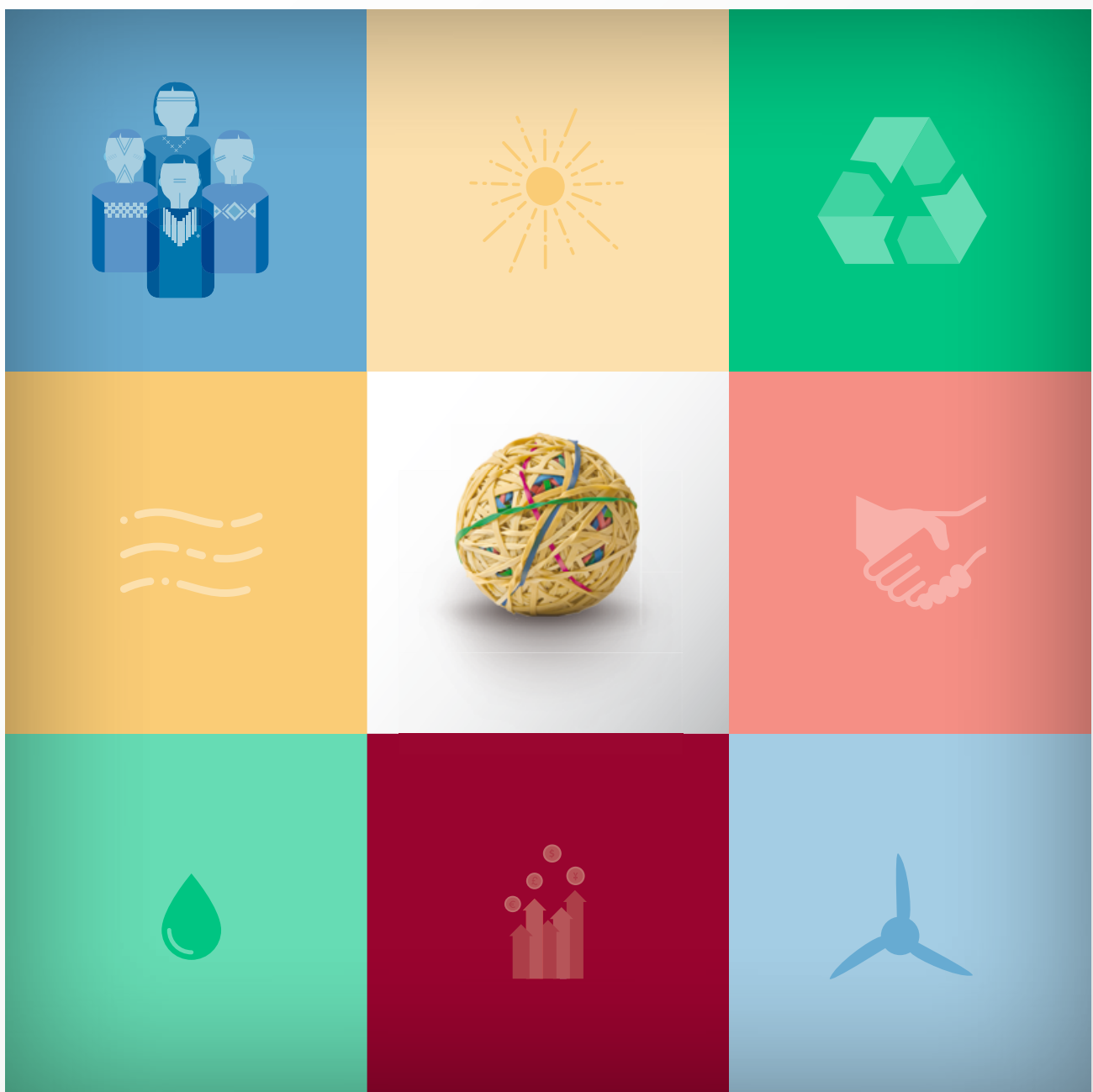

THE SHARED SOCIETIES CONTRIBUTION TO AGENDA 2030

A message for World Leaders and Governments from The Club de Madrid Working Group on Shared Societies and Environmental Sustainability 2017



The Club de Madrid, through its Shared Societies Project, convened a Working Group at the beginning of 2016 to examine the link between Shared Societies and environmental sustainability.¹ In the course of its deliberations it gave a good deal of thought to the implications of an inclusive Shared Societies approach for the successful realization of Agenda 2030. It identified key steps that will be necessary to ensure that Agenda 2030 is achieved. This statement summarizes the thinking of the whole group, though individual members may hold a different opinion on particular points or the weight that should be given to them.

