

# From Rio to SDGs



P R E F A C E

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Over **20** years after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, advancing sustainable development from the local level to the global level remains a major challenge and responsibility. In fact the development challenges, especially of poverty eradication, have become even more intractable. The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) discussed these global imperatives and agreed, inter alia, to define sustainable development goals (SDGs) to serve as a guide for the international community in implementing actions to better advance sustainable development.

The agreement to develop SDGs came at a time when the UN community is also engaged in elaborating a new global governance framework to guide development discourse and efforts in the post-2015 period when the current UN Millennium Development Goals will expire. While distinctly separate, the two processes are more than likely to give rise to one set of post-2015 sustainable development goals. Such goals, as provided in the outcome document of the Rio+20 summit, should be action-oriented, addressing all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental) and their inter-linkages in a balanced way; they must be concise, easy to communicate and relatively few in numbers; and they must be relevant to all countries.

The emphasis that the new goals must reflect fully the three dimensions of sustainable development and ensure their balanced treatment is very important. It addresses some of the lacunae in the current MDGs framework, namely lack of integration among the different goals and weak emphasis on economic drivers of development with the result also that trade enablers received limited attention. Yet development experiences over many years and recently in many countries have shown that economic growth is critical to inclusive development and this can be sustained by an enhanced and qualitative participation in international trade, accompanied by financial including investment and technology flows and supportive institutional, regulatory and human capacities. Building competitive productive capacities to increase participation in trade in turn requires enabling policies and measures at national, regional and international levels.

UNCTAD, as part of the United Nations system, is contributing to the discourse among Governments with analysis and advice. Our efforts are squarely focused on fostering a process of trade-led development that is socially, economically and environmentally inclusive and also builds up culture and creativity.

This fourth issue of our Rio+20 Journal, which we termed the *“The Road from Rio: Towards Sustainable Development Goals”* articulates some perspectives on such goals and the contribution of international trade. We have invited several leading personalities to share their views on aspects of the development framework in the post-2015 period. We hope this contribution will help Governments and other stakeholders navigate the multitude of global issues facing the international community today and define a sustainable development framework that can have a major impact on poverty eradication across the globe in the years ahead.



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