

Sustainable Development Goals: Legally Realistic or Overambitious Towards the Development of the Nations?

(Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan: Realistik Secara Perundangan atau Terlalu Bercita-cita untuk Pembangunan Negara?)

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the United Nations' latest strategy to fight the issues of health, environment, and society that are currently afflicting the world. Though the 17 SDGs are highly anticipated to be the key in achieving the global development, the goals which equipped with 169 targets are said to be fairy tales, dressed in the bureaucratise of intergovernmental narcissism, decorated with robes of multilateral paralysis, and poisoned by the acid of nation-state failure. The MDGs were criticized for being too simple and narrow focused, but conversely the SDGs have been criticized for being too complex to realistically achieve. The main problem with the SDGs seems to be related with having a set of goals that are desirable yet too ambitious to achieve in reality. Therefore, the first part of this paper will discuss on the emergence of SDGs from their predecessor-MDGs, and the aftermath of MDGs. Part 2 of the paper will then discuss on the legal challenges of the implementation of SDGs which includes the lack of clarity and imprecise definitions of each goals, difficulty to translate the goals into actionable development outcomes, as well as the problem in strengthening governance. Since the goal needs to make measurable and actionable to realise the sustainable development by 2030, the author will then provide recommendations in Part 3, which will constitute to a cohesive framework that will be relevant to make the SDGs reliable goals for the development of the nations. The research finds that the SDGs are over ambitious and impossible to achieve the targets by 2030. However, the initiative to help in achieving global development must not be wasted, therefore powerful and realistic measures are obviously a necessity to make SDGs a success.

Keywords: Development; global development; millennium development goals; sustainable development goals; United Nations

ABSTRAK

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adalah strategi terkini daripada Persatuan Bangsa-bangsa bersatu bagi menangani isu kesihatan, persekitaran, dan sosial yang memberi kesan kepada dunia kini. Walaupun 17 SDG dikatakan sebagai penyebab untuk mencapai pembangunan global, matlamat yang diikuti dengan 169 sasaran ini turut dikatakan sebagai cerita dongeng, dibayangi birokrasi kerajaan, dihiasi dengan kelumpuhan dan kegagalan negara. Millennium Development Goals (MDG) telah dikritik kerana bersifat terlalu mudah dan mempunyai fokus yang sempit, namun SDG pula bersifat terlalu kompleks untuk dilaksanakan. Masalah utama dengan SDG adalah ianya mempunyai matlamat yang diinginkan namun mustahil untuk dilaksanakan. Oleh itu, bahagian pertama kertas ini akan membincangkan tentang kewujudan SDG daripada pendahulunya-MDG dan kesan MDG. Bahagian 2 pula akan membincangkan berkenaan dengan cabaran perundangan dalam implementasi SDG yang melibatkan kakagangan daripada segi kejelasan dan definisi yang kurang tepat bagi setiap matlamat, kesukaran dalam mengerjakan matlamat pembangunan, dan juga mengukuhkan tadbir urus. Oleh kerana matlamat itu perlu boleh diukur untuk merealisasikan pembangunan mampan menjelang tahun 2030, maka penulis kemudian akan memberikan cadangan dalam Bahagian 3, yang akan menjadi rangka kerja yang kohesif yang akan menjadi relevan untuk menjadikan SDG sebagai matlamat yang boleh dipercayai untuk pembangunan negara. Penyelidikan mendapati bahawa SDG adalah satu cita-cita yang tinggi dan mustahil untuk mencapai sasaran menjelang 2030. Walau bagaimanapun, inisiatif untuk membantu dalam mencapai pembangunan global tidak boleh dibazirkan, oleh itu langkah-langkah yang berkuasa dan realistik merupakan satu keperluan untuk menjadikan SDG suatu kejayaan.