The Club de Madrid welcomes this and the other documents of the Working Group as an important contribution to the debate on these issues, without endorsing all the views expressed in them.

Agenda 2030 is an important step towards a new radical vision for sustainable and equitable development which leaves no one behind, and which recognizes that the current challenges need to be addressed in a holistic way. But the limited progress that was made in the Addis Ababa Action Plan on Financing for Development is an indication that nation states and other powerful interests hesitate to consider the substantively new approaches that are needed to ensure the realization of the Agenda 2030 vision and societies that are truly sustainable.

¹ See Working Group Concept Note and List of Members. A fuller report of the Group's deliberations can be found in a separate paper *Sharing our Planet: A Shared Societies Perspective on Elements of the Current Development Paradigm*.

THE CLUB DE MADRID 2016 WORKING GROUP ON SHARED SOCIETIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY identified five tasks which need to be implemented if Agenda 2030 is to be fully realized, based on an inclusive Shared Societies approach:

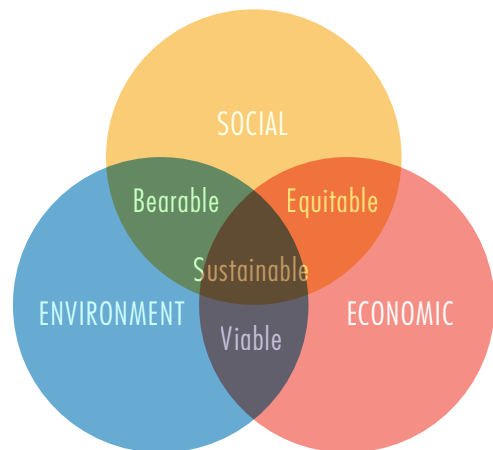
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- A.** Strengthen Agenda 2030
 - B.** Extend Agenda 2030
 - C.** Put participation and inclusion at the heart of the process of meeting the goals of Agenda 2030
 - D.** Support the ongoing efforts to review the capacity of current economic and development paradigms to provide adequate frameworks for the achievement of Agenda 2030
 - E.** Initiate a process to review the capacity of current global governance systems to facilitate achievement of Agenda 2030

These tasks are elaborated in the following sections.

A. STRENGTHEN AGENDA 2030

The efforts of UN Member States to achieve consensus on Agenda 2030 are recognized and commended:

- It lays out a **vision and goals and targets** to which UN Member States have committed, and which together provide a unique opportunity to move towards a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable world.
- Its vision contains elements of a **qualitative and radical change** in the way development is understood. In particular the emphasis on **inclusion** of all sections of society, in the sense of their participation in planning, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes, is a refreshing change of orientation.
- The principle of **“leave no one behind”** as the benchmark of appropriate development compels all decision makers to be more vigilant in their understanding of those who are most vulnerable, and to ensure greater equality.
- Agenda 2030 repeatedly emphasizes that it is a **holistic and mutually interdependent** set of goals – sustainable development can only be achieved as the result of the interaction of many factors, including social, economic, environmental and political, and any policy intervention must take into account its wider impact on all of these factors.
- The Agenda is a **human rights-based approach** that shifts the focus from donor-recipient to state-people, in the sense that, if they are to be achieved, the SDGs must become the basis of a social contract between states and people, and between duty-bearers and rights-holders. This is also at the core of the Shared Societies approach.



To maintain the focus and remain true to the spirit of Agenda 2030, it is important that plans and programmes across all policy areas are inclusive and participatory, respect the dignity of others and of the planet, and release human capacity and wealth to enhance the wellbeing of all. These characteristics are important not only because they are right, fair and affirming, but because otherwise it will not be possible to reach the targets.

