Business & the Sustainable Development Goals

GLOBAL VALUE Monitoring Report 3

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Editor(s)	Peter Hardi, Gergely Radacsi
Tel	+36 205669575
Fax	
Email	hardip@business.ceu.edu
Project Coordinator	PD Dr. André Martinuzzi Institute for Managing Sustainability Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna) Welthandelsplatz 1, A-1020 Vienna/Austria http://www.sustainability.eu/

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1. Updates on the Post-2015 Agenda and the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals

1.1. Synthesis report of the UN Secretary-General

On 4th December, 2014 the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki–moon presented a report in order to synthesize the full range of inputs available on the post-2015 development agenda and to present a synthesis report before the end of 2014, as an input to the intergovernmental negotiations. According to the UN this report "proposes one universal and transformative agenda for sustainable development, underpinned by rights, and with people and the planet at the center". In addition the document also provide six "essential elements [] to help frame and reinforce the sustainable development agenda and ensure that the ambition and vision expressed by Member States communicates and is delivered at the country level".

The six proposed elements:

- dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality;
- people: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children;
- prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy;
- planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children;
- justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions;
- partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development.

In addition, the report also discusses issues such as financing; technology and investment in sustainable development; proposes a framework to be able to monitor and review implementation, based on enhanced statistical capacities and tapping into the potential of new and non-traditional data sources and embrace a culture of shared responsibility. (UN, 2014)

The full report is available at:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&Lang=E

COMMENT: As discussed later Ban Ki-moon's report has been criticized for introducing somewhat new set of overarching principles for the SDGs. Until the finalization of our recent progress report it is still not clear how these elements would influence the final set of SDGs, if at all.

1.2. Critical voices to the Secretary-General's synthesis report from other stakeholders

After the release of the earlier discussed report, major groups and other stakeholders (including CSOs as well) have issued numerous reactions to it through blogs, policy papers, working papers etc. Beyond the ones that describe the report as a balanced synthesis of the process and issues, there are several ones that suggest it does not go far enough in vital areas. In particular, the report is highly criticized for its softer call for monitoring and review and especially accountability. *Safeworld*, for instance, highlights that the report calls for strong institutions, rather than accountable, inclusive, fair and responsive ones (IISD, 2014). In addition to this, *Overseas Development Institute* (ODI) questions how the private sector will be included in any accountability framework or related processes. As they put, the report goes notably further than the OWG outcome on the private sector's responsibility especially under paragraph 104 where it calls for country level policies enforcing companies to undertake mandatory economic, environmental, social and governance (EESG) reporting. However, there is no further recommendation on what these policies should look like and on how the long debated issue of voluntary against mandatory reporting could be resolved (ODI, 2014). As a general observation, a blog post from the Global Economy and

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Development program at the *Brookings Institution* calls for defining accountability standards for governments and business, including compacts between governments and citizens. (IISD, 2014).

The other topic where the Ban Ki-moon report has received the most criticism is the suggested six "essential elements". Some argue that the UN does not suggest any clustering of the 17 proposed SDGs under these elements. In other words, the proposed six elements are not explicitly linked to the earlier agreed preliminary set of SDGs, leading to uncertainty about the supposed or actual relationships between the two (IISD, 2014). According to *Sustainable Development 2015*[1], there is a risk that these newly introduced six elements by the Secretary-General run counter to the 3 dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social) and somewhere in the process the integration called for by a true sustainable development approach (aimed by the proposed 17 SDGs) is lost (Sustainable Development 2015, 2014).

In terms of particular issues, *Oxfam* issued a statement in which they expressed their disappointment "that the UN has not made far stronger proposals to address extreme economic inequality and climate change in its new report. The under-emphasis of both issues is a grave missed opportunity. While the first draft recognizes the need to 'leave no-one behind' and addresses climate change, dedicated goals are required to do this." In addition, they urge the UN to include "dedicated stand-alone goals to tackle extreme economic inequality and climate change in the post-2015 framework ...The UN's Sustainable Development Goals will offer the world neither sustainability nor development unless we tackle these two powerful injustices." (Oxfam, n.d.)

Finally, several civil society organizations raised concerns about the policy cycles of the UN system. For instance, *Participate*, a network of 18 participatory research organizations working with poor and marginalized groups in 29 countries, expressed disappointment and "some traces of anger" that initiatives driven by people are not included in the report. As they put, the synthesis report does "not present citizens as active participants in the development process and this approach treats people as recipients of development rather than drivers of change". In a letter to the co-facilitators for intergovernmental negotiations, *Beyond 2015*, a global civil society campaign representing more than 1000 Civil Society Organizations in over 130 countries, recommended the participation of civil society organizations at the upcoming sessions and also calls for debates specifically with civil society. (IISD, 2014)

1.3. Feedback from science

1.3.1. Science-based criticism of proposed

On 12 February, 2015 the *International Council for Science* (ICSU) and the *International Social Science Council* (ISSC) released a report analyzing the proposed 17 SDGs and related 169 targets. The report aims to assess whether the goals and targets are backed up by scientific evidence, whether they address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated way, and whether they are sufficiently specific to be effectively implemented and monitored. Here we list a few relevant observations and criticism from the report:

