



HAND - ASSOCIATION OF NGOs FOR DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID

MTVSZ - NATIONAL SOCIETY OF CONSERVATIONISTS - FRIENDS OF THE EARTH HUNGARY

AGENDA 2030:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

PROPOSALS

FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION IN HUNGARY

September 2015

The new programme of international cooperation for sustainable development defines the lines of action, goals and tasks of international cooperation required from every country in the world to achieve these goals. Based on the programme entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Hungary needs to revise and redefine what needs to be done in the fields of sustainable development and participation in international cooperation in this context. At the international and national levels alike, the relevant goals may only be defined and reached through effective cooperation between government agencies and non-governmental organizations. In this spirit, the National Society of Conservationists – Friends of the Earth Hungary and HAND Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid initiated dialogue among Hungarian NGOs working on these issues with a view to draft preliminary proposals to guide domestic implementation following the formal adoption of the international programme.

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Beyond2015

Campaigning for a global development framework
after the Millennium Development Goals



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1. Transforming our World: The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

From 25 to 27 September 2015, a level high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly was held in New York, dedicated to the concluding debate and adoption of a new global cooperation programme. The draft of the document entitled ***Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*** has already been approved by governmental delegations at the expert level; representatives of various non-governmental organizations have also had the opportunity to participate in the debates concerning the draft. At the September conference, Heads of State and Government propounded their views on the major global problems they wished to contribute to solving by means of the programme to be adopted. Following them, heads of dedicated UN agencies, as well as leaders of other international organizations took the floor.

Significant efforts have been made in the past to create societies and to promote international cooperation based on the principles of sustainability, but no plan or programme managed to garner the necessary determination, along with the broad political and popular support and the tools required to realize these ambitions. The international programme to be adopted, along with the sustainable development goals forming its backbone, attest the great desire of those present to have a successful future too.

In recent decades, ***international development cooperation and sustainable development cooperation were carried out side by side, as parallel activities***. The objectives and programmes for these areas were approved for longer periods on the occasion of major conferences. The primary objective of development programs was to improve the standard of living in less developed countries, overcoming deep poverty, as well as the creation of decent living conditions.

The programmes adopted in the spirit of this objective, but producing rather limited results, entitled "UN Development Decade", were replaced from 2000 by the programme characterized by the ***Millennium Development Goals***: the main objective of the cooperation period from 2000 to 2015 was the reduction of the proportion of the world population living in poverty and suffering from hunger. Taking into account the good and bad experiences accumulated so far, planning for development cooperation for the post-2015 period began two years ago.

Furthermore, another collaborative process was launched based on the concept of sustainable development, especially focussing on the need to take the environmental aspects of development into account. The 1992 *Environment and Development* summit was a decisive event, adopting the global sustainable development programme entitled ***Agenda 21***. Twenty years later, the UN's follow-up conference was less expansive in terms of the goals adopted, mostly focusing on the green economy, but managed to bring consensus that there is a need to start developing common global goals for sustainable development. Thus began the future-planning exercise for the cooperation effort conceived as sustainable development.

The world had to wait a long time until a unified approach was worked out to address the ever increasing number of global problems. It took a number of decades for UN member states to agree on the need to adopt a single coherent programme. This wasn't achieved until September 2013..

In addition to determining the general framework for cooperation in the post-2015 period, a separate body was set up to elaborate the Sustainable Development Goals. Building on the results of these two branches of planning, the draft document mentioned above, entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was born. By establishing a new joint programme, the international community intends to develop and implement an action-based, complex, while at the same time concise strategic plan providing an overarching framework in a variety of fields, pointing the way towards achieving sustainable development. This also calls for an appropriate interpretation and integration of the concept of sustainability in all policy domains, as well as the strengthening the coherence between policies so that they can contribute to the same overall objective through diverse means.

In this context, a third international programme should also be mentioned. Providing financial support for developing countries has always been one of the central instruments of international development cooperation. An international mechanism, referred to as **Financing for Development**, was established in 2002. An intervention programme was adopted in order to control its operation in 2015 July, considered as the chief international framework for the implementation of development and sustainable development tasks after 2015.

The programme entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* centres around the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the specific, often quantified targets and tasks. The programme is universal in the sense that it includes a general target system that is valid for all countries, but in addition to these national goals, it also shows how to support the less developed countries. Based on the latter, the programme can be considered as both a renewal and joint continuation of previous sustainable development and international development cooperation programs.