The next step is to ensure that the Agenda is put into practice, and that all states and institutions are ready to make the changes in policy and orientation that are required. Therefore Member States and all actors – intergovernmental bodies, planners and policy makers, communities, civil society, business and commerce – are called upon to jointly ensure that the spirit of Agenda 2030 is maintained and the necessary new paradigm is established. This means:

- maintaining focus on the core vision of Agenda 2030 – of a sustainable and more equitable world in which everyone’s needs are met;
- maintaining an integrated approach across agencies and disciplines, bearing in mind how the goals interact and impact on each other, and how progress on one goal can spur progress on others;
- distinguishing between development models, policies and programmes that can contribute to that overall process, and those that will need to be discarded or redesigned;
- engaging wider society, building awareness of and public support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in Agenda 2030; and
- supporting robust systems and mechanisms to monitor and assess progress towards the goals and ensure that they focus on relevant indicators and intended objectives.



B . EXTEND AGENDA 2030

While the achievement of Agenda 2030 is recognized, together with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement at the end of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Agreement on Climate Change, at the same time there are reservations. Some members of the Working Group regretted that these agreements did not go further’: there are challenges that have yet to be tackled (such as concrete ways to reduce global inequality and inequity), and there are some contradictions (such as the reality that reducing poverty can increase carbon emissions by those who now have greater purchasing power). Neither the omissions nor contradictions are surprising, given the range of opinions that were part of the consensus. But these challenges and contradictions will have to be resolved. There is also justifiable doubt that some states will meet the commitments they have made, particularly in the Paris

Agreement. Nevertheless, the agreements that have been achieved provide the springboard for further progress. In the course of implementing their provisions, all parties are called upon to go beyond the existing commitments and to rethink current concepts and assumptions, including currently entrenched economic theories that limit the prospects of achieving the SDGs. Consideration should be given to alternative approaches and frameworks that are being developed by communities and NGOs.²

The following sections consider specific ways in which Agenda 2030 can be both strengthened and enhanced.






C. PUT PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION AT THE HEART OF THE PROCESS OF MEETING THE GOALS OF AGENDA 2030

The involvement of communities and individuals is a prerequisite for effectively overcoming the many global and local challenges, and therefore it is essential to promote social inclusion and build Shared Societies. Why?

Many of the changes that will be needed have been recognized for a long time but have not been happening fast enough because there is deep resistance to change.



² For example, the relevance of concepts like pro-social business models, solidarity economy, degrowth, and principles such as *buen vivir*, *sumac kawsay*, *ubuntu* and *swaraj*. See A. Kothari, F. Demaria and A. Acosta (2014) “Buen Vivir, Degrowth and Ecological Swaraj: Alternatives to Sustainable Development and the Green Economy” in *Development 2014*, 57(3-4), (362-375).

-  There is unwillingness to give up **existing assumptions** which, even if they were relevant in the past, are no longer fit for purpose because they do not take account of current realities such as climate change or the finite nature of the world's resources and its capacity to meet demand.
-  There are also **vested interests** that benefit from the current model of development, even if it leaves many people behind, increases environmental degradation and contributes to climate change.
-  A **latent or open sense of superiority and prejudice** leads to complacency, refusal to listen to the views of others who are different, rejection of evidence and data, resistance to change, and potential for inequalities at all levels.
-  **Apathy** is the default position for many, who feel remote from the challenges of environmental degradation or climate change and do not realize that their behaviour and attitudes are part of the problem and a cause of the lack of progress.
-  **Inequality** of various kinds (power, wealth, status, access) precludes large sections of humanity from participating meaningfully participation in the transformation towards wellbeing, while enabling those with privilege to ignore the imperatives of such transformation.

An inclusive Shared Societies' approach will contribute to overcoming such negative mind-sets and creating space for **new thinking**. How?

Including the **different views and experiences** of all stakeholders in developing and implementing new approaches is fundamentally important. Particularly valuable are the views and experiences of those who have been failed by the current system and left behind and marginalized on account of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion or gender. They, more than most, know that existing approaches have passed them by and they, more than most, are vulnerable to social, environmental, economic and political shocks and the negative impacts of inappropriate policies. Their insights provide the basis for generating new, more effective approaches.

Awareness and commitment by the wider community will be needed to overcome apathy, and people's support for the necessary changes cannot be manufactured by exhortations or orders. When people feel they belong to inclusive Shared Societies, they become aware of the impact of their own actions and attitudes on the environment and on others, and are willing to share responsibility for the wellbeing of the wider community. And when people are impassioned by an issue and have opportunities, information and space to play roles as active citizens, they can bring effective pressure to bear on big institutions to act more responsibly and sensitively; self-evidently, the impact of those institutions is much greater than that of an individual. This does not only apply in local communities. When people feel they are a valued part of the global community, they share a sense of responsibility for what happens on the other side of the world and become aware of how their attitudes and actions help advance or hinder sustainable development.

