104 Aviva Investors ([SDG0007](#)) para 1.4

35. In evidence to our *Circular economy* inquiry, Tearfund told us that a “circular economy requires a seismic shift in the way we conduct economic activity and the way we view waste”.<sup>105</sup> They told us

In return it offers a triple dividend: improved living standards, greater efficiency and reduced environmental degradation. This dividend is available in developing countries as well as developed countries. Indeed, the implementation of circular economy principles offers fresh opportunities for greater poverty reduction, economic growth, environmental sustainability, resilience to commodity price fluctuations and public health (via reduced pollution) in developing countries.<sup>106</sup>

In our report, we highlighted the European Commission’s proposals to improve resource productivity, including a target to increase it by a minimum of 30% by 2030.<sup>107</sup>

36. The European Commission’s June 2014 *Communication on the Sustainable Development Goals* stated:

Current patterns of production and consumption are not sustainable. For consumption, key actions are promoting the use of energy and resource efficient and environmentally friendly products, gradually eliminating environmentally harmful subsidies and sustainable procurement. Production issues include promoting innovative and resource-efficient production, corporate sustainability reporting, product life cycle assessment, sustainable construction, waste and chemicals management and the promotion of eco-entrepreneurship and eco-innovation.<sup>108</sup>

Karl Falkenberg of the European Commission told us that:

A Europe scarce in raw materials needs to ... look at waste not as something that we need to dump in landfills but as a valuable resource for the next generation of products that we want to build. ... 600,000 jobs [could be] created in Europe by implementing circular economy objectives in bringing landfill to an end, recycling up to 70% of waste and at least recovering the energy of the remaining 30%. ... Becoming 30% more resource efficient by 2030—our studies are talking of some 2 million jobs that would be added.<sup>109</sup>

Dan Rogerson told us in relation to sustainable consumption and production that:

It is cross-cutting, so you can’t deal with it in isolation, and I don’t think you would want to deal with that in isolation. We can make real progress if we

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<sup>105</sup> Tearfund ([GCE0009](#)) HC 214 para 1

<sup>106</sup> Tearfund ([GCE0009](#)) HC 214 para 2

<sup>107</sup> Environmental Audit Committee, Third report of session 2014-15, [Growing a circular economy: Ending the throwaway society](#) HC 214, para 63

<sup>108</sup> European Commission [A decent Life for all: from vision to collective action](#) COM(2014) 335 (June 2014)

<sup>109</sup> Q225



integrate it across all the sectors where it has an impact—food, water, energy and anything connected with growth. We need to look at the issues around the sustainability of that growth.<sup>110</sup>

He told us that the Government were seeking “to play an active part in the UN’s 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, in particular the Consumer Information Programme.”<sup>111</sup>

### *Mainstreaming climate and environment in all programmes*

37. Andrew Scott of ODI told us:

I think [DFID’s] record on climate change ... is pretty good. Some of the other environmental challenges tend to take second place to the climate change challenge. Hopefully an SDG agenda will encourage all aid agencies to increasingly pay more attention to environmental sustainability, not just in the immediate term of the programme or project life but the longer-term consequences.<sup>112</sup>

WWF were concerned however about recent change in DFID’s climate and environment assessment process for assessing aid programmes.<sup>113</sup> In response, Justine Greening explained that:

We have gone through a programme within DFID called Future Fit, where we looked across the piece with country programmes about how we could make sure that climate and climate resilience in particular was integrated into all that work. We have now identified seven countries that are going to be almost like challenger countries that are going to do more innovative work, that are going to share that learning, and we very much recognise that these two things cannot be taken apart. They are inextricably linked.<sup>114</sup>

**38. The UK should support the vital goal of sustainable and resource efficient consumption and production in the Sustainable Development Goals. Rising population growth means ‘business as usual’ economic models of disposable products are not an option in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Resource efficiency is something that makes both environmental and economic sense. It is therefore disappointing that the UK is taking only small steps when a larger shift towards a more resource efficient economy is needed. Whilst the Government supports ambitious goals for other countries for poverty reduction, it is reluctant to commit the UK to such ambitious goals in the EU. There is also a role for businesses, which can be supported by more detailed corporate**

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110 Q155

111 Defra ([SDG0037](#))

112 Q97

113 Q97

114 Q7

**sustainability reporting. The Government should accelerate its work on resource efficiency and the circular economy, including through negotiating ambitious targets within the European Union. The Government should expand the requirement for corporate sustainability reporting beyond carbon emissions. Defra should ensure that this agenda is embraced across Government, and DFID should review its aid programmes to find opportunities to fund circular economy approaches. As it considers how best to support its future aid programmes to promote economic growth, it needs to learn lessons from the environmental degradation that has frequently accompanied rapid economic growth. It should ensure that all projects funded with UK aid, from international to community level, including the components implemented by delivery partners, are screened for climate and environment risks. It should also ensure that economic development related programmes fully safeguard biodiversity and tread a new path which de-couples economic growth from natural resource use.**

## **Social and human development, and inequality**

39. The Millennium Development Goals focused international attention on social and human development, but Helen Dennis of Christian Aid noted that “There are still 1.2 billion people living in extreme income poverty globally, and that is something that needs to be addressed, not just around income but ... the environmental sustainability goal. ... There are 2.5 billion people still without access to sanitation. These are significant justice and human rights issues that need to be addressed.”<sup>115</sup> Action Against Hunger told us:

we are concerned that the UK Government gives too much importance to economic development and are concerned it is too often viewed as a ‘magic bullet’ in development. We have seen time and time again, that economic growth on its own is insufficient in improving the nutrition status of countries.<sup>116</sup>

Andrew Scott of ODI believed that high consumption amongst the rising number of middle income was the most serious threat to environment and resource consumption:

Clearly a priority is to enable the people who are living in extreme poverty to get out of extreme poverty. The additional consumption of resources that that itself is going to entail in the global scheme of things is not hugely significant. The increased environmental degradation and the damage to the environment is going to come from growth and income increases among middle class, middle income people. The SDG package has to say something about that as well as to address the poverty eradication challenge.<sup>117</sup>

40. The World Bank has written that:

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<sup>115</sup> Q96

<sup>116</sup> Action Against Hunger ([SDG0035](#)) para 2.5

<sup>117</sup> Q96

High inequality is for many of us morally unacceptable and a symptom of a broken social contract. High inequality can lead to social conflict and instability which might result in lower economic standards for everyone. High inequality is in many cases a reflection that everyone does not have the same chances in life, that some have access to basic economic, social and human rights and others not, that opportunities are related to where you were born, who your parents are, or your race or gender.

Moreover, no country has transited to high income status with very high levels of inequality, and countries with the highest living standards have, in general, lower levels of inequality than low income countries. So there are many reasons why reducing inequality is a valid development objective by itself.

Reducing inequality is a valid development goal, and in the medium and long-run it is, most likely, the only way to sustainably increase incomes of those at the bottom.<sup>118</sup>

The Open Working Group outcome document included a proposed SDG on inequality. It proposed 'Goal 10' to "reduce inequality within and among countries". The main indicator for this would, they suggested, be "by 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average".<sup>119</sup> The Secretary General's synthesis report highlighted "Dignity" as one of six "essential elements" of the SDGs, and identified poverty and inequality as "defining challenges of our time":

Eradicating poverty by 2030 is the overarching objective of the sustainable development agenda.... The defining challenge of our time is to close the gap between our determination to ensure a life of dignity for all on the one hand, and the reality of persisting poverty and deepening inequality on the other.<sup>120</sup>

His report highlighted the importance of ensuring "equality, non-discrimination, equity and inclusion at all levels":

We must pay special attention to the people, groups and countries most in need. This is the century of women: we will not realize our full potential if half of humanity continues to be held back. We also need to include the poor, children, adolescents, youth, and the aged, as well as the unemployed, rural populations, slum dwellers, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and displaced persons, vulnerable groups and minorities. These also include those affected by climate change, those living in [Less