In the document to be adopted, the **Sustainable Development Goals** include the following topics: (1) the eradication of poverty, (2) the elimination of hunger, (3) ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing (4) ensuring universally accessible education, (5) achieving gender equality, (6) access to water and sanitation, (7) access to sustainable energy, (8) promoting sustained economic growth and full employment, (9) the appropriate infrastructure and sustainable industrialization, (10) reducing inequalities (11) making cities and human settlements sustainable, (12) sustainable consumption and production systems, (13) combatting climate change and its effects, (14) the sustainable use of marine resources, (15) sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and forests, combatting desertification, halting land degradation and biodiversity loss, (16) creating peaceful and inclusive societies and building effective institutions, (17) strengthening the means of implementation and global partnership. The individual goals include targets that break down the general courses of action formulated in the objectives into specific, often quantified tasks.

2. Evaluating the Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

At long last, the new international programme finally combines the tools and objectives of two areas of cooperation, i.e., international development and sustainable development, which used to be not only separate domains, but would often be at odds with each other. Thus, in contrast with previous programmes of development cooperation, the present programme takes over the more comprehensive approach of the sustainable development conception, and covers not only assistance to be provided to less developed countries, but also provides objectives and defines them for every country and region. Thus, the new programme is imbued with the notion of “universality”, both regarding the universal global vision formulated within it and regarding also the specific sustainable development goals with the objective that mankind in general and each society may be able to create a safe, equal and sustainable place for itself on this planet. Over and beyond these noble ideals, however, severe concerns can also be raised. Part of these have to do with fundamental problems of previous international development and sustainable development cooperation, while others more specifically pertain to the programme about to be approved.

A number of fundamental critical points can be formulated in connection with the collaboration efforts developed over the previous decades, along with their programmes, objectives and tools. Furthermore, mention should be made of certain requirements they have failed to properly address.

Instead of trying to find solutions for separate and isolated problems, as the programme does in its current form, solutions should be sought at the systems level, in the context of the interconnectedness of development and its environment. As long as the root cause of a problem subsists, it will keep regenerating the problem, and so long as only the symptoms are addressed instead of the underlying cause, our mistakes will be recreated in bulk. Separating goals necessarily leads to treating problems in ways that fail to be directed at the causes, as the sector involved attempts to solve the problems created in the frame of reference of its own logic, from the inside, so to speak, without either being able or willing to rise above its own perspective. This calls for a **systems-based approach** on the given issue as well. Furthermore, one should equally realize that no problem can be properly treated without altering the **driving forces** that created it (social causal factors such as our knowledge, approach, regulations, the structure of production and consumption, the way we satisfy our needs etc.)

Knowledge and morality must go hand in hand for the sake of sustainability. Morals must guide knowledge, and when they fail to do so, the latter turns into a destructive force. Knowledge guided by morality is wisdom. This is clearly observed at the beginning of the 21st century, at a time when we try to mobilize even more knowledge to solve our problems, though what really is required is wisdom. Sustainable societies not only call for more and better technology, but also their wise use, moderation, justice, faith, recreating love and trust between people, appreciation of the values of the environment and their sustainable use. The distorted values of society are both cause and consequence of the present institutional system, which also define the social fabric. The operating institutions achieve their impact through mechanisms trapping citizens and politicians alike, although the latter should be the ones to recognize and change the socially and environmentally destructive effect of the mechanisms in operation.

Mankind has exceeded the carrying capacity of our planet. The inequalities of distribution accentuate the vulnerability of certain groups, even entire societies. What one can say for sure is that in terms of our current technical knowledge, the planet cannot sustain a population that has already exceeded seven billion people. It is from feedback provided by the ecosystems or the biosphere that one learns

about surpassing local or global carrying capacity, albeit usually only in retrospect, when degradation has become obvious. Given that the signs of environmental decay can be observed day by day, we can be sure that we exceed this carrying capacity. Thus, the objectives of each and every programme should include decreasing resource use and using resources carefully over extended periods. This applies to programmes having to do with sustainable production and consumption patterns, as well the reduction of global inequalities in a conscious and systematic manner.

In the context of the new UN programme, one can highlight a number of essential problems, some of them entailed by the principles outlined above.

