

The Sustainable Development Goals:

Business, BIAC, and the OECD

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Image source: UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (2015)

The Sustainable Development Goals: A snapshot

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of global goals that seek to address the **economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development**. They succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were in place from 2000 to 2015. The 193 member states of the United Nations adopted the SDGs in September 2015.

The SDGs are **universal** – i.e. they should be embraced by countries at all levels of development, including OECD countries.

More than ever before, the SDGs embrace **private sector growth** as a means for development and poverty reduction.

The SDGs consist of **17 overarching goals** (see image above) containing **169 specific targets**. Hundreds of indicators will be used to monitor progress until 2030.

While **not legally-binding**, the SDGs nevertheless represent the world's key political fulcrum for global development.

Looking to the months and years ahead, multi-stakeholder UN working groups will form for each of the 17 goals. Discussions shall continue to define the indicators that will be used to assess progress.

For an overview of the SDGs, see [here](#).

While aid continues to play an important role in development, the SDGs recognize that the role of business is invaluable in achieving sustainable development.

“The evidence is so overwhelming that the private sector is part of the solution,” commented Erik Soheim, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2015.¹

Business is necessary for making progress in each of the 17 SDGs.

For instance:

- Goal 8 emphasizes the promotion of **“sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth”** as well as **“full and productive employment”**.
- Goal 9 calls for the building of **“resilient infrastructure”**.
- Goal 16 promotes **“effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”** and **“access to justice for all”**.
- A number of goals also pertain to specific industry sectors. For example, Goal 6 champions **water and sanitation**. Goal 2 focuses on **food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture**. Goal 7 commits to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern **energy**.

The 17 SDGs will also have profound effects for business worldwide.

For instance:

- The removal of subsidies and trade barriers is a common theme throughout the goals, describing **international trade** as an **“engine for inclusive economic growth”** and calling for meaningful trade liberalization under the WTO.²
- Goal 12 calls for halving per capita global **food waste** at the retail level.
- Goal 2 calls for doubling the **agricultural productivity and incomes** of small-scale food producers.
- Goal 7 aims to phase out **fossil-fuel subsidies** and increase substantially the share of **renewable energy** in the global energy mix.

The SDGs pave the way for the mainstreaming of sustainable development objectives into business activities, in order to be congruent with governments’ ambitions and monitoring processes. **Company reporting standards** are expected to be modified to integrate more sustainability information.

¹ USCIB (2015) “Forging a Path for Business in the UN 2030 Development Agenda”, available online here: <http://www.uscib.org/forging-a-path-for-business-in-the-un-2030-development-agenda/>

² UN (2015) “Draft Outcome Document of the United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, Paragraph 68. See full report [here](#).

Recognizing the relevance of OECD tools and policy experience for achieving the SDGs, the **BIAC Development Committee** has actively contributed the expertise of the OECD business community throughout the formulation of the SDGs.

Key BIAC milestones:

2012	BIAC participates in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) , supported by the OECD and UN Development Program. <i>The GPEDC has become an important platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and actions aimed at supporting the SDGs.</i>	2013	BIAC contributes a detailed statement for the Post-2015 Development agenda, delivered to the UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons . <i>Several aspects of BIAC's paper were then reflected in the Panel's report to the UN Secretary-General.</i> BIAC also participates in the Global Business Alliance for Post-2015 (GBA) , alongside many other international business organizations, and supports the GBA's Shared Business Messages .
2014	BIAC participates in OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Senior Level Meeting and issues a paper on private financing for sustainable development . BIAC emphasizes the business-enabling environment and development finance in a GBA letter to the co-authors of the UN Secretary-General Synthesis Report , pulling together the Post-2015 processes to date. BIAC consults with OECD in the drafting of the updated Policy Framework for Investment (PFI) .	2015	BIAC draws attention of OECD Ambassadors to the relevance of the Policy Framework for Investment for the International Conference on Financing for Development . BIAC provides views for the Global Reporting Initiative's SDG Compass . BIAC delivers direction for the GPEDC and its links to the SDGs at events in The Hague, Brussels, and Mexico City.

In the Post-2015 agenda, BIAC promotes the following three key messages:

- **Improve the business environment through policy reforms**
- **Develop mechanisms to mobilize greater private financing into developing countries**
- **Strengthen public-private dialogue for development**

Looking ahead to 2016 and beyond, BIAC will continue to advise the OECD in its contributions to the implementation of the SDGs.

At the forefront of evidence-based policymaking and sharing of good practices, indicators, and data, the OECD is uniquely well placed to support the SDGs. Speaking prior to the UN General Assembly in September 2015, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría stated that **“the OECD will work with the UN and for the UN to achieve the 2030 Agenda”**.

In addition to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) activities on mobilizing aid and increasing private sector financing, Mr. Gurría underlines that achieving the SDGs **“will depend on policy choices, on implementation – and crucially – on smarter partnerships”**. This is where the OECD’s policy advice and instruments, as well as tried and tested indicators, will play a significant role in supporting the SDGs.

Some examples of OECD activities that contribute to the SDGs include:

The Investment Environment

Policy Framework for Investment (PFI): Comprehensive tool for improving national investment conditions, already used by 30 emerging and developing countries since 2006, and recently updated in 2015.

Private Financing

Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD): A complementary measure to ODA that will reflect – and help to mobilize – a broader array of resources in support of the SDGs, including private sector instruments. Discussions are still underway.

Public-Private Dialogue

Quality of public-private dialogue ([here](#)): One of the ten indicators being created under the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) to monitor progress in development cooperation and support the SDGs. Discussions are still underway.

Domestic Resource Mobilization

Tax Inspectors Without Borders ([here](#)): A partnership with the UN Development Program that sends audit experts to assist developing country tax officials to strengthen tax audit capacity, and thereby increase tax revenues.

Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes ([here](#)): 127 countries cooperating to tackle cross-border tax evasion.

For a fuller overview of relevant OECD analysis, tools and approaches pertaining to the SDGs, see [here](#).

Contact

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