



Joint statement

BEYOND 2030

Principles for a new global partnership

Civil society plays an important role in strengthening peaceful, just and sustainable international development. As part of the Countdown 2030 project, the development and humanitarian action networks Abong (Brazil), CCRDA (Ethiopia), VANI (India) and VENRO (Germany) jointly seek to contribute to these debates and help promote sustainability in multilateral processes. This aim is particularly important in situations that undermine people's well-being.

The next United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit is scheduled for 2027. This summit will be a pivotal event in determining the future of the global sustainability agenda beyond 2030. Although the 2025 SDG Report indicates that progress has been made on several individual goals, it is increasingly evident that many of the SDGs will not be achieved by 2030. Consequently, governments, international organisations, civil society and other stakeholders have already started to consider the future of the 2030 Agenda. Various scenarios for the post-2030 framework are emerging. These include proposals to extend or further develop the existing SDGs, as well as approaches that would prioritise a smaller number of strategic goals.

Regardless of the successor framework's specific design, the following principles and priorities should form an integral and binding part of any future global sustainability agenda:

1. Building on past achievements

A successor framework is essential if the international community is to continue addressing global challenges collectively beyond 2030 and promote a sustainable and just future for all. In the current climate of growing geopolitical tensions, an increasing emphasis on national self-interest, and mounting attacks on human rights, gender justice, inclusion, and civic space, a global action plan such as the 2030 Agenda has never been more important. Experience gained from implementing the 2030 Agenda provides a solid basis for the future. It has raised global awareness of sustainable development, stimulated political action, and contributed to tangible progress in many countries. In order to ensure continuity and further strengthen the mechanisms that have already been established, the international community must build strategically on these achievements.

A future global sustainability agenda should be based on and improve upon existing approaches. Lengthy renegotiations that could delay or jeopardise the adoption of a successor framework must be avoided. Under no circumstances should the successor framework weaken existing standards or commitments, particularly those relating to individual SDGs and other key areas of global sustainability. In light of recent setbacks in areas such as human rights and gender justice, it is crucial to protect and strengthen the progress that has already been made.

2. Leave No One Behind must remain the central guiding principle

To ensure the successor framework is effective, the principle of 'Leave No One Behind' must remain central to it. Structural inequalities and disadvantages must be proactively addressed. The SDGs and their successor framework must be inclusive of all people, paying particular attention to those most affected by structural disadvantage and discrimination. This includes discrimination based on income, gender, age, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location. This also encompasses intersectional discrimination, violence, and unequal access to education and healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as barriers to political and economic participation. The Leave No One Behind principle should not only be preserved but also strengthened. There must be greater emphasis on systematically dismantling structural inequalities and discrimination while promoting the equitable participation of all people in political, economic, and social life.

Experience in recent years has shown that social, economic and political inequalities must be addressed if global sustainability policies are to benefit everyone. Rising inequalities are hindering progress across almost all dimensions of global sustainability. Targeted measures are therefore required to reduce inequalities within and between countries while strengthening societal resilience in the face of current and future crises. As the root causes of inequality are deeply structural, isolated interventions will not suffice. This requires sustained investment in social and public infrastructure, as well as policy reforms that promote the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, and enable meaningful participation. Reducing inequality also requires structural change

PERSPECTIVES FROM INDIA

The goals of an agenda beyond 2030 must be effectively implemented at federal, regional and local levels. This requires data-driven governance, digital infrastructure and equitable partnerships with countries that are particularly affected by global structures of inequality.

For the next global sustainability framework, essential priorities include reforming the multilateral system, strengthening the participation of local and national civil society organisations, reducing inequalities, and ensuring equitable access to digital infrastructure.

Civil society organisations also call for their formal participation in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). In addition, social inclusion, tackling caste-based discrimination, the integration of climate justice principles, and the protection of the right to food are key requirements for a fair and effective agenda beyond 2030.

at the global level, rather than solely national reforms. This includes establishing a fair international financial architecture and trade rules, as well as reforming international institutions to strengthen the representation and decision-making power of countries affected by the enduring legacies of colonialism.

3. Broad, inclusive and meaningful participation

For an effective successor agenda to be developed and implemented, broad, inclusive and meaningful participation across all sectors of society is essential at local, national and international

levels. While discussions on global sustainability goals often take place primarily at national and international levels, local perspectives are not always adequately reflected. However, implementation largely takes place at the local and regional levels. All people's expectations, priorities and aspirations for a future sustainability agenda must be taken into account. In particular, the meaningful participation of civil society should be strengthened, as it can offer diverse perspectives, local expertise and an in-depth understanding of societal needs.

The participation of marginalised groups must be given special attention. Those who are often excluded from political processes must be actively engaged with and supported to ensure their views are heard and considered. Only by meaningfully involving those most affected by exclusion and discrimination can a future sustainability agenda fulfil its commitment to leaving no one behind.

Similarly, it is crucial to guarantee the equal participation of individuals from countries impacted by colonial structures and their enduring legacies. Participation must extend beyond mere symbolic consultation to provide genuine opportunities to influence decision-making processes. This requires creating and protecting inclusive civic spaces that enable meaningful public participation.

4. Decolonial approaches and equitable partnerships

The international community must ensure that the negotiation process for a sustainability agenda beyond 2030 consistently adheres to decolonial, partnership-based, and human rights

PERSPECTIVES FROM ETHIOPIA

Particularly in fragile countries affected by climate change and conflict, such as Ethiopia, humanitarian action, long-term international cooperation and peacebuilding must be better integrated. It is equally important that the beyond-2030 process is not understood merely as a reporting mechanism, but as a transformative accountability framework that strengthens institutional cooperation, empowers local actors and enables evidence-based policymaking.

