



BUILDING THE FUTURE WE WANT

A Planet for Life
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

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Foreword

More than twenty years after the Rio Earth Summit which gave political and institutional birth to ‘sustainable development’, the nations of the world are on the verge of entering into a new era of negotiation and implementation of sustainable development policies. With three particularly important events – the Addis Ababa conference on development financing, the session of the UN General Assembly on the setting of universal sustainable development goals, and the ‘last chance’ conference on climate change in Paris – 2015 will certainly be a landmark. A two-decade long cycle of talks and experiences ends; while another begins, aiming at addressing challenges which by their magnitude and scope cannot be addressed with business as usual policies.

As recalled by the UN Secretary-General, the year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and others to end poverty, and also to transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights. ‘Transformation is our watchword’, the UN Secretary General emphasized.

The unprecedented challenges of the twenty-first century incentivize us – people, institutions, decision-makers – to rise above ourselves and invent solutions to old and new problems. Our three institutions have stakes in this endeavour to produce meaning and shed light on our possible futures, leaving it up to the readers, we hope, to look at sustainable development as something that tomorrow will bring.

The *Agenda 21* at Rio gave us the vision of the twenty-first century; the *Future We Want* at Rio+20 gave us the blueprint of the vision; 2015 will give us, we all hope, a common roadmap with clear goals, measurable targets and definite means to achieve them. The tasks are daunting and challenging, with many roadblocks and bumps ahead, but the people of the planet, across all countries and continents, must put their heads and hearts together and draw on all their resources to build the future we want.

On this planet earth there can no longer be islands of hope and prosperity amidst oceans of despair and poverty. Technology, economy and climate have joined us together, as never before. The remotest parts of the world are connected with each other by production systems and supply chains, ideas and information. The changing climates have linked the melting glaciers of the Arctic with the rising sea levels of the Pacific islands. We can no longer remain centred on the idea of nation-states that were created in the past; we are all part of the same planet – we will sail or sink together in future.

The Millennium Development Goals have given us the confidence to realize that together we can achieve many things that have eluded us for so long. Sustainable Development Goals should give us the guidance and the means to translate this confidence into action. Many of the goals and the targets recommended by the Open Working Group of the United Nations have already been adopted as national and local development goals in many countries. The synergies between global and national development goals should be reinforced through better technical guidance for programming, implementation and monitoring.

At the same time, we need better synergies in development assistance, which can sometimes be too thin and dispersed to create the desired impacts. Surely there is scope for better targeting and coordination to avoid duplication, just as there are opportunities for scaling up assistance from developed – and also from emerging – economies.

AFD, TERI and IDDRI have joined forces, bringing together their ideas and creating a vast network of renowned scholars and experts from across the world to share their understanding and vision of this ongoing ‘transformation’. They provide us with the incomparable narrative of its intellectual and material underpinnings, and as the reader will see, of its different meanings and perspectives in a representative set of developing and developed countries.

This anthology of ideas and perspectives from countries and regions around the planet demonstrate the challenges and complexities of the roads ahead, but at the same time captures the common dreams and the desire to move ahead for a better future.

Let us dedicate ourselves to build The Future We Want. ■