



BREAKING DOWN THE SILOS

**INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY IN THE
POST-2015 AGENDA**



REPORT OF THE THEMATIC CONSULTATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA



Front Cover images: (left to right)

1. Fatima Ahmed, Zenab for Women in Development at Costa Rica Leadership Meeting, March 2013, Photo credit: IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin, [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)
2. Yntze van der Hoek, Netherlands, Biology PHD Student, Submission to Environmental Sustainability Consultation Photo Campaign
3. Ivana Savic, Centre for Human Rights and Development Studies. Video interview at Costa Rica Leadership Meeting, Photo credit: UNDP Video Interview
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1. Audience at briefing for Member States and Civil Society on initial results from the thematic consultation, 19 April 2013, New York. Photo credit: UNDP/Eva Gurria
2. Trevor Lombaer, Musician. Submission to Environmental Sustainability Consultation Photo Campaign
3. Hassan Khazaal uses online networks to organize youth activities. Photo credit: Adam Rogers/UNDP

August 2013

The Environmental Sustainability Thematic Consultation was co-hosted by the Governments of France and Costa Rica and co-led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

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Foreword

The post-2015 agenda provides an opportunity to mobilize partnerships, investment and urgent action to drive transformational change to put the world on a trajectory that stays within planetary boundaries. Environmental sustainability is simply not optional for the ‘world we want.’ People around the world are calling for this and are ready to be a part of the change.

The narrative on environmental sustainability provides particular reason for renewed optimism. No longer is the discussion focused primarily on preventing harm to the environment but also about how environmental sustainability is fundamental to human development and well-being. There is recognition that poverty eradication is not a pre-condition for environmental sustainability but that these ambitions must advance simultaneously. Environmental sustainability can no longer be addressed in a silo.

In shaping the post-2015 agenda the United Nations system and Member States are coming together to listen to what people have to say. In the report ‘Breaking Down the Silos’, we present the results of the Global Thematic Consultation on Environmental Sustainability. Those engaged in this consultation -- academia, think tanks, representatives of civil society, youth, women and men from North and South – chose to focus the discussion on the linkages between environmental sustainability and human development rather than identifying a wish list of environmental goals. At the forefront of the discussions was the need for the post-2015 agenda to be based on principles related to integrated approaches to development, equality, human rights and resilience in order to fully embed environmental sustainability.

Similar messages resonate across other consultations and inter-governmental processes and signal a shift in how we approach development around the world. Member States, with full participation of civil society, renewed commitment to sustainable development at Rio+20. The UN system is also committed to delivering as one to support this agenda. It is only through such shared commitments that the world can move towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future.

The post-2015 agenda provides an opportunity to help drive the urgent action that is needed to deliver on these commitments. The consultations demonstrate renewed optimism that this is possible. Those engaged in the Global Thematic Consultation on Environmental Sustainability could not have been more explicit about their resolve to continue shaping and eventually implementing a universal and transformative post-2015 agenda.



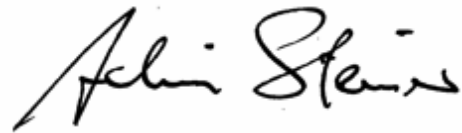
Enrique Castillo Barrantes
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Contents

Executive summary	ii
There is unprecedented engagement in shaping a universal post-2015 agenda...	1
... and there is a call to interlink environmental sustainability and human development...	5
... but responses fall short...	15
... yet we have the knowledge, capacity and ambition to redirect our development trajectory.	19
What does this mean for the post-2015 agenda?	35

Executive summary

The Post-2015 Global Thematic Consultation on Environmental Sustainability (www.worldwewant2015.org/sustainability) was part of the **unprecedented worldwide engagement in shaping the next development agenda**. The Thematic Consultation was designed to facilitate an open dialogue, stimulate creative thinking and to begin to generate consensus around how best to reflect environmental sustainability in the post-2015 agenda. From November 2012 to May 2013, the Consultation succeeded in engaging over 5,000 people from around the world, including through a call for Discussion Notes, a Leadership Meeting in Costa Rica and 11 moderated online discussions. 'Breaking Down the Silos' summarizes the results of this process.

Preliminary reflections made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically about MDG-7 (ensure environmental sustainability), highlighted the poor integration of environmental sustainability and poverty reduction. Resources and efforts towards achieving poverty reduction objectives often failed to include an environmental dimension. Similarly, environmental measures operated in a silo, not relating to the root causes of poverty.



UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner addressed participants of the Leadership Meeting via video.

PHOTO CREDIT: IISD/EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN
[HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)

Focusing the international community around one development agenda is among the MDGs' greatest achievements. However, challenges remain to secure a future that people would wish for themselves and generations to come. Moreover, the growing pace and impact of shocks—especially climate change—are better understood and documented than 15 years ago. These factors have arguably driven us further away from the realization of the 'world we want': one in which inequalities are declining and societies increasingly shift to sustainable development and wise use of the planet's natural resources. The world is fast approaching, and in some cases already breached, important planetary boundaries.

Urgent action is needed, yet **current responses fall short**. There are now unprecedented calls for an ambitious and universal agenda that promotes transformational development approaches geared towards meeting the challenges of eradicating poverty and protecting the planet's resources.

The key theme that binds human development and environmental sustainability is the ideal of integrated development solutions. This is embodied in the following four principles needed to underpin the post-2015 agenda:

- **Integrated development** that simultaneously advances multiple benefits across the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, environmental, and economic) ensures that poverty eradication and environmental sustainability go hand-in-hand;
- **Equality** in relation to access to natural resources and the benefits of a healthy environment as well as engagement in related decision-making processes is fundamental for both environmental sustainability and human development;
- A **human rights**-based approach to environmental sustainability recognizes that the realization of human rights depends on a healthy environment; and
- The **resilience** of communities to resist tomorrow's shocks without reversing today's achievements in human well-being depends on the vital role of natural resources and ecosystems.

Consultation participants shared the optimism that examples of innovation and integrated approaches suggest that **we have the knowledge, capacity and ambition to redirect our development trajectory** towards common objectives while embracing our different realities. We need transformative action that effectively integrates the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Such action should be favoured over incremental, siloed responses, in which trade-offs favour short-term gains at the expense of sustainability. Participants were clear that the future development agenda should address four key areas where urgent action is needed in order to overcome barriers and drive change:

- **Economic transformation:** The current growth-led economic model has to transform in order to redress environmental and social challenges. This entails reconsidering how we measure progress and value natural assets. The private sector needs to recognize that sustainability is good business and commit to strengthening environmental and social responsibility. There was a call to transition to an inclusive, green economy with sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- **Governance and accountability:** Governments need to create an enabling framework that promotes the cross-sectoral integration of environmental and social values, strengthening institutions and ensuring transparency. Social and environmental justice and legal empowerment are needed to enable civil society to hold the public and private sector accountable for environmental impacts, affecting their lives, livelihoods and health;
- **Local action and empowerment:** Marginalized and traditionally disempowered communities, notably vulnerable groups such as women, children and indigenous communities, need to have access to the tools (e.g. education, resources and information) necessary to achieving transformational change—change that equitably reflects local realities and needs; and

- **Education:** Education was deemed to be one of the most powerful tools at hand to drive the transformational changes necessary for sustainable development, but to realize this potential education systems need to be flexible, culturally sensitive, relevant and suited to changing people's values and behaviours.

Though the objectives of the Consultation did not include defining future goals, the results help to lay the conceptual groundwork for future goals and provide insights into key interlinked issues, including:

- The increasing threats to development from climate change, which many saw as a source of instability that will lead to resource scarcity, mass migration, disruption of livelihoods and production, requiring action to shift towards low-emission development including through education and economic transformation;
- Population dynamics including rural-urban migration and increasing urbanization requires a focus on healthy urban environments and action on slum dwelling, sustainable transport, clean air and green space;
- The importance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity for human well-being and resilience (particularly to reduce the vulnerability of those living in poverty), requiring urgent action;
- The growing challenge of food and water insecurity and the need for action on sustainable food production and consumption;
- The rights of poor and vulnerable groups to secure access to natural resources and the benefits of a healthy environment requiring strong social and environmental justice, access to information, and legal empowerment;
- Linkages between environment and health, including the need for action on pollution and environmental degradation and investing in human health; and
- The centrality of gender equality for environmental sustainability and the need to integrate gender perspectives into decision-making at all levels and empowering women through economic and educational opportunities.

A vision of the future people want has been shared through the Consultation and there is consensus that environmental sustainability needs to be fully embedded in the post-2015 agenda. Those engaged in the Environmental Sustainability Thematic Consultation were explicit in stating their resolve to continue shaping and eventually implementing a universal and transformative post-2015 agenda, making sure that **no one is left behind** and **everyone is carried forward**.