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118 World Bank [Why didn't the World Bank Make Reducing Inequality One of its Goals?](#) Accessed 9 December 2014

119 United Nations [Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals](#) (July 2014) 10.1

120 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 67

Developed Countries], landlocked countries, small island developing states, middle-income countries, conflict countries or in areas under occupation, in places struck by complex medical and humanitarian emergencies or in situations affected by terrorism. And they have called for an end to all forms of gender inequality, gender-based discrimination, and violence against women, children and young boys and girls.<sup>121</sup>

41. BOND Beyond 2015 thought that “The UK Government should push for inequality to be set as a priority in the SDG framework by ... adopting a stand-alone goal on inequality.”<sup>122</sup> They stated:

The UK Government is giving insufficient attention to the link between inequality and environmental sustainability. Addressing inequality is vital for sustainable development. Some of the poorest communities, especially indigenous communities, are highly dependent on land and natural resources for their livelihoods, assets which are increasingly under threat due to climate change. Climate related natural disasters are likely to threaten long term poverty eradication. And the excessive consumption of the world’s wealthiest people is the biggest source of environmental stress, with just 11% of the global population generating approximately 50% of global carbon emissions.<sup>123</sup>

Pope Francis recently put this in stark terms when he called increasing inequality “the root of social evil”.<sup>124</sup> Oxfam’s recent *Even it up* report highlighted how

economic inequality has reached extreme levels. From Ghana to Germany, Italy to Indonesia, the gap between rich and poor is widening. In 2013, seven out of 10 people lived in countries where economic inequality was worse than 30 years ago, and in 2014 Oxfam calculated that just 85 people owned as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity.<sup>125</sup>

42. Kevin Watkins of the Overseas Development Institute has set out an “equity agenda for the post-2015 goals” with “stepping stone equity targets”.<sup>126</sup> In Zambia, he noted, “the richest 10% saw their share of consumption rise from 33% to 43% between 2000 and 2005”, and “without rising inequality, economic growth would have lifted another 700,000 people out of poverty in Tanzania”.<sup>127</sup> He concluded that:

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121 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 51

122 BOND Beyond 2015 UK ([SDG0015](#)) para 2.14

123 BOND Beyond 2015 UK ([SDG0015](#)) para 2.11

124 Pope Francis [Tweet](#) 28 April 2014

125 Oxfam [Even it Up: Time to end extreme inequality](#) (October 2014)

126 Kevin Watkins [Leaving no-one behind: an equity agenda for the post-2015 goals](#) (October 2013) p2

127 Kevin Watkins [Leaving no-one behind: an equity agenda for the post-2015 goals](#) (October 2013) p3

Lower inequality is not an automatic route to poverty reduction (compare and contrast China with less unequal Tanzania). On the other hand, rising inequality from high initial levels is a pretty much guaranteed route to slower poverty reduction.<sup>128</sup>

43. Helen Dennis of Christian Aid told us that it is possible to set a measurable yardstick limit for inequality:

There is a fairly concrete proposal that Joseph Stiglitz put on the table, where he has basically said that there should be an assumption or a consensus that the... post-tax income of the top 10% should be no greater than the post-transfer income of the bottom 40%, which is essentially a Palma ratio of one. That is very stretching. For a country like South Africa, for example, with such exceptional levels of economic inequality, you would look at that and think that is almost unattainable, but I think it is about setting the direction of travel.<sup>129</sup>

The UK's Sustainable Development Indicators measure median income as well as GDP, in order to better reflect "economic prosperity experienced by people on a daily basis". The 2013 Sustainable Development Indicators report states: "Examining income distribution can reveal the inequalities implicit in household income".<sup>130</sup> Although the World Bank has a goal to 'promote shared prosperity', it has chosen to focus only on measuring the income growth of the poorest 40%. The World Bank observed that while this might be "a crude approximation of the socioeconomic status of those at the bottom, it is a pertinent development goal for all countries ... regardless of the initial level of development, regardless of the moment in the economic cycle..."<sup>131</sup>

44. Justine Greening told us that the Government's focus is on "leaving no one behind and lifting people out of extreme poverty and, in fact, eradicating that in a generation."<sup>132</sup> She explained:

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. ... The work that we do ... is about reaching out to the very poorest people who often have absolutely nothing, or perhaps have very little, and when disaster hits they are often hit hardest and hit first and have the least capability to be able to bounce back from that. Those are the people that we are focusing on and that is personally where I feel the next framework should focus as well.<sup>133</sup>

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128 Kevin Watkins [Leaving no-one behind: an equity agenda for the post-2015 goals](#) (October 2013) p8

129 Q106

130 Defra [Sustainable Development Indicators](#) (July 2013) p16

131 World Bank [Why didn't the World Bank Make Reducing Inequality One of its Goals?](#) Accessed 9 December 2014

132 Q55

133 Q51

**45. Inequality prevents sustainable development, not only because it can undermine social cohesion and a sense of shared well-being, but because some sections of societies may be excluded from the benefits of development and prosperity. *The UK is right to have a focus on completing the task of the MDGs in eliminating ‘extreme poverty’, but this can best be achieved as part of a wider focus that includes tackling inequality to help deal with both poverty and social cohesion. The UK should support the inclusion in the SDGs of a range of inequality indicators to measure and monitor inequality, and should design programmes to tackle both extreme poverty and inequality simultaneously.***





A woman plays with her pet monkey on earth covered with flyash from Kolaghat thermal power station in East Medinipur covers the ground and hangs in the air around a cement factory next to the power plant.  
*Credit: Christian Aid / Elizabeth Dalziel*



'Trucks delivering raw sugar cane to a mill in Belize. More than a tenth of the country's population relies on sugar cane production for their income.'  
*Credit: Fairtrade/Monika Berresheim*

### 3 Achieving international consensus on the SDGs

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46. The Secretary General's synthesis report states "the stars are aligned for the world to take historic action to transform lives and protect the planet. I urge Governments and people everywhere to fulfil their political and moral responsibilities. This is my call to dignity, and we must respond with all our vision and strength".<sup>134</sup> Justine Greening told us that "broadly" there is consensus about what constitutes sustainable development:

We think we can get some consensus across the broad base of issues. From my perspective, the most effective route we can take is to find common ground and then build out from that, but be realistic about the fact that there will always be some areas of policy where you cannot reach agreement.<sup>135</sup>

DFID described the SDGs as a "unique chance to mobilise action to eradicate extreme poverty entirely, and to put the world on a sustainable development pathway."<sup>136</sup> They told us "The UK has five key priorities for the goals in the post-2015 framework:

- A simple, inspiring, relevant framework centred on poverty eradication.
- A framework that finishes the job on the Millennium Development Goals.
- The integration of environmental sustainability across the goals, and targets that ensure visibility for climate change.
- A strong, standalone goal on gender equality.
- A goal on the critical issues left out by the MDGs: peace, good governance, and economic development."<sup>137</sup>

BOND Beyond 2015 told us "the UK Government's priorities for the SDGs are strong, but limited in their ambition. The Government should prioritise full integration of the environmental dimension of sustainable development across the goals, including environmental sustainability as the 'green thread' that is addressed within all goals".<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 25

<sup>135</sup> Q15

<sup>136</sup> DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 4

<sup>137</sup> DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 9

<sup>138</sup> BOND Beyond 2015 UK ([SDG0015](#)) para 2.3

## Number of goals

47. The ODI thought that the “strengths of the [Open Working Group] process mirror the apparent weakness of the output. The participation and buy-in of a wide range of member states along with intense engagement from many non-government voices have led to a principle of ‘leave nothing out’.”<sup>139</sup> Andrew Scott from ODI also told us “the consensus on the 17 goals and 169 [OWG-recommended] targets was reached partly through the vagueness of some of the targets”.<sup>140</sup> Dominic White of WWF nevertheless believed that the number of goals in the OWG report reflected the “inherently complex” nature of sustainable development:

To that extent, intellectually it makes sense that those issues are captured, but of course there are interesting challenges before us in how we make this actionable and ensure that we get the political will and the means to make the framework happen.<sup>141</sup>

48. Before the publication of the Secretary General’s synthesis report, the Government told us that it wanted to reduce the number of Goals. Justine Greening thought that “17 [Goals] is too many and the Prime Minister said that he would ideally like to see 10. The High-Level Panel report had 12.”<sup>142</sup> DFID told us:

While there is a lot of good content [in the OWG report], the overall framework is too long and unwieldy, and does not meet the Prime Minister’s ambition to agree a framework that is simple inspiring, and relevant.

