

## **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

In September 2015, the United Nations agreed on a global agenda for sustainable development: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, also known as Agenda 2030.

### **Agenda 2030**

Agenda 2030 is an action plan that builds on its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which ended in 2015.

*“We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.”<sup>i</sup>*

Agenda 2030 links to triple bottom line thinking (which is traditionally people, planet, and profit). The UN adopted a view that is focused on people, planet and prosperity, adding peace and partnership as crucial to success (making up the 5Ps). The idea is to create partnerships between countries and other stakeholders to eradicate poverty in a sustainable way.

### **The Goals, Targets, And Indicators**

The SDGs number 17 in total<sup>ii</sup> (see appendix). These cover a range of different, but interconnected, issues. Accompanying the goals is an explanation of what each goal means.

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Each goal has its own set of targets. There are a total of 169 targets that give more detail. The UN website “SDG toolkit” explains this<sup>iii</sup>. For example, under Goal 1 No Poverty, the targets to be achieved by 2030 are:

- 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.
- 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

## **SDG Advocates**

The UN appointed seventeen advocates to raise awareness and accelerate action on the SDGs<sup>iv</sup>. Chaired by two politicians, these advocates included a number of celebrities, including:

- Marta (Brazilian soccer player)
- Paul Polman (Dutch ex-CEO of Unilever)
- Dia Mirza (Indian actor and model)
- Jeffrey Sachs (American economist)
- Forrest Whitaker (American actor)
- Jack Ma (Chinese founder of Alibaba)
- Mathilde of Belgium (Belgium Queen)
- Richard Curtis (NZ/UK screenwriter)

These have changed over time to include Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister of Canada), Valentina Muñoz Rabanal (Chilean STEM Advocate) and BLACKPINK (K-pop band).<sup>v</sup>

## Follow Up

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is tasked with follow up and review of progress towards the goals. Each year the forum publishes a report detailing how the world is performing on its goals. For example, the 2021 report discussed problems caused by the Covid pandemic<sup>vi</sup>. The report noted that:

*“The global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in over 20 years, and 119 to 124 million people were pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020.”*

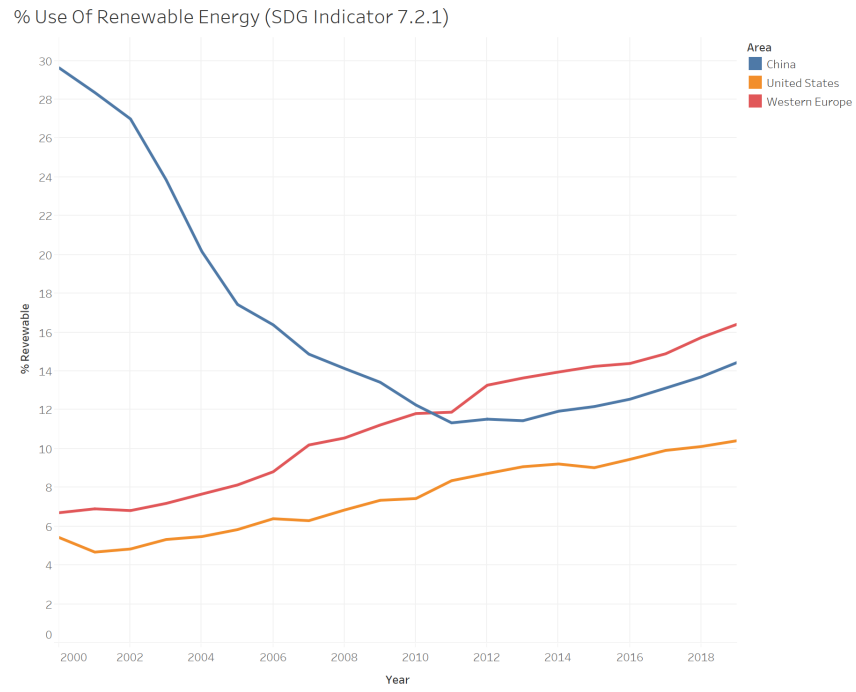
## Tracking Progress

Each target has its own indicator(s) for measuring and tracking progress. There are 232 indicators in total<sup>vii</sup>. For example, progress towards target 1.1 is assessed by the “proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)”.

The public can find much detail on progress. The “SDG Tracker” gives accessible data and visualizations on progress<sup>viii</sup>. In addition to helpful visualizations on the tracker website, data can be downloaded to allow the reader to answer their own specific queries.

For instance, Indicator 7.2.1 is “renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption”. (“Renewable” includes solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower, bioenergy and marine sources. “Final energy consumption” includes electricity, transportation and cooking/heating fuels.) Downloading the data from [SDG-Tracker.org](https://sdg-tracker.org) allowed a visualization of progress using this indicator is shown below.

Figure 1. Progress On Indicator 7.2.1



Source SDG Tracker, Indicator 7.2.1. ix

## **Appendix: The Goals**

### **GOAL 1: NO POVERTY**

Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.

### **GOAL 2: ZERO HUNGER**

The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication.

### **GOAL 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.

### **GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION**

Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development.

### **GOAL 5: GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

### **GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION**

Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in.

### **GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY**

Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity.

### **GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.

### **GOAL 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Investments in infrastructure are crucial to achieving sustainable development.

### **GOAL 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

#### GOAL 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

There needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more.

#### GOAL 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Responsible Production and Consumption

#### GOAL 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, everywhere.

#### GOAL 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

Careful management of this essential global resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.

#### GOAL 15: LIFE ON LAND

Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

#### GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

#### GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS

Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>, United Nations, Sustainable Development, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>ii</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>, “Do you know all 17 SDGs?”, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>iii</sup> <https://sdgtoolkit.org/what-is-it/indicators-and-goals/>, “SDG TOOLKIT to engage European NGOs at National and European level on the Sustainable Development Goals“, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.globalgoals.org/news/secretary-general-antonio-guterres-has-appointed-new/> “The Global Goals, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres Has Appointed New Sustainable Development Goals Advocates”, May 10, 2019, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.unsdgadvocates.org/>, “The SDG Advocates”, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>vi</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/>, The Sustainable Development Report 2021, accessed June 17, 2022

<sup>vii</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/>, Ritchie, Roser, Mispy, Ortiz-Ospina. "Measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." SDG-Tracker.org, website (2018)

<sup>viii</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/>, Ritchie, Roser, Mispy, Ortiz-Ospina. "Measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." SDG-Tracker.org, website (2018)

<sup>ix</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/>, Ritchie, Roser, Mispy, Ortiz-Ospina. "Measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals." SDG-Tracker.org, website (2018)