There is unprecedented engagement in shaping a universal post-2015 agenda...

We've been listening to people from around the world who are sharing ideas, priorities and solutions for environmental sustainability.



Hunter Lovins, Natural Capitalism Solutions. PHOTO CREDIT: IISD/EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN, [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)

The United Nations (UN) has undertaken a wide-ranging, open consultation to include the voices of people from around the globe in crafting and implementing a sustainable, integrated, inspiring and universal post-2015 agenda that is based on the aspirations of the world's citizens. These consultations elicited wide participation and engagement through:

- National consultations (currently ongoing in 88 countries);
- Eleven global thematic consultations (including this consultation on **environmental sustainability**);¹ and
- Global online platforms for consultations (www.worldwewant2015.org and www.my-world2015.org).

The objective of this report is to provide a summary of the key messages that emerged from the Global Thematic Consultation on Environmental Sustainability.² Opportunities for engagement

in the Consultation included a call for Discussion Notes, a Leadership Meeting, and 11 online discussions. With over 5,000 online members, the Consultation brought together a range of participants, including leading thinkers, members of academia and representatives from civil society and the private sector from around the world.³ Preliminary findings of the Consultation contributed to the preparation of the final report of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 'A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development'. The Panel's report contributed to ongoing intergovernmental processes aimed to help world leaders craft a universal agenda beyond 2015, an agenda that reflects the aspirations of people from around the world. Processes that will benefit from the Panel's report include the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals and the September 2013 Special Event of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals.

“The world needs to listen more to the poor marginalised people as part of the solutions that are being put forward at the global level.”

Contribution to the e-discussion on addressing development challenges in a changing world by Kimbowa Richard, Policy Researcher, Uganda

The Environmental Sustainability Thematic Consultation has had two phases. During the exploratory first phase, stakeholders prioritized many topics for the dialogue. These topics were subsequently unpacked during the second phase.⁴ The result is a dialogue focused on the interlinkages of environmental sustainability and the economic and social considerations that face the global community.

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1 See a brief summary of how environmental sustainability was reflected across the other thematic consultations here: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/369060>

2 The Environmental Sustainability Thematic Consultation was co-hosted by the Governments of France and Costa Rica, co-led by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme and supported by a Steering Group composed of UN agencies, the World Bank and the Climate Action Network, representing the Beyond 2015 Coalition.

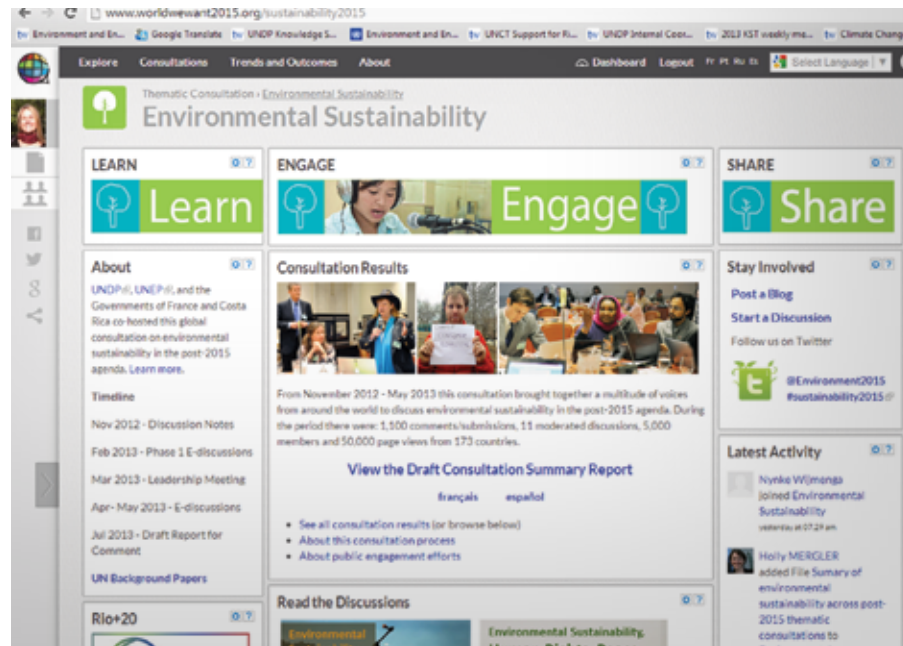
3 See summary of outreach and engagement, available at: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/357718/download/389222>

4 See the Thematic Consultation website for additional background information on the Consultation, available at: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sustainability2015>

A key milestone of the Consultation was the Leadership Meeting held in San José, Costa Rica in March 2013.⁵ Eighty-eight representatives from intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, governments and the UN reviewed the results of the first phase in order to:

- Build consensus on the key issues that should frame environmental sustainability in the post-2015 agenda, considering key interlinkages, drivers and enablers;
- Identify areas where further dialogue, outreach and innovative thinking is needed in order to build consensus and evolve the discussion for the second phase of the Consultation; and
- Develop a cohort of leading and emerging thinkers from around the world to continue the dialogue and to raise visibility and awareness of environmental sustainability issues that are key to making progress towards the future we want.

Based on the outcomes of the first phase and the Leadership Meeting, the second phase discussions centred on linkages between environmental sustainability and on key issues such as poverty reduction, human rights, peace and security and equality. The dialogue brought forward views on the role of markets and the private sector, underscored the importance of education in shaping a responsible citizenry and discussed the levels at which action needs to take place. Contributions called for an ambitious and universal agenda that retains sufficient flexibility to reflect different societal needs. Most importantly, it reflected the need for transformation to address the challenges of inequality and resource degradation in order to realize the future people want within and across generations.



People from 173 countries visited the Environmental Sustainability consultation website which hosted 11 online discussions with over 1,100 comments from 5,000 members on the World We Want 2015 Platform.

“Rather than attempt to cover every single environmental issue in depth, the consultation could more usefully focus on the core factors underpinning the lack of progress to date. In particular, the second phase of the consultation should focus on several fundamental issues relating to environmental sustainability that have not been resolved.”

[Discussion Note](#) from WaterAid

⁵ The Leadership Meeting co-chairs summary is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#) at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/360222>

Discussions centred on conceptual framing, the broader narrative on environmental sustainability, the key drivers of change and on the implementation challenges to catalysing integrated approaches that would put the world on a sustainable development trajectory.

The consultations have reflected a consensus that if we are to achieve the secure and sustainable future people want, then the universal post-2015 agenda should apply an integrated approach, with environmental sustainability as a central tenet. While this report aims to synthesize of the Thematic Consultation, the conversation and engagement will need to continue—not only to keep the global community engaged, but also to translate the shared vision into a framework that can ensure environmental sustainability by mobilizing global action and driving transformational change.

...and there is a call to interlink environmental sustainability and human development...

Across the world, people see that the post-2015 agenda should be building on integration, equality, human rights, and resilience.



Briefing for Member States and civil society on initial results from the Thematic Consultation, 19 April 2013, New York. PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP/EVA GURRIA, UNDP

“In the world we want, poverty has been eradicated and nature thrives; every woman, man, boy and girl, now and in the future can equally fulfil their rights and have sustainable, resilient, livelihoods that operate within planetary boundaries.”

Discussion Note from Climate Action Network-International and Beyond 2015 representing over 850 NGOs worldwide

From the many submissions to the Consultation, it is clear that people share a common vision for our future. This shared agenda demonstrates that environmental sustainability is a priority for the North and South, women and men, old and young, private and public sector. The global discourse reaffirms that integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development leads to multiple benefits. The discussion has graduated from focusing on preventing harm to the environment to considering environmental sustainability to be fundamental to human development and well-being for the future people want. Discussants stressed the need for people and the planet to be at the centre of the post-2015 agenda, and that the agenda be based on key principles embedded in sustainable development.

“Quite how environmental sustainability and equality will be embodied in the post-2015 development goal framework remains to be seen. That both are fundamental principles and essential for sustainable development seems unquestionable.”

Contribution to e-discussion on equality by Andrew Scott, Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute, UK

The urgency of transformational change was a message that came out strongly from the Consultation. This should translate into action at the country and local levels, action that over time will require a flexible and adaptive global and universal agenda.

Therefore, rather than defining specific goals, participants directed the dialogue towards the conceptual issues and core principles that need to be embedded in the post-2015 agenda's set of goals, targets and indicators. The dialogue broke environment out of its silo focusing on the ideal of integrated devel-

opment solutions. This is embodied in the following **four core principles** needed to underpin the post-2015 agenda—**integrated development, equality, human rights, and resilience**.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Integrating environmental sustainability into development priorities (e.g. poverty reduction, health, energy, sustainable livelihoods and food and water security) will influence a fundamental change in development and growth. The linkages among environmental and human development issues, particularly **poverty and environment**, are well understood and can be viewed from several perspectives. The viewpoint on poverty and environment linkages has shifted from recognizing that they exist to providing integrated development solutions.