Aside from being long and unwieldy, many proposed targets are unworkable or unmeasurable. If adopted, it would struggle to inspire international action, drive meaningful accountability or implementation, and would be a burden on the governments of developed and developing countries alike. It will be important to find ways to streamline and consolidate the Sustainable Development Goals while preserving the good content.<sup>143</sup>

49. WWF argued however that “it is not the number of goals that matters but what they can deliver. How these are communicated and to which audience is a matter for communication expertise once the goals and targets are agreed.”<sup>144</sup> Dominic White of WWF noted that “not all countries implemented eight MDGs—nobody necessarily communicated eight MDGs”.<sup>145</sup> He told us:

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<sup>139</sup> ODI, [Taking the Sustainable Development Goals from ‘main basis’ to effective vision – what’s the roadmap?](#) Working Paper 402 (September 2014) p1

<sup>140</sup> Q90

<sup>141</sup> Q90

<sup>142</sup> Q3

<sup>143</sup> DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 6

<sup>144</sup> WWF ([SDG0014](#)) para 12

<sup>145</sup> Q92

It is not so much a numbers issue but it is about getting on with an actionable and implementable framework. Although it is quite unwieldy and there are some refinements that can be made, we need to focus on holding the big picture ambition for what we set out to achieve and then practically finding solutions to moving that through.<sup>146</sup>

The European Commission told us:

We have a longer list of goals on the table for the moment than we might have thought at the outset. But from an EU position, that is not at all a problem. It encompasses the 17 goals that we have on the table for the moment, which really cover all three angles of the sustainable triangle. In that way, we think that they are a useful guidance for the process.<sup>147</sup>

50. IIED believed that the Government’s “insistence that there should be no more than twelve SDGs, presents risks to the agreement of a robust set of SDGs”, and suggested “softer options for restructuring or repackaging” rather than removing issues altogether.<sup>148</sup> WWF told us that “a partial framework for sustainable development will not deliver the long-term systemic change required that would begin to address inter-generational equity issues.”<sup>149</sup> Stakeholder Forum argued for “aggregation” and “integration” rather than “prioritisation”.<sup>150</sup>

51. Justine Greening gave us an “absolute reassurance” that the Government “do not see having a shorter, more compelling framework as being at the expense of sustainability at all.”<sup>151</sup> Dan Rogerson told us “the most important thing is that we have a framework that is simple, inspirational and is going to deliver things, and that we are able to implement it as well.”<sup>152</sup> However, Karl Falkenberg of the European Commission cautioned that “For the moment, a combination of the different elements of sustainability is on the table. It is going to be difficult from our perspective to further reduce that without risking doing an injustice to one of the three pillars ... My concern is particularly that in this exercise the environmental side of sustainability might suffer if we tried to reduce the number of goals.”<sup>153</sup>

The Secretary General’s synthesis report, published after we received that evidence, appeared to envisage scope for the SDGs to cover the ground of the 17 OWG goals but with a focus on six ‘elements’:

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146 Q92

147 Q207

148 International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) ([SDG0017](#)) p2

149 WWF ([SDG0014](#)) para 7

150 Stakeholder Forum ([SDG0021](#))

151 Q4

152 Q137

153 Q218

Member States have agreed that the agenda laid out by the Open Working Group is the main basis for the Post-2015 intergovernmental process. We now have the opportunity to frame the goals and targets in a way that reflects the ambition of a universal and transformative agenda. I note, 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.<sup>154</sup>

**52. The current wide consensus on the components of sustainable development, as set out in the 17 Goals listed in the Open Working Group's report, is historic and powerful. The UN Secretary General has indicated that the 17 Goals should be taken forward in the final SDGs, but has put forward a set of six 'essential elements' to facilitate engagement and communication of the sustainability message. To reduce the number of goals, as the UK has proposed, would inevitably be to omit key aspects of the sustainable development framework after 2015, potentially including those relating to environmental sustainability. That would be a mistake. Environmental limits are a key challenge that we face in the 21st Century, and a reductionist approach risks removing the growing international focus on these key areas. Communicating the goals is important (as we discuss in paragraph 79), but ultimately what counts is global action across a range of areas that is truly sustainable.**

*53. It is important that the UK respects the wider international consensus established around the 17 Open Working Group goals, in order for the process to have national ownership and legitimacy. The Government is right to seek an SDG framework that can be compellingly communicated, but any continued argument for a smaller number of Goals, in the face of the Secretary General's recent guidance, risks creating unnecessary divisions between countries when it should be seeking to build support for ambitious action. At the forthcoming European Council, and beyond, the Government should push for an EU position which favours a comprehensive coverage in the SDGs of all pillars of sustainable development as set out in the Open Working Group's 17 Goals.*

### **Co-ordination and engagement**

54. Helen Dennis of Christian Aid told us that the BOND Beyond 2015 group of international development organisations had had good engagement from the Government:

We have had very constructive engagement with the post-2015 team at DFID, where it is now hosted. Prior to that, around the High Level Panel process, we had some strong engagement with Michael Anderson [the Prime

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<sup>154</sup> United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 137



Minister's Special Envoy on post-2015] and some of the other people involved. We very much welcomed that engagement.<sup>155</sup>

Dominic White of WWF, on the other hand, empathised that the Government needs to “engage the UK domestic civil society, because at the moment it is the international NGOs who are engaged with the UK Government on this agenda. We need to get national level dialogue running on this agenda as well.”<sup>156</sup> The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities told us that there has been “no specific engagement with the UK Government in shaping the UK negotiating position with regards to ... the Sustainable Development Goal ... agenda. We believe that this needs to change.”<sup>157</sup>

55. Many of the submissions we received highlighted the importance of cross-government co-ordination. Christian Aid noted that:

There has been an attempt as well to bring together cross-Whitehall officials on some thematic areas, bearing in mind that this is not just the DFID agenda but that other departments are inherently involved in it. That has been very positive. DFID has put a lot of resource into this and it has quite high capacity both in the UK and the mission in New York, so that is very welcome. They are playing a very active role in the process... At ministerial level there has been strong championing from DFID but not necessarily from other departments.<sup>158</sup>

DFID told us “We are working across government to ensure that all departments’ equities are retained in the process. We are also ensuring that the expertise available in all relevant departments is called upon to inform the process.”<sup>159</sup> Justine Greening explained that “We have had an inter-ministerial working group in relation to setting out our policy position on the post-2015 framework, mainly because it does cut across so many different departments.”<sup>160</sup> Amber Rudd told us that her fellow DECC minister Baroness Verma had attended two ministerial meetings.<sup>161</sup>

56. In terms of implementation, Christian Aid believed that “the Cabinet Office is best placed to lead”.<sup>162</sup> DFID told us that “specific governance arrangements have been developed with the Cabinet Office to ensure that all Whitehall departments with an interest

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155 Q91

156 Q90

157 Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) ([SDG0025](#))

158 Q91

159 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 17

160 Q10

161 Q142

162 Christian Aid ([SDG0009](#)) para 3.2



can feed into the Post-2015 agenda.”<sup>163</sup> Justine Greening explained that the Cabinet Office had a “Sherpa role, which would essentially see them liaising internationally”. She added:

Essentially, it is an ability for Government to have preparatory discussions and positions understood, of our Government but also of other governments, that means we can then get a clear sense of where the lie of the land is politically so that at that stage you can then understand what the best strategy is to proceed.<sup>164</sup>

**57. The Government has committed significant time and energy to the process of developing new Sustainable Development Goals, including officials and Ministers from different Government departments. The focus has primarily been international, however, with much less thought having been given to the domestic implications of the Goals (which we discuss below). The Government seems readier to consider goals for other countries than for itself. *Defra should now start to play a stronger role, in collaboration with the Cabinet Office, in working with all departments, including the Treasury, to consider the domestic implications of the goals and pursue policies consistent with sustainable development.***

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163 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 18

164 Q57



Small scale solar energy project in the village of Wawan Rafi, Jigawa State Northern Nigeria. 2006  
Credit: Christian Aid / Sam Faulkner



Aviva are partnering with Climatecare to offset unavoidable operational carbon emissions. Nearly 3 billion people in the developing world cook food and heat their homes with traditional cook stoves or open fires. Since 2007 550,000 Gyapa stoves have been sold in Ghana. These cook food more quickly, require 50-60% less fuel and are less smoky.  
Credit ClimateCare/Adeel Halim

## 4 Achieving the Goals

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### The impact of UK aid for climate change and the environment

58. DFID told us

The Millennium Development Goals have quite clearly had a huge influence over DFID's aid programmes and policies. Once the MDG framework was in existence, it gave shape and focus to much of DFID's work...

