



## Sustainable Development Goals

### United Nations Association of Australia statement on the Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) recognises implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is the pathway to a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. The Sustainable Development Goals serve as a blueprint to guide COVID19 responses now and in recovery.

We support the underpinning human rights for all peoples. We urge governments, businesses and communities to prioritise actions to:

- reduce inequalities
- transform business to protect and restore the environment
- promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

The UNAA contributes to this agenda by convening events, commissioning research and taking action to promote partnerships across government, business and civil society including indigenous Australia, in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Context

All UN Member States adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) in 2015.

The [Sustainable Development Report 2021](#) shows that for the first time since 2015 the world lost ground on the goals as a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Jeffrey D. Sachs, President of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and first author of the report says

*The Covid-19 pandemic has created not only a global health emergency but also a sustainable development crisis. To restore SDG progress, developing countries need a significant increase in fiscal space, through global tax reform and expanded financing by the multilateral development banks. Fiscal outlays should support the six key SDG transformations: quality education for all, universal health coverage, clean energy and industry, sustainable agriculture and land use, sustainable urban infrastructure, and universal access to digital technologies.<sup>i</sup>*

In the past six years, Australia's ranking in the global SDG Index decreased from 17<sup>th</sup> in 2016 to 35<sup>th</sup> in 2021. Australia is on track to achieve just two of the 17 SDGs by 2030 – Goal 3 Good Health and Wellbeing and Goal 6 Clean Water and Sanitation. We are losing ground on Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities and Goal 15 Life on Land.

We are stagnating with significant challenges on Goal 2 Zero Hunger, Goal 13 Climate Change, and Goal 14 Life Under Water. We have no data for Goal 12 Responsible Production and Consumption.

On Goal 1 No Poverty where we were previously on track we are moderately improving and facing challenges. This is also the case for Goal 4 Quality Education, Goal 5 Gender Equality, Goal 8 Decent Work and Economy Growth, Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

Australia's progress on the SDGs ranks 31 out of 37 OECD countries.

### **The UNAA observes:**

- Momentum for sustainable development is building. We see action and partnerships working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals across communities, research organisations, business, and state and local government in Australia.
- Speakers and participants at our *UN & Australia Sustainable Partnerships Forum* in April 2021 called on leaders across the community, academia, business and government to reinvigorate governance arrangements, policies and programs for the Sustainable Development Goals. Speakers and participants focused on the value of setting and monitoring targets to enable us to better implement and measure the Goals within Australia, as well as in our international development work.
- Australia can learn from countries leading on the Goals such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Norway and France as well as our neighbours, Japan, New Zealand and Korea.
- Australia must continue to partner with and support our neighbours in particular in the Pacific and South East Asia integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in our foreign policy and international development programs.
- It is critical Australia work with countries in the region and across the world on issues requiring a regional or global approach, such as peace and security, treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, climate change, ocean health, modern slavery, and food and water security.

### **Recommendations to the Australian political parties:**

- Integrate Sustainable Development Goals and targets within domestic and foreign policy and reporting frameworks.

- Establish a group of representatives from civil society, business, trade union, academia, state, territory and local governments to sit alongside the existing inter-departmental committee to strengthen transparency, collaboration and communication on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across all foreign and development policy.
- Partner with UNAA as the convenor of collaboration to amplify action on the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Join countries leading on the Sustainable Development Goals to learn and share on governance, engagement, program design and implementation and measurement, target setting and reporting.
- Agree on measures and targets for Australia and undertake regular reporting of Australia's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, drawing on the expertise of independent bodies which focus on sustainable development.
- Fund a secretariat to coordinate national action on the Sustainable Development Goals and develop a national public awareness campaign to increase understanding, engagement, commitment and partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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i *SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021 The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals* By Jeffrey D. Sachs, Christian Kroll, Guillaume Lafortune, Grayson Fuller and Finn Woelm. Bertelsmann Stiftung, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Cambridge University Press, June 2021, p vii.