

**ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GLOBALLY: EU FOLLOW-UP  
TO RIO+20**

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Your name (first and last name) \* (compulsory) Sally Tyldesley

In which capacity are you participating in this consultation? \* (compulsory)

- on behalf of an organisation

If answering as an individual, please indicate the country where you reside\* (compulsory)

If responding on behalf of an organization, please indicate below which type \* (compulsory) and your interest representative ID number:

- NGO, civil society, environmental group, charity

Name : The Royal Society

Interest representative ID number: 041898210470-66

Organization Represented

and main activities of your company/organization/association:

The Royal Society

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The Society's fundamental purpose, reflected in its founding Charters of the 1660s, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

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**Do you agree to the listing of the name of your organization in the report that the Commission will draw up on the results of this public consultation? (Tick the appropriate box)**

YES

NO

# ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GLOBALLY: EU FOLLOW-UP TO RIO+20

## Background

The Rio+20 world summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in June this year. It followed from previous related UN summits, in Stockholm (1972), Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Johannesburg (2002). The aim of Rio+20 was to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, by assessing progress to date, identifying remaining gaps in the implementation of past commitments and addressing new and emerging challenges<sup>1</sup>.

The Summit's focus was on two intertwined themes: "a Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication" and "the institutional framework for sustainable development". After extensive negotiations a Rio+20 Outcome document was agreed upon, with a number of actions and commitments. Even though the outcome was less ambitious than what the EU had aimed for, Rio+20 does offer a number of important opportunities for follow-up at EU and international level.

## The implications of Rio+20 outcomes for EU policies

The main outcomes of Rio can be described along five streams:

1. The inclusive Green economy, as an important tool to achieve sustainable development.
2. Action in priority areas, such as poverty eradication, sustainable agriculture, water, sustainable energy, decent work for all, oceans and fisheries, and sustainable consumption and production.
3. Agreement to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. Agreement to develop options on an effective Sustainable Development Financing Strategy.
5. Strengthening the Institutional Framework for sustainable development.

Implementing these outcomes would lead to furthering sustainable development globally, for *all* countries (developed countries, emerging economies and developing countries). The outcomes also have implications for a range of EU policies such as economic, trade, environment, fisheries, energy, agriculture and employment and social policies. Within the EU Rio+20 offers the opportunity to review, revitalize, and re-orient a number of activities that the EU is already pursuing. An example of this is the inclusive Green economy, which is addressed in the EU by the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>2</sup> and by EU development policy.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)

## **The aim of this public consultation**

The European Union needs to prepare for follow-up actions and what next steps have to be taken. Follow-up by the EU level will constitute an important practical step in making sustainable development a reality in the years to come.

The objective of the present public consultation is to provide input to the European Commission for the development of specific actions and measures and for its proposals for EU positions. In particular, it will serve as input to a Communication from the Commission on Rio+20 follow-up, planned for the first half of 2013. The consultation is also a complement to the Public Consultation "Towards a post-2015 development framework"<sup>3</sup>.

The Commission widely engaged with civil society, including by undertaking a public consultation<sup>4</sup> prior to Rio+20, and civil society also made important input during the conference itself. Related consultations include those which took place on the Resource Efficiency roadmap and the recently launched consultation on the 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Plan. The present consultation seeks stakeholder's views on five main areas from the perspective of advancing sustainable development globally. A brief explanation of each is described below, followed by a set of questions. Please try to limit your responses to one page per area. In addition, in the final section there is the opportunity to voice your views on other topics not explicitly mentioned.

### **1. The Inclusive Green Economy**

The Rio+20 Outcome document stated that the inclusive Green economy is an important tool for achieving sustainable development, that can be implemented in a number of different ways by countries in accordance with national priorities. The Green economy can contribute to sustainable growth, help create employment and decent work, contribute to eradicating poverty, while maintain a healthy environment. The document indicated that the implementation of Green economy policies can be a common undertaking by countries that wanted to do so.

Furthering the inclusive Green economy needs to be considered at three contexts:

1. action within the EU as a direct contribution to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy,
2. collaboration with developed countries and emerging economies, and
3. cooperation with developing countries, as part of development cooperation policy in particular as a means of eradicating poverty.