...The Post-2015 agenda provides the UK the opportunity to help shape an integrated agenda that will help to define not only DFID's aid programmes but also how HMG's wider international policies will contribute to the challenges.<sup>165</sup>

### *International Climate Fund and future Green Climate Fund*

59. The main element of DFID's bilateral funding for climate change and environmental protection is the £3.9 billion allocated between April 2011 and March 2016 for the International Climate Fund (ICF).<sup>166</sup> This supports programmes that help the poor in developing countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change, promote low carbon growth and protect forests. The allocation of funding is 2.4bn for DFID, £140m for Defra and £1.3bn for DECC. 56% of ICF funding has been directed to low carbon development, 27% to adaptation and 10% to forestry, with the remaining 7% spent on cross-cutting areas.<sup>167</sup>

60. Dominic White of WWF told us that he found the commitment to the ICF "impressive, and the UK has taken the lead for sure in some of the innovation and research that has gone on under that programme".<sup>168</sup> Justine Greening told us that DFID had used the ICF "to hopefully turbo-charge some of the multilateral climate funds", to complement the bilateral Forest Governance, Markets & Climate programme tackling illegal logging.<sup>169</sup> DFID told us that it will also spend £60 million on a new programme to encourage businesses to join the fight against deforestation—the Investments in Forests and Sustainable Land Use initiative.<sup>170</sup> Ministers agreed in October to a bilateral programme between 2015 and 2018 to combat deforestation in Indonesia, funded from DFID's ICF allocation.<sup>171</sup>

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165 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) paras 29, 30

166 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 26

167 Independent Commission for Aid Impact [ToR of audit of The UK's International Climate Fund](#)

168 Q97

169 Q40

170 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 24

171 Q41

61. In our 2011 report on *The impact of UK overseas aid on environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation* we welcomed the establishment of the ICF, but stated “given the sums involved, we recommend greater clarity over what the ICF will deliver, how funding decisions will be made, the governance arrangements for the Fund and how its impacts will be measured”.<sup>172</sup> DFID’s 2014 annual report highlights how the Department has supported nearly 3.4 million people to cope with the effects of climate change, and improved access to clean energy for almost 2.4 million people. However, despite committing to “give more protection to the world’s forests and the 1.2 billion people who depend on them” it has so far only been able to report 5,000 hectares of avoided deforestation and degradation in Nepal.<sup>173</sup>

62. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact were due to assess the impact and value for money of the International Climate Fund in 2013, but at the time we took evidence from Ministers in December 2014 this had still not been published.<sup>174</sup> A separate independent assessment of the ICF’s delivery options highlighted that “the overall administrative costs ... appear moderate, although there are some concerns about incentives for efficiency at the project level”,<sup>175</sup> and “while 30 of the 33 investment plans in the [Strategic Climate Fund] have a results framework in place, only one out of 16 of the [Clean Technology Fund] investment plans do. Stakeholders interviews have also raised concerns that some of the early [Clean Technology Fund] investment plans do not place sufficient emphasis on development benefits.”<sup>176</sup> Amber Rudd told us that the ICF has “careful monitoring of all its initiatives” and that the Government “take very seriously” the good governance of the Fund.<sup>177</sup> Defra were “in touch with our delivery partners on the ground, for example in Brazil, to monitor and get feedback on progress”,<sup>178</sup> and outlined the monitoring and evaluation arrangements.<sup>179</sup>

63. The Government has announced a UK commitment to fund 12% of the Green Climate Fund, up to £720m, drawn from existing UK commitments to the International Climate Fund to support projects between 2015 and 2018.<sup>180</sup> The Fund is aiming to spend 50% on mitigation, and 50% on adaptation (with half of the adaptation funding going to the most

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172 Environmental Audit Committee, Fifth report of session 2010-12, [The impact of UK overseas aid on environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation](#) HC 710 para 63

173 DFID [Annual report and Accounts 2013-14](#) HC11 p40

174 DFID’s website [Monitoring and evaluation of ICF programmes](#) stated “We expect the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) will independently evaluate impact and value for money in the ICF in 2013” Accessed 9 December 2014

175 Vivid Economics [Delivery Options for the International Climate Fund](#) (June 2014), p59

176 Vivid Economics [Delivery Options for the International Climate Fund](#) (June 2014), p61

177 Q176

178 Q178

179 Defra ([SDG0037](#))

180 Q182



vulnerable). The Fund aims to start programming its work in 2015.<sup>181</sup> Justine Greening told us:

One are doing increasingly is a focus on research, understanding what works, and then tailoring that into the programmes that we are bringing forward going forward and also tailoring that research into helping to shape the international programme and the Green Climate Fund as it gets set up so that it can be successful.<sup>182</sup>

The Government is considering using the Green Investment Bank (GIB) to deliver international climate fund projects. Amber Rudd told us

We would very much like the Green Investment Bank to have an international role. It has been, we think, a great success in the UK, leading on identifying sound investments within the green sector and, critically, mobilising other sources of finance for investment as well. We are looking into ways of developing that. I am speaking to the Green Investment Bank about the best way to go forward, but I share what I think is your positive view on it, that it would be a good thing to do.<sup>183</sup>

64. We have looked at the Green Investment Bank in three previous reports; *Green Investment Bank*,<sup>184</sup> *Green Economy*,<sup>185</sup> and *Green Finance*. We concluded in 2013 that the Bank “has made a good start”.<sup>186</sup> However, we have not yet attempted a detailed assessment of the impact of its investments. The delivery options report on the ICF highlights “concern, expressed by GIB stakeholders, that a focus on international activities may distract from its core UK mandate and dilute the identity of GIB as a commercially-minded ‘for profit’ investor.”<sup>187</sup> More significantly, the GIB’s current Articles of Association, “require it to focus on activities which make a contribution to the UK”, although this could be changed by Parliament.<sup>188</sup>

**65. The UK has committed significant amounts of funding to the International Climate Fund and now also the Green Climate Fund. Whilst we are pleased that the Government is prioritising these, it is vital that the funds are spent effectively and have as large an impact as possible. Currently, there is poor public transparency of how these are being used. We welcome the Independent Commission for Aid Impact’s report on the ICF, but note this was originally due in 2013. *The Government should report clear annual results summaries for the International Climate Fund, which detail the impacts***

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181 DECC [Press Release: UK pledges to help hardest hit by climate change](#) (November 2014) Accessed 9 December 2014

182 Q40

183 Q179

184 Environmental Audit Committee, Second report of session 2010-11 [Green Investment Bank](#) HC505

185 Environmental Audit Committee, Twelfth report of session 2010-12 [Green Economy](#) HC1025

186 Environmental Audit Committee, Twelfth report of session 2013-14 [Green Finance](#) HC 191 p3

187 Vivid Economics [Delivery Options for the International Climate Fund](#) (June 2014), p7

188 Vivid Economics [Delivery Options for the International Climate Fund](#) (June 2014), p7

*that the programmes have had. It should particularly ensure that expenditure on forestry programmes has clear impact indicators.*

### **Funding for biodiversity protection overseas**

66. In biodiversity terms, the UK Overseas Territories are critically important. As we highlighted in our January 2014 report on *Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories*,<sup>189</sup> the UK is ultimately responsible for vast tracts of ocean, thousands of coral atolls, tropical forests and a polar wilderness six times the size of the United Kingdom, which comprise 90% of the biodiversity which the UK is responsible for and at least 517 globally threatened species.<sup>190</sup> Our report on *Marine Protected Areas* in June 2014 called again for Marine Protected Areas around Pitcairn Islands, Tristan da Cunha and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.<sup>191</sup> We are discussing this and other Overseas Territories biodiversity issues with the Government.

