

**CONCORD-BEYOND 2015 EUROPEAN STEERING GROUP RESPONSE
TO THE UNSG SYNTHESIS REPORT ON POST-2015:
The Road to Dignity by 2030**

The CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Steering Group (ESG) welcomes the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report on the post-2015 framework. We greatly appreciate the importance the UNSG attaches to human rights throughout the report and his insistence that the realization of human rights is vital for sustainable development. In that context, we note that this report goes further than many others in terms of recognizing the value of and need for people to participate in decisions which will concern their lives. We welcome the UNSG's clear statement of the need for the post-2015 agenda to be both people-centred and planet-sensitive. However, we are less convinced that the initial emphasis on the need for a transformative agenda is translated into the more specific proposals relating to the framework itself.

In addition to the above observations,

We like...

1. The introductory two chapters covering both the issues and the inputs from other stakeholders and working groups (UN or otherwise) in great detail. We fully agree that the legitimacy of the process going forward - and indeed, of the framework itself - will depend largely on the degree to which the key messages from all these consultative processes and inputs are incorporated.
2. We also fully support the need for an **integrated framework**, with the three dimensions of sustainable development being addressed throughout in order to avoid a silo effect and to recognised the positive - and potentially negative - impacts of one area on another.
3. The principle of '**leave no one behind**' being clearly highlighted, including the UNSG stressing that no goals or targets should be considered met until met for all social and economic groups
4. The emphasis the UNSG puts throughout the report on the **environment**, including the need to remain within planetary boundaries and within a global temperature rise of under 2°C and the consequent importance given to addressing **climate change**.
5. We welcome the UNSG dedicating a chapter to monitoring, review and accountability and appreciate the clear incorporation of points that have been raised in the regional consultations, such as the need to **ensure that local and national accountability mechanisms and processes** should be highly participatory and – as the closest to the people – should be the most significant element of the accountability continuum.
6. The acknowledgment that **policy coherence for sustainable development** will be critical to the success of the future framework.
7. The fact that the **means of implementation** for the framework is given sufficient emphasis with concrete recommendations, such as the need to respect ODA commitments, to correct the inequities of the international system, to adopt **national sustainable development financing strategies** to take account of all financing streams to deliver coherently on the objectives and the call for the establishment of an **intergovernmental committee on tax cooperation** to address illicit financial flows that arise from commercial transactions.

We like, but.....

1. **Universality:** we welcome the UNSG's call for the post-2015 agenda to be a universal one, but would have preferred a very clear reference to the need for every country to implement each and every goal and target in their own context. Otherwise, there is the risk of 'cherry-picking' and of some issues being considered to be for 'other countries' to implement. Furthermore, we would have hoped that the UNSG might have addressed the issue of **differentiation** of the targets and indicators in order to respond to countries' very different contexts and starting points.
2. **Governance:** while recognized as important and that changes need to be made both at domestic and international level, the report fails to follow through with adequate recommendations and subsumes governance under 'justice' which is highly misleading. Furthermore, while participation in processes by all people is critical and we welcome the acknowledgement of the need to respect civil and political rights in this regard, the justice section does not sufficiently address the huge power imbalances the world today, which give rise to rights violations and to rising inequality.
3. The attention given to **gender, children and other so-called disadvantaged groups**, but regret that the focus on improving their participation does not extend to how the framework might promote all their needs and rights and **prioritise them** in the implementation of all parts of the framework, in line with a human rights-based approach. Furthermore, despite the recognition that **gender inequality** and realizing women's rights remains one of the key challenges we face, this is not backed up by recommendations regarding the urgent need to achieve equality for girls and women in all areas of social, political and economic life and to improve their participation and influence at all levels.
4. The recognition that the **private sector** has played a considerable role in creating the challenges we face today, both in terms of environmental degradation, but also in terms of people's ability to realize their rights. We would urge Member States, however, both to tailor their response to the nature of the company concerned (the private sector is not a monolithic bloc) and, in the upcoming negotiations, to take the UNSG's recommendations even further in terms of putting in place the requisite regulation to curb any harmful impacts of, particularly, multinational and transnational corporations.
5. We are pleased that the UNSG's report recommends "**alternative measures of progress, beyond GDP**" notably because in some instances this has been linked to alternative measures for growth, which is not satisfactory. However, the report does not suggest that these alternative measures must be *implemented* urgently in order to contribute to changing the way we do business and how the economy is organized.
6. The recommendation to **adopt innovative ways to raise additional resources**, such as Financial Transaction Taxes (FTTs), but regret the **failure to mention that such taxes are also means for reducing the harmful economic, social and environmental externalities**, or that removing harmful fossil fuel subsidies, both direct and indirect, is also an innovative source of financing while also correcting market externalities.

We like a lot less....

1. We are not convinced that the **clustering** into the 6 essential elements adds value. Why would one want to separate dignity from people, for example? Why would one put governance under justice – not least because it should be mainstreamed into each dimension of sustainable development in addition to being addressed separately? And a **number of important issues either get left out** of the 6 essential elements (eg. habitats, food and nutrition security) **or are very superficially dealt with** (eg. sustainable consumption and production, access for all to clean, renewable, affordable energy).

2. We regret the fact that chapter 3 which deals with the content of the future framework – the goals and targets – does not offer specific recommendations or proposals, in stark contrast to the chapter on MoI.
3. **The emphasis on economic growth** – a transformational approach to the post-2015 agenda has to address the current economic paradigms which dictate how we do business today. It is therefore hugely disappointing to see that this is not listed as one of the key points in Section 3.2. On the contrary, the Secretary General would appear to underscore the need to retain an approach based on economic growth as the solution to our global challenges, rather than recognizing that it has created or contributed to many of those challenges. **Economic growth has been proven *not* to lead to *shared* prosperity.** However, we recognize that the UNSG does mention the need for economy to serve people, but given that the resulting recommendation is to measure *growth* “in ways that go beyond GDP and account for human well-being, sustainability and equity”, we are concerned that his leadership on creating real change is lacking in this area.
4. We regret that there are **no references to tackling the structural - or root - causes of poverty, of inequality of or human rights violations.** Without this, the framework will inevitably fail to address them in anything other than a piecemeal or haphazard manner, if at all. Given the importance attached to **poverty and inequality**, it is surprising that these issues are particularly inadequately addressed. The language on ending or eradicating poverty clearly indicates that the UNSG is referring not only to an income-based definition of poverty (as opposed to recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty), but is proposing to limit efforts to reaching the international poverty line of \$1,25/day. Not only is this unambitious, but it clearly undermines the concept of a universal framework, as it only applies to certain countries. While there is some language on inequality, it is largely as pertains to income inequality or inequality of opportunity – particularly in terms of participation. Strong rhetoric on tackling gender inequality, while welcome, is not matched by suitable proposals. This fails to address the scale of inequality in the world today, or the reasons for its rise over the last 15 years.
5. We are concerned that the UNSG proposes that the SDGs be underpinned by **a goal on global partnerships** for the means of implementation, which runs the risk of this turning into a failure along the lines of MDG8. We must learn from past experience in this regard.

In light of the above reflections, we call on EU Member States to welcome the Secretary General’s Report in the forthcoming Council Conclusions on post-2015 as a step forward to deliver a transformative, equitable and actionable agenda to achieve sustainable development. However, we urge Member States to pay particular attention to the issues we raise during the upcoming negotiations.