Without **identifying and addressing the driving forces** behind the processes which the programme intends to treat, one cannot expect good and lasting solutions. This also holds for severe social problems and environmental problems of global significance. The synergy created by merging the international development and sustainable development goals in a single programme remains limited, because certain contradictions now only raise their heads within the bounds of a single programme. One example is the goal promoting “classic” economic growth, to which is opposed the objective calling for a reduction of natural resource use along with the transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

A deficiency of the programme draft is that it fails to take the clashes among individual objectives or conflicting preconditions seriously. For example, the energy policy goal – as it has been the case at the level of individual countries and internationally as well – does not pay sufficient attention to the problems generated by the related environmental pollution, arising especially from access to and use of non-renewable resources. These sustainability-related contradictions can be found over many areas from infrastructural development to transportation.

These contradictions should be at the heart of policy integration, in line with the requirements of sustainable development in the implementation of the programme and the achievement of objectives, but according to a number of critical voices, to some extent, it is not likely that it will in fact be possible to make “peace” between the goals that are in conflict. .

In itself, supporting developing countries with the tools of development policy, with the objective of fostering their development – according to the present programme, encompassing their sustainable development – has not so far been successful either. When making agricultural, energy and trade policy decisions, and concerning their **policies and measures in general, developed countries should consider their potential impact on the developing world.** The governments of developed countries will spend billions labelled as international development cooperation in vain, if they end up destroying the livelihoods of millions of poor people by means of domestic policy decisions. Among other things, the creation of this coherence will be necessary with the new international programme and the development framework encompassed within it. This will also be a great challenge for developed countries.

3. The most important domestic tasks related to the Agenda?

The Agenda defines specific target areas and objectives that are vital to the sustainable development of each country. For fine-tuning and adopting these targets at the national level, it is first of all necessary to fulfil the essential requirements of sustainable development. Some of the most critical requirements are highlighted below.

The foundational requirement of the eradication of poverty is for all to **have equal access to the conditions of income generation**, such as natural resources, knowledge, information, the market, and affordable credit. We must move towards community ownership of natural resources, to increase the share of community ownership of natural resources, also encompassing agricultural land and forests. The state should provide regulation for the sustainable use of resources, while local communities should accordingly act as careful and responsible administrators thereof.

It is impossible to preserve the integrity of natural resources in Hungary at current levels of resource use. Sustainable systems of production and consumption can only be achieved by means of **restricting the use of natural resources**, that is, only if the total material, energy and land use is continuously curbed. We need economic and legal regulation that can, at first, maximize resource use at current levels, and then reduce levels in a continuous manner. Regulation should promote innovation in support of resource efficiency.

There is a need to support local initiatives that are based on the cooperation of local communities, producing goods and services through efficiently managing and safeguarding local knowledge and local resources, primarily producing for the local markets and keeping profits local. This means establishing and reinforcing local **community economies**. In order to support these initiatives, one should promote the development of interest-free alternatives to money that will support keeping profits local as well as providing affordable credit for the economy to run.

The role of local communities in decision-making should be increased. At the heart of the social structure closely linked to sustainable development lies transforming present monolithic systems into a diverse system organized bottom-up from small social and economic units. **Applying the principle of subsidiarity** will not solve every problem of our communities, but is a step in the right direction. In order for this principle to be realized, there is a need to ease off centralized control, to introduce local control over local values, to democratize public life at the local level. The trends that have led to throttling life in rural areas and small communities need to be reversed. The role of morality and of sustainability awareness need to be reinforced in society and in the economy. Self-organizing groups of civil society and the churches need to be reinforced so that they can increase trust within societies, and foster lifestyles transcending material values, rooted in restraint, solidarity, respect for nature and the interests of future generations.

Public funds and state development resources should only be **used to finance activities and projects** that cause no harm in the social and environmental systems. Harmful subsidies must be abolished, including support for fossil energy use. Large scale funding for agriculture must also be restructured so as to promote activities and practices complying with ecological conditions (protection of the soil and biological diversity) and manual work. Development policy must strive to ensure respect for environmental considerations, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

A systems-based approach also requires **reforming education**, as the world cannot be mapped from information fragmented and broken up into disciplinary compartments. The amount of analytical

information offered is overwhelming, while exploring correlations and relationships, followed by understanding and applying them, receive insufficient emphasis. The time of specialized knowledge in isolation, experts, policies and professional institutions each avoiding co-operation, regulations only addressing isolated problems and schools dividing unified knowledge into fragmented school subjects is over. Sustainable society needs wise people who can think in terms of systems, able to explore the interconnectedness of things and to adapt their actions accordingly.

The specific objectives and targets of the Agenda can be implemented in the domestic context according to these fundamental principles and lines of action serving sustainable development. In certain cases, this calls for a revision of existing strategies and programmes, expanding them, and establishing a clear coherence among them, while in other cases, both the direction and the method of the solution offered should be radically reconsidered.