To capture the linkages between poverty and environment, poverty needs to be viewed multi-dimensionally, involving deprivation of resources for survival, livelihoods and well-being.⁶ Natural resources and ecosystem services were recognized as a fundamental contribution to meeting basic needs (e.g. providing livelihoods, shelter, food and fresh water) and reducing income inequalities, both in rural and urban settings. Recurring themes included equal access and distribution of natural resources and getting the energy, food and water nexus right (in both the developed and developing world). It became evident that “environmental sustainability is non-negotiable”⁷ for the continued provision of these services to people and to secure the future people want.



Camille Andre, France, Student, Submission to Environmental Sustainability Consultation Photo Campaign

“ I think we’re better-positioned today to make a difference on these issues of environment and development than we were even a decade ago when the Millennium Development Goals were established... It’s up to us now to take that political momentum and really drive it into the Sustainable Development Goals in a measurable way. ”

[Contribution](#) from Glenn Prickett, Chief External Affairs Officer at The Nature Conservancy

6 Contribution to the [e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty](#) by Ashish Kothari, Researcher activist, Kalpavriksh and ICCA Consortium, India

7 Contribution at the Leadership Meeting from Andrew Deutz, Director of International Government Relations, The Nature Conservatory

The challenge is to ensure that environmental sustainability is factored into improving the lives of the poor, which entails increasing necessities such as food, water, energy, sanitation, education, health care, housing and security. Contributions to the Consultation highlighted the notion that poverty eradication is not a precondition for environmental sustainability—the two must advance simultaneously. However, policies and approaches to providing immediate basic needs often fail to minimize their impact on environment.⁸ This has put development on an unsustainable trajectory. Therefore, getting this linkage right will be the ‘make or break’ of the post-2015 agenda.

The Consultation also challenged assumptions regarding linkages between poverty and environmental degradation. Though poverty may force people to take desperate measures to eke out a living, the statement that ‘poverty is the greatest pollutant’ needs to be refuted.⁹ In fact, contributors shared many examples, experiences and initiatives of poor communities that built on traditional knowledge, land stewardship and technology in order to identify solutions for environmental sustainability.

Many discussants highlighted that because the poor are often the most vulnerable to environmental degradation, inequalities continue to deepen as a result. For example, the contribution of the poor to greenhouse gas emissions is relatively minimal, yet they stand to suffer the most from the consequences of climate change.

Population dynamics featured often in the Consultation. Apart from increasing population numbers, the rapid movement of people to unplanned **urbanization** was highlighted as a factor that is entrenching conditions of poverty, environmental degradation and unhealthy lifestyles. Given that two-thirds of the global population will live in cities by 2050, the post-2015 framework should ensure sustainable and healthy urban environments and include action on slum improvements. Additional elements for consideration include action on sustainable transport and urban

living, including clean air and green spaces.¹⁰

“Does an ecologically intact and biologically diverse environment contribute to a lack of poverty... Available evidence from around the world would indicate that this is indeed the case, and that even where financially poor, traditional communities that are living amidst ecologically diverse conditions often have more secure livelihoods and lifestyles.”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty](#) by Ashish Kothari, Researcher activist, Kalpavriksh and ICCA Consortium, India

The linkages between environmental sustainability and the growing challenge of **food and water insecurity** were also highlighted. Sustainable agriculture and food security have been identified as critical challenges for the post-2015 agenda, particularly in the face of growing world population and increasing per capita

8 Contribution to the [e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty](#) by Lal Manavado, Advisor, Norway

9 Contribution to the [e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty](#) by Ashish Kothari, Researcher activist, Kalpavriksh and ICCA Consortium, India

10 Contribution to the [e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty](#) by NCD Alliance

food production. Food production is often environmentally destructive, causing groundwater depletion, topsoil loss, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution from fertilizers and pesticides, loss of habitat and declining biodiversity. Food stocks today could feed all 7 billion people on Earth, but much food is being wasted and food distribution is uneven. Regions experiencing food scarcity today will remain vulnerable to food insecurity particularly because of climate change, depletion of fresh water supplies and land erosion. These challenges must be addressed by pursuing an environmentally sustainable intensification of agriculture – particularly among smallholder farmers, investments in the resilience to climate change, drastically reduced losses in the food production chain, and promoting the rapid, voluntary reduction of fertility.¹¹

Linkages between **health** and the environment were brought up by many. For example, participants highlighted the need to address and share responsibilities for health risks from pollution and environmental degradation associated with extractive industries. Additionally, there are many examples showing that investing in environmental health is tantamount to investing in human health, resulting in multiple benefits and a multiplier effect towards poverty reduction. For example, indoor air pollution from unsustainable use of biomass and coal stoves leads to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases in low- and middle-income countries, particularly among women and children. In contrast, clean household energy stemming from investments in modern low-emissions heating and cooking technologies will not only mitigate CO2 emissions but also prevent millions of premature deaths.¹² It is also essential to invest in women's economic and educational opportunities in order to ensure increased use of improved stoves and access to and control over safe, affordable and renewable energy for households.¹³

“As a member of a developed country, this (the unfair exploitation of the natural resources of developing countries) troubles me morally and spiritually... Nor do I want to worry about whether the bananas I bought on sale were so cheap because the multinational corporate agri-farm in South America was able to displace indigenous people from their tribal homelands, and to boost crop yields by applying pesticides and herbicides banned for their environmental and human hazards in developed countries. I don't want a banana if it means that an indigenous mother is feeding her infant with breast milk that contains 220 times the amount of DDT determined by the World Health Organization to be hazardous to human health—not to mention the long-term contamination it causes to soil and groundwater wherever it is applied. ... Yet, as troubled as I might be as a consumer—I also might not (and likely do not) have the specific knowledge I need to make the moral choices I want to. The scariest prospect is that I might not have any choices left to make—perhaps it is all tainted with costs I never intended anyone else to suffer or for the planet to endure so that I could afford to live as I do. So, to me—there is a common problem and theme here of a lack of empowerment for everyone involved in this equation on the most intimately personal, human scale.”

Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security
by Kathleen I. O'Halleran, Social Sciences Secondary Education Program Director and Instructor of Political Science, Geography and Sociology, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, USA

11 Contribution to the e-discussion on framing environmental sustainability in the post-2015 agenda by Bonnie Scarborough, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

12 Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty by NCD Alliance

13 Contribution to the review of the draft final report by Eleanor Blomstrom (Programme Coordinator at WEDO), Norma Maldondo (Assistant Director, Asociación Raxch' och' Oxlaju Aj), Sabine Bock (Director of the German office of WECF)

EQUALITY

Equality was identified as a principle for integrating environmental sustainability into the next development agenda. Discussants noted the importance of equal access to natural resources, land rights and the benefits of a healthy environment as well as engagement in related decision-making. The discussions also noted the challenges of increasing income inequality within and between countries.

These comments highlight the need for a development agenda to benefit everyone. Therefore, many put forward the importance of monitoring and reporting mechanisms that use population data and indicators (e.g. disaggregated by sex, age, rural/urban location, educational background and economic quintile).

“**A value-based ethical framework should be in place which will have control over consumption pattern and life style of the economically advanced section in any country which is the underlying cause of inequality.**”

[Anonymous contribution to the e-discussion on capitalizing on the MDGs and MDG7](#)

It was recognized that **poverty** is also an expression of the inequalities within and between countries. The unsustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles of those who benefit from today's development model are directly linked to poverty generation, the growth of inequality and threats to ecosystem services.

Many participants repeatedly called for environmental justice due to unequal or unfair exploitation and the commercialization of local natural resources related to corrupt power structures and private control over natural resources.



Video message from Pavan Sukhdev, United Nation's Environment Program Goodwill Ambassador

PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP VIDEO INTERVIEW

The unsustainable use of our planet's resources, stemming partly from relentless consumption, production patterns and population dynamics, pushes planetary boundaries to their limits and puts **intergenerational equality** at risk. Though these risks are well-known, development continues to diminish our natural resource wealth.

Participants brought particular attention to the need to simultaneously advance **gender equality** and environmental outcomes through actions such as improving access to clean water and sanitation, combating land degradation and reducing deaths due to disasters and pollution. Backed by the 2011 Human Development Report findings and evidence that women tend to show more concern for the environment and to support pro-environmental policies, it was concluded that increasing women's involvement in decision-making is instrumental to addressing environmental degradation.¹⁴

Several contributors noted that though population growth contributes to environmental degradation, protecting women's reproductive rights and universal access to quality reproductive health services is a prerequisite for women's involvement and participation in decision-making for environmental sustainability.

