

**Governance Innovations to Implement the Post-2015 Sustainable
Development Agenda
March 30 2015**

Summary

2015 is a pivotal year. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will sunset, a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be agreed upon, and the means of implementation—particularly around financing for sustainable development—will be determined as part of the post-2015 development agenda. And the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be forged by the end of the year. To advance these global efforts, the Global Economy and Development program at Brookings, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, will convene a full-day, private conference on March 30 2015 on governance innovations for implementing the post-2015 agenda.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this event is to engage leading actors in generating specific, practical, and concrete ideas for successful implementation of an ambitious universal post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The Issues

The international community is examining how best to secure commitments on national and global actions for successful implementation of the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Previous efforts have highlighted two main lessons: first, that linking the political momentum of the goal-setting phase to the implementation phase is critical in anchoring the implementation on country ownership, policy reform, and resource mobilization; and second, that multi-stakeholder involvement across a wide spectrum in society and a wide range of government ministries and agencies is also vital in implementing transformational change based on integrated strategies and goals.

The sustainable development goal-setting phase will culminate at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2015, after the Third Financing for Development (FFD) Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015.

It is clear that goal-setting can no longer be separated from implementation, as the global goals will require private financing as well as public resources, finance ministry and domestic sectoral ministry involvement, and foreign and development ministry engagement. The global system of international institutions also must be committed to and aligned with the Post-2015 agenda to assure a systemic approach to the future, rather than a fragmented and competitive relationship among international institutions. Furthermore, the society of each

country must be engaged in adopting and adapting global goals to its own vision of the future for goals to drive action rather than simply articulate hopes.

The Context

The Brookings Global Economy and Development program will host a full-day, private conference on March 30 2015 on governance innovations for implementing the post-2015 agenda. This event will draw upon Brookings's experience and engagement in global goal-setting and implementation, as well as in governance reforms at the national and global levels necessary for successful goal achievement.

The conference will also build upon the previous efforts of The Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy, which was convened by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland jointly with the Government of Tanzania and involved distinguished leaders through the Helsinki Group. This process focused on bridging global divides and closing governance gaps. It also anticipated the need for international institutional reforms and more inclusive global governance mechanisms, even presaging the need for a large summit mechanism such as the G-20, and the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement and the benefits of this approach as a tool for both policy development and policy implementation. The MDGs were a major focus of work on mobilizing resources for development as an integral part of the Helsinki Process.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, the preparatory phase of the Post-2015 agenda for sustainable development has so far included the report by the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development proposing seventeen SDGs, the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for Sustainable Development Financing, and the Synthesis Report of the U.N. Secretary-General. All these reports will serve as important background material to the conference and its deliberations.

The Approach

Within this context, the conference will seek to propose concrete measures on how the present or reformed governance structures and processes would better feed into mobilization of political will, financial resources, and public policies for domestic and international implementation of the post-2015 agenda. It will also seek to engage participants in the exchange of ideas that will result in collaboration, coordination, and convergent activities among nations, institutions, and stakeholders to maximize goal implementation and generate transformative results on the ground. To do this, the conference will brainstorm on concrete proposals of coordination efforts and their challenges, based on current examples:

Korea's experience with cross-ministerial presidential committees that include private sector leaders along with government ministers will be examined as a possible governance innovation at the national level to enhance implementation of integrated comprehensive agendas, such as the Post 2015 agenda.

The experience of G-20 leaders-level summits in providing strategic direction for the global system of international institutions in the wake of the global financial crisis in 2008 will also

be examined for roles that the G-20 might play in complementing and supporting the post-2015 agenda in its three dimensions. Attention in the conference will also be focused on the degree to which competitive tensions can be managed in order to keep the global system of institutions on the same page and move a single, universal and inclusive agenda forward.

The challenge of bringing the relevant financial actors and institutional players into the articulation of the financing for development effort is vital to moving from goal-setting and benchmarking to implementation of global efforts to mobilize the massive amount of financing that is required to achieve the SDGs, the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, and to actualize the outcomes of the climate negotiations under the UNFCCC.

The difficulties encountered with multi-stakeholder engagement and national accountability must be overcome. Increasingly, the local and international business community is engaged in multi-stakeholder processes to contribute to sustainable development, but there are few mechanisms of accountability for them and overall information systems are inadequate to support a high degree of national accountability.

Finland has developed a unique implementation model called “Society’s Commitment to Sustainable Development”—in fact a kind of social contract—that provides a relevant material experience for further discussion.

Conference Modality: Highly Interactive Brainstorming

This event will convene a large group of high-level participants, with the active involvement of Washington-based officials from G-20 members and other countries through their delegations at the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and their embassies, along with leaders from business, finance, civil society, academics, think tanks, and prominent NGOs in the development field. Relevant U.N. representatives and staff will also participate.

The format will be plenary brainstorming sessions on four themes: (i) integrating domestic government policies across ministries and levels of government, (ii) improving coherence of global institutional processes, (iii) organizing financing for development, and (iv) multi-stakeholder engagement for national accountability. The conference set-up will be round tables in a large auditorium to enable intensive small group interactions to generate ideas and specific recommendations for follow-up action. Crisp feedback loops are envisioned that will allow participants to grasp the range of actionable options raised and also to focus on the select few high priority actions that have the greatest relevance and potential for effectiveness in enhancing implementation of systemic transformation.

This format is being used to maximize participation, enlarge the number of ideas that can be thoughtfully considered and energize the development of concrete, achievable and compelling actions at the local, national, regional and global levels of the world community that can be carried forward during 2015 and beyond.

We anticipate a short report from the conference to be delivered to the co-facilitators of the U.N. forum on “means of implementation” at Addis, as well as to relevant U.N. secretariat staff.