

1 **Conference Statement – Draft version**

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3 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed upon in 2015 under the Agenda 2030, are
4 losing momentum and thereby failing to reach milestones. Their stagnant progress reflects the
5 current state of multilateralism where crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and
6 geopolitical tensions have diverted attention away from sustainability governance. This is also
7 acknowledged in the Pact for the Future, which calls for global transformation through fifty-eight
8 actions. This conference statement takes note of these actions and provides a roadmap for
9 sustainability governance with the horizon set beyond 2030.

10 The present statement is based on a survey sent out to participants to the GLOBALGOALS20204
11 Conference on the Future of the SDGs. The results from the survey were consolidated into a draft
12 statement that was discussed during co-creation workshops held online. The co-creation process
13 involved experts in sustainability governance, stakeholders and civil society members.

14 A large majority of the survey respondents do not believe that the SDGs can be achieved by their
15 target date. Most do believe that the goals should be kept and improved for they are built on a
16 comprehensive and coherent consensus. In order to improve the SDGs, three reform categories
17 may be distinguished. The first category of reform concerns sustainability governance principles,
18 such as participation, accountability, and transparency (1). A second set of reforms is institutional,
19 consists of the improvement of the current arrangements that govern sustainability, including the
20 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and financial organizations, such as the World Bank and the
21 International Monetary Fund (2). Lastly, a third type of reform focuses on the substance of the
22 SDGs, suggesting new targets, localizing indicators, and negotiating additional SDGs (3).

23 Through the aforementioned methodology, we have identified twelve insights to bring about
24 meaningful transformations in global sustainability governance until 2030 and beyond. We
25 hereupon provide the next steps for policymakers and stakeholders to consider when deciding the
26 future of sustainability governance beyond 2030.

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28 **1. Strengthening sustainability governance principles**

29 **I. Enhance participation and inclusiveness.** Foster greater participation of civil society, the
30 private sector, and local communities in SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring. This
31 includes creating transparent mechanisms for accountability and ensuring that marginal voices
32 are heard.

33 **II. Strengthen accountability and transparency.** This requires stronger involvement of civil
34 society organizations within the HLPF and UNDESA. Participants mentioned the possibility of
35 a Global Citizens' Assembly for more accountability and transparency on issues of sustainability
36 governance. Additionally, mechanisms need to be put in place to monitor the actions of
37 international financial institutions and ensure that they are contributing to achieving the SDGs, or
38 at least not generating negative results.

40 **2. Improving global sustainability institutions**

41 **III. Reform the HLPF.** The HLPF requires a stronger review process to implement its mandate.
42 Some participants suggest the establishment of a new UN Council for Sustainable Development,
43 with global accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs. The HLPF should
44 have a more analytical and critical role concerning the review of Voluntary National Reports
45 (VNRs). For the VNRs, a joint monitoring, reporting and verification mechanism could be
46 considered that helps harmonizing the reporting process.

47 **IV. Integrate the SDGs with existing legal frameworks.** Including the Human Rights
48 framework, the Paris Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity. This integration would
49 strengthen SDGs by coupling them to legal implementation mechanisms.

50 **V. Strengthen Institutional Coordination and Governance.** Establish or strengthen
51 national SDG coordination mechanisms, such as a dedicated SDG unit or a multi-stakeholder
52 platform, to ensure collaboration across government ministries, agencies, and with non-state
53 actors.

54 **VI. Improve the global financial architecture for sustainable development.** There is a need
55 to establish fair and equitable financial systems that would be conducive to partnerships between
56 government and the private sector to implement sustainable development. For this, governments
57 need to establish standards and regulations to account for investment risks, considering also non-
58 monetary benefits of the SDGs, such as variables, like impacts for poverty reduction or
59 biodiversity conservation.

60 **VII. Reform existing institutions including the World Bank and the International**
61 **Monetary Fund (IMF)** to prioritize sustainable development lending and provide debt relief for
62 developing countries. The World Bank and IMF should also establish a robust funding mechanism
63 for sustainability measures to be conducted in countries in the Global South.

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65 **3. Revising the substance of SDGs**

66 Many participants believe that the current geopolitics would not lead to more ambitious outcomes
67 if the SDGs were to be renegotiated, as they benefit from visibility. Instead, participants have
68 suggested continuing with the implementation of the current goals, while also adjusting their
69 targets and complementing them with additional goals. Hence, long-term sustainability
70 governance should focus on both improving the data upon which SDGs have been formulated
71 and on their enforcement.

72 **VIII. Consolidate the current goals and recalibrate targets and indicators.** Strengthen
73 data collection and monitoring systems to accurately track progress, identify gaps, and inform
74 evidence-based policy decisions. Advancing the tools and methodologies for policy evaluation
75 is essential to ensure that strategies and interventions are effective.

76 **IX. Enhance differentiation and localization of SDGs at national and subnational levels.**
77 Countries should use a whole-of-government approach and embed the SDGs into national and
78 subnational development strategies and policies based on national contexts and priorities.
79 Localization of the SDGs at national level could also consist in accelerated targets adopted at
80 national level.

81 **X. Negotiate new goals or targets.** Adaptive sustainability governance could take the shape
82 of the adoption of additional goals. Proposals for new goals have been put forwarded by states
83 and stakeholders and include a goal for One Health and animal welfare; Artificial Intelligence
84 governance; fighting ethical and racial discrimination; and contextual environmental education
85 to strengthen and concentrate pedagogical, technological and methodological actions for
86 various social groups in the post-2030 Agenda.

87 **XI. Focus on adaptive and flexible governance.** Some survey participants suggested
88 discontinuing the goals in order to focus on adaptive and flexible targets instead. A new global
89 sustainability agenda could include targets that are more readily adapted to changing
90 circumstances, technological advancements, and societal needs, ensuring that it remains
91 relevant over time. Recognizing the diversity of global challenges, such a framework might
92 encourage the development of goals that are tailored to the specific needs and capacities of
93 different regions or countries.

94 **XII. Initiate a paradigm shift through "systems thinking"** to focus on circular economy,
95 rather than economic growth as an objective of sustainable development.

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