

# The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit:

**Just words or a move towards a just and renewable future?**

September 2015

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From Sept 24-27, as the [United Nations Sustainable Development Summit takes place in NYC](#), thousands of people around the world will call on governments to tackle the defining issues of our time – poverty, inequality and climate change. As part of this global alliance, Greenpeace will promote solutions to the impacts of climate change and call for a 100 percent renewable energy future for all and an end to deforestation. Greenpeace activists in 31 countries (follow [#ActionsforClimate](#)) will join the call for action on climate this week.

Greenpeace International views the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) as an important to do list for humanity. If implemented in full, the Sustainable Development Goals could help end poverty by 2030, turn the tide on soaring levels of inequality and accelerate the transition to a world run on 100 percent renewable energy already under way. Greenpeace hopes that the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit will be used as an opportunity by governments, civil society and businesses alike to build momentum for an ambitious long-term climate agreement in Paris in December. This will require Heads of State and CEOs to commit to a phase out of fossil fuels and a switch to 100 percent renewable energy for all by 2050.

Kumi Naidoo, International Executive Director of Greenpeace comments:

“Many governments will have to drastically alter policies in favour of people and planet if they take this new to-do list for the planet seriously. To tackle poverty and dangerous climate change, we must urgently end the fossil fuel era and deliver 100% renewable energy for all. Governments must deliver on the promise to halt deforestation by 2020.

These new global goals will only be achieved if we act fast enough to prevent dangerous climate change. A critical next step is therefore that governments agree to phase out fossil fuels and switch to 100% renewable energy for all by 2050 at the Paris climate summit later this year.”

Greenpeace welcomes the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, but remains concerned some of them also endorse ideas and institutions fuelling unsustainable development – the opposite of what they are designed to achieve. Greenpeace, for example, strongly opposes the call for more free trade in the Outcome document and calls for a radical rethink of our economic system, not a continued ideological belief in economic growth as the only way to achieve development.

## Background

### SDGs and climate change

Climate change, sustainable energy access (including RE and EE), resilience and adaptation are addressed in the preamble and the declaration, but overall the SDGs are vague on climate (the text explicitly acknowledges the UNFCCC is the key global body on climate change).

We welcome that via SDG #7, “Ensuring Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All” the urgent issue of energy access has prominence in the SDGs. Decentralized renewable energy is the best way to implement this target in our view. The specific target on renewable energy is disappointing, as it only calls for a “substantial increase”, but as an [energy revolution](#) based on renewables is already under way we are optimistic the SDGs [will contribute to the necessary switch to 100 percent renewable energy for all](#).

SDG #13 is the specific goal on climate change entitled “Taking Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts”

While the climate language is vague, we welcome these key messages, namely that:

- development and the application of technology should be climate-sensitive and respect biodiversity
- climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development
- the survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, are at risk
- there is an emissions reduction gap to achieve the agreed global goal to stay below two degrees mean temperature rise, and that there is a need to accelerate emissions reduction

### SDGs and forests

Greenpeace welcomes SDG #15 and specifically the target 15.2, which calls for a halt to deforestation by 2020. We will push governments and business alike to deliver on this promise. You can find more background on why zero deforestation needs to be achieved by 2020 [here](#).

### SDGs and oceans

Greenpeace welcomes the prominence given to ocean protection via SDG #14, “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. We also welcome, as a first step, the following targets:

- By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.
- By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.
- By 2020, conserve at least 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

Greenpeace is demanding even more ambitious protection of our oceans. Greenpeace is calling for a global network of marine reserves to ultimately cover 40 percent of the planet's oceans. Governments must also adopt a UN High Seas Biodiversity Agreement to protect marine life in international waters. Immediate action is needed to safeguard fragile areas before it is too late, such as the high seas region around the North Pole to be set aside as an Arctic Sanctuary.

## SDGs and agriculture

Greenpeace welcomes ambitious SDG #2, “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.” We specifically welcome the targets to:

- ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices
- maintain genetic diversity of seeds
- increase investment
- increase access by small-scale producers to land and other factors of production

Since much of the language is vague and fails to address the root and structural causes of hunger and unsustainability, we are concerned this may result in a “doing more of the same” rather than promoting any real political change.

Greenpeace is calling for a paradigm shift in agriculture practices. SDG #2 must not be used as a way to promote chemical-intensive agriculture inputs (like pesticides, GE seeds, and chemical fertilizers). Instead, these targets should be translated into action through wide-scale support for the uptake of ecological farming to maintain ecosystems and improve soil quality while increasing productivity and resilience to climate change and other shocks.

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For general international media requests including interviews, broadcast-ready video and high-resolution photos, please contact our 24/7 hotline at +31 (0)20 718 2470 or e-mail [pressdesk.int@greenpeace.org](mailto:pressdesk.int@greenpeace.org).