

Building a world community



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**Realizing the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in Canada and Abroad  
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In September at the United Nations, governments from around the world will agree to a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to replace the Millennium Development Goals – which expire at the end of 2015. The [draft outcome document](#) for September has been negotiated, and includes a broad, sustainable development agenda underpinned by a framework of goals, targets and indicators for 2030. Importantly, the SDGs will serve as a universal agenda, applying to *all* countries, not just developing ones.

Canada has been participating in consultations in the lead up to the September summit. Throughout the negotiations, Canada championed an agenda based on realistic, focused and measurable targets and indicators, and consistently emphasized the poorest and most vulnerable as a key focus for the sustainable development agenda. Given its strong statistical system and expertise, Canada has also been engaging on the indicator framework for the SDGs, which is set to be finalized in March 2016.

Canada has recognized that the SDGs are universal in nature, meaning that they will apply to all Member States, including Canada. However, in June 2015 a [confidential memo was leaked](#) revealing that “Canada has no plans to apply the Post-2015 Agenda domestically, or to take on new reporting obligations beyond what [Canada is] currently producing,” notwithstanding the likelihood that the country will face pressures to do so. At the international level, Canada will be expected to take the SDG agenda seriously, particularly given that the legitimacy of the agenda – notably the claim that it represents a paradigm shift from the MDGs which were largely about the developing world, to a transformational, universal agenda based on the recognition of shared challenges – relies, at least in part, on high income countries taking the agenda seriously both at home and abroad. In Canada, civil society groups have called on the government to take seriously the universal nature of the agenda, including addressing Canada’s sustainable development challenges such as climate change, poverty and inequalities in Canada. Indeed, Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations, Canada’s largest Aboriginal group, has welcomed the SDGs, noting the need for greater efforts to close the well-being gap between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples in Canada.

Going forward, there are a number of steps Canada can take to support the finalization of the

SDG agenda and to realise its potential both at home and abroad. Canada is participating in the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG). As part of the IAEG, Canada has an opportunity to support the creation of a realistic, appropriate set of indicators that respect and measure the ambitious commitments embodied in the SDGs – including commitments which are more difficult to measure such as those related to issues like governance and rule of law. At the same time, Canada should advocate for an indicator set that takes advantage of existing national and international data collection processes and measurement frameworks to reduce the burden of SDG reporting on developing countries. Once the indicator framework is established, Canada should continue to play a strong role on the accountability agenda by supporting developing countries to establish the necessary data infrastructure and capacity to monitor sustainable development outcomes. Canada is already taking positive steps in the right direction, announcing the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics at the International Development Research Centre in July 2015.

Sustained and energetic political and diplomatic engagement will also be critical for maintaining momentum on the accountability agenda going forward. The High Level Political Forum at the United Nations will provide political oversight of SDG implementation – a challenging task considering the myriad governments, international organisations, and private sector and civil society partners that will be involved in implementing the goals. In addition to financial contributions to facilitate follow-up and review processes in partner countries and support for global and regional accountability mechanisms, Canada can lead by example by serving as one of the first high income countries to submit to the global voluntary review process. To be seen as a credible leader on the SDGs, sustained diplomacy and political support will also need to be matched by significant Government of Canada contributions to achieving the SDGs, through increased development assistance as well as leveraging partnerships with international agencies, civil society, the private sector and philanthropic organizations.

At the national level, the Canadian government should commit to the SDG agenda and its robust adoption and implementation. While some consultations have occurred, the federal government will need to seriously ramp up efforts to make the SDG agenda a reality in Canada. The SDGs cover a range of issues that spread across federal, and provincial and territorial jurisdictions, such as health, education, energy, the environment and infrastructure. Cities and municipalities, civil society, academics and the private sector are also implicated in the SDG agenda. Strong federal leadership will be needed to raise awareness with appropriate stakeholders and among the public, consult across levels of government and sectors, and establish a national strategy for SDG implementation informed by Canadian priorities. As [research has shown](#), Canada is home to many innovative efforts to address sustainable development challenges. Canada's SDG roadmap should be developed through a consultative process that builds from existing efforts by different levels of government, civil society and the business sector.

Finally, an important aspect of the SDGs for Canada is the international call to leave no one behind. Research has continued to show that Canada's Aboriginal populations fall behind on almost every measure of economic, social and environmental well-being. The SDGs present an important opportunity for Canada to develop and adopt a national vision for sustainable development in Canada that targets the poorest and the most marginalized, and ensures that no one is left behind both abroad and at home.