A future sustainability agenda should also be guided by the following key principles: the consistent implementation of Leave No One Behind, climate justice, inclusive and transformative economic development, gender justice and social participation. Further priorities include digital transformation, fair financing for development, and stronger representation and decision-making power—particularly for countries affected by colonial continuities—in global governance processes.

principles. This requires a deliberate effort to address and dismantle existing power imbalances in international decision-making processes. Structural power asymmetries, particularly between countries that have historically benefited from colonialism and those that continue to be disadvantaged by its legacies, continue to influence international decision-making. These power asymmetries must be addressed to ensure that all countries can participate as equal partners in shaping the negotiation process, with stronger representation and greater decision-making power. Participation mechanisms must also ensure that civil society actors from countries affected by the enduring legacies of colonialism are

meaningfully involved in developing the successor framework and its key measures. Local knowledge and context-specific approaches must be recognised and incorporated.

However, decolonial approaches require more than fair and inclusive decision-making processes. They also necessitate the recognition of historical and ongoing responsibilities. Countries that continue to benefit from colonial patterns of power and economic relations — including Germany — bear a particular responsibility for advancing global justice and sustainability. Due to their historical involvement in colonialism, their ongoing privileged position within global systems of power, trade and finance, and their disproportionate consumption of resources, these countries have a special obligation to promote global justice and sustainability. This includes providing

greater financial contributions and driving structural changes in areas such as trade, climate and economic policy. Therefore, a credible successor framework must clearly acknowledge these responsibilities and translate them into binding commitments.

5. More binding commitments and greater accountability

The 2030 Agenda is based on the principle of national ownership, whereby states determine how to implement the agreed goals. While this approach allows for flexibility and adaptation to national contexts, it also means that these commitments are less binding. Therefore, a successor framework should include robust mechanisms to strengthen the binding nature of these commitments and ensure greater accountability. Clear, binding commitments are needed from all states to ensure that the agreed goals are not merely political declarations of intent. To this end, the goals must be measurable and subject to monitoring. States should be required to regularly collect, analyse and publish robust, comparable and disaggregated data to demonstrate progress and setbacks.

6. Integrated approaches instead of silo thinking

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs cover all three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic. It is essential that this integrated approach remains a core principle of the successor framework. Selective implementation of individual goals should be avoided, and instead all SDGs should be pursued with equal commitment to ensure that every dimension of sustainability is addressed. Experience to date has also shown that the trade-offs and spillover effects between

PERSPECTIVES FROM YEMEN

For the further development of the 2030 Agenda, it is essential that local and national actors from crisis- and conflict-affected contexts are more effectively and meaningfully involved throughout the entire process. This includes civil society organisations, women-led organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities, and community-based organisations.

Key principles for a future framework include local ownership and decolonial approaches to ensure that decision-making power and resources are more strongly anchored at the local level. Equally important are robust accountability mechanisms towards affected populations, fair and equitable partnerships, and the genuine inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly women and persons with disabilities.

individual goals are often not recognised or addressed adequately. This highlights the importance of placing greater emphasis on policy coherence and the interlinkages between different policy areas. Systemic approaches must therefore be embedded throughout the development and implementation of the successor framework.

Any successor framework must be grounded in the principles of climate justice. This requires the international community to recognise its historical responsibilities and provide substantial climate finance to the countries and communities most affected by climate change. Additionally, concepts such as 'Beyond Growth' and 'Beyond GDP' should be reflected. Societal well-being should be measured not only by economic growth or gross domestic product (GDP), but also by a country's ability to meet people's needs, eradicate poverty, and operate within planetary boundaries. Economic policy should therefore be guided not only by the pursuit of economic growth, but also by promoting human well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Finally, greater attention must be paid to the links between humanitarian action, long-term international development cooperation, and peacebuilding. Armed conflicts, natural disasters and pan-

demics directly impact humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts and can disrupt or reverse existing progress. These interlinkages must be systematically addressed in the successor framework, which should demonstrate greater policy coherence across these areas.

7. A just international financial architecture

Regardless of the scenario ultimately pursued, the international community must ensure that any future sustainability framework addresses the need for a more inclusive and equitable global financial architecture. In particular, countries that continue to be disadvantaged by the enduring legacies of colonialism require more equitable and adequate access to finance in order to achieve the SDGs. Addressing these imbalances will necessitate comprehensive reforms to the international financial system. This should include expanding voting rights in the IMF and World Bank, adopting a United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation and establishing an inclusive, legally binding international sovereign debt workout mechanism for heavily indebted countries. Furthermore, debt relief should be linked to investments in global sustainability and climate action.

Recommendations for policymakers and governments

To achieve a successful successor framework, we recommend:

- to actively advocate for an ambitious successor document to the 2030 Agenda and help shape its development from the outset
- to ensure that “Leave No One Behind” remains a binding overarching principle guiding all goals, measures and implementation mechanisms
- to address structural economic, social and political inequalities and strengthen the resilience of societies through binding measures
- to ensure a genuinely inclusive successor process
- to embed decolonial approaches and equitable partnerships in the agreement to address persistent global power imbalances
- to establish clear and binding targets for all states and monitor progress through disaggregated data
- to secure adequate financing for the implementation of the goals and advance an inclusive and equitable global financial architecture



Publisher:

Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Organisation (VENRO),
Stresemannstraße 72, 10963 Berlin, Germany, Telephone: 030/2 63 92 99-10; Email: sekretariat@venro.org
Editor: Karoline Krähling

Berlin, 17. July 2026

This publication was developed as part of the VENRO project "Countdown 2030 – Global Goals need Civil Society", in partnership with ABONG, CCRDA and VANI. The project is supported by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL with funds from the BMZ.

With funding from the



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development