Going forward with Agenda 2030
Leaders sharing experiences

The informal high-level group in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda
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The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 was a critical milestone for the world and our planet. The goals we committed to can only be achieved through a strong global partnership. In this spirit, nine countries came together in an informal High-Level Group to help maintaining political support at the highest level for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As a group, we are committed to lead by example and to do our part. We have started to carry out concrete actions domestically. We are also engaged with the leaders of other countries by sharing experiences and learning from each other. We see our role as promoting the need for leadership at the highest level for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

In order to contribute, the nine countries in our group, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Liberia, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Timor Leste and Tunisia, have compiled this brochure offering glimpses of some of our ongoing work to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. We hope that by sharing our experiences we can contribute to reflection and discussion regarding which policies and actions are most effective.

The nine texts in this publication aim at providing inspiration and learning and perhaps most important of all, an approach of sharing challenges and solutions. The 2030 Agenda is no simple task – it is important to admit that – and we, as leaders of our countries, need to take responsibility for implementation, but also responsibility for making sure that all stakeholders are engaged and can contribute.

An underlying conclusion that can be drawn from all the different examples in this publication is that political engagement at the highest level is absolutely necessary. We are convinced that such commitment from the world’s leaders, together with leadership from all parts of our societies, will generate the outcome that we all wish for, a universal implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

Stefan Löfven
Prime Minister of Sweden
Social responsibility and SDGs

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?
There is no social responsibility without fiscal responsibility. Fiscal responsibility is key to sustained economic growth and decent work (SDG 8). It is key to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable (SDG 1). Tax payers’ money needs to be respected in the name of public education (SDG 4), health (SDG 3) and income transfer programs (SDG 10). When the economy is disorganized, it is the poor that bear the heaviest brunt.

How are you organizing the work?
Through dialogue and with determination, we are undertaking a number of structural reforms aimed at reordering the economy. Congress has already approved a constitutional amendment to ensure budgetary balance. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility has enabled us to promote job creation and to strengthen our capacity as a government to preserve and enhance indispensable social programs. It has allowed us to significantly reinvigorate health and education policies, income transfer and housing programs. This is the way towards social responsibility, towards SDGs.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?
Close cooperation between the Executive and the Legislative branches has proven crucial. As has dialogue with society as a whole. Labour unions, business associations, civil society: all stakeholders have been engaged in an endeavor that is, by definition, a collective one. A Council for Economic and Social Development – composed of all such stakeholders – advises the Government. Specifically on the 2030 Agenda, a National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals has been established, composed – on an equal footing – by government officials at all levels (federal, state and municipalities) as well as by representatives of the Brazilian society. And, of course, a free and active press provides a vital contribution to the debate.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?
Brazil is leaving behind a severe economic crisis. Our most urgent challenges are to create jobs and to fully restore the financial capacity of the government to meet the plight of the poor. If there is one lesson we have learned in the recent past is that fiscal imbalances inflict harmful consequences upon the whole of society – especially the most vulnerable.

What advice would you like to offer to others?
There are no shortcuts to the 2030 Agenda. Fiscal responsibility is essential to social responsibility. It is essential to a sound economic environment, to job creation and to achieve the SDGs.
Institutional arrangements

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?

One year before the SDGs were adopted, Colombia began preparing for implementation. The High-Level Commission for the SDGs, established by the President in February 2015, has been key in improving coordination among national government entities and the definition of procedures and mechanisms to better respond to the challenges the SDGs pose.

How are you organizing the work?

Several achievements showcase the Commission’s role in the early implementation of the SDGs, allowing:

- continuous interaction of seven ministries and the Office of the President in a technical committee to discuss a policy framework for implementing the SDGs;
- a National Development Plan based on the SDGs: 92 of the 169 targets were included;
- the definition of a set of national indicators;
- a mapping of co-responsibilities for achieving the SDGs;
- the inclusion of the SDGs in regional and local development plans.

Could you give some examples of fruitful cooperation with arrangements?