What needs to happen to ensure that a Shared Societies approach is embedded in policy discussions? It is recommended that all stages of the policy process are screened for their incorporation and application of **seven key principles of a shared societies approach to sustainable development**:

KEY PRINCIPLES AND QUESTIONS FOR A SHARED SOCIETIES APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Participation:** Are all sectors of society involved in developing sustainable policies and programmes, beginning with joint assessments of the issues and concerns, rather than only seeking support for preconceived solutions?
- 2. Transparency:** Is there transparency and full access to information for all stakeholders?
- 3. Shared benefits:** Does everyone and the natural environment benefit from policies and projects, or are some affected negatively?
- 4. Affirmative action:** Does the proposed initiative benefit groups that are marginalized, whether on grounds of physical location, identity, gender or for other reasons? How will they be negatively affected and left behind?
- 5. Long-term perspective:** Are the long-term ecological, social and economic consequences of policies and programmes positive? Are they sustainable in the long term?
- 6. Responsible pollution mitigation:** Do those who are responsible for negative consequences, including environmental degradation, bear the cost of repair? How will that obligation be enforced?
- 7. Disaggregated monitoring data:** Are provisions built into the systems of monitoring programmes and projects for sustainable development to ensure the collection of disaggregated data in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, gender and other aspects of identity, in order to identify quickly what groups are being left behind and introduce corrections?

These questions are applicable in local and national processes leading to the design and implementation of new public programmes, policies and projects. They are also relevant to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, as the UN central platform for follow-up, monitoring and review of Agenda 2030, and elsewhere. They go beyond measuring the outputs of programmes and projects but assess the kind of processes involved and whether they are appropriate. By ensuring that these and other similar questions are asked, policies and programmes will become oriented to an approach which is more likely to ensure real commitment. This will lead to meaningful engagement and, in turn, to more sensitive and effective strategies and approaches.

Fundamentally it is agreed that no one can be left behind if the SDGs and a prosperous sustainable future are to be achieved. Equally no one should be or can be left out of the *process* of creating that future and monitoring progress. Otherwise the achievements will be partial and inadequate. **The High-Level Political Forum and the Economic and Social Council are expected to keep this perspective at the centre of the process of implementing and monitoring policies and programmes to fulfil Agenda 2030.**

D . RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT

THE ONGOING EFFORTS TO REVIEW CURRENT ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AGENDA 2030

If one assesses the current economic and development paradigms from the perspective of social inclusion and environmental protection, it is clear that **they are not fit for purpose**.³ The underlying imperatives of the current paradigm are competition between people and between states, which by its own logic means that some, or many, will be left behind; and growth, which by its own logic means maximum exploitation of the world's resources. These paradigms may have served a purpose in previous times, but they are now outmoded in the light of current challenges and current knowledge. The existing discussions around alternative models and frameworks that are taking place, both within and outside intergovernmental institutions, now have to be brought into the mainstream.



³ The Working Group has examined this issue in more detail in a separate paper, *Sharing our Planet: A Shared Societies Perspective on Elements of Current Development Paradigm*.

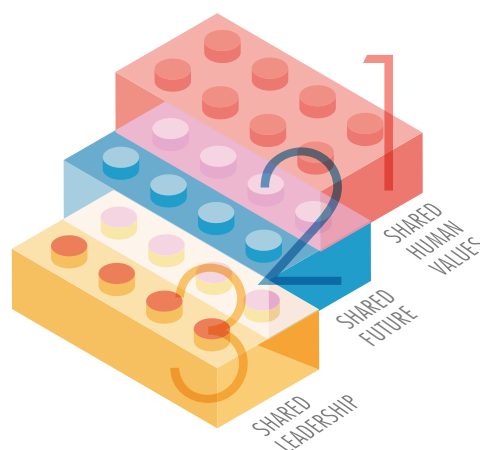
What is needed now is a dedicated initiative, backed (but not constrained) by national governments, to formulate a more relevant economic and development model or models, consistent with the aspirations of Agenda 2030. The starting point must be the vision of the society and the world that we want – inclusive, prosperous and sustainable, ensuring wellbeing in all its facets for all – and the challenge is to use our knowledge of economics to propose how that vision can be realized. Too often the starting point seems to be based on the assumptions of existing economic theory, which limit the possibility of a new vision such as Agenda 2030 ever being realized. Inspiration and lessons can be taken from countries that are making an effort to put social justice and sustainability at the forefront of progress, and we urge the creation of an alliance of such countries to act as role models and provide the leadership that is necessary to address the challenges of the 21st century.