Kata kunci: Pembangunan; pembangunan global; millennium development goals (MDG); sustainable development goals (SDG); Persatuan Bangsa-bangsa Bersatu

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 25th September 2015 which is also known as 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.'¹ While the SDGs seems promising, there had been a prolonged debate about the goals. Nevertheless, the sprawling package of SDGs, which includes the 17 overarching goals and a mind-boggling 169 targets, was adopted virtually unchanged from that proposed.² The SDGs which took effect on the 1st January of 2016 set a new global agenda for the next 15 years and in the same time promise to engage the whole world community including multinational companies, civil society, NGOs, scholars, scientist, and students around the globe³ The SDGs were built on their predecessor – The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁴ Like their predecessors, the SDGs are a statement of aspirations which is a voluntary agreement rather than a binding treaty. While this presents a drawback as states may be more tempted to limit their commitments, it also presents an opportunity insofar as states may be willing to adopt a more ambitious agenda when this agenda imposes on them no legally binding obligations.⁵

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development on one hand reflects the shortcomings of their predecessor because the MDGs did not sufficiently address the priorities of fragile and conflict-affected countries plus the implementation and progress of MDGs are uneven. On another note, SDGs also reflects shifting security dynamics, coupled up with new and evolving threats and challenges between humanitarian and development needs as well as their responses. For instance, the issue of global migration crisis which clearly are unable to be resolved through humanitarian or development responses alone as the humanitarian response will only take care of the risk while ignoring the root cause and the development-responses are lack of capacity and flexibility of resources to respond to urgent demands.⁶ Above all of the promising goals and targets in the SDGs, a question arise; in an international system where states jealously guard their sovereignty and policy autonomy, is it possible for world leaders to agree upon common objectives and plans for action, especially when it comes to contested issues such as that of 'global development?'.⁷

Thus, this article will start the discussion on the emergence of SDGs and the aftermath of the MDGs to make an overview of what MDGs have given to the nation and to see whether SDGs are able to continue the unsettled targets where MDGs had left off with additional targets to be realised in 30 years. The above questions mentioned will then be discussed in the following part of the paper as the author will discuss on the legal challenges in the implementation of SDGs and to also discuss whether SDGs are overambitious. Next, some relevant recommendations will be made based on what had been discussed in the

two earlier parts of this article. Then, the discussion will conclude by giving an answer as to whether SDGs are legally realistic or just and overambitious goals.

THE AFTERMATH OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) AND EMERGENCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The 2030 agenda is an intergovernmental agreement that is designed to guide global development efforts for the next fifteen years. As mentioned before, the SDGs replace the MDGs which the goals of SDGs are designed to build on the MDGs and complete what they did not achieve. While there were only 8 MDGs, the SDGs are 17 in number, with 169 associated targets and 304 proposed indicators.⁸ The origins of MDGs lie in a series of UN summits and conferences held during the 1990s. Based on the targets set at these conferences, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) articulated a set of international development goals in year 1996. These set of international development goals were then made as the basis for the MDGs. The MDGs were never debated openly. Following the adoption of UN Millennium Declaration, a group of high level experts were convened to formulate the MDGs which were then presented as an annex to a report from the Secretary General to the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The report was accepted and it was argued that the acceptance had contributed to the fact that the UNGA had assented to the MDGs.⁹

The MDGs had gone through a long journey from the very beginning as the undemocratic beginnings were always a target of criticism, and when the time comes for replacing the goals, the UN was more careful to adopt a more open and inclusive process. A vast amount of time and effort have done into the creation of Agenda 2030. On 2012, the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon appointed 27 member of high level panel which accordingly had consulted a massive swathe of people and also did online surveys, then recommended 12 illustrative targets to replace the MDGs and referred it as "sustainable development at the core." This clearly shows that there is a shift from the idea of human development in MDGs to sustainable development in SDGs. Following the Rio+20, the MDGs replacement process was conclusively merged with the UN's sustainable development agenda. The outcome of Rio+20 was an agreement by member states to develop a set of aspirational sustainable development goals similar to MDGs.¹⁰

