

DIANOVA INTERNATIONAL

Statement to the Human Rights Council intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda

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A Human-Rights Based Approach to the SDGs

Transforming goals and aspirations into rights: the role of human rights systems in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

The [Agenda 2030](#) for Sustainable Development has been widely acknowledged as the most participatory process ever in the history of the United Nations. As a direct consequence of the inclusive process adopted for its conception, it became one of the most comprehensive and powerful instruments for sustainable development. Differing from the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) – which are the “[world’s to-do list](#) to end poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle climate change” in the Agenda 2030 – incorporates a wide range of human rights principles and standards throughout its targets.

In [this document](#), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OCHCR](#)) did a remarkable work in demonstrating how the SDGs cover all aspects of human rights, “including economic, civil, cultural, political, social rights and the right to development”. The significance of understanding the relationship between the SDGs and human rights is not just illustrative – it is rather a way of strengthening States’ accountability vis-à-vis their commitments to a human rights-based approach to development and to the SDGs themselves.

This is particularly relevant because while the Agenda 2030 is not a legally binding instrument, the regional and [international human rights Conventions and Covenants](#) are, in fact, binding instruments of international law. On one hand, these core human rights conventions are monitored at the global level by their respective committee of independent experts, within the framework of the so-called “[human rights treaty body system](#)”. On the other hand, in most cases these instruments can also be legally claimed at the national level and are used as powerful tools for people’s human rights.

Leveraging Human Rights mechanisms in the implementation of the the SDGs

The SDGs and the Human Rights system are mutually reinforcing: While the latter ensures the binding stamp and, most importantly, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, the SDGs give visibility to the rights and put in evidence the needed

indivisible approach to all the multiple aspects of human rights – in addition to integrating “people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership” for the achievement of sustainable development.

When analyzed through the lenses of existing human rights instruments, many targets of the SDGs are transformed from a goal or aspiration into immediate rights. In this sense, the implementation of the SDGs can be much more effective if guided by a human rights-approach and if considered the conclusions and recommendations of global and regional [Treaty-based Bodies](#) and of National Human Rights Institutions ([NHRIs](#)).

In fact, local, regional and global human rights bodies can be leveraged to ensure that a human rights-based approach underpins national policies and programs for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the SDGs: the many human rights mechanisms can provide valuable and at times disaggregated data to feed decision-making and reporting processes, and the institutions leading on human rights processes can be a helpful bridge between governments and different vulnerable groups in society. Being in place for decades, these bodies may also offer important lessons on the inclusion of organized civil society for the SDGs processes, at the same time as it may learn from the SDGs on how to work the interlinkages between rights of different nature.

The SDGs and the human rights are manifested in multiple areas of human life, and harmony between these two agendas can only benefit governmental efforts in achieving both of them. More collaboration between the agenda for sustainable development and existing human rights mechanisms will ensure coherence and avoid duplication of efforts at national level. It will also enhance accountability and ensure that States are utilizing all available tools to fulfill the rights of the people they serve.