

23rd March 2015

Dear Negotiator,

We are writing to you as a group of academics and directors of policy institutes and think tanks to urge you to strengthen the targets linked to the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We view the SDG process as an energising moment, a great opportunity to incentivise governments to do even better at achieving sustainable development for all.

Experience and evidence attests that specific and measurable targets, while not legally binding, can influence decision-making and budget-setting, both nationally and internationally, in a way that vague commitments are unlikely to. The more we can measure the SDG targets, the more manageable and monitorable they will be. Therein lies the difference between good intentions and real implementation.

When the Open Working Group draft was published last year we assumed, along with most others, that there would be a further stage of work during which the targets would be refined to make them more implementable. From what we can see, that stage is yet to take place.

This is not a comment on the content or amount of targets, but on their quality in terms of implementability and monitorability. Much work is being done by colleagues to suggest concrete ways in which the targets can be improved – we urge you to consider it fully.

Importantly, we emphasise that all the targets in the draft SDG document should be improved, both those referring to development outcomes and those focusing on the means of implementation.

In conclusion, too much of the current draft is too loose to help deliver measurable results and systemic change. A sound process needs to be devised to remedy this. If the resource-intensive process of developing the SDG agenda is to be judged a success by future generations, an urgent push must be made now to turn an ambitious and compelling vision into a meaningful framework for action.

Wishing you every success in your continued deliberations,

Charles A. Abugre, Chief Executive Officer, The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority

Franklin Cudjoe, Founding President, IMANI

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director, Twaweza East Africa

Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University

John Githongo, CEO Inuka Nisisi Kenya, Mimi & Peter Haas 2015 Distinguished Visitor, Stanford University

Stefano Prato, Managing Director of Society for International Development (SID)

Rathin Roy, Director and Chief Executive of National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

Philipp Schonrock, Director of Centro de Pensamiento Estrategico Internacional (CEPEI)

Bright Simons, President, mPedigree

John Ulanga, Member, Africa Policy Advisory Board (ONE)

Robert Wade, Professor of Political Economy and Development, London School of Economics

Kevin Watkins, Director of Overseas Development Institute (ODI)