Moving on from the MDGs to the SDGs, a major breakthrough has been achieved with the inclusion of the concept "Leaving no-one behind", clearly implying the intention to move away from the former approach of picking off the low hanging fruit, criticized under the MDGs.¹¹ As the final SDGs document states "As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that

no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”¹²

According to what had been reviewed in the process of creating the SDGs, the question arises, as to whether the MDGs work? Clearly, the MDGs and their targets highly variable across goals, regions and countries.¹³ The MDGs were viewed as a facade for pushing the superpowers’ economic agenda with minimal concerns for gathering developing countries’ opinions.¹⁴ Further, because the MDGs were developed to fit within the capitalist system, poverty reduction will ultimately fail, since the goals do little to change the structure that produced the present levels of poverty.¹⁵ Though there has been substantial advancement on reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger, however approximately 800 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, suffering from hunger.¹⁶

The MDGs had left with some unresolved issues since the beginning of its formulation. This is due to the fact that some key objectives of the Millennium Declaration (2000) were not addressed in the MDGs, as for instance peace and disarmament. In addition, there are some key areas which carry insufficient progress namely; MDG2 – provision of universal primary education, MDG4 – reduction in child mortality, and MDG5 – reduction in maternal mortality.¹⁷ In addition, there were gaps between areas of global development that the goals failed to cover, and the goals themselves were narrow-minded. For instance, primary education was the only type of education that was identified as a target, whilst it is agreeable that basic education is an important building block for the development of an educated and functional society. For all that matters, it actually ignores the provision of education needed for the skilled adults such as farmers, plumbers, engineers, doctors, mechanics and many more.¹⁸ Apart from that, one of the major MDG failures is that the success of the goals was not experienced equally around the globe, which this is in fact can be considered as a major defeat. One of the focus of MDGs is on gender inequality which according to the United Nations, the said inequality still persists despite the fact that there is more representation of women in parliament and more girls are going to school. Still, women are being discriminated in terms of access of work, economic assets, as well as participation in private and public decision making.¹⁹

Of the many goals and target only gender parity in primary, secondary, and tertiary education has been achieved. However, it should be noted that the target relates to enrolment and not completion rates.²⁰ In addition to that, the goals also have difference between countries and regions, which more than half of the countries still have gender disparity at primary level in sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia is the only one region that has achieved the target at tertiary level.²¹ On

top of that, women are still disproportionately numbered among the working poor and living in extreme poverty. In addition, women are concentrated to be employed in a poor paid part times jobs, and still being paid less than men in many sectors.²² In terms of gender equality, MDGs were too modest in their ambition, covered too few areas in gender goals. The absence of violence against women and girls as targeted under MDG 3 was widely seen as a major oversight and the indicators were said to be too narrow, failed to focus on the structural barriers that prevented the progress on gender equality.²³

In addition to that, the numbers for global emissions of carbon dioxide as well as water scarcity are devastating. There were a 50% increase in carbon dioxide and emissions and water scarcity affects more than 40% of the world in comparison to the 1990s statistic.²⁴ Other than that, it was argued that there were gaps between areas of global development that the goals did not cover, and the goals themselves were too narrow minded. Nevertheless, although there have been failures in trying to implement all the MDGs, they were far from a complete failure. MDGs were first of its kind and was an unprecedented agreement on the call for more action on global issues.²⁵ In contrast of MDGs which were said that have been conceived around the negotiation table and were based on what the UN was doing, the consultation process for the SDGs was a big task as all 193 member states had input into the development of these goals.²⁶ People from over 100 countries were asked what they wanted the goals to address.²⁷ This signalled a decisive change from the idea of human development in the MDGs to the sustainable development as articulated in the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987 as: ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’²⁸

In order to implement the SDGs, serious and stronger as well as consistent political commitments are needed to tackle the human needs and inequalities. Greater cooperation between governments, the private sectors and many facets of civil society are needed. Also, clear and persistent focus is important to achieve.²⁹ However, back to the question that was thrown earlier, can the world do that despite all the sovereignty and policy safeguards by the member states? The discussion will then with the legal challenges for the implementation of the SDGs.

LEGAL CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDGS – OVERAMBITIOUS GOALS?

