



THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of global objectives aimed at achieving a tenable and poverty-free world by 2030. The SDGs is a successor of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an international agenda aimed at halving world poverty, stopping the spread of communicable diseases and providing universal primary education until 2015, adopted in 2000. The MDGs is comprised of the following goals: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability; and 8) global partnership for development. Significant progress was reached in the framework of the MDGs, especially in terms of the fight against poverty and access to primary education. Nevertheless, according to the 2015 UN assessment of the MDGs, the program did not contribute to the lives of the poorest and the most disadvantaged communities due to their age, gender, ethnicity or disability. As the MDGs term came to an end in 2015, the process to establish the Post-2015 Development Agenda led to the creation of the SDGs. The SDGs was developed taking into account all of the shortcomings of the MDGs.

To create an all-encompassing set of objectives, a high-level UN Open Working Group including 70 of the UN member states sharing 30 seats on the committee worked on preparing the SDGs. One to four countries from the same UN regional group shared each seat. The MDGs was described as “an internal UN bureaucratic creation.” The final draft of the agenda was approved on July 19, 2014. Finally, a set of 17 goals in the framework of the SDGs aimed at ending poverty and protecting the Earth, known

as “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” was adopted on September 25, 2015. The plan came into force in January 2016. The SDGs was prepared on the basis of the principles of the document named “The Future We Want” adopted as a result of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on June 20-22, 2012. The SDGs are not legally binding but the countries are expected to take action on a national level. Implementation of the goals is to be based on each country’s policies on sustainable development.

The SDGs is set to be achieved via a range of tools such as financial support for developing nations, technology transfer, and development of an open trading system to increase export opportunities for the developing nations. In this light, the Sustainable Development Goal Fund (SDG Fund) was created in 2014 to implement the agenda by attracting international donors and agencies by joining the efforts of governments, academia, civil society and the private sector. The SDG Fund has joint programs with an approximate budget of \$70 million in 21 countries across four regions: Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Arab States. The programs are mostly focused on three sectorial areas: the issues of economic growth for poverty eradication, food security and nutrition, water and sanitation. Partnership in the implementation of the programs is reached via matching funds, meaning that a financial contribution from outside must match the monetary support made by the Fund.

As for the criticism of the failure of the MDGs to assist certain groups who are most in need, the SDGs has a universal nature covering even the poorest and farthest communities. The largest difference between the agendas is the target countries: while MDGs worked in the format of helping poor nations, i.e. de-

veloping countries only, the SDGs aims to work across the world, paying special attention to the poorest people in both developing and developed countries, in order to close the gap between the poor and rich. The SDGs is a call for action to the governments, large corporations, the private sector and civil society of low-, middle- and high-income countries.

Two agendas have had similar goals; however, due to the criticism regarding the narrowness of the MDGs, the SDGs was expanded from eight to 17 goals consisting of 169 targets. Adding a new range of issues absent from the MDGs, the SDGs created the following set of goals: 1) No poverty; 2) Zero hunger; 3) Good health and well-being; 4) Quality education; 5) Gender equality; 6) Clean water and sanitation; 7) Affordable and clean energy; 8) Decent work and economic growth; 9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure; 10) Reduced inequalities; 11) Sustainable cities and communities; 12) Responsible consumption and production; 13) Climate action; 14) Life below water; 15) Life on land; 16) Peace, justice and strong institutions; and 17) Partnerships for the goals. Each of these goals has an agenda that is expected to be achieved over the course of 15 years.

It can be seen that all 17 goals are interconnected, and progress cannot be achieved separately. Without the even advancement across all agendas, the most important objective of eradicating poverty, including extreme poverty, and hunger is not possible as negative aspects of life such as climate change, water scarcity, illnesses, inequality, etc. hit the poorest communities first. Economic, social and environmental development go hand in hand, and it is essential to achieve improvement in all aspects to end poverty and hunger. If the goals set by the agenda are met, the issues of poverty, climate change, and inequality are to be overcome by 2030.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his official visit to Yerevan, the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, and his Armenian counterpart, Serzh Sargsyan, discussed bilateral relations on trade, political, industrial, agrarian, healthcare, scientific, educational and environmental issues. As a result of the high-level talks, the parties signed a number of documents including a Joint Declaration, Program of Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of Armenia and Tajikistan for 2018-2019 and inter-governmental agreements on mutual trips of citizens, air communications, mutual recognition and equivalence of certificates of education, qualifications, university and academic degrees, cooperation in the field of sport and youth affairs and healthcare.
- During his official visit to Baku, the Commissioner for the European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of the EU, Johannes Hahn, and the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, discussed the simplification of visa regime between two sides, as well as further prospects for cooperation in the fields of energy and transportation.
- During his official visit to Baku, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia, and the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, exchanged views on further strengthening of bilateral ties in the areas of trade, investment, transport, tourism and agriculture.
- During his official visit to Ashgabat, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Istvan Mikola, held political consultations with the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan. The agenda of the consultations included the issues of political-diplomatic, trade-economic relations and cooperation in cultural-humanitarian areas.
- During his official visit to Astana, the Head of the Central Office for Treaties and Legal Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Andrei Metelitsa, and the Director of the International Law Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Arman Isetov, held consultations on the matters of international law. The parties also discussed the cooperation in legal structures and bodies of the United Nations Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Eurasian Economic Union.
- During his official visit to Astana, the Commander of the Land Forces of Turkey, General Salih Zeki Colak, and the Vice Minister of Defense of Kazakhstan, General Lieutenant Murat Maikeyev, discussed the cooperation between the two countries in fight against non-traditional challenges and security threats.
- During his official visit to Astana, the Deputy Minister of Defense for Armament and Equipment of Uzbekistan,