In sum the report states that out of 169 targets, 49 (29 %) are considered well developed, 91 targets (54 %) could be strengthened by being more specific, and 29 (17%) require significant work. To support the science based technical review of the targets the report lists the following criteria:

- *Consistency* with existing national and international agreements and processes. The report suggests aligning targets and goals with existing national and international agreements and

[1] The Sustainable Development 2015 website aims to provide the latest news, information and expert analysis around the global decision-making process to define a new set of global goals to eradicate poverty through sustainable development, known as the post-2015 development agenda. The website forms part of a wider multi-stakeholder engagement program run by CIVICUS and Stakeholder Forum, in collaboration with UNDESA, known as SD2015.

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political processes. For instance under Goal 1(End poverty in all its forms everywhere) the report suggests a systematic comparative analysis of national poverty lines and definitions and also concludes that the success on this goal will significantly depend on the adoption and implementation of actual concrete social policies, in particular the implementation of ILO's social protection floors. Other policy processes are also suggested, including the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UNFCCC negotiations with the new climate agreement expected in December 2015, and the process on Financing for Development.

- *Implementability*. According to the authors, some targets lack the focus to enable effective implementation in a sense that many of the targets may also contribute to several goals, and some goals and targets may conflict. "Action to meet one target could have unintended consequences on others if they are pursued separately. Research suggests that most goal areas are interlinked, that many targets might contribute to several goals. One example: "progress on ending poverty (SDG 1) cannot be achieved without progress on the food security target under SDG 2, macroeconomic policies related to targets on full and productive employment and decent work under SDG 8, the reduction of inequality under SDG 10, and without enhancing resilience to climate change under SDG 13. Success in these will lead to better health and wellbeing, thus contributing to the achievement of SDG 3." The report also highlights that there are important trade-offs between targets: For example, an increase in agricultural land-use to help end hunger can result in biodiversity loss, as well as in overuse and/ or pollution of water resources and downstream (and likely negative) effects on marine resources, which in turn could exacerbate food security concerns. (ICSU, ISSC, 2015, p. 6)

- *Measurability*. According to the authors, a number of targets are not quantified, and wherever possible the report proposes minimum levels of ambition that could be specified. For example, figures are suggested for targets to reduce water pollution, increase recycling and safe reuse of waste water, or to prevent new and reduce existing marine pollution. This report does not focus on indicators for measuring progress, but does identify some apparent gaps where key indicators may need to be developed and make recommendations to support an ambitious framework for monitoring and review of implementation. The report also concludes that measurability will depend on the availability of data and capacity to measure the targets which would require the improvement of the capacity to collect reliable data at the national levels. Finally, the report suggests several considerations to improve the measurability of targets including:
    - the establishment of "country-appropriate" baselines;
    - the consideration of new ways of obtaining data through participatory and transparent methods and systems;
    - new metrics and indicators that capture multidimensional wellbeing in relation to environmental issues beyond income metrics.

The report does not specifically analyze the proposed SDGs from the perspective of business. The only relevant comment is found under the issue of implementation in which the authors suggests that there is a need for more detailed revision of the targets based on the engagement of stakeholders, including civil society, citizens, the scientific and technological community and the private sector. They conclude that the OWG proposed framework does not sufficiently reflect private sector perspectives and incentives to participate in the delivery of the final goals, but no further details are given.

Finally, the authors suggest that a 'narrative of change' is missing from the OWG document, both in terms of how the pursuit of specific goals would lead to broader outcomes of social change and in terms of how this change actually takes place. As they put, there is no clear means to an end or 'theory of change' underpinning the framework. The 'ultimate end' of the SDGs in combination is not

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clear, nor is how the proposed goals and targets would contribute to achieving that ultimate end. The authors recommend that deploying a more scientific approach to the refinement of the SDG framework would enable a more systematic means-ends separation between ultimate goals (intrinsic goods in their own right), for example human wellbeing, and enabling means or conditions. In their argument, they say that development research has already provided multiple perspectives on how attaining human wellbeing in the long term, as an ultimate aim, is dependent on an enabling development context, where global public goods, resources and capital (both manmade and natural) are safeguarded, and where economies can prosper. As a conclusion the report suggests that there is a need to formulate an overarching goal for the SDGs: "*a prosperous, high quality of life that is equitably shared and sustainable*" (p. 9). Here, the authors also call for the introduction of new metrics for measuring progress toward the end goal and, to move beyond both GDP and the established alternative Human Development Index (HDI) to more appropriate measures of progress toward sustainable development. (ICSU, ISSC, 2015)

COMMENT: The report includes detailed analyses and recommendations for each goals and related targets. The full report is available at: http://www.icsu.org/publications/reports-and-reviews/review-of-targets-for-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-science-perspective-2015/SDG-Report.pdf