It was doubtful that the SDGs could achieve more due to the fact that it has more targets, goals and indicators compared to the MDGs. As it is a well-known fact, the MDGs were criticized for having limited scope and lack of consensus but the question now arises, whether the United Nations have gone overboard in trying to please

every interest group in seeking consensus for the SDGs. There are many views regarding the SDGs, some of the view claimed that the number of goals should be reduced, while some others claimed that the goals should be numerous for it to be universal. On top of that, there are views saying that with more goals and complexity, the SDGs will be easier to ignore.³⁰

It is a well-known fact that SDGs are universal and therefore apply to all countries. However, the question now arises as to what this means in practice. The main issue in debate was whether the principle upheld in the Rio Declarations (1992 Earth Summit) of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) is sustained in the SDG process.³¹ The negotiations explain that ‘developing countries unanimously clarified that while the sustainable development are universal to all countries, in terms of their nature and relevance, the degree of national responsibility in the implementation of the goals should be differentiated in accordance with the varying capacities, realities and developmental levels of countries.’³² This shows that the sustainable goals though are universal in nature, still upholds the national interest and are moving according to their own pace.

Next is strengthening of governance where the issue of bringing the right stakeholders at the right time and place. As mentioned before, the SDG involves many different stakeholders operating at many different scales, from national governments to transnational corporations, local and international NGOs, small villages and many more. It is very difficult to get the relevant stakeholders in order to solve complex poverty and sustainability problems. Take Goal 7 for example, ‘access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.’ The question is who is supposed to be involved in developing, producing, installing and maintaining the technologies to provide universally accessible energy? Plus, who is involved in determining what is ‘reliable and affordable’ for different communities in different parts of the world? This can be seen in the differences between China and United States.³³

Challenges are not only focused on one goal like energy but also poverty. Nevertheless, on the issue of poverty, the question of success of SDGs to reduce poverty and inequality comes into picture. Since the first SDG goal is to eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere, will the SDGs realistically deliver on this?³⁴ This is due to the fact that the current economic model built on GDP could never be inclusive or sustainable and on top of that the corporations and rich-country governments that control the SDG process are very unlikely to adopt changes needed to truly eradicate poverty because it would threaten interests of the global 1%.³⁵ For the issue of inequality, the concern was never integrated into other goals in a cross cutting manner as it is done for the objectives of combating climate change and achieving gender equality. It is not wrong to be skeptical when the SDG-10 which aims to reduce inequality is a stand-alone goal and there

is no explicit reference to inequality within and among countries outside this particular goal.³⁶ The inclusion of this goal represents a ground-breaking acknowledgement from the community of states that inequality – not only focusing on poverty and absolute deprivation – is a core development issue. However, there are still challenges particularly in achieving the goal that is targeted to tackle economic inequality and inequalities between countries. Financial commitments remain scarce and SDG10 has no obvious thematic body or set of institutions at the international level to drive actions and funding for this goal unlike other goals which have dedicated UN agencies, mechanism and committees.³⁷ On top of that, government of most developing countries do not yet have the laws and policies in place to allow them achieve gender equality (SDG5) as well as to reduce inequality within and among countries as discussed above in SDG10. There are only three of ten developing countries – Brazil, South Africa, and Ghana – that have over 65% of key inequality reducing policies in place now. Three countries – Senegal, Uganda and Zambia – have less than 50% in place. Worse still, the rich and developed countries are not adequately supporting developing countries to achieve the SDGs, contrary to the SDG 17’s commitment to ‘revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.’ These countries’ policies are actually contributing to deepen inequalities globally. Above all, the list of grounds for potential discrimination recognised by the SDGs is not complete. There is no language understood as an attempt to end discrimination, violence, and denial of sexual and reproductive rights on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.³⁸

