

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2012, the Rio +20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development decided to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process that is open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address the challenges and shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹ It is widely agreed that Indigenous Peoples were not granted enough attention in the MDGs. They were excluded from the process and are mentioned in neither the goals nor their indicators. Dealing with issues directly related to Indigenous Peoples, such as ending poverty, ensuring human rights and inclusion for all, ensuring good governance, preventing conflict, ensuring environmental sustainability and protection of biodiversity and climate change, the Post-2015 development framework and the SDGs will set the standards for global sustainable development for the next decade and will directly influence the lives of millions of Indigenous Peoples. The SDGs present a unique opportunity to remedy the historical injustices resulting from racism, discrimination and inequalities long suffered by Indigenous Peoples across the world. In the post-2015 development process, Indigenous Peoples are striving to have the SDG targets and indicators reflect Indigenous Peoples' rights and their relationship to their lands, territories and natural resources and to take their special vulnerabilities and strengths into consideration.

The Rio+ 20 Outcome Document mandated the creation of an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG)² to discuss and propose goals, targets and indicators for the SDGs. The OWG's working methods included the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the UN system, in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience. Thus all nine UN Major Groups, among them the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group, and other stakeholders have been engaged in the OWG sessions in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

On 25 September 2015, Heads of State gathered at a High Level Plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly and adopted a new development framework: “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The new development framework is a universal agenda comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 corresponding targets, as well as a political declaration, a chapter on means of implementation and a conclusion on follow-up and review. The new Agenda will guide global development efforts on poverty reduction, food security, environmental sustainability, etc., for the next 15 years, setting a precedent for future global sustainability, and will thus have a crucial influence on the lives of millions of Indigenous Peoples.

The 2030 development framework has only a few specific references to Indigenous Peoples. Nevertheless, this will not prevent application of the broader goals and targets to Indigenous Peoples’ specific contexts. In addition, some of the key human rights principles promoted and advocated by Indigenous Peoples in the last years are reflected in the 2030 Agenda and they have now become universal. This may open new opportunities for continuing advances in the promotion and recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This article reports on the work and actions undertaken by a number of indigenous organizations working together in the Indigenous Peoples’ Major Group during the period when the Sustainable Development Goals were being formulated, developed and negotiated at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The Indigenous Peoples’ Major Group (IPMG) is one of the nine Major Groups (youth, women, trade unions, local authorities, science and technology, business and industry, farmers and NGOs) represented at the United Nations with an official voice and the right to intervene during deliberations among member states. Tebtebba Foundation and the International Indian Treaty Council have served as Global Organizing Partners (OPs) for the Indigenous Peoples’ Major Group since the beginning of the process, and both actively participated in the SDG stocktaking and negotiation processes which began in February 2013 and concluded with the Summit in September 2015. The Indigenous Peoples’ Major Group worked closely with other Major Groups and stakeholders and actively engaged with State Parties, especially with Permanent Missions in New York to seek support for Indigenous Peoples’ proposals and major issues.

Main IPMG activities have included: facilitating the participation of key indigenous leaders from the regions as speakers, panelists, and advocates to governments and other Major Groups; active participation and engagement with other

Major Groups and State Parties; plus research, development and delivery of statements and position papers. As a result of IPMG's active engagement, the Agenda 2030 outcome document includes **six** specific references to Indigenous Peoples in its final text, two of them are included in the Goals themselves: in Goal 2 on "agricultural productivity and the income of small-scale food producers" where Indigenous Peoples are mentioned between commas along with women, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers; and in Goal 4 on education, which reads "to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and children in vulnerable situations."

The final two weeks of intergovernmental negotiations from 20- 24 and 27-31 July 2015 were the most important and the culmination of two-and-a-half years of efforts. The IPMG invited Joan Carling of AIPP to New York where, in her capacity as member of the UNPFII, she attended several events organized by civil society networks and secured one-on-one meetings with member states' representatives. During the two weeks, the IPMG met with negotiators from Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, India and others.

The IPMG's main request to the member states was to include internationally agreed language pertinent to Indigenous Peoples, as contained in the Rio +20 outcome document "The Future We Want", which recognizes: "the importance of participation of Indigenous Peoples in the achievement of sustainable development";³ in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states: "Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development";⁴ and in the WCIP Outcome Document, which is committed to "giv[ing] due consideration to all the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the elaboration of the Post-2015 development agenda".⁵

In particular, the IPMG called for the inclusion of the following sentence in paragraph 8 (9 in subsequent versions) of the draft document: "*A world in which Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the exercise of their right to development based on their security to their lands, territories and resources*". Unfortunately, the recommended language was not included in the final draft despite the very strong support from "friendly states" and the use of the exact text in their statements.

Additionally, the IPMG called for the inclusion of references to Indigenous Peoples throughout the text of the draft as well as the streamlining of the text in

regard to “ethnicity” and “cultural diversity”, as reflected in paragraphs 8, 24, 36 and 74 of the final draft. The sustained effort of the IPMG paid off in the final hours of the negotiations and specific references to Indigenous Peoples were included in paragraphs 23, 25, 51 and 79.

On 25 September 2015 the 193 Members of the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted a new framework, “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The Agenda is composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.⁶

The following are the direct references to Indigenous Peoples in the document adopted by the UN General Assembly.