67. Defra is responsible for the UK's Darwin initiative, specifically supporting environmental goals in developing countries. For the latest round (Round 21) of funding, 90% of projects will be funded by DFID (and thereby required to have a poverty-reduction objective) and 10% by Defra.<sup>192</sup> Defra told us that departments provide up to £6m a year for Darwin projects in developing countries, plus another £2m for projects in the UK Overseas Territories ('Darwin+').<sup>193</sup> Justine Greening told us

We do not have the budget to be able to necessarily do a broader programme on biodiversity, but what we can do is make sure that in those countries that do not have the wherewithal themselves because of poverty to be able to tackle biodiversity, we can help them do that through funds like the Darwin Fund.<sup>194</sup>

**68. The UK is not sufficiently prioritising funding for the establishment of marine protected areas in the UK Overseas Territories. It is vital that these unique ecosystems are protected before it is too late. There is a lack of timely and transparent information to explain how biodiversity-related funds are spent overseas. *The Government should publish an annual report outlining its spending on biodiversity-related projects overseas, and the impact these have had. It should prioritise funding to support the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the UK overseas territories, such as Pitcairn, and explore with the World Bank and others the most appropriate ways of sustainably financing and managing these.***

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189 Environmental Audit Committee, Tenth report of session 2013-14 [Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories](#) HC332

190 DFID ([SDG 0011](#))

191 Environmental Audit Committee First report of session 2014-15 [Marine Protected Areas](#) HC221 para 6

192 Darwin Initiative [Guidance for Round 21 funding](#), November 2014

193 Defra ([SDG0037](#))

194 Q47



## Agreeing national targets for the Sustainable Development Goals

69. The UK's obligations under the new SDGs will not be limited to its international aid programmes. SDGs will be 'universal', so will apply to the UK and other developed countries, as much as to developing countries. The European Commission concluded in June 2014 that the SDGs:

should be global in aspiration and coverage and universally applicable to all countries, while being based on national ownership and taking into account different national contexts, capacities and levels of development. It should be rights-based and people-centred. It should recognize and address the mutually reinforcing nature of poverty eradication and sustainable development. It should integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, environmental and economic) in a balanced way.<sup>195</sup>

Stakeholder Forum welcomed the approach of “setting a limited number of broad universally applicable goals in general terms and then supplementing these with more specific quantifiable targets that can be calibrated appropriately for different countries according to local circumstances and current state of development is a good way of combining universality and difference”.<sup>196</sup>

70. Andrew Scott of ODI warned, however, that “the goals and their universal application, and their relevance to the domestic agenda, has not been explored very much in any OECD country”.<sup>197</sup> Helen Dennis of Christian Aid told us that “there are now moves to try to articulate universality in the context of the EU common position”.<sup>198</sup> Dan Rogerson told us that domestic application of the Sustainable Development Goals in the UK is led by Defra, “although that is at an earlier stage because that is where we are in the process.”<sup>199</sup> The Government's approach, however, in discussions at the European level, was that “a target based approach [was] not always the most helpful way of doing things”.<sup>200</sup> He told us “there are issues around measurability and complexity in what is currently proposed. That is an area that we would want to make progress on, so that ... we have goals that are simple and achieve what we want in terms of sustainability, and that we are able to implement.”<sup>201</sup> The Office for National Statistics are examining how progress might be measured.<sup>202</sup>

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195 European Commission [A decent Life for all: from vision to collective action](#) COM(2014) 335 (June 2014)

196 Stakeholder Forum ([SDG0021](#))

197 Q91

198 Q102

199 Q146

200 Q156

201 Q191

202 Q84 and UK Statistics Authority ([SDG0034](#))

71. The Secretary General's recent synthesis report stated:

What is needed now is a technical review to ensure that each [Goal] is framed in language that is specific, measurable, achievable, and consistent with existing United Nations standards and agreements, while preserving the important political balance that they represent. To these ends, the technical experts of the United Nations System are available to review the targets, including on the means of implementation, and to compare and align the level of ambition represented by each to that of existing international targets, commitments, standards, and agreements thus strengthening the overall framework of the goals.<sup>203</sup>

A set of applicable indicators will also need to be identified to allow us to collect, compare, and analyse reliable data, to do so at the adequate level of disaggregation, as of 2016.<sup>204</sup>

However, Thomas Lingard of Unilever told us:

we cannot afford to agree a set of lofty ambitious goals in September next year and then spend five years working out how we are going to implement ... Linking the how and the what is going to be an important part of turning this from just a set of goals into something that impacts on the ground.<sup>205</sup>

## Accountability

72. The Government believed that the accountability mechanism needs to:

- (a) Support the effective and coordinated implementation of the Post-2015 goals and targets;
- (b) Be responsive to change, signal when progress is off-track, and provide a setter for the rest of the post-2015 architecture for rapid response when this does happen;
- (c) Be low on cost, avoid duplication with other processes, and operate in a transparent and participatory fashion, supporting the citizen-state relationship;
- (d) Be constructive and positive, with lessons learned an integral part of the framework and share best practice;

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203 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 137

204 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 139

205 Q114

- (e) Build on national and regional, as well as international, post-2015 monitoring measures;
- (f) Take into consideration the accountability and monitoring of non-government actors; and
- (g) Have data generation, collection, analysis, and dissemination at its heart.<sup>206</sup>

The Secretary General's report stated:

All have asked for a rigorous and participatory review and monitoring framework to hold governments, businesses, and international organizations accountable to the people for results, and to ensure that no harm is done to the planet. And they have called for a data revolution to make information and data more available, more accessible, and more broadly disaggregated, as well as for measurable goals and targets, and a participatory mechanism to review implementation at the national, regional, and global levels.<sup>207</sup>

73. Helen Dennis of Christian Aid told us “some of the mechanisms such as peer review, some of the accountability frameworks that are present in other processes could be learnt from”.<sup>208</sup> The Secretary General's synthesis report highlights five types of accountability:

- i) A country-led, national component for accountability. In the overall review process, this national segment, as that closest to the people, should be the most significant.
- ii) A regional component for peer reviewing, tailored to regional and sub-regional needs.
- iii) A global component for knowledge sharing to chart global progress at regular intervals on the sustainable development framework, to help to identify challenges and bottlenecks, and to mobilize action to address them.
- iv) A thematic component to chart global progress at regular intervals on the sustainable development framework.
- v) A component to review the global partnership for sustainable development.<sup>209</sup>

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206 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 39

207 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 56

208 Q102

209 United Nations [The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda - advanced unedited version](#) (December 2014) para 170

## 74. The ONS told us:

Although the goals are not yet agreed, we are already looking at how the UK might report and monitor the SDGs from 2016. We are considering a framework for dissemination and reporting a set of headline indicators supplemented by additional indicators. This will, at a minimum, meet our international obligations. When the final UN sustainable development goals are decided in September 2015, we will look at alignment to [UK Sustainable Development Indicators] and make any refinements at that stage.<sup>210</sup>

Christian Aid suggested that “a cross-Whitehall plan to implement the SDGs should be published. Regular Parliamentary scrutiny of the UK’s contribution to the SDGs should take place.”<sup>211</sup> The Government told us