1.3.2. Global Goals and the Environment: Progress and Prospects

May 2015 the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) issued a report analyzing the progress on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7, Ensuring Environmental Sustainability based on official indicators and data. The report covers all developing countries to which MDG-7 applies as well as developed countries, where MDG-7 targets were considered as reference points related to other global environmental commitments. In general the authors conclude that coverage of the environment in the MDGs was little more than symbolic and many key dimensions were not represented. In addition they also highlight that progress was globally uneven for most targets, and the indicators in this report confirm earlier observations that no target can be expected to be achieved everywhere. The major constraint to the success of environmental goals is, according to the report persistent data limitations in many of the countries covered. Without a major effort to improve statistical data collection and observation systems, these problems will continue to persist and undermine the ability of countries to visualize their progress toward new goals. In sum IISD suggests that without a major effort to improve statistical data collection and observation systems, these problems will continue to persist and undermine the ability of countries to visualize their progress toward new goals. Finally the report presents thorough comparison of all targets and indicators from target 7A to target 7D. (IISD, 2015h)

For more details the full report can be downloaded from:

http://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/global-goals-and-environment-progress-prospects.pdf

1.4. Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGNs)

In the recent phase of the process of defining a post-2015 development agenda, the UN has conducted intergovernmental negotiations (eight sessions taken place in New York) among member states. The outcome document of these sessions will directly feed into the UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda (25-27 September 2015). Since January 2015, five sessions have taken place covering the following issues:

COMMENT: This is, again, a highly politicized process with very limited or no insights on the country level negotiations (with almost no stakeholders involvement).

IGN - 1 (19-21 January 2015): The first intergovernmental negotiation was a stocktaking session for a new global sustainable development agenda, organized according to the expected elements of the outcome of the post-2015 summit: a global declaration, the sustainable development goals and

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targets; technical proof and whether there is a need for expert advice, means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development, follow-up and review. (IISD, 2015a)

IGN - 2 (17-20 February 2015): The session focused on the declaration component of the outcome that would be adopted at the Summit in September 2015. The week's discussions were in terms of the purpose of the declaration, the use of language and the vision for the future. (IISD, 2015b)

IGN - 3 (23-27 March 2015): The session focused on a proposed timeline and roadmap for the UN Statistical Commission to create an indicator framework for the SDGs; country experiences in implementing sustainable development; and arrangements for a joint meeting with the preparatory process for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in April 2015. (IISD, 2015c)

IGN – 4 (21-24 April 2015): The session was a joint meeting with the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) focused on proposals for a feasible technology mechanism and other science, technology and innovation issues; the relationship between the FfD and post-2015 processes; follow-up and review on FfD and means of implementation (MOI); and coherence between the outcome documents from the two processes. (IISD, 2015d)

IGN – 5 (18 – 22 May 2015): The session focused on follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda; goals, targets and indicators; themes for the interactive dialogues during the Post-2015 Summit in September 2015 and the way forward. (IISD, 2015e)

IGN-6 (22-25 June 2015): This session enabled delegations to provide their reactions to the "Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda," which was distributed earlier in the month. During the session, participants commented and provided amendments on each of the sections of the draft, which included sections titled: Preamble, Declaration, Sustainable Development Goals and targets, Means of implementation and the Global Partnership, and Follow-up and review. On Wednesday morning, (IISD, 2015f)

Upcoming sessions:

7. session: 20 - 24 July. Intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document

8. session: 27 - 31 July. Intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document (UN DESA n.d.)

1.4.1. Most debated issues

Universality and shared responsibility

As discussed in our previous progress report, there are still contradictory visions among countries about who should "take the lead" with regards to responsibilities for global development. During the post-2015 debate, countries were called upon for more "universal" actions meaning that all countries – both developed and developing – should have responsibilities in the implementation of the future goals. This principle is referred as "Universality" all over the debates. However, while universality is accepted as an overarching principle, there are different interpretations of this issue. On the one hand, there is the UN approach known as the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), in which differentiation (based on historical context and realities of resources and capacities) within a universally applicable agenda is an overarching principle. On the other hand, mostly developed countries define universality in a rather opposite way when under "universality" they rather mean "equality". Those who agree with this approach would see a totally equal treatment of all countries. After five intergovernmental sessions, while delegates have agreed that the post-2015 agenda must rest on the principles of universality and CBDR, in fact, there is still no consensus on how these concepts should be understood and realized.

An additional side of these debates is the interpretation of shared responsibilities, when it comes to the responsibility of the business sector in the future development process. As discussed later in this

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report, at the top global political levels, politicians would like to see more actions and contributions by the private sector in order to complement governments and civil society in the furthering of the global development agenda. In this sense, universality would mean actions by all (including also the business sector), and responsibilities shared among all sectors, not only governments. Note: these issues are further discussed under chapter 2.

