



Sustainable Development Goals

Water in the heart of the development goals

The United Nations has defined a set of ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim of ending poverty, starvation and disease by 2030. Water is a central theme of a number of goals, including access to clean drinking water, adequate sanitation, climate-proof cities, and flood prevention. Water is also an important factor for the realisation of various other SDGs. Now that the goals have been defined, it is time for action. One of the first steps is to create a structure to guide implementation and monitoring.



A world free from poverty, starvation and disease by 2030, plus solutions to problems relating to water, sanitation, climate, and energy. That is the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by 193 United Nations member states at the end of September 2015. In total, there are seventeen long-term goals, with 169 subordinate targets. Peace and security, sustainable economic development, equality and partnerships are important to the realisation of these goals.

Water: essential for development

SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) strives for access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation for everyone by 2030. Other targets included in SDG 6 are improved water quality and the prevention of water pollution. Improved trans-boundary water management and the protection of ecosystems are also targeted. SDG 11 focuses on the development of sustainable, climate-proof cities, the prevention of flooding and disaster risk reduction. Those topics are also addressed in the International Water Ambition (IWA). The Dutch government's ambition of working with other delta countries worldwide to improve water safety and water security in urbanised deltas.

Water is additionally relevant to various SDGs with other primary focuses, emphasising water's significance to the development agenda. The climate action goal (SDG 13) makes explicit reference to water, for example. Water determines the scope for improving resilience when adapting to the effects of climate change. The role of water is also mentioned in the goals on hunger and food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), energy (SDG 7), and the protection and sustainable use of the oceans (SDG 14).

Implementation and progress

Now that the SDGs have been defined, the focus must shift to implementation and monitoring progress. The SDGs apply to both developed and developing countries. They need to be translated into concrete, measurable outcomes at the national and international levels. Furthermore, a mechanism is required to guide implementation and monitoring. To that end, indicators will have to be defined, monitoring systems developed, and a structure established for political oversight and funding of the process. In the water domain, no such structure currently exists. The Netherlands has therefore indicated to the United Nations that it is willing to contribute to the development of an appropriate framework.

More information and contact

For more information, visit the website: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals

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