Accountability and monitoring structures will be agreed alongside the goals and targets in September next year. Those structures are yet to be negotiated but it is expected that all countries report against progress in delivering the post-2015 goals and targets. We would also anticipate assessing DFID’s policies and programmes against delivery of the post-2015 goals and targets.<sup>212</sup>

This framework will be relevant to all of our partners, such as the development banks, the UN system and other international financial institutions. Once the goals are agreed, we anticipate working with international and multilateral partners to discuss how their programmes will respond to the post-2015 agenda.<sup>213</sup>

**75. Agreeing the right indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals is a vital step in ensuring that they have traction. The universal nature of the goals means that there will need to be a combination of international and national goals, and the UK has an important role in agreeing these. It is important that the UK is accountable for its progress in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals. It has not yet done sufficient work to consider the implications for UK policy. We will continue to monitor and review the Government’s progress in agreeing the goals, and there is a clear role for our successor Committee to audit implementation and performance against the goals in future. *The ONS and Defra (as the lead department for domestic sustainable development) need ensure that the appropriate data and systems are in place to monitor and report on the UK’s delivery of SDG targets. It should review the UK’s Sustainable Development Indicators and ensure that these reflect the key nationally-relevant SDG indicators, including on sustainable consumption and production.***

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210 UK Statistics Authority ([SDG0034](#))

211 Christian Aid ([SDG0009](#)) para 3.4

212 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 31

213 DFID ([SDG 0011](#)) para 32

## Engaging citizens

76. In its response to our June 2013 *Outcomes of the Rio+20 Summit* report, the Government highlighted DFID funding for “two complementary citizen engagement initiatives—the *MY World* survey and *Participate* research programme—as part of the post-2015 process”.<sup>214</sup> In response to our questions in our current inquiry about awareness raising projects, such as the *Hard Rain* project, DFID told us:

Whilst we recognise the value of development education, in particular the formal education sector, it was agreed that the Department’s funding would be redirected to areas that demonstrated the greatest impact on our overall objective for global poverty reduction.<sup>215</sup>

77. DFID’s International Citizen’s Service aims to bring together 18-25 year olds from all backgrounds to fight poverty in overseas and UK communities. DFID funds 90% of the programme—£7,600 per person on average—with the other 10% funded by volunteer fundraising (usually a minimum of £800).<sup>216</sup> The programme currently has projects in 24 of the world’s poorest countries. A recent evaluation of the programme concluded that it was “delivering effectively and achieving high levels of satisfaction from volunteers and partners” and an “initial assessment of value for money does not raise any concerns”,<sup>217</sup> although “London and the South East are over-represented at the expense of other regions and the nations (notably Scotland and Wales)”.<sup>218</sup> The Government told us:

The International Citizen Service (ICS) is not primarily an awareness raising programme. By supporting the UK’s young people to work alongside local counterparts in some of the world’s poorest communities we seek to deliver real poverty reduction outcomes on the ground, as well as the personal and social development of volunteers in the UK and overseas. By facilitating these changes we aim to develop a global network of active citizens who are committed to social change in their own communities and beyond.<sup>219</sup>

## Education for sustainable development

78. The Rio+20 conclusions document included a clear commitment in 2012 to build sustainable development into education:

We recognise that the younger generations are the custodians of the future, as well as the need for better quality and access to education beyond the

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214 Environmental Audit Committee Fourth Special Report of Session 2013-14 [Embedding sustainable development and the outcomes of the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit: Government responses to the Committee’s First and Second Reports of Session 2013-14](#) HC633 para 33

215 DFID ([SDG0029](#))

216 ICS website: [Costs and Funding](#) Accessed 9 December 2014

217 Ecorys [Evaluation of the International Citizen Service Phase 1 Report](#) (December 2013) p3

218 Ecorys [Evaluation of the International Citizen Service Phase 1 Report](#) (December 2013) p29

219 Defra ([SDG0037](#))

primary level. We therefore resolve to improve the capacity of our education systems to prepare people to pursue sustainable development, including through enhanced teacher training, the development of curricula around sustainability, the development of training programmes that prepare students for careers in fields related to sustainability, and more effective use of information and communication technologies to enhance learning outcomes. We call for enhanced cooperation among schools, communities and authorities in efforts to promote access to quality education at all levels.<sup>220</sup>

The National Union of Students [NUS] told us that they were looking to introduce a new accreditation scheme for sustainability for colleges and universities, and get a question on sustainability in the National Student Survey.<sup>221</sup> Jamie Agombar of the NUS stated that the Government had not made a contribution to the UNESCO Conference on Education for Sustainable Development or Decade for Education on Sustainable Development. He told us:

It was quite surprising and disappointing there was not a UK delegation there [the UNESCO Conference on Education for Sustainable Development]. We [the UK] used to be leaders on this field maybe 20 years ago around education for sustainable development I think we are now laggards, having seen what other Governments like Japan and Germany are doing, how they are embedding it into the core purpose of that education.<sup>222</sup>

Dan Rogerson told us “it was a diary issue that prevented the Secretary of State for Education attending the conference. ... It is a very important topic, and there are other ways we are taking it forward.”<sup>223</sup> He explained further that:

DfE is supportive of opportunities being made available to schools in England to incorporate education for sustainable development (ESD) into their teaching, should they choose, but believes that schools themselves are best placed to make decisions about this.

The outcomes of the UNESCO conference on ESD will help inform thinking on how best to ensure that the attainment of education outcomes are reflected within the final set of goals.<sup>224</sup>

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220 United Nations [Rio + 20 Outcome Document: Future we want](#) para 230

221 Q129

222 Q120

223 Q200

224 Defra ([SDG0037](#))



## *Communicating sustainable development*

79. Thomas Lingard of Unilever told us that behaviour change often involves engaging people with universal themes:

The reality is you cannot go in and start a conversation by talking about climate change or about poverty in many places, but you can go in and start to talk about people's children, about the future. It sounds a little bit twee sometimes, but this is a universal theme that people can engage on, "What kind of world do you want to build? What kind of world do you want to live in? What kind of world do you want to leave for your children and what opportunities do you want your children to have?" It works obviously better with parents, but there is still something universal and there are a lot of parents. We know that children can be big drivers of behavioural change within homes, exactly to the point about if you can get them young and the kids come home from school or university and say, "Mummy, why are you not recycling this?" that can be a hugely powerful driver, often underestimated.<sup>225</sup>

People are busy and stressed and short of money and if we can appeal to things that are top of their mind rather than long term what appear to be distant issues of climate change, you can get engagement with people. If you make it fun and interesting and engaging, again you can get more engagement.<sup>226</sup>

"The Fairtrade market is 20 years-old", Michael Gidney told us, "and we have seen a change in attitudes over that time that will mean that people are more aware of impacts across the supply chain and more aware of the interconnectedness of things and their role as responsible consumers."<sup>227</sup> He added:

One of the most exciting areas of Fairtrade is we have local groups, volunteer groups, who get together on wet and windy Saturday afternoons and give out leaflets in the high street. There are 9,000 groups around the country, and within that the most exciting bit is one third of the schools in Britain are voluntarily working towards Fairtrade status, which means you are using Fairtrade as a way into understanding the wider interconnectedness of development and social things in schools, so it might be within a citizenship or geography or PSHE classes or whatever. There is an incredible opportunity to work with that group to think about what it means to be a responsible consumer, what does sustainable growth look like. Some of the

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225 Q124

226 Q122

227 Q121

rather challenging language in the SDGs could be worked through in that kind of way.<sup>228</sup>

80. Dan Rogerson told us that Defra was working with the Sustainable Schools Alliance “to provide a clearer offer of support to all schools in the country about how they can look at this, both in the way that they structure what they do, but also in terms of how they approach education and discussions with young people ... Young people naturally want to hear more about it and are challenging us—just as much as you are today—on how we are going to take this forward.”<sup>229</sup> Amber Rudd believed that with the negotiations on the SDGs and climate change in 2015, “There will more and more on the news and being communicated internationally ... This will continue to be a major issue for people, which will help politicians to deliver the right answer and a permanent target by the end of next year.”<sup>230</sup>