Apart from that, SDGs targets can be viewed as the goal for the rich as the targets refrain from referring to the need to redistribute income and wealth and do not mention any relationship between incomes of the rich (particularly the one percent) and those of the poor. While SDGs should recognise the rich and powerful special responsibilities, which of course require changes in domestic policies of rich countries, there are nothing on this in the SDGs.³⁹ Instead, the SDGs should have specified the responsibilities of wealthy states in these goals by identifying what they must do to reduce impediments and to increase assistance so that the ambitious targets could be met even by the poorest countries. By doing so, it will be in line with Agenda 2030 which states the commitment to realising the right to development and the internalisation of responsibility that this entails.⁴⁰ In this regard, measures to ensure the participation and empowerment of marginalised and excluded groups will be critical. States must seek to give the principle of equity and their commitment to international cooperation, which are central to the right to development and meaningful operational force.⁴¹ The fight against inequality requires that those who are ‘more equal’ take steps to reduce the gap. Nevertheless, the richest countries continue to put developing countries at a disadvantage in order to protect

their privileged positions. Even when it comes to the issue of their commitment to development and reducing inequality, rich governments normally use tools ranging from tax treaties to self-serving ‘policy advice’ to retain their advantages and prevent developing countries from reaching new opportunities.⁴²

The issue of competing interest is another challenge to the SDGs. For instance, on the issue of climate change (Goal 13), those affected in the short term such as fossil fuel companies and their workers will regard themselves as ‘losers’ if they are forced to change even though the society will be a ‘winner’ in the long-term by avoiding the tremendous risks and impacts of runaway climate change. Making difficult trade-offs may be a major governance weakness, especially for complex problems within the SDGs where the responsibility is discrete and the interest of different stakeholders can conflict.⁴³

Agenda 2030’s commitment to human rights is declared in its preamble and reinforced by several proclamations that the SDGs are grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.⁴⁴ This human rights base appears much less clearly in the SDGs and the related target themselves. However, it is translated to be applicable universally. In contrary with MDGs which applied to the South, the SDGs apply to both developing and developed states.⁴⁵ This clearly shows that human rights and development challenges exist and require action all over the world.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there are some obvious inadvertences where essential resources, such as food and water are not characterised as human rights. While SDG-5 which mentions achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is seen to be much stronger than the MDG on gender equality, the SDG-5 does not clearly recognise the human rights of women and girls. In addition, while children are identified as a vulnerable group to whom special responsibilities are owed, there is no reference to children’s rights, which was supposed to be in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Also on this vein is the failure of recognising community’s land rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples to land, taking note that large amount of land in developing countries is held by communities based on a shared culture or heritage rather than by individuals.⁴⁷

Besides that, the language of the goals also gives the view that governments could commit themselves to the goal of realising all human rights everywhere as fast and as fully as possible when in reality this is not the way the goals have come to be conceived in the international development discourse. Although the UN proudly proclaims that “the MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people of extreme poverty” but no such lifting efforts have occurred. Though there might be an effort to reduce inequality within their respective countries, very few governments have reduced domestic inequality in

the MDG period.⁴⁸ In most countries, income and wealth inequality has increased with the result that the world’s poor have lost some of the gains they would otherwise gained from ordinary economic growth. With this, it is evident to say that governments have ‘spared no effort’ to reduce human deprivations.⁴⁹

On top of that, the concept of a goal implies that there is some definite individual or collective agent whose goal it is and it also implies that these personnel have a reasonably clear idea about the steps it will take to achieve the goal and has both the commitment and necessary means to do the relevant. Yet, this does not mean that though having a common goal, there must be a single leader. A group is free to decide collectively on what to aim for and how to get there but to have a common goal, this group shall have a shared understanding towards implementation. As there was no such shared understanding in the MDGs era, it is relevant to refer them as the Millennium Development Wishes as the government have publicly agreed on a set of proposition without first agreeing on the division of labour towards making these propositions true. The agreement did not specified as to who was to do what. Therefore, when the targets failed, there was no authoritative way of identifying the party/parties required to make additional efforts to get the agreement back on track.⁵⁰

In contrast to the MDGs, many if not most, SDGs are worded to be applicable to all countries, rich and poor alike. From a human right perspective, the SDGs are thus an improvement over the MDGs in that they more frequently envision full (although slow) eradication rather than reduction and are committed to an agenda that is universal in scope. However, this is offset by the fact that important goals are not framed in universal terms but in terms of what is “nationally appropriate.” While the SDGs should be made relevant to all countries, roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the goals should be differentiated according to the different countries and also to national policies and priorities.⁵¹ This, in reality, will give a legitimate concern that no particular goals will be used to shame and blame developing countries that simply lack of capacity to achieve them.⁵²