The Consultation also highlighted that **indigenous peoples** are often among the most vulnerable to climate risk and environmental degradation. However, they also have a wealth of traditional knowledge about biodiversity, sustainable agriculture practices and the protection of land and forests that could help provide a pathway to a sustainable future.¹⁵ Participants therefore stressed the importance of ensuring that indigenous peoples have an equal voice and participation in decision-making.

“**Women's rights and gender equality must be guaranteed in order to achieve sustainable development. This means that climate change must be addressed in a way that ensures women's rights are taken into account, and that women are not further jeopardised by the proposed solutions.**”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on equality and environmental sustainability](#) by Carmen Capriles, Coordinator and founder of Reacción Climática, Bolivia

“**For indigenous peoples environmental sustainability is a very important issue because it is related with our concept of development, it is related with exercise of our human rights to own our own territory, to use our traditional knowledge.**”

Video message from Myrna Cunningham Cain, member of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

¹⁴ [Discussion Note](#) from Natalia Kostus, Representative to the United Nations, IAW- International Alliance of Women

¹⁵ Contribution to the Leadership Meeting in Costa Rica by Norma Maldonado, Assistant Director, Asociación Raxch' och' Oxlaju Aj

HUMAN RIGHTS

“Human rights, including rights to life, health, property, food, water, development, and self-determination, are grounded in respect for fundamental human attributes such as dignity, equality and liberty. The realization of these attributes depends on an environment that allows them to flourish.”

Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Prof. John Knox, UN Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment, USA

A key argument in favour of a human rights approach to sustainable development issues more broadly is that it elevates the entire spectrum of sustainability, development and environmental issues to fundamental values of society.¹⁶ A human rights-based approach to environmental sustainability recognizes that the realization of human rights depends on a healthy environment. For example, livelihoods of the rural poor often depend on natural resources and ecosystem services, so enjoyment of human rights is at risk from environmental hazards. Likewise, urban dwellers, particularly those living in informal settlements, are disproportionately at risk from natural disasters, their vulnerability further exacerbated by the

growing urban population, threatening the fulfilment of their human rights.¹⁷

Furthermore, many recognized that a human rights approach provides **minimum substantive standards** for environmental sustainability, particularly when formulated as the human right to a healthy environment. It was noted that although these standards need to be clarified, regional and national tribunals have begun to build an extensive jurisprudence explaining the environmental duties that human rights place on States and other actors. Further clarification of these obligations, from domestic policy to international negotiation, is needed for States and others to understand them and ensure that they are met.¹⁸ It was also suggested that National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) should be recognized as important actors in moving towards a human rights based approach to environmental sustainability.¹⁹

“Respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the right to a healthy environment may require overcoming substantial obstacles... As well, in some countries it is necessary to pursue sustainable forms of economic growth, build institutional capacity, and ensure respect for the rule of law.”

Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Dr. David R. Boyd, Adjunct Professor, Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University, Canada

¹⁶ Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Jan van de Venis, attorney-at-law and owner of JustLaw, Corporate Law and Human Rights, The Netherlands

¹⁷ Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by WWF International

¹⁸ Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Professor John Knox, UN Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment, USA

¹⁹ Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Ivana Savic, Executive Director of the Centre for Human Rights and Development Studies, Serbia

RESILIENCE

Another fundamental principle often raised for fully integrating environmental sustainability into the post-2015 development agenda was the resilience of communities—their ability to resist tomorrow’s shocks without reversing today’s achievements in human well-being.

Climate Action Network-International and the Beyond 2015 Coalition captured the thinking of many discussants by highlighting that natural resources and ecosystems have a vital role to play in building resilience. Healthy natural environments (environments that have well-functioning ecosystem services and species diversity and abundance) are best able to support the poor. Secure land tenure, adaptive capacity, and **healthy ecosystems reduce people’s vulnerability** to the effects of climate change and other shocks. This is particularly true for those living in poverty.

The linkages between environmental sustainability and the resilience of communities also reinforce the importance of equality. It was recognized that a resilient community is above all an **equitable community**. Profound inequalities and inequitable power structures cannot support environmental sustainability and are therefore likely to undermine resilient communities.



Briefing for Member States and civil society on initial results from the Thematic Consultation, 19 April 2013, New York. PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP/EVA GURRIA

Considering the scale and impact of increasingly frequent environmental shocks, particularly as a result of climate change, communities will continue to face an increasing cost from these shocks. Cities around the world, along with their crowded slums, are often located along coastlines and are particularly vulnerable to floods, sea level rise and the increasing intensity of severe weather events. Extended drought periods empty national and regional food stocks, and increasingly drive an exodus of disenfranchised farmers to cities.

It was recognized that if we are to foster greater resilience, we need to live within our planetary boundaries. Therefore, greater resilience recognizes the urgency and scale of the action needed to successfully protect and manage natural resources (e.g. dramatic reductions of greenhouse gas emissions in order to stabilize and reverse the global warming trend). Local ecosystem-based initiatives need to be fostered, as they promote innovation and build resilience in the three dimensions of sustainable development.

In this context, the principles and processes of the commons (e.g. common wealth, common ethos and common good) was brought up on several occasions as a concept or approach that interconnects the social, economic and environment dimensions of sustainable development. While commons can be described in a variety of ways and along several dimensions, one participant defined it as a social system that associates people with their resources and the participatory and mindful ways they are managing/producing/caring for them.²⁰

“**Are prevailing 10% biodiversity conservation goals ENOUGH? Or do such 10% conservation goals actually risk—or invite—collapse? Think of the functioning aspects of other complex and interacting systems that we know, for example ... a space vehicle. No rational astronauts would remove, destroy, damage, or eradicate 82% of their navigation systems, 91% of their vehicle’s electrical systems, 87% of its heat shields, 78% of its CO2 scrubbers and life-support systems, and 94% of their propulsion and re-entry systems.**”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on consensus and divergence](#) by Randolph Femmer, Editor and Senior Director, The Wecskaop Project and Biospherics Literacy 101, USA

20 Contribution to the [review of the draft final report](#) by Helene Finidori, France

...but responses fall short...

The world is rapidly changing with growing inequalities and the planet's life-support systems at risk.



Mayola Charles, United States, Student, Submission to Environmental Sustainability Consultation Photo Campaign

“The MDGs should be a learning platform for going into Post 2015. There is a strong need to identify success stories, benchmarks as well as barriers in achieving environmental sustainability.”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on capitalizing on the MDGs and MDG7](#) by Pinaki Dasgupta

The Consultation recognized the strengths of the **MDGs** and concluded that the post-2015 development agenda should build on its successes. In particular, the Consultation noted that the MDGs highlighted some of the fundamental causes of poverty and provided an effective means to concisely frame, focus, measure and easily communicate development concerns. This has allowed the MDGs to catalyse and mobilize resources and action to reduce poverty in developing countries. However, consultation participants highlighted that past development policies, plans and actions have fallen short in addressing ever-growing global-, national- and local-level challenges.

Despite some positive trends for MDG-7, progress on the targets have mostly been poor. Contributors noted that challenges to achieving the MDGs included the false sense of competition between goals, poor monitoring, lack of data, limited grass-roots' engagement and failure to address important drivers. Although the urgency related to environmental sustainability is a global concern, the MDGs did not reflect local sustainability manifestations or implications. Furthermore, not all important issues captured in the Millennium Declaration were translated to the MDGs (e.g. equality issues).



Twitter was an important tool for the consultation to encourage online debate and to reach a broader public.

“The failure to frame environmental sustainability as a poverty issue is arguably a critical factor in subsequent failures in MDG-7 monitoring, reporting and results.”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on capitalizing on the MDGs and MDG7](#) by Lucy Hadley, Policy and Advocacy Administrator, International Diabetes Federation, Belgium

One of the most important reflections made on the MDGs, MDG-7 in particular, was the poor integration of environmental sustainability and poverty reduction. Poverty reduction resources and efforts did not always include an environmental dimension. Similarly, environmental measures operated in a silo, not relating to the root causes of poverty. Ultimately, poor integration of the environment into other sectors, development policies, institutions and investment decisions has hampered and even reversed development achievements at all levels.

As the international community focuses on a new global development agenda, there is a realization that the world has changed since the MDGs were formulated. In this regard, three specific challenges to environmental sustainability were consistently highlighted throughout the Consultation: population dynamics, consumption and production patterns and climate change.