First of all, it should be clarified to what extent does the **National Framework Strategy for Sustainable Development** contain the system of Sustainable Development Objectives. This and other domestic strategies should be adapted to the system of objectives approved by the UN according to the principles described above. It is especially important to revise the system of subventions in Hungary, including EU funds and development financing.

In the course of adapting and implementing the Agenda, significant changes must be realized in order to create **policy coherence for development**. More specific goals need to be formulated than the ones currently defined. These need to be complemented by specific action plans that can be achieved yearly, while planning needs to be stricter than ever.

Given that all these tasks have an impact on governmental bodies and NGOs, representatives of the civil sector call for establishing partnership with all advocacy organizations. The governmental bodies should thus formulate the processes of participation and dialogue, including Civil Society Organizations and other relevant actors already at the stage of planning for implementation and government accountability (that is, at the earliest stages), followed by the stages of implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation. Given that implementing domestic sustainable development goals and international development tasks, related to the Agenda, exceeds the capacities of governmental institutions in any case, there is need to strongly rely on the resources of the private sector and of NGOs.

Appropriate indicators and methodologies need to be adopted for planning documentation that needs to go with each and every sustainable development objective and target. The same holds for monitoring progress, evaluation, and creating the personal, material and professional conditions required.

There is need to place much greater emphasis on **awareness raising** of sustainable development, along with education on global issues and interconnections. The amount of resources allocated needs to be multiplied. This will not only promote an understanding of sustainable development, the related global and domestic problems, identification with sustainability as a cause, as well as strengthening social support for Hungary taking action on the global stage, but can also increase the potential for citizens taking active responsibility.

4. The main domestic tasks related to international development cooperation

The new international programme defines the tasks within the scope of international development cooperation for each Sustainable Development Goal related to each topic area. Other provisions of the Programme also refer to the elements, objectives, and, essentially, the contribution to the Official development assistance. The assessment of the domestic situation should start, first and foremost, with the general criticism of the main outline of ***the concept and practice of international development cooperation*** as it has been developed and established in Hungary.

Within the framework of this cooperation, the developed countries have in fact contributed to spreading their own ***unsustainable economic and social model even wider***. By relocating their industrial production in developing countries, on the other hand, they placed the negative environmental and social impacts on the global environment. The development of cooperation resources should not serve narrow individual and national economic interests, or the transmission of unsustainable production and consumption patterns from developed countries to the rest of the world. On the contrary, they should strengthen the identity of local communities, their social self-governance, their ability to retain their own economic self-reliance, food sovereignty and self-determination.

In addition to international development cooperation, one should specifically address the problems related to ***taxation***. The related set of issues resulted in an essentially unresolvable debate during the preparation of the new action programme *Financing for Development*. Due to the problems engendered by global scale tax evasion, the amount of money that is illegally leaking out from developing countries is significantly higher than the aid received by these countries. The competition between countries to decrease taxes results in very few winners, while the number of people ending up as losers may amount to billions. The complicated new legislation designed to prevent tax fraud can mostly be exploited by the companies best armed with information and resources. Instead of competition, cooperation should be given priority also in the area of taxation, in the form of a more uniform, simpler and more transparent tax system, which does not make companies interested in playing countries and various social groups against each other.

The established ***global trade regime***, along with the regime of trade cooperation between the developed countries it encompasses, is significantly inconsistent with the concept of sustainable development. Furthermore, we have to be severely critical of the activities of the World Trade Organization, as well as the bilateral and regional free trade agreements, along with the proposed transatlantic agreements (TTIP , CETA). Several non-governmental organizations warned that the TTIP in general and the EU's trade and investment policy is at odds with the objectives of the EU for poverty eradication, as well as with creating policy coherence for international development at the EU level.

Based on the new Agenda and taking into account the critical remarks described above, the **domestic practices, strategies and means of implementation of international development cooperation** need to be re-evaluated and readjusted.

The relevant national strategy in force is in harmony with the founding principles of the Agenda at the level of the principles described and adopted. It also demonstrates the intention to further enrich and deepen the constructive role Hungary played in placing international development cooperation on new foundations by taking specific action and measures in the future. Unfortunately, however, it fails to name any of these particulars in the remainder of the text. The directions for intervention as identified by this strategy – institutional development, tasks to be done in certain economic sectors

(the green economy, etc.), human capacity building (education etc.) practically cover all the areas determined by the specific Sustainable Development goals. As a consequence, it would not be impossible to “read” the new objectives into the Hungarian priorities.