Indicators

Governments will adopt the SDGs in September 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will expire at the end of the year, so the world must be ready to start implementing the SDGs on 1 January 2016. By then, indicators and accompanying metrics must be available. In addition, while several organizations representing different sectors work on indicator sets based on the 17 SDGs proposed by the OWG, adequate monitoring protocols and data collection modalities should be also ready to implement the goals. According to the UN, for this a so called "data revolution" (including the capacity building of national and international statistical systems) is necessary as called for by the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (UN, 2013). However, the international community is far from reaching a consensus on the particular indicators and especially on the funding of this data revolution. According to a needs assessment for SDGs and statistical capacity building published by the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network* (SDSN), a total of US$ 1 billion per annum is needed to support 77 of the world's lower-income countries to put in place a statistical system capable of measuring the future SDGs. And these estimates have not included the costs of monitoring and evaluation systems, nor the costs of modernization over time (SDSN, 2015a). As discussed earlier, donor countries are no longer willing and able to allocate all the required resources to the implementation of the SDGs. This is also true for the case of the indicators and monitoring. Recipient countries are also expected to contribute to the build up of their statistical systems from domestic resources, which are scarce or non-existent in the case of the poorest and fragile states. As we discuss below, the UN would like to bring new sources of financing into the system, especially business. In any event, observers of the recent post-2015 negotiations suggest that the Financing for Development Conference (FfD),to be held in Ethiopia in July 2015, could be the key forum to start the desired partnership and commitments from member states, international financial institutions and private sector (SDSN, 2015a).

The discussion around the SDG indicators highlighted other challenges as well, including: How is it possible to create a common set of global indicators while measuring the global progress that also takes national differences into account? Should each and every country create its own set of indicators based on the final set of goals and targets, or this should also be centralized? And again, whether the indicators and their monitoring should be in the hands of regional/global actors, or should remain a national governmental responsibility? And finally, how is it possible to finalize the indicator framework without a clear agreement with the final set of goals and targets? (IISD, 2015c) In light of these challenges, the UN Statistical Commission expressed that making the final set of indicators would likely need for another year, and being elaborated for the agreement not earlier than March 2016 (IISD, 2015c).

Financing and Means of Implementation (MoI):

As already discussed in our previous report, the allocations of financing responsibilities and ways of implementation have been a highly debated topic all over the policy cycle. Research from the Bretton Woods Institutions informed the delegates of the Intergovernmental Negotiations that "funding must increase from "billions to trillions," in order to achieve the SDGs as currently proposed (IISD, 2015d, p. 16.). According to country delegations and global institutions, classic forms of development financing (i.e. ODA) alone cannot bring enough resources into the process, other sources of contributions are also needed. The OWG proposal on means of implementation contains a range of resources like traditional and new forms of finance, technology facilitation, and measures to improve the international policy environment for development. As discussed later in this report (under chapter 2) the business sector is seen as a crucial player in meeting the financial demands of the future sustainable development agenda. In terms of the policy background and the means of

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implementation, the most recently debated question has been the relationship between the two parallel processes: the post-2015 process and the 3rd Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) (IISD, 2015a). For instance, some delegates of the IGN meetings suggested establishing a technology-facilitation mechanism while others forced to leave the task of means of implementation to the FfD process. Also, mostly developed countries supported that the FfD3 outcome document should be the post-2015 agenda's MOI pillar. By contrast, many developing countries expressed concern that incorporating the MOI into the FfD3 process could result that it would be removed from SDGs. (IISD, 2015d). In many ways, the necessity of establishing linkages between the post-2015 and FfD processes has been highlighted. In fact, recent communications (blog posts, working papers, reports etc.) discussing finance or MOI related issues also aim to serve as feeding to the FfD3.

Accountability, review and follow-up

While delegates of IGNs generally agree that the success of the future SDGs heavily depends on a well-developed review framework, there have been continual debates on the composition of these mechanisms. For instance, country delegates have different views on reviewing the process: whether strong mechanisms should be set up or let "the voluntary nature of follow-up" dominated (IISD, 2015a). In addition, there has been a disagreement about the basic terminology of this element. Some noted that the previously used expression "accountability" was not appropriate for an intergovernmental process because governments are not accountable to each other so the term changed to "review and follow-up". (IISD, 2015a)

In the fifth session of the IGNs, delegates mainly focused on review and follow-up. Participants agreed that a well-developed review framework is necessary to implement the SDGs but the terminology using in the outcome document also caused disagreement. Most developing countries suggested the terms of follow-up and review instead of accountability which could imply conditionality while some developed countries preferred to use monitoring, accountability and review. (IISD, 2015e) "The EU said monitoring, accountability and review are all essential for the implementation of the agenda, and clarified that monitoring is about data and information to provide an assessment of progress, while accountability is about taking ownership, responsibility and ensuring follow up of commitments." (IISD, 2015e, pg 18.)

