

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This briefing is about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by 193 countries at the United Nations, in September 2015. There are 17 new goals grouped under four broad headings of well-being, society, nature and economic. Each goal has a set of progressive targets covering a 15 year period. They replace the [Millennium Development Goals](#).

For ease of reference this briefing will only highlight certain goals and focus on where there maybe resonance with Prospect members in their professional capacities. The briefing aims to:

- Draw attention to the scope and holistic nature of the goals.
- Show how the international goals have relevance to national and devolved government planning on sustainable development and climate change. [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) have already developed policy and activity along these lines.
- Signpost the corporate application and tools of the goals for CSR or Sustainability reporting.

This briefing may also be useful for members involved in Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility reporting.

BACKGROUND

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development plan of action](#) is a framework for people, planet and prosperity. It recognises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is a major challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The SDGs reflect a holistic approach to human development and well-being within the context of global poverty, urbanisation, industrialisation and growing inequality of people and nations – all compounded by the ravages of climate change impacts.

The SDGs are integrated and indivisible. They balance the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environment) and introduce a set of goals defined as “well-being” goals. It is worth noting that the goals are broad in scope, global in nature, universally applicable and include ambitions for developing countries and established economies alike.

OUR SHARED SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT

Prospect’s energy, good-work, health and safety, equality, environment and climate change activity and policies reflect many of the SDGs ambitions. The “economic goals” however relate specifically to core labour standards and Decent Work.

[Global trade unions](#) are particularly committed to realising goals and targets to end poverty, foster decent work, ensure quality education, provide public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, reduce inequalities, champion women’s participation in the work force and improve fiscal, wage and social protection policies.

We believe that trade union workplace representation contributes to the wider good of society but also to good, transparent and sustainable business.

Latest revision of this document: <https://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2015/01548>

This revision: <https://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2015/01548/2015-11-27>

SUMMARY OF THE GOALS

The SDGs are grouped into broad themes addressing well-being, society, nature and economics.

WELL-BEING GOALS



#2 Zero hunger: By 2030 there is an expectation of sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production. There will be an emphasis on maintaining ecosystems that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that improve land and soil quality.

#6 Clean water & sanitation: The goal focusses on increasing water-use efficiency across all sectors. By 2020 there should be in place mechanisms to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes. By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

SOCIETY GOALS



Goal #5 is known as the stand-alone gender goal. Women play a critical role in all of the SDGs, with many targets specifically recognising women's equality and empowerment as both the objective, and as part of the solution.

Goal #10 broadens the scope of reducing inequality and aims to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

The **sustainable cities goal** (#11) aims to adopt a holistic approach to urban development that ensures universal access to basic services, housing and mobility. Urban planning, transport systems, water, sanitation, waste management, disaster risk reduction, access to information, education and capacity-building are all relevant issues to be addressed.

#17 Partnerships for the goals: [Technology](#), science and capacity building are major pillars of the Means of Implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda. [Science for sustainable development](#) is the focus of Chapter 35 of Agenda 21. It calls for:

- strengthening the scientific basis for sustainable management;
- enhancing scientific understanding;
- improving long-term scientific assessment; and
- building up scientific capacity and capability.

NATURE GOALS



#13 Climate action: This goal acknowledges that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. The goal however is clear in the importance of climate action and aims to:

- Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries,
- Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning,
- Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning,
- Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (CoP) to a goal of mobilising jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions, and
- Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

Goals #14 and #15 address restoring marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant impacts and [terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems](#). This includes managing forests, combatting desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss.

The [importance of forests](#) in reducing the risk of natural disasters, including floods, droughts, landslides and other extreme events is acknowledged with a specific target. At global level, forests mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration, contribute to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air and protect watersheds, which supply 75% of freshwater worldwide.

The goal also explicitly mentions [mountains among the ecosystems](#) to be conserved, restored and sustainably used in line with international agreements.

ECONOMIC GOALS



#7 Accessible & clean energy: Whilst there is a focus on accessibility of energy to the poorest in the world there is a goal that by 2030 there will be an increase in the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. Added this is a doubling of improvement in energy efficiency and international co-operation to facilitate energy research and technology.

#8 Decent work and economic growth: There are eight targets associated with this goal. The umbrella ambition is that "By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value".

Another target aims to [protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working](#) environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

It also facilitates taking immediate measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

Two ILO reports are referenced in this goal:

- World Employment and Social Outlook: [The Changing Nature of Jobs](#) reveals a shift away from the standard employment model.
- Decent Work, [Green Jobs and the Sustainable Economy](#) identifies the concept of a green economy as one of the pathways to sustainable development.

#9 Industry & sustainable transport: The goal enables the [Development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure](#). By 2030 there is an expectation that infrastructure will be upgraded - with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes.

#12 Responsible consumption: This in many respects goes hand in hand with goals such as waste, zero hunger and energy. The goal is about sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. It addresses food losses along production and supply chains. Environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle are also included as a target with an aim to significantly reduce pollution to air, water and soil.

THE SUSTAINABILITY COMPASS

While the SDGs primarily target governments, they are designed for a wide range of organisations around a common framework and language. There is already evidence of a move to integrated reporting aligned to the pillars of sustainability. This will become further mainstreamed when the [EU Directive on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information](#) is transposed into national regulation by 2016.



The [sustainability compass](#) has been developed in conjunction with the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) and the [UN Global Compact](#). It's a business tool for companies to map and mainstream their contribution to the SDGs whilst recognising that not all SDGs will be equally relevant.

The [interactive tools](#) allow a strategic approach to identifying and prioritising actions aligned to corporate objectives. They also show which reporting standard, code or set of principles may be used to implement and report on the SDGs. For example:

Filter by SDG: Goal 13 (climate action) will show four standards of which one is ISO14000 (popular tool for managing environmental responsibilities). The tool lists all the SDGs that this could contribute to; namely:

- SDG 6 = clean water and sanitation
- SDG 7 = affordable and clean energy
- SDG 12 = Responsible consumption
- SDG 13 = climate action

There are other tabs for matching SDG targets to [business indicators](#) and guidance on the use of the on-line tool.