Colonel Atabek Ibadullayev, and the Deputy Minister of Defense of Kazakhstan, Major General Talgat Zhanzhumenov, discussed promising areas of bilateral military-technical cooperation. It was also noted that the Uzbek delegation visited a number of defense enterprises of Kazakhstan, which produce small arms, sea ships and boats, as well as special vehicles.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the Chairman of the Board of a state-owned oil and gas company of Uzbekistan, Uzbekneftegaz, Alisher Sultanov, the country plans to increase the annual volume of gas supplies to China up to 10 billion cubic meters in 2018-2020.
- The Eurasian Economic Commission stated that the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran finalized the text of the interim agreement conducive to the establishment of a free trade zone. It was also noted that two parties would continue the negotiations on liberalizing mutual access of goods to the common market. The interim agreement will be concluded for three years.
- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) announced that it approved two loans and one equity investment totaling \$324 million to support infrastructure projects in India, Georgia and Tajikistan. The AIIB plans that \$150 million would be allocated to India's Infrastructure Fund, while \$114 million and \$60 million would be invested to Georgia's Batumi Bypass Road Project, which is the Bank's first loan to the country, and Tajikistan's Nurek Hydropower Rehabilitation Project Phase I, respectively.
- Kazakhstan's national company, Kazakh Invest, reported during the 6th Kazakh manufacturers' trade mission organized together with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Minsk, the parties agreed to arrange supplies of 20 Kazakhstan-made passenger electric locomotives to Belarus. The mission resulted in export contracts inked for a total of \$7.2 million.
- The Azerbaijani state-owned company Azerbaijan Caspian Shipping (ACS) reported that it transported more than 1.55 million tons of liquid cargo on its tankers and ferries in January-May 2017, which is almost two times more compared to the same period of 2016. The ACS transported 660,870 tons of dry cargo, which is 54,150 tons more than in January-May 2016. The volume of cargo transported on dry bulk carriers and Ro-Ro vessels was 305,000 tons in January-May 2017, which is 52,500 tons more than in the same period of 2016.
- The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, signed a Resolution on measures on further improving the management and accelerated development of the automotive industry for 2017-2021.

According to the document, Uzbekistan plans to increase the production of cars from 88,200 in 2016 to 240,000 in 2021. It is expected that Uzbekistan will produce 122,000 cars in 2017. In 2017-2021, Uzbekistan intends to increase the production of buses and trucks by 1.6 times reaching 6,900 units by 2021. Starting from 2019, Uzbekistan will launch the production of light commercial cars. It is expected that the output of light commercial cars will stand at 3,000 units a year. By 2021, the figure will exceed 6,200 units.

- Kazakhstan's biggest private bank, Halyk Bank, reported about its plans to buy a 96.81% stake in Kazkommertsbank, for a symbolical sum of 1 tenge. It was noted that Halyk Bank, after the acquisition, would invest \$585 million in Kazkommertsbank. The deal should be finalized by the end of 2017.
- The Deputy Taxes Minister of Azerbaijan, Ilkin Valiyev, reported that in January-May 2017 about 75% of tax revenues in the country accounted for the non-oil sector. It was also noted that during the reported period the tax revenues reached \$1.66 billion, exceeding the forecast by 4.7%.

Society and Culture

- During the plenary session of the 10th Astana Economic Forum, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, reported that the country observed a 70% decrease in associated petroleum gas emissions in the past decade. It was also noted that the International Center for the development of green technologies and investment would be created on the basis of Astana EXPO-2017 complex.
- During the visit of the Russian delegation from Association of Legal Assistance to Labor Migrants and the State Institution of Russian language named after Pushkin to Tashkent, the parties considered the issues of organization of state testing on Russian language in Uzbekistan, organization of trainings on Russian language at the Center for pre-departure training of labor migrants in Ferghana city. It was noted that the creation of such centers in the Uzbek regions will help to train labor migrants, travelling to Russia.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of Kazakhstan announced that over 1 million ethnic Kazakhs returned to their homeland and received the status of oralman in the period from 1991 until April 1, 2017. Over 16,400 families (33,754 people) return to Kazakhstan in 2016, while in first quarter of 2017 the figure reached 2,600 families (4,900 people). Most oralmans are from Uzbekistan, China, Mongolia and Turkmenistan. In 2016, 7 regions were identified as the settlement areas for oralmans. It is planned that in 2017 the Government will pay subsidies for relocation of 2,700 citizens.