Another debated issue is who will be in charge for follow-up and review. The fifth session of the IGNs brought the consensus that the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) should be the main platform for follow-up and review but countries had different views about its exact role. While some countries supported the idea that the HLPF should be the key forum, with other mechanisms established around it, others warned that the HLPF will not be able to take charge of following up the wide and interlinked agenda. The latter countries suggested the HLPF as a central stage in the global review structure supported by a network of existing review mechanisms, including the World Trade Organization, OECD's Development Assistance Committee, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. (IISD, 2015e)

1.5. Next phases of the post-2015 process

Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda – Sixth Session: The sixth session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda is expected to focus on negotiating the outcome document. **Dates:** 22-25 June 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York

Third Meeting of the HLPF: The third meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which will take place under the auspices of ECOSOC, will focus on the theme, "Strengthening integration, implementation and review – the HLPF after 2015." **Dates:** 26 June - 8 July 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York

Third International Conference on Financing for Development: The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will be held at the highest possible political level, including

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Heads of State and Government, ministers for finance, foreign affairs and development cooperation, and other special representatives. **Dates:** 13-16 July 2015 **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda – Seventh and Eighth Sessions: The seventh and eighth sessions of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda will focus on negotiating the outcome document. **Dates:** 20-31 July 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York

UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda: The Summit is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including: a declaration; a set of Sustainable Development Goals, targets, and indicators; their means of implementation and a new Global Partnership for Development; and a framework for follow-up and review. **Dates:** 25-27 September 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York

2. Latest outcomes of the post-2015 process for business

2.1. Partnership for Development: rising expectations for business

2.1.1. The UN's narrative

As discussed in our previous progress report, global initiatives, especially the ones that are linked to the UN, refer to a so called new paradigm in development thinking by calling for the central role of private enterprise in the pursuit of the development agenda. During the past six months, expectations for the business sector have been rising, although concrete policies and actions are still to be agreed upon. One notable communication that heavily drives the negotiations on the issue is a summary by the President of the General Assembly. This document was released on 18th February, 2015 with the aim to highlight the key messages and proposals from the high-level thematic debate on 'Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda' held between 9-10 February, 2015. In short, the old/new "buzz-word" is 'partnership' that means money directly channeled from companies into the implementation of the new development mechanism and also other forms of contributions. Below are key messages quoted from the President's summary:

Point 7: The mobilization of all resources – public and private, national and international – as well as their effective use will be vital for the successful implementation of the new agenda.

Point 8: While the primary responsibility for implementing the new agenda, of which SDGs will be the main component, lies with countries and governments, multi-stakeholder partnership should be utilized, enhanced and strengthened, through engagement of a variety of actors from the private sector, civil society and philanthropic organisations, among others.

Point 11: The private sector should do more to contribute towards sustainable development, complementing the role of governments and the public sector.

Point 24: The post-2015 development agenda offers a unique opportunity to align private finance and the private sector with the UN and public policy goals. While progress has been made on corporate social responsibility, a more substantive contribution from the private sector is needed.

Later, on 8th April, 2015 at the General Assembly's informal Interactive Hearing for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the gathering of country delegates and private sector representatives, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reaffirmed the UN standpoint. He noted that channeling both public and private sector cash flows into sustainable development initiatives would be "crucial for securing an ambitious post-2015 agenda". He described a few obstacles in facilitating global financing: loopholes, tax avoidance and tax evasion that hampers the attempts to raise public resources through taxation in many countries; volatility in private international capital flows. In addition, he noted that the global financial crisis had further exposed

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the risks and underlying vulnerabilities in the international financial system, increasing inequalities, environmental challenges and rendering states susceptible to shocks such as the recent Ebola epidemic. Finally, he stressed the need for an “international financial framework that is predictable and effective in meeting these challenges and achieving sustainable and inclusive development”. To achieve this he invited the private sector to be “our partners in supporting and financing this agenda, including through partnerships and collaboration.” (UN, n.d.)

COMMENT: At this point of the progress report we, the authors at CEU Business School, wish to note that we observed a general lack of involvement and heavy underrepresentation with regards to the role of the private sector in the UN process. As discussed later in this report, the UN narrative often addresses the business sector and asks for specific actions from the private sector without any proof for their representations in the negotiation process and without discussing the private sector’s own views and approaches.

2.1.2. EU Communication on Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015

On 5th February 2015, the European Commission issued a communication (COM 2015 44) in which the EU expressed its alignment with the previously mentioned partnership for global development. While the Commission also considers the private sector a „key player” in the success of future SDGs, it uses a somewhat softer language (e.g. no mentioning of mandatory reporting). In order to enhance the mobilization of domestic and international private sector the Commission highlights the following considerations:

