

29 September 2014

President of the General Assembly of the United Nations,  
H.E. Sam Kutesa  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017 USA

*CC: Secretary General of the United Nations, H.E. Ban Ki-moon;  
UN Deputy Secretary General, H.E. Jan Eliasson;  
UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, Ms. Amina Mohammed.*

Your Excellency,

We write to you as the [Post-2015 Human Rights Caucus](#), a cross-constituency coalition of development, environment, trade union, feminist and human rights organizations worldwide. We welcome your efforts to involve civil society in the important discussions about the future development agenda. This is a generational opportunity to ensure that the international community is progressing towards a sustainable future for people and planet, and we encourage your offices to ensure that people's voices are heard in these deliberations.

We urge world leaders and all development actors gathered at the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly to embrace governments' existing human rights duties as an essential and non-negotiable framework for delivering an inclusive, action-oriented and accountable sustainable development agenda. Human rights—a fundamental pillar of the United Nations—must not be considered politically contentious, and must under no circumstance be traded off. In what follows, **we'd like to clarify the concrete implications of putting the holistic human rights framework at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) themselves, how they are financed, and in their monitoring and accountability infrastructure.**

First, embedding human rights into the core of the sustainable development agenda means, at the least, respecting and reflecting pre-existing human rights norms, standards and commitments in the sustainable development goals, targets and indicators themselves. The Open Working Group (OWG)'s proposals are consistent with human rights in some quite significant ways. Yet, as discussed in more detail in the reflection document, [“The post-2015 agenda won't deliver without human rights at the core.”](#) the OWG's proposals still leave much to be desired to be “consistent with international law” as agreed by UN member states in Rio+20. To meet the [Human Rights for All Litmus Test](#) in this sense, the SDGs should:

- **Align all goals and targets with the provisions of relevant human rights standards**, which should be explicitly referenced.
- **Secure the full spectrum of human rights.** Alongside targets on economic, social and cultural rights, the final SDGs should explicitly include **clear targets to protect civil and political rights**, in particular the freedoms of expression, association, assembly, access to information and political participation, and guarantees of an enabling environment for civil society, human rights and environmental defenders.
- **Combat inequality and commit to ending discrimination in all its forms** by *inter alia* ensuring time-bound targets to progressively eliminate inequalities between groups by prioritizing a more ambitious rate of progress for the most disadvantaged.
- **Comprehensively support the human rights of women and girls** according to international standards and agreed commitments. The future framework should ensure that gender equality and women's rights are embedded throughout all goals, targets and indicators, that robust specific funding for women's rights is in place, and that the meaningful participation by women's rights groups, organizations and movements in implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms is guaranteed.

Second, we urge governments to **use existing human rights standards**—as legally binding universal norms aimed to promote human dignity and well-being—as **a central benchmark for assessing whether the financing of sustainable development is sufficient, equitable and accountable** in the lead up to the Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015. While the private sector can play an important role in contributing new resources to achieving sustainable development, any outsourcing of development cooperation needs to ensure full and continued compliance with human rights standards. **Specific *ex ante* criteria, based on human rights standards, should be established to determine whether a specific private sector actor is fit for a partnership in pursuit of the post-2015 goals.** These would include whether the private actor has a history or current status of serious allegations of abusing human rights or the environment, including in their cross-border activities; whether the private sector actor has previous involvement in acts of corruption with government officials; and whether the private actor is fully transparent in its financial reporting and fully respecting existing tax responsibilities in all countries within which it operates. International financial institutions, including those from the North and those emerging from the South, need to properly integrate human rights criteria into their safeguard policies and procedures, and be held accountable for violations of human rights resulting from any harmful policies and practices.

Thirdly, it is essential that the Post-2015 agenda provides a robust and inclusive mechanism or series of mechanisms to ensure human rights accountability of all development actors. Such a post-2015 accountability framework should in our view:

- Require **national, regional- and international-level human rights-based periodic review of all states** on their progress in implementing sustainable development commitments.
- **Develop constructive interaction between the post-2015 accountability framework and existing human rights accountability mechanisms** at the national, regional, and international levels such as the Universal Periodic Review.
- Ensure **human rights accountability** in any future global partnership for sustainable development by *inter alia* introducing mandatory, independent assessments and periodic public reporting of the cross-border human rights and sustainable development impacts of governments, businesses and international financial institutions.
- Require **national-level plans for implementation** of the Post-2015 agenda which translate global goals, targets, and indicators into national contexts using human rights-centered criteria.
- Secure **active and meaningful participation of all, in particular marginalized communities**, without fear of repercussion, in the design, implementation, and monitoring of all relevant policies and programs, including in future efforts to tailor the SDGs at the national level. Indigenous peoples, for example, have the right to give or withhold their free, prior and informed consent to development projects on their lands and territories.
- Development actors should be held to account for their **performance in financing gender equality**, women’s organizing, and women’s collective empowerment processes around the world.
- Ensure **access to justice for all**, requiring that every person has equal access to effective national-level remedies for violations of civil, political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental human rights through accountable and impartial justice systems.
- Promote a human rights-sensitive ‘**data revolution,**’ including by ensuring participatory processes to put into practice the right to prompt and effective access to high-quality information on public policies, including on budget, financial and tax policies, disaggregated on the basis of various grounds of discrimination such as gender, disability status, geographical region and compound and intersecting forms of discrimination.

We encourage you in your role as leader of this international body founded on the promotion and defense of human rights to insist on a truly human rights-centered approach to sustainable development post-2015. We stand ready to continue to contribute actionable proposals toward this aim in the year to come.

*Accept, Excellency, the assurance of our highest considerations,*

Amnesty International (International)  
Association for Women's Rights in Development (International/USA)  
Center for Economic and Social Rights (USA)  
Center for Reproductive Rights (International/USA)  
Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University (USA)  
Center of Concern (USA)  
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo S.J." (Ecuador)  
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (South Africa)  
Committee to Protect Journalists (USA)  
CONCORD Sweden (Sweden)  
EuroNGOs - The European NGOs for SRHR, Population and Development (Belgium)  
The Finnish NGO Platform KEPA (Finland)  
Franciscans International (International)  
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (USA)  
Human Rights Watch (International)  
IBON International (Philippines)  
International Disability Alliance (International)  
International Disability and Development Consortium (International)  
International Trade Union Confederation (International)  
International Women's Health Coalition (USA)  
Ipas (USA)  
KULU-Women and Development (Denmark)  
Minority Rights Group International (UK, Uganda, Hungary)  
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (Sri Lanka)  
Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (Ecuador/International)  
WASH United (Germany)  
Women in Law and Development in Africa (Togo)