Likewise, a range of policy approaches are needed to stimulate the inclusive Green economy, and these may best apply in different ways in the above three contexts. Policies can include the removal of barriers or the creation of enabling conditions and may include:

- taxes and pricing systems
- improving the functioning of markets
- effective regulation

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/public-consultations/towards\\_post-2015-development-framework\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/public-consultations/towards_post-2015-development-framework_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/un\\_2012.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/un_2012.htm)

- a favourable environment for trade
- phasing out policy distortions such as harmful subsidies
- encouraging innovation
- appropriate labour policies and decent job creation
- green skills development

The inclusive Green economy can also be promoted through the development and application of appropriate indicators that measure progress beyond GDP. It can also be encouraged through a range of public private partnerships with aim of advancing business engagement and performance along social and environmental dimensions, and encouraging investment. Corporate social responsibility and sustainable consumption and production are also important elements.

**Questions:**

- 1. What policy tools do you think are the most effective and need to be put into place to stimulate the transformation to the inclusive Green economy within the EU? How should this complement the Europe 2020 strategy and/or its implementation?***

In April 2012 the Royal Society published its ‘People and the Planet’ report. This report addressed the links between global population, consumption and sustainable development. It also sets out why today’s market system is distorted by failing to price environmental and social impacts, leading to perverse incentives for unsustainable activities. It states that GDP is a poor measure of social wellbeing and does not account for natural capital. The report highlights that a better measure than GDP is one of comprehensive wealth – which includes the value of a country’s entire set of capital assets (natural, manufactured, human, knowledge, and institutional). The report recommends that national governments should accelerate the development of comprehensive wealth measures. This should include reforms to the system of national accounts, and improvement in natural capital accounting.

The UK has recently established the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) to advise the Government on the state of England’s natural capital. Professor Georgina Mace FRS was a member of the People and the Planet working group and is now a member of the Natural Capital Committee. The work of the NCC could provide lessons for developing comprehensive wealth measures across the EU.

- 2. What policy tools do you think are the most effective and need to be put into place to as part of the EUs interactions with developed countries, emerging economies, and with developing countries? How should this complement EU external policies and their implementation?***

**Answer (max 200 words):**

3. *What policies need to be put into place to further encourage and engage EU business and stakeholders?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

4. *What specific actions could be foreseen in this area? How could such actions contribute to growth and jobs?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

## **2. Action in Priority Areas**

The Rio+20 Outcome document contains a large number of actions in the section "Framework for action and follow-up". These will address in practice specific themes of the Green economy in the context of sustainable development:

- Poverty eradication
- Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture
- Water and sanitation
- Energy
- Sustainable tourism
- Sustainable transport and sustainable cities and human settlements
- Health and population
- Promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all, and social protection
- Oceans and seas
- Small island developing states
- Least developed countries and landlocked least developed countries
- Africa and regional efforts
- Disaster risk reduction
- Climate change
- Forests

- Biodiversity
- Desertification, land degradation and drought
- Mountains
- Chemicals and waste
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Mining
- Education
- Gender equality and women's empowerment

Following the request of the European Council<sup>5</sup>, the EU did propose goals and targets to advance the transition to the Green economy in key areas, which are essential for social and economic development.

**Questions:**

5. *Which key areas do you think are the most important and should be given the highest priority (for the EU/at global level)? Please give reasons for your choices.*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

6. *Are there specific ways in which an area needs to be followed up (within the EU/at global level)? Should the EU promote and enter into partnerships for action and if so, in which area specifically? Are there specific barriers to implement actions in a given area? What could be done to overcome these barriers?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

7. *Do you think it is useful for the EU to develop targets to drive the inclusive Green economy? If so, what aspects do you think should be covered and how should economic, social and environmental aspects be addressed?*

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<sup>5</sup> Conclusions of the European Council, 1-2 March 2012 (article 28), and Environment Council Conclusions, 12 March 2012 (articles 17, 18).

**Answer (max 200 words):**

8. *What additional tools and indicators for the measurement of progress should be applied?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

### 3. Sustainable Development Goals

The Rio+20 Outcome document outlined key principles for developing SDGs. It is stated that the SDGs should reflect all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in a balanced way; and that they should be action-oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, and that they should be guided by the Rio Outcome document. The Rio+20 Outcome document also states that the SDGs need to be coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015, and that the process to establish SDGs needs to be coordinated and coherent with the processes for the post-2015 development agenda.