- The design of a policy document (CONPES) setting out the targets and responsibilities will allow the national government to allocate resources to each sector promoting the SDGs.
- The alignment of political agendas with the SDGs, including access to the OECD, the National Development Plan, the Peace Agreement, the Green Growth strategy.
- The use of the National System for Monitoring the National Development Plan (SINERGIA) to start a follow-up system to monitor the SDGs. SINERGIA considers national and international best practices.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?

- As the Commission does not include all government entities, broader coordination is needed, from planning to implementation to follow-up.
- The Center of Government needs to better define and monitor responsibilities across all levels of government. It has an active role to play especially with entities that are not included in the Commission.
- The 2030 Agenda implies a deep social transformation over only three periods of Government before 2030. Time and continuity will be key to actually achieving the SDGs.

What advice would you like to offer to others?

Institutional arrangements and political will need to go hand in hand to guarantee a solid basis for the preparation and implementation of the SDGs. Both conditions must integrate a planning approach that will enable incoming governments to continue SDG-related work.
Ensuring healthy lives

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?
A healthy life is an indispensable precondition for everybody’s well-being. Without health, there can be no sustainable development, neither individually nor collectively. The health-related targets of SDG 3 are therefore an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. In 2014, the Ebola outbreak claimed too many lives and had a disastrous impact on people’s health. Health systems collapsed and the economic and security situation in West African states deteriorated. We came to realise that the international community was ill-prepared to deal with a serious health emergency. We do not know when and where the next pandemic of this scale will break out, but we know for certain that it will happen. Next time, we must be better prepared.

How are you organizing the work?
In the midst of the Ebola crisis, I established key priorities for better crisis management – a strengthened global health architecture, rapidly available financial resources, a greater focus on R&D for vaccines and drugs against neglected tropical diseases and more robust health care systems. These priorities have become guiding principles in our work with civil society, humanitarian actors and other partners. What is more, we are cooperating with the United Nations (UN), the World Bank and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in order to achieve results on a larger scale.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?
In its response to the crisis, Germany teamed up with Norway and Ghana to initiate a High Level Panel in the UN. The panel formulated recommendations that are now being followed up by the UN Global Health Crisis Task Force. During our presidency in 2015, the G7 supported concrete measures such as the creation of an innovative financing and insurance mechanism by the World Bank and the introduction of major structural reform within the WHO. Germany, the WHO and the World Bank are working together to develop the Healthy Systems – Healthy Lives initiative, which seeks to strengthen health systems and to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Furthermore, global health has been one of the key focal areas of our G20 presidency in 2017.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?
Many useful proposals have been put forward in the wake of the Ebola crisis. However, long-term solutions need effective implementation and long-term engagement. While emergency situations enjoy a high level of attention, we must remain committed to preventing health crises by enshrining our efforts at all levels – national, regional and global.

What advice would you like to offer to others?
The 2030 Agenda reflects the challenges of a globalised world in the 21st century. If we want to pass the test of time, we need to be willing to learn from each other and to join forces. Let’s act together. Let’s act now.
Country: Liberia
HLSG member: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

I am personally proud to have been given the opportunity to work closely on the elaboration of Agenda 2030, first as Co-chair of the United Nations High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post 2015 which set the policy perimeters of the new agenda and later working with ten other African leaders in the African Union High-Level Committee on the Post-2015 which led to an unprecedented continental agreement on our development priorities. I hope that the spirit of universality and partnership which brought the world together to craft Agenda 2030 will grow stronger as we move to tackling the enormous social, economic and environmental challenges facing our world today.

Engaging stakeholders

Why is this key issue for the 2030 Agenda?
The success of Agenda 2030 depends on the involvement of many stakeholders and this requires an enabling environment for partners, including parliaments, local governments, civil society, the business sector, philanthropy and trade unions, along with support to country-level platforms for collaboration. It is key to foster an enabling policy environment to support responsible, inclusive and sustainable business practices; as well as support to civil society in playing its full role as an independent development actor in its own right.

How are you organizing the work?
The Government of Liberia held a national launch of the Agenda 2030 which brought together all stakeholders including the Government, civil society, private sector, academia, youth & women groups as well as development partners. The outcome of this event called for a multi-stakeholder approach to drive the process forward. The Ministry of Finance & Development Planning leads this process.