The planet's population has been growing exponentially over the past decade, and is likely to increase to over 9 billion people by 2050. Likewise, two thirds of the population is predicted to live in cities by 2050. Taking **population dynamics** into account (including population size, growth, urbanization, ageing and migration) is necessary to understanding the scale and scope of the development challenges to be faced during the lifetime of the post-2015 development agenda.

A related issue repeatedly referred to was the current and projected **consumption and production patterns**. Per capita consumption is expected to increase as a consequence of continued economic output and growth. Consumers and producers are unsustainably diminishing the planet's natural resources—depleting fish stocks, losing fertile soil and shrinking forests—and there are already signs of the devastating effect this will have on societies and economies. This will crowd out the prospects of the poor and exacerbate inequalities that increase the risk of conflict.

“Climate change is the greatest threat to poverty reduction. It is also symptomatic of a fundamental developmental and economic crisis. It is a ‘threat multiplier’, amplifying existing social, political, and resource stresses. The impacts of crossing ‘planetary boundaries’, especially climate change, hit people living in poverty first and hardest, as they often depend directly on natural resources for their livelihoods and have the least resources available to undertake adaptive action.”

[Discussion Note from the Climate Action Network-International and the Beyond-2015 Coalition](#)



Wael Hmaidan, Climate Action Network- International (CAN-I),
representing Beyond 2015 Coalition PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH
NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA /POST 2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post-2015/sustainability)

Climate change and its development repercussions were noted and recognized as exacerbating inequalities and poverty. Many participants mentioned its impacts, particularly on food security and health. Furthermore, climate change was identified as a potential source of instability by leading to resource scarcity and mass migration, putting peace and security at risk.

**...yet we have the
knowledge, capacity and
ambition to redirect our
development trajectory.**

**A universal and ambitious agenda that reflects
different realities and fully reflects the scale and
urgency of today's and tomorrow's challenges**



Photo posted on Twitter of group discussion of rural and urban issues in environment and development at Leadership Meeting.
PHOTO CREDIT: SAMEER KHAN @SAMURYSAM

There was overwhelming agreement on the need for **urgent action and transformational change** to put the world on a sustainable development trajectory that fully integrates environmental sustainability and human development. A trajectory that moves the world to a future that applies integrated approaches to decisions that affect human well-being, fully respects human rights, makes equality the norm rather than the exception and fosters societies that are resilient to change and that operate within planetary boundaries.

Breaking Out of a Silo: The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Targets

Biological diversity underpins ecosystem functioning and the provision of ecosystem services that are essential for human well-being. Biological diversity provides for food security, human health, the provision of clean air and water; it contributes to local livelihoods, economic development and is essential for the achievement of the MDGs (not only MDG-7). In addition, it is a central component of many belief systems, worldviews and identities. Yet despite its fundamental importance, biodiversity continues to be lost. It is against this backdrop that the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 with the purpose of inspiring broad-based action in support of biodiversity over the next decade by all countries and stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan is comprised of a shared vision, a mission, strategic goals and 20 ambitious yet achievable targets, collectively known as the Aichi Targets. The Strategic Plan serves as a flexible framework for establishing national and regional targets, and it promotes the coherent and effective implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity's three objectives.

The adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Targets is a major milestone, as it sets a challenging and ambitious vision that biodiversity should be fully valued and integrated into national decision-making and that concrete actions must be taken to reverse biodiversity loss during this decade. It has been recognized that one of the main reasons that the global community failed to achieve the previous target of reducing biodiversity loss was that there has been insufficient integration of biodiversity issues into broader policies, strategies, programmes and actions, including decision-making in economic sectors. As a consequence, the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss were neither adequately addressed nor significantly reduced. Against this background, the Strategic Plan and Aichi Targets offer new opportunities going forward.

Based on contribution from the Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity and information found at www.cbd.int/sp/targets/default.shtml

A number of examples on how to bring about this change were shared during the Consultation, demonstrating that there is an existing base of evidence, knowledge and capacity that can be built upon to ensure that the future people want is within reach. Several global level agreements were highlighted including the MDGs, the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the UN Global Compact. At the national level several specific examples of integrated development solutions were also shared. For example, achievements by a number of countries supported by the joint UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative demonstrate that ‘triple wins’—economic, social and environmental—are indeed possible when integrating poverty and environmental priorities into national and sub-national development policy, planning and budget processes. At the local level examples of valuing indigenous knowledge and the positive role played by rural people who have lived for generations close to the land and nature were shared.²¹



Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of France for the Protection of the Planet, during an interview,
PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN
HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY

However, the full potential of these existing capacities and experiences often remains untapped. The participants in the Consultation pointed to several key areas where change is needed in order to address the barriers and drive the change needed to unlock this potential: **economic transformation, governance and accountability, local action and empowerment, and education.**

“ We need to look at the ecological crisis we are faced with not only as a constraint, but also as an opportunity to leap forward. The crisis should not drive people apart, nor make them more unequal. A new and shared vision of mankind shall help us meet this challenge. ”

Opening remarks at the Leadership Meeting in Costa Rica from Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy to the President of France for “Protection of the Planet,” France

21 Contribution to the e-discussion local action, innovation and empowerment by Judith A. Louis –Prince, International development policy analyst, World Association of Former United Nations Internes and Fellows (WAFUNIF), Trinidad & Tobago

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The Consultation highlighted consensus on the need for economic transformation and that the current growth-led economic model remains the most significant challenge to sustainable development. The discussions pointed to an overemphasis on economic growth, which has resulted in inequitable human development and can be detrimental to sustainable development.

Discussants debated the norms and values underpinning capitalist, socialist and communist systems as alternative economic models that could bring about greater equality. The discussion highlighted the interesting ideological viewpoints.

A thread throughout these discussions highlighted that both economic models and education systems need to integrate environmental sustainability more effectively in order to drive change. They also called for an economic model that would foster innovation and respond quickly to emerging challenges related to sustainability.

It was recognized that current, growth-led economic models generate environmental externalities that threaten the foundations of these models. Therefore, it is essential to adopt approaches that decouple economic growth from environmental degradation in order to shift to a sustainable global development trajectory. There is renewed optimism this is possible if urgent action is taken. The Consultation noted that there are experiences and key innovations that could help drive change, and that as part of the post-2015 agenda we need to urgently assess what is hindering the wider application of such approaches so that barriers can be removed and appropriate incentives put in place.

“ I believe that transforming the economy into one that delivers greater human well-being and happiness is possible and that doing this is also key to ending the global economic crisis: we can't achieve one without doing the other. ”

Contribution at the Leadership Meeting by Hunter Lovins,
President of Natural Capitalism Solutions, USA

The dialogue around economic transformation was wide-ranging throughout the course of the Consultation, but four key areas were highlighted to promote a transformative agenda: multi-dimensional measurements of growth and natural assets, inclusive green economy, private sector responsibility and sustainable consumption and production.

Many participants reflected on the notion that **multidimensional measurements of economic growth and natural assets** could be key drivers for transformation. As natural capital is traditionally unaccounted for in economic decision-making, it remains greatly undervalued and depleted at unsustainable rates. It was noted that a continued focus on economic growth as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will not support the changes that are needed to foster environmental sustainability. There was thus a call to move beyond GDP.

It was also suggested that public and private decision-making needs to have a stronger focus on valuing natural assets (e.g. natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services). It was noted that methods, tools and examples to accomplish this shift already exist, including applying integrated bottom-line approaches, natural capital accounting and payment for ecosystem services. However, some participants expressed concerns about placing an economic value on natural resources, highlighting the difficulties inherent to accounting for natural asset's intrinsic cultural and aesthetic value.

The role of governments to provide incentives for the private sector, consumers and investors to value environmental sustainability and natural assets was particularly highlighted. For example, because there is no such thing as a value-neutral tax, taxes serve as an incentive or a disincentive. Therefore, tax systems should be adjusted to ensure they are incentivizing sustainable behaviour.²²

Participants called for systemic change to transition to an **inclusive green economy**—a sustainable and equitable economy. It was noted that an inclusive green economy would need to be based on a premise of conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems to be considered 'green'.²³

The Business Case for Sustainability in the Private Sector: Learning from Business Leaders

The report 'Sustainability Pays: Studies That Prove the Business Case for Sustainability' provides an annotated list of studies that demonstrate the business case for sustainability. It highlights that leading companies will benefit by moving towards measuring performance using an integrated bottom line. This new measure places financial performance in the context of a firm's environmental and social impacts in order to more holistically gauge its competitiveness in the marketplace. An integrated bottom line recognizes the interdependent relation between business, environment and society and emphasizes that businesses gain by identifying shared opportunities to support all three.