In the section entitled “***The new Agenda***”

23. “People who are vulnerable must be empowered. Those whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include all children, youth, persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80% live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, **Indigenous Peoples**, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants ...”

25. “We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels ... All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, **Indigenous Peoples**, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society...”

In the section entitled “***A call for action to change our world***”

52. “‘We the Peoples’ are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is ‘We the Peoples’ who are embarking today on the road to

2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as Parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, **Indigenous Peoples**, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people. ...”

In the chapter on *Follow-up and review, section entitled “National Level”*

79. We also encourage member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from **Indigenous Peoples**, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.

Additionally, Indigenous Peoples are mentioned in:

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, **Indigenous Peoples**, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, **Indigenous Peoples** and children in vulnerable situations.

Many indigenous leaders around the world see the SDGs as a major improvement to the MDGs and an opportunity to improve the situation of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. There has been a consensus among the organizations participating in the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group that the Agenda's references to human rights, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination, respect for ethnicity and cultural diversity, access to justice, and participatory decision-making are very positive. Among the provisions that were highlighted as potentially useful for Indigenous Peoples are paragraph 4 (a pledge that no one will be left behind; goals and targets to be met for all peoples and all segments of society; endeavor to reach the furthest behind first), paragraph 23 (Indigenous Peoples mentioned among those who are vulnerable and must be empowered), paragraph 35 (need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on respect for human rights; reference to the right of self-determination); and paragraph 79 (progress reviews on the implementation of the Agenda to draw on contributions from Indigenous Peoples). Also highlighted as important for ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are included in the implementation of the Agenda were Goal 10 (on reducing inequalities within countries) and Goal 16 (on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies).

However, there are major disappointments as well. The IPMG had consistently proposed the inclusion of some of the most important issues for Indigenous Peoples such as the right to self-determined development, the right to lands, territories and resources, the recognition of traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, sustainable use and management of biodiversity resources, respect for the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples, etc. Despite Indigenous Peoples' active engagement throughout the process, most of the concerns were not specifically reflected in the document adopted by the UN General Assembly. Indigenous peoples' vision of development was not included and Indigenous Peoples' collective rights were not given sufficient recognition to be consistent with the commitment in the WCIP Outcome Document to give "due consideration to all the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda" (para. 37),⁹ as well as the provisions of the UNDRIP affirming Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determined development (Arts. 3, 23, 32).⁹

The SDGs do not affirm the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples to their lands, territories and resources, and there are no specific targets relat-

ing to Indigenous Peoples' security of lands, territories and resources. Other flaws include a lack of commitments by the private sector, potential conflicts between the economic growth goals of the Agenda and its environmental and social goals, insufficient attention to access to information and public participation in decision-making, and a poor definition of extreme poverty in Target 1.1. ("people living on less than US\$1.25 a day"), which does not reflect the situation of Indigenous Peoples and could be detrimental to traditional economies based on the natural environment and self-subsistence.

Following the adoption of the Agenda 2030 at the UN Summit, the UN system has worked to finalize a list of global indicators, which are being negotiated under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission until April 2016 (possibly to be extended to May 2016). An Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) has been established under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) to develop a proposed set of indicators. The next meeting of the IAEG-SDGs will take place from 10 March to 1 April in Mexico City. It will be attended by a designated lobbying group of indigenous experts. The IPMG has already noted that the indicators being currently drafted do not reflect the priorities of Indigenous Peoples, and that Indigenous Peoples urgently need to reinforce their advocacy related to the indicators. Advocacy efforts should focus on specific indicators to address collective land rights and data disaggregation, in order to ensure that goals and targets are relevant for Indigenous Peoples.

Roundtable Conference to take stock of and strategize on Indigenous Peoples' involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda.

On 8 and 9 October 2015, only two weeks after the UN's adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda, IWGIA and the Norwegian Forum for Development Cooperation organized a roundtable conference in Copenhagen to take stock of and strategize on their involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda.

This roundtable conference provided a platform for sharing knowledge and assessing opportunities as well as challenges faced by Indige-

nous Peoples in the context of the future implementation of the new Post-2015 Development Agenda. It was attended by Indigenous Peoples' representatives from all regions, representatives from UN mechanisms dealing with Indigenous Peoples' rights, officials from UN agencies and representatives from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The roundtable conference resulted in a summary report containing the lessons learned from Indigenous Peoples' engagement in the Post-2015 process, an assessment of the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda: "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and the way forward including recommendations on how to advance the respect and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the implementation of the new 2030 Development Agenda.¹⁰ ○

Notes and references

- 1 <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf>
- 2 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>
- 3 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
- 4 "The Future We Want", paragraph 49.
- 5 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, paragraph 32.
- 6 Word Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document, paragraph 37.
- 7 "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development": <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- 8 WCIP Outcome Document.
- 9 UNDRIP.
- 10 The summary report and other relevant documents presented during the conference can be downloaded from IWGIA's webpage: http://www.iwgia.org/images/stories/sections/envir-and-devel/sust-development/docs/roundtable/postconference/Summary_RoundtableConference-nelPsSDGs.pdf

Galina Angarova, Policy Advisor, Tebtebba Foundation, and **Roberto Borrero**, International Indian Treaty Council—Representatives of the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group in New York.