It is important to underline the universal character of the SDGs. They must simultaneously respond to the need to have global goals for all countries and the need for a specific development focus.

The EU will have to set up a process to establish its position on the scope, nature and specifics of the SDGs. This should take into account the EU 2020 targets and those being further pursued under the resource efficiency flagship, as well as the proposals for priority areas and cross cutting themes made by the EU in the run up to Rio+20. It will also be important to ensure that goals should be consistent with internationally agreed goals, such as on biodiversity, climate and social aspects.



*Questions:*

**9. In your opinion, what specific themes or topics should SDGs cover? In what way could the EU build on existing or proposed goals and targets?**

The Royal Society wishes to highlight the value of science, engineering, technology and innovation in international development; the importance of building a stronger educational and research base; tackling climate change, food, water and energy insecurity; and strengthening governance mechanisms. SDGs should take account of demographic trends and projections (e.g. urbanisation and population ageing) and the implications that these trends will have on resource needs (e.g. food and water), or capacity to provide services (e.g. healthcare and education) and infrastructure (e.g. cities and transport). Food security is a rapidly growing concern, aggravated by population increase as well as climate change: investment in more research is urgently needed to address this issue. The Society would also like to highlight the importance of universal access to family planning and the empowerment of women if individuals are to flourish and if the goals of sustainable development are to be met.

The MDGs provide an excellent example of existing goals and targets that can be both learnt from and built upon. The MDGs have been simple, memorable and to some extent quantifiable. Efforts made to achieve them have led to substantial reductions in child mortality and maternal deaths, for example; changes that are likely to have had wider beneficial effects on communities as a whole. But they have also been criticised for not being appropriately evidence-based; being over-simplistic and not reflecting the interdependencies between goals; setting inappropriate and/or incomplete goals, targets and indicators; and serving to marginalise missing areas (e.g. higher education and research) and downplay others (e.g. environmental sustainability).

**10. What form and structure should SDGs have? How should economic, social, and environmental dimensions, as well as the inter-linkages between them be addressed?**

Responding to global challenges of the future will require recognition that these challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. The interconnectedness of global challenges requires a holistic, interdisciplinary and forward looking approach. Any sustainable development goals should capture the need for improved integration of economic, environmental and social policy-making, and the respective roles of the public and private sectors. They should be built on the development of appropriate, scientifically robust goals, targets, indicators and review mechanisms.

**11. How can it be best ensured that SDGs and their monitoring are science based?**

Based on the Royal Society's observations of international policymaking, such as the development of the MDGs and negotiations in the run-up to and at Rio+20, there are concerns that the best and most appropriate evidence is not always reaching those making policy decisions; as a result, policies are not as robust and sustainable as they should be. The scientific community should play a much stronger role in informing discussions on

international development and in helping to shape post-2015 development goals, targets and indicators. The scientific community has a central role to play in the development and transfer of technologies; improving the science-policy interface; in facilitating information exchange and data accessibility; and building international research collaboration.

National science academies and learned societies can play an important role in identifying and convening experts to contribute to discussions on the SDGs; organising themselves nationally, regionally and globally e.g. through the IAP – the global network of science academies, representing 105 academies around the world. The Society has worked with these academies on joint statements on issues as wide-ranging as building resilience to natural disasters, meeting energy needs and assuring water availability, the health of women and children, water and health, and innovation for development.

***12. How can one make sure that the SDGs will be relevant and will act as a stimulus to all countries (developed, emerging, developing)? How will they contribute to mobilizing action?***

Since the MDGs were first developed, the world has become more multipolar and systems of governance more diverse; global challenges are ever more pressing; strengthening resilience is becoming a greater priority; and many poor people live in middle income countries, who are themselves serving as “donors” e.g. China and India. The SDGs should reflect these global changes, building on existing goals and broadening them out to incorporate others, such as economic growth, governance, higher education and research.