The 2010 UN Global Compact - Accenture study 'A New Era of Sustainability: UN Global Compact-Accenture CEO Study' analysed CEO's perspectives of sustainability issues. The study included 766 respondents from 26 countries and a wide array of industries. It examined how CEOs' strategies are evolving, and the conditions necessary to shift the market towards greater social and environmental responsibility. Some of the findings include:

- Over 93 percent of CEOs see sustainability as crucial to their business' success, with 88 percent stating such issues are fully embedded into their strategy and operations.
- 72 percent of CEOs believe strengthening brand reputation and trust among consumers and governments is the "strongest motivator for taking action on sustainability."

Based on a contribution to the [e-discussion on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Hunter Lovins, President of Natural Capitalism Solutions, USA

22 Contribution to the [e-discussion on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Kevin Kromash, Corporate Sustainability Professional, Yale University, USA

23 Contribution to the [review of the draft final report](#) by the Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity



Video message from Cynthia Rosenzweig, Senior Research Scientist at NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. See more video messages from this consultation at <http://www.youtube.com/user/Environment2015>

PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP VIDEO INTERVIEW

economic transformation and transitioning to an inclusive green economy. Such an approach begins with dramatic increases in efficiency to buy time to implement more profoundly sustainable measures, then moves to redesign of how all goods and services are produced and delivered, and finally a transition to manage all institutions to be restorative of human and natural capital.²⁴

Private sector responsibility was noted as critical to driving the change needed. Globally interconnected markets and corporations powerfully influence natural resource decisions. All types

“The private sector is getting increasingly aware of its role for long term growth that is green and inclusive for sustainable development. It is providing new ideas in the fight to end global poverty by partnering with traditional development players....leveraging supply chains to create economic opportunity for the world’s poorest people, and incorporating social responsibility into their business practices.”

Contribution to e-discussion [on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by the Samer Khan, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Mewar University and Founder & Chief Technical Officer of Keynovations Inc., Oman & India

of businesses, including micro-, small, and medium enterprises are the essence of economic societies, creating jobs and providing households and public procurers with goods and services. Many participants called for corporate environmental and social responsibility. There was also a call for strengthening safeguards in the private sector in order to ensure protection of people and the planet.

It was also noted that businesses that are green champions and innovators are outperforming those that do not adapt quickly enough to the challenges of a changing environment and

24 Contribution to the [review of the draft final report](#) by Eleanor Blomstrom (Programme Coordinator at WEDO), Norma Maldonado (Assistant Director, Asociación Raxch’ och’ Oxlaju Aj), Sabine Bock (Director of the German office of WECF)

25 Contribution to the [e-discussion on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Patricia Almeida Ashley, Associate Professor at UFF, Brazil International Policy and Research Network on Territories of Social Responsibility - INTSR, Brazil

26 Contribution to the [e-discussion on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Hunter Lovins, President of Natural Capitalism Solutions, USA

resource scarcity. Business response to demands and consumers' expectations varies widely, creating new opportunities for change.²⁷ As the world evolves from private-sector accountability to private-sector engagement on matters of environmental sustainability, governments must provide incentives for environmentally responsible and growth-centric behaviours.²⁸ In particular, governments should create a business climate to encourage and support sustainability innovation and leadership in micro-, small and medium enterprises.

Related to the transition to an inclusive green economy, **sustainable consumption and production** were highlighted throughout the Consultation as key drivers of transformational change

The Economic Case for Public Investment in Natural Resources: Learning from the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative

In public decision-making, there is need for increased engagement with the ministries of finance in order to demonstrate how ecosystem services and natural resources benefit livelihoods and the economy and to highlight the potential development gains from supporting a transition to an inclusive, green economy. In Malawi, the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative supported an economic assessment of the natural resources sector. The Initiative quantified, in economic terms, the contribution of natural resources to the national economy. This raised the government's awareness of the value of investing public sector funds in areas of the economy dependent on these natural resources (e.g. in agriculture). Similar studies have been done in Burkina Faso and Rwanda.

Other tools include undertaking public expenditure reviews of the environment and natural resource management sectors. In several South-East Asian countries, the ministries of finance are undertaking climate and environment public expenditure and institutional reviews centred on analysing how climate change-related expenditures are being integrated into national budgetary processes. The aim is to secure a comprehensive, cross-sector approach that delivers a coherent response to climate change, involving both the public and private sectors, and including climate change adaptation initiatives at local, sub-national and national levels among others. In Nepal, the Ministry of Finance has created a new budget code on climate change in order to track and coordinate climate change financing.

Lastly, grounding initiatives on economic-environment and ecosystem wealth accounting with ministries of finance and planning can offer substantial traction, especially when working in close collaboration with the ministries of environment, water and agriculture. The Government of Botswana is making strides to strengthen its national accounting systems with the support of the UNDP-UNEP PEI and the World Bank WAVES programme.

Based on a [Discussion Note](#) from the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative

27 Contribution to the e-discussion [on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Hunter Lovins, President of Natural Capitalism Solutions, USA

28 Contribution to the e-discussion [on the role of the private sector and markets](#) by Chandrashekar Tamirisa, Global Sustainability Consultant, Transformations LLC, United States of America

towards an environmentally sustainable future. Participants noted that current consumption and production patterns are not sustainable. Innovation in production, such as cradle-to-cradle, circular economy and biomimicry, were highlighted as approaches that need to be promoted and mainstreamed. Additionally, consumer education and access to information is of paramount importance.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Governance shortcomings emerged as a significant barrier to achieving environmental sustainability. For participants in the Consultation, environmental damage was viewed as often being related to corruption, inadequate legislation, dysfunctional institutions, poor enforcement of existing legislation, insufficient information and inappropriate and incomplete data informing ineffective policies and plans. However, governance was also seen as fundamental to driving transformational change, including through strengthened institutions, rule of law, transparency and accountability, social and environmental justice and peace and security.

“**Successful advances in any sustainable development undertaking require good governance, rule of law and transparency with engagement of civil society.**”

Contribution to the e-discussion on framing environmental sustainability in post-2015 by Linda Ghanimé, Environment and Development Consultant, Canada

Strengthened institutions and capacities across all levels are needed to provide an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance and engagement to support effective and integrated decision-making. Methods include incentives for collective action, finance mechanisms that support integrated approaches and capacity building.

“Local civil society institutions provide entry points for development interventions to reach typically marginalized constituents, including women, indigenous peoples, youth, and those prejudiced against on the basis of geography, caste, or ethnicity.” (Discussion Note submitted by the Global Environment Fund Small Grants Programme, UNDP-GEF Communities, Resilience and Sustainability, and Equator Initiative) The **rule of law** and the role of governments in setting

“**In the interest of fairness and equity, governments need to agree on an international regulatory framework that would establish minimum social and environmental standards, ensure that corporations pay their fair share of taxes, prevent companies becoming so large that they have a monopoly position and are more powerful than governments, or too big to fail.**”

Contribution to the e-discussion on the role of the private sector and markets by Arthur Lyon Dahl, President, International Environment Forum, Switzerland



Briefing for Member States and civil society on initial results from the Thematic Consultation, 19 April 2013, New York. PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP/EVA GURRIA

a policy and regulatory frameworks with clear rules were also identified as fundamental ingredients of success. Acceptable social and environmental standards for the private sector should be set and enforced at the local, national, regional and global levels. Many participants advocated for a global mechanism that could establish, advocate and enforce minimum social and environmental standards. In particular, the need for enforcement of environmental standards related to trade and commerce was highlighted. Environmental chapters of trade agreements are often not enforced and not linked to binding global legislation, which presents a key challenge to achieving an environmentally sustainable future.²⁹

Additionally, legal empowerment of the poor is necessary to ensure access to natural resources and land rights. It was suggested that governments could proactively invest in land and resource tenure for local communities as a pre-emptive measure to secure food, water and resources for the communities.

“ In the midst of record commodity prices and record corporate profits, the gap is growing between industrialists and market speculators on the one hand, and rural communities on the other, who live on a treasure of natural assets but are often excluded from benefits while suffering the impacts of toxicity and the rise of conflict. ”

Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability, human rights and peace and security by Dr. Kishan Khoday, Practice Leader for Energy & Environment, UNDP Regional Center in Cairo

²⁹ Contribution to the review of the draft final report by Eleanor Blomstrom (Programme Coordinator at WEDO), Norma Maldondo (Assistant Director, Asociación Raxch' och' Oxlaju Aj), Sabine Bock (Director of the German office of WECF)

Related to this was a strong call for full **transparency and accountability** in decision-making at all levels, with specific reference to natural resource management and extraction, trade and commerce. Access to information and public disclosure was seen as critical not only to enable stakeholders to engage in decision-making, but also to inform individual decisions and behaviour (e.g. empowering consumers with information on products).