81. We asked Justine Greening what work the Government had been doing to promote awareness raising projects, such as the Hard Rain project. DFID told us:

Whilst we recognise the value of development education, in particular the formal education sector, it was agreed that the Department’s funding would be redirected to areas that demonstrated the greatest impact on our overall objective for global poverty reduction. The Hard Rain project, as a development awareness project, was therefore not considered for funding at this time.<sup>231</sup>

**82. Education for sustainable development is crucial to help people understand the impact their actions have on the planet. The Government has shown few signs of promoting this, as illustrated by the lack of ministerial priority given to global conference on education for sustainable development. This is despite a strong appetite from business and voluntary organisations for engaging with such universal themes at both a global and local level. The Government has invested in young people through the International Citizens Service, although that programme has been more successful in engaging young people from London and the South-East than other parts of the UK. It is important that the Government empowers citizens to embrace this in order to achieve sustainable economic growth which values people and the planet.**

***83. Given the global significance of the Sustainable Development Goals and their powerful vision for the next 15 years, the Government should do more to engage young people in the UK with the new goals, and with the concepts of sustainable development. This should include taking Education for Sustainable Development seriously, and integrating it into the National Curriculum, and supporting the NUS’ proposals for a new***

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228 Q121

229 Q196

230 Q199

231 DFID ([SDG0029](#))

*accreditation scheme and questions in the National Students Survey. It should look to maximise the value of the International Citizens Service, by integrating the proposed Sustainable Development Goals into the material that young people use to prepare for their period of ICS service, and supporting them in sharing these messages about sustainable development more widely in their communities. The Government should also review the channels it uses to promote the ICS to ensure it has as wide a geographic reach across the UK and across all parts of society as possible. It should embrace creative and powerful ways of communicating the urgency of sustainable development, such as the approach taken by the Hard Rain project, and its proposal to promote the SDGs simultaneously in universities around the world. It needs to engage all stakeholders, including businesses, schools and higher and further education colleges, and NGOs to raise awareness in the run up to the UN General Assembly and Paris Climate Change conference at the end of 2015, and beyond.*



Lone child in a Mexico City slum, Mexico  
*Credit: Rob Webster / WWF*



Lifebuoy's School of Five Handwashing programme, Global Handwashing Day, Indonesia.  
*Credit: Oscar Siagian*



## Conclusions

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1. The Millennium Development Goals gave insufficient attention to environmental protection and sustainable development. The prioritisation of aid resources on vital areas of human development such as health and education, was at the expense of an integrated sustainable development agenda. The Open Working Group's proposals provide a broader framework which better captures the complexity and interdependency of the relationship between people and planet. The mix of standalone goals and integrated indicators has the potential to be just as action-orientated as the MDGs, but have the advantage of being more comprehensive. It includes innovative tools such as Natural Capital Accounting which help Governments measure what really matters to support decision making and guide policy. (Paragraph 18)
2. The similar timing of the SDG and climate change negotiations presents an important opportunity to embed climate change thinking throughout the SDGs—to avoid development that exacerbates climate change while also building decarbonisation and adaptation into development. However, at the same time as stating a commitment to ambitious action on climate change, the Government is pursuing contradictory policies by effectively giving subsidies for fossil fuels. (Paragraph 27)
3. International trade has played an important role in reducing extreme poverty. But such gains often come at the expense of the environment. It is equally important that the poorest and most vulnerable groups are not further impoverished by changing trade rules and agreements. (Paragraph 29)
4. As we stated in our recent report on Action on Air Quality, air pollution is an “invisible killer” in the UK. However, poor air quality is also a major issue and cause of premature death in cities in many developing countries. (Paragraph 31)
5. The UK should support the vital goal of sustainable and resource efficient consumption and production in the Sustainable Development Goals. Rising population growth means ‘business as usual’ economic models of disposable products are not an option in the 21st Century. Resource efficiency is something that makes both environmental and economic sense. It is therefore disappointing that the UK is taking only small steps when a larger shift towards a more resource efficient economy is needed. Whilst the Government supports ambitious goals for other countries for poverty reduction, it is reluctant to commit the UK to such ambitious goals in the EU. There is also a role for businesses, which can be supported by more detailed corporate sustainability reporting. (Paragraph 38)
6. Inequality prevents sustainable development, not only because it can undermine social cohesion and a sense of shared well-being, but because some sections of societies may be excluded from the benefits of development and prosperity. (Paragraph 45)

7. The current wide consensus on the components of sustainable development, as set out in the 17 Goals listed in the Open Working Group's report, is historic and powerful. The UN Secretary General has indicated that the 17 Goals should be taken forward in the final SDGs, but has put forward a set of six 'essential elements' to facilitate engagement and communication of the sustainability message. To reduce the number of goals, as the UK has proposed, would inevitably be to omit key aspects of the sustainable development framework after 2015, potentially including those relating to environmental sustainability. That would be a mistake. Environmental limits are a key challenge that we face in the 21st Century, and a reductionist approach risks removing the growing international focus on these key areas. Communicating the goals is important, but ultimately what counts is global action across a range of areas that is truly sustainable. (Paragraph 52)
8. The Government has committed significant time and energy to the process of developing new Sustainable Development Goals, including officials and Ministers from different Government departments. The focus has primarily been international, however, with much less thought having been given to the domestic implications of the Goals. The Government seems readier to consider goals for other countries than for itself. (Paragraph 57)
9. The UK has committed significant amounts of funding to the International Climate Fund and now also the Green Climate Fund. Whilst we are pleased that the Government is prioritising these, it is vital that the funds are spent effectively and have as large an impact as possible. Currently, there is poor public transparency of how these are being used. We welcome the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's report on the ICF, but note this was originally due in 2013. (Paragraph 65)
10. The UK is not sufficiently prioritising funding for the establishment of marine protected areas in the UK Overseas Territories. It is vital that these unique ecosystems are protected before it is too late. There is a lack of timely and transparent information to explain how biodiversity-related funds are spent overseas. (Paragraph 68)
11. Agreeing the right indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals is a vital step in ensuring that they have traction. The universal nature of the goals means that there will need to be a combination of international and national goals, and the UK has an important role in agreeing these. It is important that the UK is accountable for its progress in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals. It has not yet done sufficient work to consider the implications for UK policy. We will continue to monitor and review the Government's progress in agreeing the goals, and there is a clear role for our successor Committee to audit implementation and performance against the goals in future. (Paragraph 75)
12. Education for sustainable development is crucial to help people understand the impact their actions have on the planet. The Government has shown few signs of promoting this, as illustrated by the lack of ministerial priority given to global conference on education for sustainable development. This is despite a strong



appetite from business and voluntary organisations for engaging with such universal themes at both a global and local level. The Government has invested in young people through the International Citizens Service, although that programme has been more successful in engaging young people from London and the South-East than other parts of the UK. It is important that the Government empowers citizens to embrace this in order to achieve sustainable economic growth which values people and the planet. (Paragraph 82)