Once this point is duly considered, the revision of the governmental strategy adopted in 2014 becomes necessary in the context of the new, or modified domestic objectives to be defined based on the international programme. The strategy itself stipulates a half-time revision in 2017, assessing, among other factors, the relevance of the international development activities, the realization of coherence and coordination, efficiency and cost efficiency, as well as the effectiveness of these activities, their impact and sustainability. In this evaluation, one needs to focus on the “building in” of international objectives, their application and implementation, while considering the internationally formulated recommendations and concepts. After accepting the new development goals this year in 2015, it is worth raising the idea of bringing this process forward in time.

Related to the domestic implementation of the international programme, it becomes necessary to develop strategies and action plans covering the sustainable development objectives, as well as to process them in the context of our international development cooperation. This creates an opportunity for ***coherent sectoral planning***, in line with the sustainable development approach, of the foreign activities by governmental agencies, which are otherwise currently not necessarily developed or implemented following the priorities of international development cooperation, but are still impacting developing countries and are also registered in the accounts as official development aid. This presupposes much greater coherence between the relevant sectoral policies and measures, which also calls for further training to be provided to the decision-makers shaping the policies, as well for further developing the institutional structure and mechanisms in charge of creating the coherence. Besides the fact that in all likelihood, a different institution will be appointed for the coordination of the domestic implementation of the objectives, the NGOs active in the field of international development keep recommending to reinforce the coordinating role of the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs within an exhaustive mechanism of SDG implementation.

The sectors of international development cooperation need to be defined and prioritised with more precision, also in line with the sustainable development goals, while there is also need to radically *increase the resources for international development* and to meet our EU commitments as soon as possible. (Hungary made a commitment to secure a 0.33% ODA/GNI ratio, whereas the present level is only 0.12 %.) **Increasing the amount of development aid is ineffective without revising and constantly monitoring the impacts of economic regulators and the investment practice.** The principle of policy coherence for development should be expanded to all areas of the economy, and to further this aim, there is need to develop efficient mechanisms of control.

In line with the strategy adopted by the government, the planned budget must be expanded as soon as possible within the set of resources for bilateral development aid, primarily through increasing the international development target of the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs on the one hand, but also through operating a better coordinated framework structure putting more emphasis on the perspectives of international development and reinforcing the role of said Ministry, on the other hand. In a related vein, improving the provision of the relevant statistical data will also be inevitable.

5. The institutional structure required for an efficient implementation of domestic tasks

It needs to be clarified, how, and to what extent can **governmental institutions** promote and assist the realization of domestic tasks, the Sustainable Development Goals, participation in the relevant international cooperation and in general, sustainable development in Hungary based on their current organizational structure, mandate, and cooperation.

We propose that the **strategic coordination** of the measures to be applied in the course of implementing the domestic programme and objectives – i.e., Hungarian sustainable development – take place at the **governmental level**, which could be best realized through coordination provided by the Office of the Prime Minister at the secretary-of-state level.

Sustainable development is an issue impacting the whole of society, which calls for more efficient **social cooperation** than in the past, including cooperation between state institutions, governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations. In order to define the domestic tasks and for the sake of evaluating implementation, it would be reasonable to confer the appropriate role of professional consultation and advisory powers on the National Council for Sustainable Development, as well as to actively cooperate with the different social advocacy organizations.

At present the institutional structures in charge of realizing the objectives of the *National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development*, and those in charge of Hungary's participation in international development cooperation are isolated from each other. It is necessary to consider the global dimensions of sustainability and to transcend national borders in order to envisage education for sustainability and to create a domestic policy capable of supporting developing countries. Throughout the definition and implementation of the domestic aspects of the international programme and the sustainable development goals, there is need for **better cooperation between the Hungarian institutions working in the fields of sustainable development and international development agencies**. In the assessment of NGOs, it is unavoidable and essential that some mechanism of coordination is established in order to link the two areas to ensure that they operate on the basis of the same principles and foundations.

In particular, in the present structure, the tasks related to **environmental issues** are fragmented. They are not guaranteed to be implemented in a homogeneous and efficient manner, which also makes it impossible to adopt the international programme efficiently. It is essential that the tasks related to the protection of natural resources be regrouped in a separate ministry, independent from the governmental bureaus in charge of controlling the specific economic sectors.

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