Calls for **social and environmental justice** and legal empowerment/remedies were repeatedly made during the Consultation. Several participants suggested the need for a higher-level overseeing body, such as an international criminal court for environmental crimes, international codes of conduct (e.g. on water issues), a global bill of rights supported by international legal mechanisms and global watchdogs, to supervise the state of the environment and to ensure equitable distribution of environmental resources. These would enable civil society to hold the public and private sector accountable for environmental impacts, affecting their lives, livelihoods and health. Additionally, participants suggested strengthening legal empowerment for local communities through the establishment of local environmental courts.

Within the context of social and environmental justice, linkages with environmental sustainability and the role of governance in safeguarding **peace and security** were brought up several times throughout the Consultation.

“It is obvious that a single way to global sustainable development does not exist. Therefore, global guidelines and frameworks must show certain flexibility to allow each country, region or community to plan and execute their development activities according to their own local-specific characteristics, needs and expectations... However, it is also necessary to provide a set of global guiding principles, based upon international agreements that will help those communities engage in a sustainable development deeply rooted on continuous improvement and conservation of their stock of natural capital.”

Opening speech at the Leadership Meeting in Costa Rica by
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, Carlos Roverssi



Carlos Roverssi,
Ministry of Foreign
Affairs, Costa Rica,
Nicolas Hulot, Special
Envoy of the President
of the Republic of
France for the
Protection of the Planet,
and Yoriko Yasukawa,
UN Resident
Coordinator, Costa Rica
PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH
NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN
HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST
2015/SUSTAINABILITY

LOCAL ACTION AND EMPOWERMENT

There was widespread agreement that development from within local communities is essential to securing environmental sustainability (and sustainable development more broadly). It was also recognized that local civil society and community groups can deliver a wide range of benefits for people and nature if empowered to manage ecosystems and natural resources. These benefits include jobs, food security, increased household income, biodiversity conservation and healthier ecosystems. There is a diversity of evidence, responses and approaches at the local level demonstrating this. Yet the linkages between global, regional, national and local action are not always made and capacities at the local level often remain a constraint. Therefore, local action was identified as a key area with unrealized potential to drive transformational change at a much broader scale. The Consultation highlighted several areas to help drive this transformation, including through linking local, national, regional and global levels, empowering communities and scaling up local action.

“Local people in remote and biodiversity rich areas often have different needs, priorities, cultural requirements, attachment to the land and ecosystems. The welfare schemes may not be aligned with their needs as they are often not at the dialogue table with the policy makers. They do not often have resources or means to argue their case for equitable and sustainable development.”

Discussion Note submitted by Dr. Harpinder Sandhu, Research Fellow, School of the Environment, Flinders University, Australia

The importance of establishing **linkages between local, national, regional and global** levels, through both top-down and bottom-up approaches was noted in the Consultation. To do this, participants suggested that it is imperative for international organizations to include a local agenda in all development initiatives. They also suggested that national governments and intergovernmental institutions provide incentives for the private sector to work with local communities in order to establish a cohesive and locally supportive economy.

In order to successfully understand local communities and their needs, participants warned of the danger of attributing blanket analysis to situations, indicating that international and national institutions need to consider local context and specificity.

Linkages between local and global levels are often constrained by capacity and the lack of local-level power and funding. Additionally, local participation is often seen merely as a means of improving a project's efficiency and/or effectiveness rather than as a long-term process of social transformation and empowerment.³⁰ The importance of **empowering communities, and particularly those whose voices are not heard**, was strongly advocated for throughout the Consultation. Genuine empowerment can only happen if local communities have the capacity,

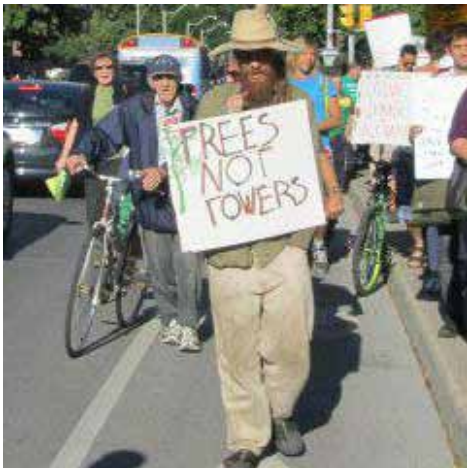
30 Discussion Note submitted by the Global Environment Fund Small Grants Programme, UNDP-GEF Communities, Resilience and Sustainability, and Equator Initiative

“Need to bring the voice of the voiceless to shape an agenda for the future.”

Statement from video message from Fatima Ahmed, Founder and President, Zenab for Women in Development, Sudan

ability and means to engage in effective and binding decision-making. In order to identify the more equitable, sustainable and resilient approaches to development, it is necessary to pay particular attention to marginalized groups, such the poor, women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and youth. Empowerment includes universal access to health services, (including rights-based sexual and reproductive health services), and access to education.

Several participants also highlighted that resources to support community-based institutions were necessary to empower the linkages between global sustainable development goals and local priorities. On the financial side, many participants argued that there are simply not enough financing mechanisms for local communities, nor is there easy access to those that exist. Hence, they asked for increased accessibility and availability of finance (e.g. small grants) for local community usage towards action. Beyond availability and accessibility, participants highlighted that the establishment of additional longer-term funding is imperative to ensuring the sustainability of local community initiatives.



Daniel Johnson, Occupy Movement Organizer, Canada, Submission to Environmental Sustainability Consultation Photo Campaign.

Community programmes that build on traditional knowledge and technologies and integrate human rights- and ecosystem-based approaches to address local livelihoods and environmental problems were identified as more likely to succeed. An increasing trend towards devolution of environmental management to communities was identified as yielding positive results.³¹ Local ecosystem-based initiatives have proven to be highly scalable and effective in supporting national government efforts to advance people-centred development solutions and to add value to the rural development model. Furthermore, local civil society groups engaged in managing ecosystems and natural resources have achieved development benefits extending well beyond environmental conservation.

Documenting and sharing best practices and lessons learnt is essential if such positive experiences are to be replicated and scaled up.³² In this regard, the importance of **scaling up and learning from local innovation** was frequently introduced in the discussion, which converged

31 Contribution to the e-discussion on environmental sustainability and poverty by Ashish Kothari, Researcher activist, Kalpavriksh and ICCA Consortium, India

32 Contribution to the e-discussion on local action, innovation and empowerment by Judith A. Louis –Prince, International development policy analyst, World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows (WAFUNIF), Trinidad & Tobago

around three main points to address it. The first point was the need for a case-by-case approach to ensure an appropriate consideration of context. The second point was the necessity to explicitly consider the notion of scale in all standard development processes. The third point was that national governments should work with local communities (and the scale of the community's choosing) in order to successfully create development goals and action plans. These plans can be submitted to intergovernmental and international institutions to both monitor and support communities and governments.



Ivonne Studer, AkzoNobel Industrial Coatings, Mexico (right)

PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN
[HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)

Several approaches to **measuring local participation and empowerment** were considered by discussants when they reflected on tools and indicators to measure sustainable development. For participation, discussants suggested a continuous process of assessment to analyse stakeholders, measure considerations of capital and quantify the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Regarding empowerment, participants suggested local empowerment could be measured in two different ways: by using quantitative and qualitative data (such as indicators of environmental health or assessments of the participation of local communities) and by measuring government support towards local processes.

“Community-based natural resource management can facilitate the use of local knowledge in designing plans and policies for a more sustainable use of the natural capital, as well as help empower, educate and integrate local and indigenous people in the wider society, bringing long-term social and economic benefits.”

Contribution to the [e-discussion on local action, innovation and empowerment](#) by WWF

EDUCATION

Quality and inclusive education was deemed to be one of the most powerful tools at hand to drive the transformational changes necessary for sustainable development, and thus environmental sustainability. Ultimately, the discourse on education focussed on the need to induce behavioural change that can lead to broader paradigm shifts and ultimately drive transfor-

mational change. In education for sustainable development, the behaviours to be shaped reflect a value and conservation of the environment and resilience to environmental risks and climate change.

By empowering citizens, workers and consumers to make informed decisions, education can contribute to making individuals and communities not only responsive to, and prepared for, current and emerging challenges, but also a proactive force in triggering market and political pressures to move the sustainable development agenda forward.