- “Business and consumers will be key actors in the transition to sustainable development, since the private sector, ranging from small stakeholders to major multinationals, is an important engine for innovation, sustainable growth, job creation, trade, and poverty reduction. It also plays a critical role in investing in resource efficiency and infrastructure, such as sustainable transport systems, energy networks and digital infrastructures that are vital for a country's economic growth.
- Sustainability standards and criteria underpin a range of measures to achieve the SDGs, such as fiscal incentives, public procurement, company reporting and product labeling.
- Businesses should systematically analyse the environmental and social impact of the products they use and produce by carrying out a life cycle analysis.
- Businesses should be encouraged to continue successful initiatives that aim to improve working conditions and environmental opportunities, such as the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are needed to scale up business initiatives. Small and medium-sized enterprises are major drivers of job creation but they often lack the economies of scale and capacity to invest in innovative technology or participate fully in sustainability programmes. Partnerships with large multinationals, for instance through the UN Global Compact18, can help small and medium-sized enterprises to realise their sustainable development and innovation potential.
- The EU encourages businesses to invest more and more responsibly in developing countries, including through differentiated and specific approaches in fragile, conflict-affected countries that urgently need jobs and economic opportunities to restore social cohesion, peace and political stability.
- The EU is taking steps to enhance market reward for corporate social and environmental responsibility and disseminate good practice, improve self and co-regulation processes; and improve company disclosure of social and environmental information. It will also continue to promote sustainability guidelines, including on corporate social responsibility, through dialogue with partner countries. “(European Commission, 2015, p.12-13)

The full communication is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/com-2015-44-final-5-2-2015_en.pdf

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2.1.3. The US position

The US Council for International Business, the organization that promotes the global interests of American business through advocacy to policy makers worldwide, launched a dedicated website called "Business for post-2015" with the aim to showcase business' contributions to sustainable development to demonstrate the need for a proportionate role for business in the negotiations and follow-up mechanisms of the post-2015 agenda. In order to participate business enterprises and private sector entities e.g., trade associations with business enterprises as members of all kinds can apply with those of their activities that contribute to sustainable development and can be related to specific Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The application is through the Business for post-2015 website. Finally the site reses awareness among private sector organizations about their expected contributions toward the achievement of the future global development agenda. At this point USCIB also refers to the above discussed partnership for development narrative. However they clearly state that partnerships are widely discussed but poorly understood in negotiations around the post-2015 development agenda mostly because people always mean something different when they refer to partnerships, multi-stakeholder partnerships or public-private partnerships. (USCIB, n.d.) For more information the website is available at:

http://www.businessforpost-2015.org

2.1.4. Development banks

16 April 2015, in a joint statement, the heads of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that they "could and should do more," to generate needed financial resources and help the international community to achieve the SDGs. In this statement again, development banks emphasized the need for new sources of funding, particularly from the private sector. They stated: "achieving the SDGs will require moving from billions to trillions in resource flows". They argue that this paradigm shift will require a wide-ranging financing framework that can channel all types of investments and resources, from global to national and public to private. They call for, inter alia: greater efforts to unlock, leverage and catalyze public and private flows; improvements in institutional and policy environments to attract increased private investment and financing; and pursuit of sustainable and inclusive growth that translates into poverty reduction and social progress. (IISD, 2015g)

2.2. Further arguments for private sector involvement

Further to governments, other stakeholders have also highlighted the need for private sector involvement and multi-actor partnership as means of implementing the post-2015 development agenda. *World Vision*, a faith-based NGO in the field of social care, for instance, considers cross-sector partnerships – between government, business (and other private sector actors), civil society and/or UN agencies – one of the "primary modalities" through which those who are left behind in the MDG era (i.e. the most vulnerable) could be reached in the post-2015 period. After conducting over 30 interviews with representatives from government, business, civil society and the UN they recommend that companies, also, "take a holistic, portfolio view of their investments to ensure they are aligned in a way that maximizes the *benefits to the most vulnerable* (World Vision, 2014).

From a more "green" perspective, Hajer et al. argue that the final SDGs and related targets that will be adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 "risk falling short of expectations" because of what they call "cockpit-ism": the illusion that top-down steering by governments and intergovernmental organizations alone can address global problems (p. 1651). As they put it, by learning from the failures of the MDGs (i.e. the limited effectiveness of intergovernmental efforts and the questionable capacity of national governments to affect change), the SDGs need to additionally mobilize new agents of change such as businesses, cities and civil society. The authors propose four

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perspectives to strengthen the "universal effectiveness of SDGs": *planetary boundaries* to stress the urgency of addressing environmental concerns and to target governments to take responsibility for (global) public goods; *the safe and just operating space* to highlight the interconnectedness of social and environmental concerns and its distributive consequences; *the energetic society* to benefit from the willingness of a broad group of actors worldwide to take action; and *green competition* to stimulate innovation and new business practices. *Green competition* is the area where Hajer and associates would count mostly on business and other private actors. They believe that SDGs "can guide green competition for novel ideas and technologies at the macro scale and stimulate new business practices". Finally, the authors conclude that "targets on sustainable production and resource efficiency that directly address businesses will not only support front runners in developing sustainable business models but will also put pressure on laggards to change unsustainable corporate practices." (Hajer et al, 2015, p. 1657)

In April, 2015, Schmidt-Traub and Sachs (Sustainable Development Solutions Network) presented a working paper in which they list recommendations for furthering the above described partnerships for development. This paper also aims to feed the preparation for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) scheduled for 13-16 July, 2015. The paper examines some of the questions involved in designing new institutions to handle the long-term, complex investments needed for key sustainable development priorities. SDSN suggests a public-private cooperation for financing the required $2-3 trillion additional support per year for implementing SDGs. According to the authors the crucial challenge for FfD is to bring the private-public sectors on one stage to finance the investments of SDGs and to decide how the partnership can be organized. The authors also list twelve so called priority commitments for the FfD conference that they believe could be made in order to further the implementation of the post-2015 agenda. The twelve commitments are:

1. Adopt indicative financing needs – public and private – and estimates of International Development Finance needs (including ODA & climate finance).

