

**Robust and measurable SDGs:  
Launch of Report –“[Scientific Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective](#)”**

UN HQ, Conference Room 12, 18 February 2015

[www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org)

[www.worldsocialscience.org](http://www.worldsocialscience.org)

**Lucilla Spini, Head of science programmes  
Claudia Ringler, Deputy division director international food policy research institute, united states**

**Lucilla Spini, Head of Science Programmes- ICSU**

On ICSU:

ICSU’s Vision is “A world where science is used for the **benefit of all**, excellence in science is valued and scientific knowledge is effectively linked to policy-making”. ICSU was founded in 1931 based on two earlier bodies: 121 national members representing 141 countries/regions. It has 31 international scientific unions, & 19 interdisciplinary bodies, with regional offices in : Malaysia, Mexico, and South Africa. It is the organizing partner of the scientific and technological community major group. ICSU operates on 3 strategic pillars: universality of science, science for policy, and research.

**International Initiatives- Future Earth, Urban Health, Disaster Reduction, Observing systems and the upcoming “International Scientific Conference “Our Common Future Under Climate Change” –Paris, France 7-10 July 2015.**

**Introduction to the report: a tool for consolidating the SDG targets-  
Anne-Sophie Stevance, science officer, international council for science**  
Review of targets for the SDGs: the science perspective

Strong engagement throughout different scientific communities. They put together a group of 41 authors from 21 countries across natural and social sciences

Comprehensive analysis of all targets focusing on- 1) Integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, 2)How are they based on scientific evidence 3) Measurability, and 4) Implementability.

- This gives form to concrete recommendations to improve targets and prepare for their implementation and monitoring
- Their report review goals following a common template:
  - \* Importance for SD as a whole
  - \* Analysis of targets and recommendations (can they be more specific, clearer, etc)
  - \* Inter-linkages with other goals and targets <- the report tried to make this inter-linkage more explicit.
  - \* Monitoring and evaluation

\*Analysis of goal's potential for being transformational. (Does it provide a clear road map for stakeholders? Etc.)

### Main Findings

-The scientist community thought that the SDG framework was a clear improvement from the MDGs especially in the way economic, social, and environmental dimensions are more balanced and integrated.

It successfully addresses the Systemic drivers and barriers of change.

Recommendations:

\*Tackle interactions explicitly to maximize synergies and avoid trade-offs between goals

\*Build ambitious approach and capacity to monitoring and review.

\*Integrate data from multiple sources

\* Integrate monitoring into policy-making processes at all levels

\* Weigh environmental and social data, and allow for progress on a national level as well as a local and global level in terms of progress for the SDGs

The 17 goals are many, and there's the risk of some goals being pushed aside and becoming side-goals. We should look to see if the 17 goals could also be framed in an overall vision statement that can be developed, such that each goal is seen as important. Also, Stakeholders should be empowered as agents of change.

Overall, 29-30% of the targets were robust and well developed. 54% should be more specific, while 17% require significant work.

"Requires significant work" here means: Not specific enough to garner implementation. EG "access to energy" <- what constitutes access? What energy sources are being spoken of?

Some targets could also be more quantifiable.

Targets that could be more integrated:

Ex: education for sustainable development

Ex: social AND economic and environmental inequalities

Targets that cannot be monitored effectively:

Ex: lack of data and coherent approach to monitoring waste water charge.

Targets that could be simplified or streamlined: land degradation and halting deforestation

Targets that could be more forward looking and/ or ambitious: health

SDGs put forth a challenge of integration: The SDGs challenges scientists to be solutions-driven and work in partnership with policy makers and civil society. The

integration of disciplines and co-productions of knowledge keeps the scientific community forever engaged.

How do we set up the monitoring frameworks that look at global trends, but also individual countries national progress?

**Claudia Ringler, Deputy division director international food policy research institute, united states**

SDG2- "Achieving integration- an imperative to meet SDG2 on food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

^It's very ambitious

^Integration of SDG2 with all the other goals.

Educations, Climate change, healthy lives, etc. still women .