As a critical enabler for **behavioural change**, it was clear to participants that education

should have a broader focus than just on formal school-based education. It was recommended that education be expanded beyond the classroom to include skills relevant to everyday life in the context of environmental sustainability. The Consultation noted that most countries' education systems are constrained by the dominant political system. The results frequently exacerbate inequalities in gender, class and age. A paradigm shift would create global citizens by expanding education beyond formal systems to include informal and non-formal education

“**Education systems should provide hands on experience which would lead to behavior change...The learning process should be flexible, adaptive and link global and local perspective. Education systems that encourage development of competency (active handling of knowledge for a certain purpose) is needed for environmental sustainability.**”

Contribution to the e-discussion on education for sustainable development by Centre for Environment Education, India

“**People are always tempted to take the easy choice available to them. In the case of environmental sustainability, the sustainable path isn't always the easiest one. Therefore, unless individuals truly understand the implications of not taking a sustainable route, environmental sustainability will always be seen as a 'future we want' rather than a 'future we have'...Clearly, further dialogue is needed around the best way forward in educating present and future generations.**”

Contribution to the e-discussion on consensus and divergence by Shaleeka Abeygunasekera, World Board Member, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, Sri Lanka

and would change the curricula to reflect the diversity of development priorities. Additional emphasis was considered necessary to teach good citizenship with students seeing themselves as part of the solution to local and global environmental challenges. Indeed, part of the emphasis on education was to better align the global population's realisation of the limits of our planet and the need for action within planetary boundaries.

Many participants also suggested that to effectively change behaviours (e.g. a revised diet based on less resource-intensive or polluting foods), the scope of education should not only focus on intellectual and technological growth, but also should be rooted in **principles, ethics and values** that embody the importance of the environment, promote collaboration and are free of elitism, classism, sexism and other forms of exclusion and oppression.

Another characteristic of education for sustainable development identified by participants, in addition to its flexibility, was its **cross-sectoral** nature. Moreover, as sustainable development challenges are complex and interconnected, an interdisciplinary approach is needed to address them. It is therefore crucial to incorporate education for sustainable development into other sectors such as economics, business management, politics and health.

In order for the poor and vulnerable to escape intergenerational poverty, education needs to increase access to all and **encourage resiliency and local innovation** in order to ensure



Video message from Fred Boltz, Conservation International.
PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP VIDEO INTERVIEW

“Information is one of the weapons that can be used to fight poverty and inequalities. There is a need to increase accessibility to information to people in the developing country.”

Contribution to the e-discussion on addressing development challenges in a changing world by Nabulime Mastulah, Director of CAGIEA, Uganda

productivity and upward social and economic mobility. Skills that need to be prioritized include critical thinking and innovation. Ultimately, education should contribute to driving innovation, appropriate technology, adaptation and locally-suited solutions to sustainability problems. In this regard, the Consultation underscored the need to revitalize environmental education in local communities. Participants highlighted that with a relevant and informative ecological education, local populations can enhance their resiliency through a better understanding the threats to their environment. This will enable them to take more strategic actions to help preserve the health of their community and local resources. A specific suggestion was to incorporate community-based natural resource management into local environmental education curricula. Other suggestions included having a peer-to-peer learning component across communities, which could then act as a scaling up tool.

What does this mean for the post-2015 agenda?

Governments have the opportunity to set an ambitious global agenda that helps drive the urgent change needed for an environmentally sustainable future.



Final Comments by Javier Diaz, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Costa Rica, Co-Chair, Veerle Vandeweerd, Jean Baptiste Chauvin, French Ambassador to Costa Rica, at the Leadership Meeting. PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST2015/SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)

A vision for the future people want has been shared and there is consensus that achieving it requires environmental sustainability to be fully embedded in the post-2015 agenda. From the many inputs, it was possible to identify at least four fundamental principles that bind together human development and environmental sustainability and will thus need to underpin the post-2015 agenda:

- **Integrated development** that simultaneously advances multiple benefits across the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, environmental, and economic) ensures that poverty eradication and environmental sustainability go hand-in-hand;
- **Equality** in relation to access to natural resources and the benefits of a healthy environment as well as engagement in related decision-making processes is fundamental for both environmental sustainability and human development;
- A **human rights**-based approach to environmental sustainability recognizes that the realization of human rights depends on a healthy environment; and
- The **resilience** of communities to resist tomorrow's shocks without reversing today's achievements in human well-being depends on the vital role of natural resources and ecosystems.

It will take substantial ambition to realize this common vision and to overcome the many critical issues that were raised, from the MDG shortcomings to the growing challenges of unprecedented scale and impact. Moreover, inputs to the Consultation exhibited a profound sense of urgency for the next agenda to be inspiring and fully inclusive.

Incremental, slow changes to development will not suffice; discussants instead called for transformational change. Participants identified the following four areas where change is needed in



Norma Maldonado, Asociacion Raxch'och' Oxlaju Aj.

PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST 2015/ SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)



Myrna Cunningham Kain, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

PHOTO CREDIT: IISD EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/POST 2015/ SUSTAINABILITY](http://www.iisd.ca/post2015/sustainability)

order to address the barriers and to unlock this potential:

- **Economic transformation:** The current growth-led economic model has to transform in order to redress environmental and social challenges. This entails reconsidering how we measure progress and value natural assets. The private sector needs to recognize that sustainability is good business and commit to strengthening environmental and social responsibility. There was a call to transition to an inclusive, green economy with sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **Governance and accountability:** Governments need to create an enabling framework that promotes the cross-sectoral integration of environmental and social values, strengthening institutions and ensuring transparency. Social and environmental justice and legal empowerment are needed to enable civil society to hold the public and private sector accountable for environmental impacts, affecting their lives, livelihoods and health.
- **Local action and empowerment:** Marginalized and traditionally disempowered communities, notably vulnerable groups such as women, children and indigenous communities, need to have access to the tools (e.g. education, resources and information) necessary to achieving transformational change—change that equitably reflects local realities and needs.
- **Education:** Education was deemed to be one of the most powerful tools at hand to drive the transformational changes necessary for sustainable development, but to realize this potential education systems need to be flexible, culturally sensitive, relevant and suited to changing people's values and behaviours.

To address the global challenges we face, all countries must embrace responsibilities and ownership. Participants agreed that the post-2015 agenda needs to be a universal one: action and goals will be needed in all countries, not just developing countries, should be inclusive rather than exclusive and should reflect diverse development pathways and implementation capacities. The challenge then lies in contextualizing environmental sustainability and making the post-2015 agenda flexible so that it addresses needs across countries and ensures that the common vision can translate into collective action.

The results of this global consultation make an important contribution to laying the conceptual groundwork needed to ensure that environmental sustainability is fully embedded in the post-2015 agenda, both as a cross-cutting issue and as a development priority to be reflected in the next set of goals, targets and indicators. Examples shared from around the world have helped unpack and contextualize the linkages between environmental sustainability and other development objectives, specifically providing insights into key issues, including:



Video message from Pascal Girot, CARE International.
PHOTO CREDIT: UNDP VIDEO INTERVIEW

- The increasing threats to development from climate change, which many viewed as a source of instability that will lead to resource scarcity, mass migration, disruption of livelihoods and production, requiring action to shift towards low-emission development including through education and economic transformation;
- Population dynamics including rural-urban migration and increasing urbanization requires a focus on healthy urban environments and action on slum dwelling, sustainable transport, clean air and green space;
- The importance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity for human well-being and resilience (particularly to reduce the vulnerability of those living in poverty), requiring urgent action;
- The growing challenge of food and water insecurity and the need for action on sustainable food production and consumption;
- The rights of poor and vulnerable groups to secure access to natural resources and the benefits of a healthy environment requiring strong social and environmental justice, access to information and legal empowerment;
- Linkages between environment and health, including the need for action on pollution and environmental degradation and investing in human health; and
- The centrality of gender equality for environmental sustainability and the need to integrate gender perspectives into decision-making at all levels and empowering women through economic and educational opportunities.

Other issues, such as states' common but differentiated responsibilities, financing and means of implementation, the role and impact of trade, financial markets and others need further discussion and clarification before a comprehensive agenda can be identified. These are daunting challenges that cannot be solved by member states acting alone. Fortunately, the process made it clear that there is renewed optimism and that governments can count on civil society to be an active partner in shaping and implementing the post-2015 development agenda. The process elicited unprecedented levels of participation in the World We Want consultations, demonstrating that people from around the globe want to work alongside governments to make the post-2015 agenda reflective of their needs and aspirations and drive the collective action that is urgently called for.



“ In the world we want, poverty has been eradicated and nature thrives; every woman, man, boy and girl, now and in the future can equally fulfil their rights and have sustainable, resilient, livelihoods that operate within planetary boundaries. ”

Climate Action Network-International and Beyond 2015 representing over 850 NGOs worldwide



www.worldwewant2015.org/sustainability