To ensure that any new goals, targets and indicators remain relevant and meaningful for their lifetime, they will need to be forward looking and mindful of how the world might look in the decades to come. They should take account of demographic trends and projections (e.g. urbanisation and population ageing) and the implications of these for resource needs (e.g. food or water goals) or capacity to provide services (e.g. health or education goals) and infrastructure (e.g. cities or transport). Those goals designed to address security of resources should include the reduction of unsustainable consumption, improved efficiency, infrastructure and production practices. Development and environment should not be considered as two separate issues.

***13. In what way should the SDGs relate to stimulating the inclusive Green economy?***

**Answer (max 200 words):**

***14. How do you see the relationship of SDGs to future goals following up on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are likely to be developed under the post 2015 development agenda?***

The Sustainable Development Goals should be integrated with, and complement, the parallel development of the post 2015 development agenda. Considering environment and development separately creates a false dichotomy and would be harmful to the attainment of goals put in place.

#### **4. Financing Strategy for sustainable development**

The Rio+20 Outcome document underlined Means of Implementation as crucial to achieving sustainable development. It established an intergovernmental process under the UN General Assembly to produce options for a sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of financial resources and their effective use. Such a strategy should promote a single comprehensive approach to development financing, building on the Financing for Development agenda<sup>6</sup> and promote an integrated approach to the various global financing processes, including Rio+20, climate change and biodiversity financing.

It is important that financing strategies for sustainable development should consider all possible sources to be mobilized by all types of stakeholders, including by national and international, public and private, financial and non-financial actions. This includes giving due attention to public and private financing schemes, innovative financing, taxation and pricing schemes, regulation, and to the barriers to foreign direct investment, as well as looking at the synergies and overlaps with other policy goals (development, climate change, biodiversity).

On external financing, the strategy should look beyond development aid. There is a need to recognize that the major emerging economies should no longer only be seen as recipients of aid even if they still require institutional and technological capacity building assistance. Relevant international and regional banks such (the IMF, World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks, such as the EIB) should be involved. Also it should be noted that many of the financing and investment conditions are similar to those for fostering an inclusive Green economy.

#### ***Questions:***

***15. What should be the main elements covered in financing strategies for sustainable development? Could, for example, thematic strategies such as the Biodiversity Resource Mobilization Strategy<sup>7</sup> be a useful starting point?***

**Answer (max 200 words):**

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=11654>

*16. What are some of the most effective financing and resource mobilisation schemes to date, such as public or private schemes, micro-financing, climate change and biodiversity financing? How can they be scaled up?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

*17. What are the most effective ways of encouraging investment? Where possible, link your replies to questions on the inclusive Green economy.*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

*18. How should coherence, coordination and non-duplication of efforts be ensured with regard to the Financing for Development process and other relevant processes?*

**Answer (max 200 words):**

## **5. Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development**

An important theme of Rio+20 was on furthering the institutional framework for sustainable development. Rio decided to strengthen the functions of UNEP. Rio also decided to establish

a High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development. The EU will now have to consider how it can best contribute to implementing this outcome.

**Questions:**

**19. What measures would you see best taken to ensure that the EU effectively contributes to the implementation of these outcomes?**

**Answer (max 200 words):**

**20. Do you think the participation of civil society, social partners, and other stakeholders should be strengthened? If so, how internationally and within the EU?**

**Answer (max 200 words):**

**Other issues**

You may also outline your views on other issues related to the follow-up to Rio+20 that have not been mentioned above.

The Royal Society is an advocate for evidence-based policymaking at all levels, and encourages international policymakers to draw on the very best evidence available and engage with those at the forefront of excellent science. Indigenous research expertise is imperative to meet locally and regionally defined challenges, but higher education and research have been hitherto overlooked in development frameworks: the current focus on universal primary education has further exacerbated this and had a deleterious effect on the capacity and quality of teaching.

The Royal Society recognises the importance of building indigenous scientific capacity in developing countries to help them to carry out their own demand-led research and be able to verify and exploit existing research delivered elsewhere, whilst also increasing the capacity for developing countries to engage in global discussions on global issues. This requires investment in a strong and diverse higher education system at all levels, including building

the institutional capacity of universities, research institutes and learned societies, and increasing the number of (post)doctoral students, researchers and teaching staff.

**Thank you for your contribution!**