2. Adopt clear standards for Domestic Budget Revenues (DBR) directed towards the SDGs that respond to countries' needs and ability to raise resources.

3. Recognize the central role of pooled financing mechanisms in building goal-based public-private investment partnerships, in many – though not all – priority investment areas for the SDGs.

4. Promote long-term investments in infrastructure around:

- National Public Investment Systems and Infrastructure Project Preparation Facilities to support the development of early-stage projects at local, national, and regional levels.
- Effective global, regional, and national subsidy and investment risk-mitigation mechanisms, including a strengthened and expanded MIGA.
- Reviews of financial and insurance standards (Basel III and Solvency II) to promote long-term investments, including through annual reports on whether global rules are consistent with countries achieving the SDGs and long-term climate objectives agreed under the UNFCCC.
- Harmonized infrastructure investment platforms and an effective secondary market, to facilitate direct infrastructure investments from institutional investors.
- Deeper local saving pools and banking systems to mobilize greater volumes of domestic financing for local infrastructure investments.

5. Ensure that capital markets can provide long-term finance for infrastructure and other sustainable development finance needs. *Inter alia* FfD may resolve to:

- Make integrated reporting from companies and asset managers a global standard.
- Address excessive short-termism in capital markets.

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6. Adopt clear standards and targets for additional ODA and other forms of international public, concessional finance.

7. Agree to transparent eligibility criteria for ODA and other public international flows.

8. Encourage individual holders of large wealth to sign the Giving Pledge and donate a significant share of their net worth to achieving the SDGs, particularly through specialized SDG global funds. Such investments might further focus on a particular sector or investments in the wealth holder's own country.

9. Commit to providing at least $100 billion in additional climate finance from developed countries by 2020, roughly mobilized as 1/3 ODA for climate (ODA-C), 1/3 non-concessional public finance (OOF-C), and 1/3 Private Finance Mobilized (PFM) through official finance.

10. Reform international regulation and ensure transparency to support DBR, by adopting the following principles and ensuring their enforcement:

- Transparent beneficial ownership of companies, trusts, and other investment vehicles in open data format;
- Fair transfer pricing regimes and taxation of multinational companies;
- Exchange of information among tax authorities and taxation of offshore assets;
- Publish what you pay;
- Open government data including mandatory disclosure laws and the EITI; and
- Periodic review of key international rules and standards for consistency with achieving the SDGs.
- Expansion of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) initiative to address the needs of all developing countries

11. Launch Public-Private Partnerships for key sustainable development technologies to prepare technology roadmaps and promote technology development.

12. Launch a new Multilateral Development Finance Committee (MDFC) – working with the UNFCCC and building on the OECD-DAC and IATI – to provide a transparent, multilateral forum for monitoring all International Development Finance flows, including ODA, OOF, and PFM. (Schmidt-Traub and Sachs, 2015)

COMMENT: Progress in accepting and even less on acting on these proposed commitments have not been reported either by the authors or external partners.

2.3 Developments in public sector-private sector cooperation

In line with the above discussed narrative of major governmental institutions and to support their presented vision the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the United Nations Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) have joined forces to produce an implementation guide on impact assessment, KPI selection and goal setting, a publication that aims to support businesses in assessing their impacts, aligning their strategies with the final set of SDGs and setting company goals. At the moment this cooperation seems to be the best positioned to come up with a set of tools and other guidance that can be widely implemented by major companies. The argument for strategic private sector involvement in the post 2000 process is fully aligned with the UN communication and highlights business can have a strong and positive influence on society if joining the post-2015 development agenda. In addition, they also argue that responsible businesses can provide an extraordinary boost in realizing the SDGs through innovation, investment, a mass customer base and a global labor force. The implementation guide of this cooperation is expected to be published following the launch of the SDGs in September 2015. The guide is planned to include the following elements:

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1. Guide companies on existing principles, methodologies and standards to assess and communicate their impact across the SDGs;
2. Present an inventory of indicators that can be used by companies to assess impact against particular SDGs and their corresponding targets; and
3. Provide direction on how companies can enhance the quality of their sustainability goals, position them as commitments, and communicate them in a meaningful and credible manner. (wbcsd.nd.)