E. INITIATE A PROCESS TO REVIEW

THE CAPACITY OF CURRENT GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE ACHIEVEMENT OF AGENDA 2030

The role played by the global governance system will be a crucial factor in whether or not the goals of Agenda 2030 are achieved. The conundrum at the heart of development is that, rightly, each country is responsible for its own territory and the wellbeing of its own people, but at the same time is constrained by the international context within which it exists. Agenda 2030 says the SDGs are envisaged as “global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities,”⁴ and while “each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development,”⁵ “we will not be able to achieve our ambitious goals and targets without a revitalized and enhanced Global Partnership”.⁶ To this we might also add the word “inclusive”.

While the call in Goal 17 for a new Global Partnership is welcome, an enabling global system is not yet in place. Short-term national self-interest takes precedence over the needs of disadvantaged countries, marginalized communities and the long-term interests of the planet,



⁴ United Nations (2015) *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development*, New York: UN, para 55, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁵ Ibid., para 63.

⁶ Ibid., para 60.

and therefore everyone's long-term interest. Intergovernmental bodies operate independently of each other, with only minimal co-ordination, though of course the same powerful states are the most influential members of all of them. They often have specific areas of interest – not least maintaining their own influence and privileges – and so do not take a long-term view of the many elements and policies that need to work together to ensure sustainable development.

This applies equally to the UN family and its more than 50 distinct agencies, which is itself a complex set of huge bureaucracies. These agencies must resist the temptation to claim ownership of SDGs that are specifically related to their area of responsibility, a tendency which would begin to disaggregate the goals into discrete policy areas. This would undermine the concept of development as a multifaceted, interdependent process and the SDGs as an integrated whole. The Permanent Representatives of the Member States must also ensure that this does not happen, while national governments must be alert to this danger within their own governance systems. Key tasks of national departments and of all UN agencies will be to scrutinize all policy areas and proposed actions to see how they incorporate the specific concerns of that body and advance its mission, and at the same time critically assess the possible negative impact of its own activities on other aspects of sustainable development. So, for example, environmental agencies or programmes should *ensure that the social and economic impacts of environmental policies are considered*, as well as screening economic and social policies for their impact on the environment. Equally, economic agencies should consider *the impact of economic policies on the environment and society*.

What process would nudge world leaders into developing a new system that is better able to balance economic processes, social wellbeing and the limits of the planet's resources? To help answer this question, the Club de Madrid produced a Global Shared Societies Agenda⁷ with its partners, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Center of Concern, and representatives of intergovernmental agencies, to show what would be required to create that overarching framework at the heart of Agenda 2030. It provides a template for such a reorientation of the global system that is responsive to the needs of all, including the marginalized and disadvantaged. It would be structured in ways which are enabling and supportive of national efforts to implement effective strategies and programmes for sustainable development.

The United Nations is called upon to convene all relevant parties, rights-holders and stakeholders and guide the process of developing structures and practices that will enable national governments and peoples of the world to implement programmes that will achieve prosperity and wellbeing for all, reflecting the spirit of Agenda 2030. In particular, these programmes must centrally involve people's forums representing the hitherto marginalized sections of humanity, including indigenous peoples, other traditional communities, women and children. The Global Shared Societies Agenda provides a list of the key issues that need to be addressed.

By urgently addressing the five key requirements discussed above, and keeping them in mind and revisiting them regularly, one can be confident of achieving and going beyond the Sustainable Development Goals, creating a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable world which meets the needs and ensures the wellbeing of all peoples everywhere. Otherwise progress may be made in some areas but will fall short of the ambition to ensure everyone can satisfy their basic needs and contribute to the wellbeing of all. The choice is clear and the responsibility recognized. World leaders and the United Nations system are urged to take decisive and appropriate action and provide clear leadership consistent with the spirit of Agenda 2030.

7 http://www.clubmadrid.org/en/publicacion/global_shared_societies_agenda

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