

Chapter 1

Overview of the inquiry and the UN SDGs

Referral

1.1 On 4 December 2017 the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 29 November 2018:

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with particular reference to:

- a. the understanding and awareness of the SDG across the Australian Government and in the wider Australian community;
- b. the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDG;
- c. what governance structures and accountability measures are required at the national, state and local levels of government to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the SDG that is both meaningful and achieves real outcomes;
- d. how can performance against the SDG be monitored and communicated in a way that engages government, businesses and the public, and allows effective review of Australia's performance by civil society;
- e. what SDG are currently being addressed by Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program;
- f. which of the SDG is Australia best suited to achieving through our ODA program, and should Australia's ODA be consolidated to focus on achieving core SDG;
- g. how countries in the Indo-Pacific are responding to implementing the SDG, and which of the SDG have been prioritised by countries receiving Australia's ODA, and how these priorities could be incorporated into Australia's ODA program; and
- h. examples of best practice in how other countries are implementing the SDG from which Australia could learn.¹

1.2 On 26 November 2018 the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date to the last sitting day in February 2019.²

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 Details of the inquiry were placed on the committee's website at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_fadt. The committee also contacted a number of relevant individuals and organisations to notify them of the inquiry and invite

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 76—4 December 2017, pp. 2428–2429.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 130—26 November 2018, p. 4228.

submissions by 29 March 2018. The committee continued to receive submissions after the closing date. Submissions received are listed at Appendix 1, and tabled documents, additional information and answers to questions on notice at Appendix 2.

1.4 The committee held five public hearings in 2018: on 24 August, 26 November and 7 December in Canberra; on 29 October in Melbourne; and on 2 November in Sydney. A list of witnesses who gave evidence is available at Appendix 3. Submissions and the Hansard transcripts of evidence may be accessed through the committee website.

Acknowledgement

1.5 The committee thanks the organisations and individuals who participated in the public hearings as well as those who made written submissions. The committee would like to extend its particular thanks to the students and teachers from Forrest Primary School pictured below for their joint submission and attendance at the committee's hearing in Canberra on 26 November 2018.



Source: Mr Joe Italiano, House of Representatives.

Structure of the Report

1.6 This chapter provides a brief overview of the SDGs. Chapter 2 outlines the potential benefits, opportunities and costs of implementing the SDGs for Australia (Term of Reference (ToR) b). Chapter 3 summarises suggestions from the evidence for improving the national governance of the SDGs, and monitoring and reporting progress against the goals (ToR c and d). Chapter 4 describes proposals for partnerships on the SDGs between the Australian Government and the international, state, territory and local levels of government (ToR c and d).

1.7 Chapter 5 includes ideas for partnering with civil society and the private sector to support their engagement with the SDGs, and illustrates the level of awareness of the SDGs in Australia (ToR d and a). Chapter 6 notes examples of how the SDGs are being implemented across the Indo-Pacific, and outlines proposals from the evidence for how to support this through official development assistance (ToR e to g). Chapter 7 details the committee's recommendations. Examples of international best practice are dispersed throughout the report (ToR h).

Sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals

1.8 A widely accepted definition of 'sustainable development' is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.³ The United Nations (UN) has recognised three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.⁴

1.9 The international community has undertaken a series of conferences on these issues over past decades, including the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (the Rio+20 Summit).⁵ It was agreed at the Rio+20 Summit to establish the SDGs.⁶ The SDGs were developed to progress the global momentum on sustainable development policy and to replace and build on the eight anti-poverty UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ceased in 2015.⁷

Establishment of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

1.10 The international community undertook the 'largest consultation programme in UN history' to develop the SDGs.⁸ This involved many actors, including a UN System Task Team, a High-level Panel established by the UN Secretary-General, and an Open Working Group with a mandate from the Rio+20.⁹ In addition, 'extensive public consultations about the post-2015 development agenda' were undertaken by the UN, including through the 'My World' survey.¹⁰ The SDGs and associated targets are:

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- 3 Adopted from the Brundtland Report in the 1987 United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141, Attachment 1*, p. 3.
- 4 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015.
- 5 Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The age of sustainable development*, Columbia University Press, 2015, pp. 7, 481; UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 4.
- 6 Jon Lunn, Emma Downing and Lorna Booth, *The Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda*, House of Commons Library, briefing paper no. 7291, September 2015, p. 7.
- 7 For more information on the MDGs see: UN, *Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015* <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml> (accessed 15 August 2018).
- 8 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 5.
- 9 Lunn et al, *The SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda*, p. 3.
- 10 Lunn et al, *The SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda*, p. 6; UN, 'My World', <http://vote.myworld2015.org/> (accessed 24 April 2018).