SDG-17 which was intended to be a more ambitious version of the paltry MDG-8 ended up suffering from the same key defect. This is due to the fact that the world’s most powerful agents which can be referred to as rich states, international organisations and multinational enterprises are once again shielded from any concrete responsibilities in achieving the SDGs. Considering their wealth and influence, it is they who should take the lead in providing the needed resources such as improving data collection in developing countries as well as implementing systematic institutional reform that will address the root causes of poverty.⁵³ If these most influential agents had been made liable for what they owe towards making sustainable development work, the concept of partnership and universalism would have

definitely been more meaningful rather than what they are now likely to become “a smokescreen for extreme global inequalities.”⁵⁴

Despite the progressive development of international human rights law as well as the many subjects that were covered over time, environmental concerns have scarcely been addressed.⁵⁵ Occasionally, a human rights objective appears in the environmental SDG targets. For instance, Target 6.1 with regards to achieving “universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.”⁵⁶ Most of the other environmental contents of Agenda 2030 totally neglects human rights dimensions, even when they are straightforwardly addressed such as the reduction of the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including attention to air quality and waste, and many more. Thus, this clearly shows that the human rights related provisions of Agenda 2030 do not make connections with sustainability or environmental aspect.⁵⁷

Therefore, despite all-pervading official protest to which the effect of human rights is indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, the SDGs covers only a subset of internationally recognised human rights that remains widely unrealised by among the poor states. On top of that, the SDGs are ignoring the need to make national and supranational institutional agreements less skewed towards the small and poor states. In addition, the human rights deprivations are allowed due to the fact that the monitoring process are monopolised by politically exposed and vulnerable intergovernmental agencies such as the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), led by the chiefs appointed and funds are dependent on government – making it predictable that they are involved in making cosmetic efforts towards giving the politicians the trend figures they want.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, nations acknowledge the imperative of a revitalised global partnership – ‘an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the goals and targets, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources.’ The scale and ambition of the new agenda require the inclusion of new partners such as national parliaments, regional and local authorities, academia, volunteer groups and the private sector. The revitalised global partnership will endeavor to deliver the means of implementation through ‘domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt and debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity-building,

and data, monitoring and follow-up.’ Therefore, it is important to look at the means of implementation to the Agenda as it forms the basis for SDG-17 and its supporting targets.⁵⁸

Since the agreement has already been signed, there will then be a process of deciding national level targets. In the case of MDGs, their adoption was followed in most countries by extended period of five years or more of inaction due to the fact that there was little national level buy-in to the agreement, or because countries already had their own national development priorities and targets. Compared to SDGs, the government had a very long process to reach where they are heading now with the SDGs making it relevant for the governments to likely consider how best to adapt and adopt the framework agreement for their national context in the implementation process.

In making their policy ready to achieve the SDGs, civil society and national governments should, firstly shift policy decision making power away from those who currently hold power and influence. This most probably involves multilateral institutions, high-income country governments, elite groups, and multinational corporations. The decision should be towards developing countries government and their own people.⁵⁹ Besides that, states should engage a broad range of stakeholders at an early stage in order to provide a more balanced view on national progress, highlights gaps and make reporting more robust.⁶⁰

On top of that, there should be an increased institutional cooperation *vis-à-vis* the implementation of the SDG. One of the innovative aspect of the SDG system is that all goals are ‘three dimensional’ which include environmental social as well as economic aspects. In addition, many issues and values have been mainstreamed horizontally across the goals. Administrations are currently working in silos, while the ‘soul’ of the SDGs is the fact that they have been constructed using a system approach. This means that the progress in any of the traditional ‘silos,’ such as agriculture, infrastructure, nature conservation or health, will be greatly assisted by the accomplishment of certain targets in other goals. For instance, the climate change target (Goal 13) has five targets, while progress with respect to climate change mitigation and adaption will be furthered by no fewer than 24 targets that belong to other goals. Therefore, no branch or ‘silo’ of the administration will be able to implement an SDG on its own, nor should it be left alone without such a task.⁶¹