## Recommendations

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13. The Government, despite its innovative work on developing Natural Capital Accounts, is not currently showing sufficient leadership around biodiversity and environmental protection. It should actively champion this area in the Sustainable Development Goals in international negotiations, so that the 'green thread' that runs throughout the Goals leads to real improvements in environmental protection and improved outcomes by 2030. (Paragraph 18)
14. The Government should publically support a separate climate change goal in the SDGs given the importance of reaching an ambitious global climate change agreement in Paris next year. It should also re-consider and rapidly phase out its continued subsidies to carbon intensive energy sources in line with the commitments made at Rio +20 and the Secretary General's call to phase out "harmful subsidies". The Government needs to do more domestically to support the transition to a low carbon economy, including urgently working with the FCA to make it easier for community groups to register as energy co-operatives. The Government should clearly set out the steps it is taking to achieve this. (Paragraph 27)
15. The Government's renewed focus on income poverty should not view economic development in isolation, but equally consider the environmental and social impacts of this economic activity and promote low carbon growth. It should demand the highest standards of environmental protection in trade deals, and ensure unequivocally that there is no potential for these to be undermined through dispute settlement mechanisms. (Paragraph 29)
16. The UK should lead international efforts to improve air quality in cities in developing countries, where an increasing number of people live. This could include international knowledge sharing around effective low emissions zones, low-emissions transport, and vehicle and fuel standards to save lives. (Paragraph 31)
17. The Government should accelerate its work on resource efficiency and the circular economy, including through negotiating ambitious targets within the European Union. The Government should expand the requirement for corporate sustainability reporting beyond carbon emissions. Defra should ensure that this agenda is embraced across Government, and DFID should review its aid programmes to find opportunities to fund circular economy approaches. As it considers how best to support its future aid programmes to promote economic growth, it needs to learn lessons from the environmental degradation that has frequently accompanied rapid economic growth. It should ensure that all projects funded with UK aid, from international to community level, including the components implemented by delivery partners, are screened for climate and environment risks. It should also ensure that economic development related programmes fully safeguard biodiversity and tread a new path which de-couples economic growth from natural resource use. (Paragraph 38)

18. The UK is right to have a focus on completing the task of the MDGs in eliminating 'extreme poverty', but this can best be achieved as part of a wider focus that includes tackling inequality to help deal with both poverty and social cohesion. The UK should support the inclusion in the SDGs of a range of inequality indicators to measure and monitor inequality, and should design programmes to tackle both extreme poverty and inequality simultaneously. (Paragraph 45)
19. It is important that the UK respects the wider international consensus established around the 17 Open Working Group goals, in order for the process to have national ownership and legitimacy. The Government is right to seek an SDG framework that can be compellingly communicated, but any continued argument for a smaller number of Goals, in the face of the Secretary General's recent guidance, risks creating unnecessary divisions between countries when it should be seeking to build support for ambitious action. At the forthcoming European Council, and beyond, the Government should push for an EU position which favours a comprehensive coverage in the SDGs of all pillars of sustainable development as set out in the Open Working Group's 17 Goals. (Paragraph 53)
20. Defra should now start to play a stronger role, in collaboration with the Cabinet Office, in working with all departments, including the Treasury, to consider the domestic implications of the goals and pursue policies consistent with sustainable development. (Paragraph 57)
21. The Government should report clear annual results summaries for the International Climate Fund, which detail the impacts that the programmes have had. It should particularly ensure that expenditure on forestry programmes has clear impact indicators. (Paragraph 65)
22. The Government should publish an annual report outlining its spending on biodiversity- related projects overseas, and the impact these have had. It should prioritise funding to support the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the UK overseas territories, such as Pitcairn, and explore with the World Bank and others the most appropriate ways of sustainably financing and managing these. (Paragraph 68)
23. The ONS and Defra (as the lead department for domestic sustainable development) need ensure that the appropriate data and systems are in place to monitor and report on the UK's delivery of SDG targets. It should review the UK's Sustainable Development Indicators and ensure that these reflect the key nationally-relevant SDG indicators, including on sustainable consumption and production. (Paragraph 75)
24. Given the global significance of the Sustainable Development Goals and their powerful vision for the next 15 years, the Government should do more to engage young people in the UK with the new goals, and with the concepts of sustainable development. This should include taking Education for Sustainable Development seriously, and integrating it into the National Curriculum, and supporting the NUS' proposals for a new accreditation scheme and questions in the National Students

Survey. It should look to maximise the value of the International Citizens Service, by integrating the proposed Sustainable Development Goals into the material that young people use to prepare for their period of ICS service, and supporting them in sharing these messages about sustainable development more widely in their communities. The Government should also review the channels it uses to promote the ICS to ensure it has as wide a geographic reach across the UK and across all parts of society as possible. It should embrace creative and powerful ways of communicating the urgency of sustainable development, such as the approach taken by the Hard Rain project, and its proposal to promote the SDGs simultaneously in universities around the world. It needs to engage all stakeholders, including businesses, schools and higher and further education colleges, and NGOs to raise awareness in the run up to the UN General Assembly and Paris Climate Change conference at the end of 2015, and beyond. (Paragraph 83)

# Formal Minutes

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**Wednesday 10 December 2014**

Members present:

Joan Walley, in the Chair

Peter Aldous  
Zac Goldsmith  
Mark Lazarowicz  
Caroline Lucas

Dr Matthew Offord  
Mrs Caroline Spelman  
Dr Alan Whitehead

Ordered, That the following written evidence relating to Connected world: Agreeing ambitious Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 be reported to the House for publication on the internet.

Action Against Hunger

Department for Energy and Climate Change

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Draft Report (*Connected world: Agreeing ambitious Sustainable Development Goals in 2015*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 83 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 17 December at 10.10 am]

# Witnesses

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## Wednesday 29 October 2014

*Question number*

**Rt Hon Justine Greening MP**, Secretary of State for International Development, **Melinda Bohannon**, Deputy Director, Post-2015 Goals, Department for International Development, and **James Jansen**, Policy Adviser, International, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[Q1–88](#)

## Wednesday 19 November 2014

**Andrew Scott**, Research Fellow, Climate and Environment Programme, Overseas Development Institute, **Helen Dennis**, Senior Advisor, Poverty and Inequality, Christian Aid, and **Dominic White**, Head of International Development Policy, World Wildlife Fund UK.

[Q89–106](#)

**Thomas Lingard**, Global Advocacy Director, Unilever, **Michael Gidney**, Chief Executive, Fairtrade Foundation, and **Jamie Agombar**, Head of Sustainability, National Union of Students.

[Q107–129](#)

## Tuesday 2 December 2014

**Dan Rogerson MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, **Amber Rudd MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change, **Melinda Bohannon**, Deputy Director, Post 2015 Goals, Department for International Development, **James Hughes**, Deputy Director, Strategy, Engagement and Analysis, International Climate Change, Department of Energy and Climate Change, and **James Jansen**, Policy Adviser, International, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

[Q130–206](#)

**Karl Falkenberg**, Director General, Environment, European Commission.

[Q207–246](#)



## List of printed written evidence

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- 1 Global Sustainability Institute ([SDG0001](#))
- 2 UKCDS Secretariat ([SDG0002](#))
- 3 The Fairtrade Foundation ([SDG0003](#))
- 4 Steps Centre ([SDG0004](#))
- 5 Add International ([SDG0006](#))
- 6 Aviva Investors ([SDG0007](#))
- 7 Cafod, Care International UK, Christian Aid, Oxfam , Practical Action, WWF-UK ([SDG0008](#))
- 8 Christian Aid ([SDG0009](#))
- 9 Appg On Population, Development and Reproductive Health ([SDG0010](#))
- 10 Department for International Development ([SDG0011](#), [SDG0029](#))
- 11 Cafod ([SDG0012](#))
- 12 WWF-UK ([SDG0014](#))
- 13 Bond Beyond 2015 UK ([SDG0015](#))
- 14 International Institute for Environment and Development ([SDG0017](#))
- 15 Natural Environment Research Council on behalf of RCUK ([SDG0018](#))
- 16 The Royal Society ([SDG0019](#))
- 17 Trade Justice Movement ([SDG0020](#))
- 18 Stakeholder Forum ([SDG0021](#))
- 19 World Animal Protection ([SDG0022](#))
- 20 Compassion in World Farming and Others ([SDG0023](#))
- 21 lied ([SDG0024](#))
- 22 Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosia) ([SDG0025](#))
- 23 Unilever ([SDG0026](#))
- 24 NUS ([SDG0027](#))
- 25 Hard Rain Project ([SDG0028](#))
- 26 UK Sustainable Investment and Finance Association([SDG0032](#))
- 27 Durham University ([SDG0033](#))
- 28 UK Statistics Authority ([SDG0034](#))
- 29 Action Against Hunger ([SDG0035](#))
- 30 DECC ([SDG0036](#))
- 31 Defra ([SDG0037](#))