...the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable.¹¹

1.11 The Australian Government and civil society contributed to the development of the SDGs. Australia's first Voluntary National Review notes that Australia:

...strongly supported the establishment of new standalone goals for economic growth (SDG8), peace and good governance (SDG16) and oceans (SDG14), as well as keeping gender equality as a central contributor through its own goal (SDG5).¹²

1.12 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was 'actively engaged in more than two years of consultations and negotiations to shape the 2030 Agenda and to ensure that the issues the 2030 Agenda covers align with Australia's national interests and the challenges faced in our region'.¹³

1.13 On 25 September 2015 all 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).¹⁴ The 2030 Agenda comprises the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (Addis Agenda). DFAT explained:

The seventeen SDGs provide a roadmap for addressing global development challenges to 2030 and beyond ('the what'), and the Addis Agenda provides a global framework for financing sustainable development that aligns financing flows and priorities with the SDGs ('the how')...¹⁵

International review process

1.14 The UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development is the central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. A core feature of the HLPF is the presentation of voluntary national reviews (VNRs) by member states on their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.¹⁶

1.15 The HLPF also includes an annual international thematic review of progress. The 2018 topic was 'transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies', and in 2019 the topic will be 'empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'. The Secretary-General also prepares an annual progress report on the SDGs based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.¹⁷ In 2019, the quadrennial *Global Sustainable Development Report* will also be presented, which is drafted by

11 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 3.

12 Australian Government, *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 7.

13 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

14 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

15 *Submission 60*, p. 3.

16 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 34.

17 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 33–34.

independent experts and intended to provide evidence to inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁸

1.16 While the MDGs were focused on developing countries, the 2030 Agenda is 'accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities'.¹⁹ DFAT reiterated that 'each country's approach to implementing the SDGs is shaped by its own national context and priorities'.²⁰ The SDGs officially came into force on 1 January 2016. They are listed on the following two pages.

18 HLPF 2019, <http://sdg.iisd.org/events/high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2019/> (accessed 27 September 2018).

19 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 3.

20 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UN Department of Public Information, *Sustainable Development Goals: Guidelines for the use of the SDG logo*, including the colour wheel, and 17 icons, December 2017, p. 48

Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*²¹
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

21 * Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Supporting targets and indicators

1.17 The SDGs are accompanied by 169 targets. Some targets are relatively specific, such as reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 (target 3.1). Other targets are more general, for example:

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate (target 5.4).

Indicators

1.18 The 2030 Agenda established that the SDG goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators.²² A global indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and agreed in 2017.²³ The indicator framework includes 232 individual indicators.²⁴ These are more detailed than the targets, for example, target 3.1 is supported by the following indicators:

- 3.1.1 maternal mortality ratio; and
- 3.1.2 proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel.

1.19 Target 5.4 is supported by indicator 5.4.1 (proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location).

1.20 The indicators have been grouped into three tiers. As of 31 December 2018, Tier I included the 101 indicators that have an internationally established methodology and are supported by relevant data that is regularly produced by countries. The 84 Tier II indicators have an internationally established methodology, but data are not regularly produced by countries. The 41 Tier III indicators are not yet supported by internationally established methodology or standards.²⁵

1.21 The indicator framework is 'a voluntary and country-led instrument' that is 'complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be

22 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 32.

23 UN, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 71/313*, p. 2.

24 The indicator framework lists 244 indicators, however, nine of these are repeated under two or three targets, so there are 232 unique indicators. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (UN DESA) *SDG Indicators*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/> (accessed 28 November 2018).

25 Six indicators have components split across multiple tier classifications. UN DESA, Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/> (accessed 7 January 2018); Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, DFAT, 2018, p. 7.

developed by Member States'.²⁶ The global indicators are to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the UN Statistical Commission in 2020 and 2025.²⁷

Principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

1.22 The preamble to the 2030 Agenda includes what are referred to as the '5Ps', the five interlinked and integrated areas for action:

- **People**
We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
- **Planet**
We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.
- **Prosperity**
We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- **Peace**
We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.
- **Partnership**
We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.²⁸

1.23 Another key aspect of the 2030 Agenda set out in the preamble is the pledge 'that no one will be left behind'.²⁹ The 2030 Agenda also reaffirms a range of existing international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.³⁰

26 UN, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 2.

27 International Women's Development Agency, *Submission 98*, p. 10.

28 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 2.

29 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 1.

30 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 7–8.

Addis Ababa Action Agenda

1.24 The Addis Agenda is the 'financing framework for sustainable development'.³¹
It:

...supports, complements and helps to contextualize the 2030 Agenda's means of implementation targets. It relates to domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt and debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity-building, and data, monitoring and follow-up.³²

1.25 DFAT summarised the key action areas in the Addis Agenda as follows:

Domestic public resources

- Mobilise domestic resources including remittance flows and tax
- Improve transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of tax systems
- Scale up international tax cooperation

Domestic and international private business and finance

- Build dynamic private sectors
- Promote financial inclusion
- Reduce costs of remittances

International development cooperation

- Find new ways to attract both public and private sources of financing for development
- Modernise forms of cooperation
- Promote foreign direct investment

International trade as an engine for development

- Ensure trade expansion benefits developing countries
- Strengthen regional economic integration and interconnectivity
- Utilising Aid-for-trade

Debt and debt sustainability

- Strengthen macroeconomic and public resource management
- Coordinate policies to foster debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and debt management

31 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 16.

32 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 28.

Address systemic issues

- Strengthen international coordination and policy coherence to enhance global financial and macroeconomic stability

Science, technology, innovation and capacity-building

- Investing in multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Invest in infrastructure and public services.³³

33 DFAT, *Financing the Sustainable Development Goals*, <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Pages/financing-the-sustainable-development-goals.aspx> (accessed 24 April 2018); UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)*—Resolution 69/313, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015.