Clear priorities should be set by the countries of what they want to focus on, For example- Sustainable agriculture can actually reduce food security, depending on how it's carried out. There are trade-offs in almost anything. If we want to conserve our forests, you might need to aggressively increase our agriculture which might further contribute to climate change.

Improved Targets 2.1-2.4

2.2- Malnutrition should be *defined* as including under-nutrition, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies.

Suggestion to add means of implementation of SDG2 .

Monitoring: Already well-established, albeit insufficient protocols for measuring change in hunger. (calories available per capita per day, dietary diversity score, etc.) SDG2 target goals should be linked with other goals..

**Professor Susan Parnell- University of Cape Town – Executive of the African Centre for Cities at UTCU**

Global priorities like the SDGs, need local action in design, resourcing, implementation and capacity building, and monitoring and reporting.

Science is quite interested in multi-scale development.

Cities are places where Political, fiscal, institutional, technological, natural, social and environmental change comes together.

Cities are the crucible for the SDGs. Cities are sites of sustainable development, hubs, and pathways.

Everyone agrees that they are important, but not everyone agrees why.

Goal 11: to make cities safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient sets from the SDG apart from the MDGs. These are the places that are catalytic places of social change. This is an innovative goal, so the goal developers should be applauded for that.

It's absolutely imperative that you call on the scientific community to join these very complicated discussions. This is probably the most important goal on the list.

**Berta Martin-Lopez- University Autonomidad.**

Understanding and accounting for inter-linkages between natural and social systems

The most important message from this goal is that if we don't respect the biophysical boundaries of the planet, we'll have a heavy price to pay. We have to Preserve and respect the planet.

**Michelle Scobie- Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations- The University of the West Indies**

Imbedding the SDGs in national policy

How do we integrate the SDGS with an existence between 2 policies?

How do we make the SDGs resonate with local priorities? How do you foster cross-boundary knowledge networks? It presents the challenge of building policy across sectorial silos and divides, in already complicated issues.

How can we involve SIDs (Small Islands and Developing Nations) in furthering the SDGs?

We must avoid the temptation of working on short term, problems rather than longer term goals.

We are moving beyond policy development to facilitating processes for better governance.

**Comments**

Commentator: Commended them on the work they've done. This comprehensive view urges them to think further and think of the indicator challenge.

Anna Sophie response: there are scientists working hard on indicators. There's a lack of clarity on the process of how the scientific community can provide it's input.

Susan- It'd be useful to have discussion where the scientific community can have direct with indicators. The scientific community might be best-suited to present a huge role

Berta: The 17 goals are the result of a political process rather than a scientific process. Now we have to look at them through a scientific process. Things may be done for political reasons, but those reasons might actually be very important. With The declaration it should be short, concise, visionary, interesting and engaging. This has been a very difficult process and many scientists are satisfied that we've gotten so far.

Not all the goals and targets have the same importance to each country so obviously one size doesn't fit all.

### **Heading from global to international to local**

ICSU has national members, if you'd like to dialogue with your country on a national level they can put you in touch.

"We've embarked in producing this report to provide a tool, not to judge on the scientific level of a particular goal. The tool is to help during the implementation phase, and we welcome your feedback"

We want to use indicators that get us where we want to go. It'd be terrible for a conversation to be carried out that either takes us where we don't want to go, or leads us nowhere at all.

Sue - In the scientific community there's a tremendous amount of evidence that can show the relationship between these goals and the outcomes through these indicators.

Berta: The indicators that work nationally and globally probably don't work on a local scale, so this is an issue that still needs to be addressed.

Sue: "One of the key roles of science is to be a friend to sustainable development by being a critic. We are going to such uncharted territory that reflecting on what we're doing and whether we're doing it right or doing the right thing is **so** important. There's much uncertainty, and we wouldn't be honest if we didn't admit that. Let's reflect as independent viewers, not just as nation-states.

Attendee Semia Gharbi: Remark: Scientists have to use everything we have. It's more than just political tools, but also we have actual facts to back our claims up.