Apart from that, states are required to report their progress in realising human rights through Treaty Body Examinations and the Universal Periodic Review. This can be a platform for the advocates to raise their views on the challenges and to progressively report on the status of implementation of their commitments under the 2030 agenda. Furthermore, state parties to international human rights treaties, such as the ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, and CRC

are required to report periodically on the progress that they are making in implementing the treaties' provisions to the respective human rights treaty body. This could be an effective way of implementing SDG to human rights and pushing for progress at national level.⁶²

CONCLUSION

SDGs are equipped with 17 goals and 169 targets, coupled up with a lot of United Nations' enthusiasm. The question is, will it succeed? The SDGs are fairy tales, dressed in the bureaucratise of intergovernmental narcissism, adorned with the robes of multilateral paralysis, and poisoned by the acid of nation-state failure. It was further argued that human factors such as well-being, capability, intergenerational equality, externalities and resilience play a greater part in sustainable development than some of the environmental aspects that have received new attention in the SDGs.⁶³

The SDGs cover a broader horizon of global issues and provide more comprehensive and integrated targets to actually achieve these goals. Realistically, the SDGs seems overambitious, and not every target is achievable by the deadline in 2030. While the MDG were criticized for being too simple and narrow focused, the SDGs have been criticized for being too complex to realistically achieve.⁶⁴ Thus, according to the discussion here as a whole, it is believed that the SDGs is like a fall back after the failure of MDGs. It is probably not fair to put MDG as a failure, but to critique it as a whole, though there are some achievements, the MDGs still failed. If not, there will be no SDGs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, with the MDGs then only the United nations are looking forward to gear up and take development into serious consideration.

As discussed, SDG had promised a so-called solid development plan that will give an impact to the global development. Nevertheless, it was argued that it comes with so many shortfalls that the states themselves are not sure of the outcome. Apart from that, the implementation problem seems to always be the main problem in any global plans. As mentioned, implementing the SDGs even at the national level had been an issue for most of the states, not forgetting the issue of developed vs developing states. These kind of issues are the ones that is contributing towards the failure of any global development plan. The states need to buckle up and start giving full commitment and be ready of any changes and consequences. The states are the main parties of this global development plan. If the states themselves still hesitate to give full commitment and still considering their own private-national interest, even a 40-year development plan will never be a success.

On top of that, the states also need to consider the realistic way to achieve each of the goals. They should relevantly discuss and put in writing the real situation in

each of the states to ensure that the goals are workable. Real discussions and field work report should be done instead of academic discussions. The issues of poverty, climate change, human rights, environment, and all sort are all issues that can be clearly be seen. It is not something that is beyond imagination, in fact it is so real. States need to really take serious action in providing a 'genuine' report and not for the sake of fulfilling the numbers for the governments' political interest.

Global development plans should be precisely to develop and not to just give the world another thick written report to do, or read. It is supposed to be a real live development action that really helps the world to turn in to a better place for every human being. Development should not only focus on wealth and economy. Development should focus on humanly interest. When human develops, nations will automatically develop. SDGs in fact should be praised in giving a platform for states to kick start their development plan and to finally prove that the world are recognizing underdeveloped states and are preparing them in moving forward together. Nevertheless, in making this a success, the main question should be answer is whether it is just another global plan that is too ambitious and will again be monopolised by the big states and will prejudiced the small and poor states? It is too soon to give a concrete and final answer like what MDGs had answered. However, to be fair, based on the discussion here believed that the SDGs are far too ambitious, making it easier for the states to not realizing it. Commitment of states will always be a major drawback and the states need to really work on it in order for any global development plans to work because when it comes to the question of commitment, the question of national interest will appear and when this happens, it will never be legally realistic to realise any global development plan.

NOTES

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