



Key Messages from the GSO

Open Interactive Dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Goals

24 April 2014

The Global Social Observatory hosted an open interactive dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Goals on Thursday, 24 April 2014, with the specific purpose of exploring the inter-linkages among key focus areas and identifying how multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement can contribute to these linkages from a Geneva perspective. Drawing from the diversity of international interests in Geneva, participants came from NGOs, academia, the private sector, governments and international organizations – bringing with them a range of sectoral interests, including health and population dynamics, food security and nutrition, employment and trade. Most importantly, they brought an eagerness to engage with each other and to promote transformative thinking and action about what sustainable development means. Here are the highlights of the dialogue:

Economic Growth is the Foundation for Sustainable Development

- While participants recognized the nexus between social, environmental and economic sustainability for development, there was unequivocal endorsement of the role of economic growth as the foundation for sustainable development.
- But it is not economic growth by itself. Participants further described the kinds of Interventions that are needed to ensure a transformative quality to growth.
- Inequalities between rich and poor, between men and women, young and old require a commitment to inclusive growth strategies.
- **The key is integration** across all of the goals of a post-2015 development agenda.
- Although too many inter-linkages will tie you up in knots, the challenge is to identify what works and what does not work and to make an integrated strategy that is pragmatic and as comprehensive as possible.

The SDGs are different from MDGs.

- The SDGs need to be universal in focus, as opposed to having only a focus on development assistance for developing countries.
- Many new ways of thinking apply to the SDGs - consumption as well as production, malnutrition generally, universal health coverage, entrepreneurship, etc.
- There is a basic underpinning for the SDGs on human rights.
- There is furthermore a new development framework in the works that includes multiple stakeholders and defines development in diverse ways.



There is a growing and important role for non-state actors in the SDGs.

- Participants did have different viewpoints regarding the role of non-state actors in policy deliberations and the issue of accountability – some favor revising the issue of governance to include multi-stakeholder partnerships – but non-state actors are not organized – and other participants preferred to emphasize the accountability of governments and politicians.
- Nonetheless, participants did recognize that policies, even at the global level, are being set through multiple networks and in different forums.
- And the implementation of policies definitely includes a growing space for multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- The ILO offers one approach that has worked well for 80 years to integrate the complex interaction between states and non-state actors through tripartite governance on international labour issues.
- Challenges remain for implementing a multi-stakeholder approach to including non-state actors in international policy deliberations. There is an absence of effective machinery for non-state actor participation outside of specific issue areas; trust among many non-state actors (and interactions of non-state actors with governments) is missing.
- The role of social media is transforming the policy environment to compel new thinking.

The role of trade as an instrument for implementing all of the SDGs needs to be more fully integrated into the SDGs.

- Trade was included only in what many are calling the “orphan goal” of MDG 8 and only with regard to two narrowly defined targets on tariffs and access.
- Participants raised the question of how one might imagine a transformative process in any of the SDG issues without trade. Trade is seen as an enabler of all other goals.
- That said, participants also believed that the international trading system needs to be made more equitable and fair.
- Trade has an “image problem” with regard to its role as a means of implementation.

Job creation is central to sustainable development.

- Development is about people moving from less productive jobs to more complex jobs – this is affected by health, education, climate change, consumption patterns and all of the other SDGs – but employment is a precondition for sustainable livelihoods.
- Governments don’t create jobs on their own – they provide the enabling environment both generally and with regard to specific opportunities for SMEs, youth, women, entrepreneurship.
- Freedom of association and the ability to negotiate terms of employment are key to making jobs work.



- Many participants observed that economic growth and job creation do not happen on their own but that social support programmes involving education, health, social security programmes, and the like, precede economic growth and job creation.
- The new economic environment in the post-financial crisis as well as post-2015 requires transformative thinking about new job opportunities, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship.

Health affects everything and everything affects health.

- The centrality of health to development is a clear example of how issues should be developed in the integrating context of inter-linkages with all other issues.
- Participants were especially motivated by the gender dimension in health but also noted (a) that gender equality is a concern for all SDGs and (b) that a stand-alone gender goal is not the best strategy.
- The WHO has a key role to play in providing technical expertise, with a particular focus on how to implement universal health coverage as the yardstick for ensuring healthy lifestyles for all age groups.
- Participants also expressed concern that a multi-sectoral approach was necessary for health promotion since everything does affect health (nutrition, exercise, mobility, education, energy, water and sanitation, etc.), just as health can affect everything (productivity of workers, capacity of students to do well in school, etc.)

Participants expressed support for a standout goal that focuses on food and nutrition security

- In contrast to the formation of the MDGs, we now recognize that hunger and malnutrition have become global issues.
- It is hard to address malnutrition without addressing water, education, energy and the other SDGs.
- The issue must be implemented globally and not just in developing countries.
- We need to address inequalities in access to food security and nutrition just as we do in other goals.

What does Geneva bring to the SDG process?

- Geneva brings Trade – UNCTAD has partnered with other IOs and NGOs to hold events on trade and gender, trade and development, and a series that continues on 18 June and again in October;
- PLUS the human rights council;
- Plus the ILO and employment;
- Plus the WHO and universal health;
- Plus many other agencies and issue areas :



Global Social Observatory

Geneva, Switzerland

- Intellectual property
- New technologies in communications
- Linkages to the Rome agencies on food security and nutrition
- Migration and population dynamics
- Humanitarian relief operations
- A growing environmental network