2.4. Critical assessment of the proposed partnership for development

We have touched upon a number of critical inputs to question private sector engagement as proposed by the UN and other governmental bodies above. We could cluster these arguments as follows:

Different interests: profitability vs. sustainability:

The fundamental engagement of the business sector in the global sustainable development agenda is highly criticized based on the different supposed interests of the actors involved. The social outputs are not the primary objective of the private sector, instead, the main measures of success are profitability, with other factors rarely considered. Even in those cases where donors (e. g. global public bodies) achieve to stimulate businesses to focus on development impacts, they tend to target a narrow set of outcomes such as a broad measure of job creation, rather than systematically identifying opportunities for positive impacts (CADOD, 2015). Also, because of this supposed contrast between the ultimate interest of business and society, some argue that governments cannot leave the responsibility to change consumption and production patterns solely in the hands of individual consumers and producers. Governments have to play a lead role in establishing limits, standards and setting the right policy incentives, or, first of all, correcting wrong incentives (CSRG, 2015).

Lobbying:

Private sector and especially multinational corporations have received constant criticism over decades based on their tremendous lobbying power over other stakeholders. Here again, critics argue that there is a threat that private sector engagement that heavily relies on business resources would further strengthen the position of companies over society and the environment. From a human rights perspective, for instance, the High Commission for Human Rights argues that “as businesses assume an ever-expanding role in the development and economic spheres their adherence to the human rights responsibilities outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights becomes increasingly critical.” (Caliari, 2015) In other words, the greater influence of the business sector on the development agenda could undermine earlier settlements (such as UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) and could drive development in the direction that is more in favour of business interest (Caliari, 2015). CSRG suggests that privileges for corporations created over the last two decades under trade and investment rules should be re-balanced with corresponding rights and privileges of societies and people – with the standard being set by the latter (CSRG 2015).

Highly criticized PPPs:

Ban Ki-moon’s December 2014 “synthesis report” on the post-2015 development agenda emphasizes Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a means of working together with the business sector for development. However, such an endorsement of PPPs comes at a moment when even World Bank experts are criticizing this model of procurement for its lack of transparency and the implicit tendency to overspend in what ultimately acts as a “buy-now-pay-later” formula (Bissio, 2015). According to a discussion paper there is significant evidence to show that costs can be high for governments, as can risks and debt arising from contractual obligations and contingent liabilities (CAFOD et al., 2015). An OECD (2014) report that includes lessons learned on the implementation of PPPs states that private participation in infrastructure development can be complex, slow, and subject to frequent renegotiation and restructuring, which is disadvantageous for the public part of the partnerships. If certain modalities have been a great failure in OECD countries, then it would be necessary to perform

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a careful analysis to establish evidence whether they could be successful in less developed countries where costs recovery is more difficult (DAWN, 2015).

Additionally, further issues are also listed as risks of PPPs, including growing influence of the business sector in the political discourse and agenda-setting; fragmentation of global governance (in a sense that PPPs can lead isolated solutions, which are poorly coordinated, often contribute to the institutional weakening of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and hinder comprehensive development strategies); weakening of representative democracy (weather partnerships give all participating actors equal rights or they sideline the special political and legal positions occupied legitimately by public bodies); unstable financing ("Will the funding of the Post-2015 Agenda become increasingly privatized and dependent on voluntary and ultimately unpredictable channels of financing through corporations, benevolent individuals or private philanthropic foundations?" CSRG, 2015).

3. Implications for the Global Value Project[2]

3.1. Main developments since the 2nd progress report

Policy process	Stakeholders	Science	Business relevance
UN Sec. Gen. Synthesis report: Proposes 6 elements for SDGs Intergovernmental negotiations: the outcome document of these sessions will directly feed the UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda Most outcome documents feed into the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (13-16 July, 2015)	Criticism of the synthesis report (CSOs, Academia): - Too soft on monitoring and accountability - No clear expectations for business - Questionable link between the 17 SDGs and the proposed 6 elements - Missing issues (inequality, climate change) Feedbacks to promote business involvement: - Potential to reach those who are left behind in the MDG era (i.e. the most vulnerable). - Private sector: new agents of change. - Green innovations etc. Critical arguments: - Business is driven by profit and not SD - Possible increase of corporate	The International Council for Science (ICSU) and The International Social Science Council (ISSC) Issues a critical report on the 17 SDGs from perspective of synth. Highlights: - out of 169 targets, 49 (29 %) are considered well developed - 91 targets (54 %) could be strengthened by being more specific - 29 (17%) require significant work Areas to improve: - Consistency with existing national and international agreements and processes. - Resolve conflict of targets	"Partnership for Development": rising expectations for business UN narrative: The private sector should complement the role of governments and the public sector to achieve SD. It should serve as an additional source of financing. Mandatory reporting is emphasized. EC Communications: Private sector is a „key player" in the success of future SDGs. No mentioning of mandatory reporting. Underrepresentation of business at all levels of the policy cycle

[2] This part of the report offers only a summary of the issues to be consider. We recommend a thorough discussion of the implications involving all GV partners.

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Policy process	Stakeholders	Science	Business relevance
	lobbying power over other stakeholders - Highly criticized PPPs etc.	- Measurability of targets	

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