Additionally, the President has set up a Special Secretariat on SDGs, in her office, to provide policy guidance and support to various stakeholders.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?
The establishment of an inter-agency committee for national inputs during the final stages of the inter-governmental negotiations on the 2030 Agenda coupled with a multi-stakeholder committee in preparing for the national lunch of the Agenda 2030 has created a high level of understanding amongst many stakeholders. Additionally, the Government of Liberia has signed a Partnership Policy, including an Accord with the National Civil Society Council of Liberia, to accelerate socio-economic and political development in Liberia. The National Civil Society Council of Liberia in partnership with the Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) are mapping community understanding and conducting awareness dialogue on the SDGs, targeted at universities, technical and vocational institutions.

What are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?
The independent nature of mandates and functions of the stakeholders sometimes poses challenges for partnership and collaboration for development.

What advice would you like to offer to others?
To ensure that every sector of society is well aware of the agenda and its transformative potentials and to establish linkages between all sectors to ensure national understanding and ownership.
Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in domestic plans

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?

Effective implementation of Agenda 2030 requires it to become an integral part of plans and priorities that guide the nation’s development, not a separate undertaking. SDG implementation therefore leans on both the National Development Plan and the current Medium Term Strategic Framework, and naturally on the Constitution. This also facilitates the involvement of all relevant line-function departments across the Government.

How are you organising the work?

Government departments are urged to take the 2030 Agenda into consideration in their planning and processes, and to involve key stakeholders. Ensuring that decisions and actions are based on correct and relevant information makes the mandate of Statistics SA of collecting, analysing and reporting national data on sustainable development highly important. The data collection has undergone a modern ‘data revolution’ and South Africa is at the forefront of the move beyond traditional methodologies.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?

South Africa has over the past couple of years created intense task team exercises for matters relating to sustainable development, such as waste management, the blue economy, the mining industry, among others. In these “Operation Phakisa” exercises, all stakeholders are brought together over a couple of weeks to ensure maximum synergy and collaboration between relevant entities and stakeholders.

Which are the main challenges so far?

A key issue is funding. The African Union has stated that USD 7.8 trillion is required by the Continent to fully implement the SDGs. Domestic resource mobilization for African countries is constrained by low economic growth and low levels of sustainable industrialization. The challenge is compounded by USD 50-60 billion annually leaving the Continent in illicit financial flows. On top of that, the capacity of traditional development partners is affected by a stifled global growth.

From a substance perspective, South Africa views securing the basic right to sufficient water as one of the most challenging. With a fast urbanization, the demand for water and sanitation will soar. However, even in South Africa, where this right is guaranteed in the Constitution, there are challenges in ensuring it, especially under the constraints of drought and increased demand.

What advice would you like to offer to others?

Never forget that effective implementation of Agenda 2030 requires the sustainable development action plan to relate to other over-arching national priorities. Otherwise you risk it becoming a matter for only some, not all.
Mainstreaming is key

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?

The level of ambition given by the agenda is such that governments are not able to reach the goals by themselves. Forces have to be joined from all sectors. Swedish municipalities, business communities, trade unions, CSOs and academies increasingly identify sustainable development to be at the heart of their core activities which facilitates implementation.

How are you organizing the work?

During 2016 a national committee was set up to work out a plan of action for the Swedish implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The members of the committee, consisting of both state and non-state actors, cover a wide scope of perspectives and competences.

To assure a multi-stakeholder approach, a key task of the committee is to promote and facilitate dialogue and coordination with stakeholders, including public-private partnerships, and to disseminate information on best practices of multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?

• The Municipality of Gothenburg has for several years worked closely with local universities and industries to develop sustainable solutions for the city. Substantial results have been achieved for example in electrifying local transports.
• The National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations (consists of 84 independent, democratic constructed, national youth organizations) has taken an active role in spreading information about the Agenda i.e. by arranging workshops on how to a) understand the core of the Agenda, b) turn local initiatives into a part of a global movement, and c) develop methods on effective cooperation and implementation of the Agenda.
• The private sector and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, puts sustainability in focus and considers it a competitive advantage in global markets. The matter will be addressed at a private sector summit in 2017.
• The Swedish Government’s Innovation partnership programmes are a concerted effort to find innovative solutions to a number of major challenges facing society today and engages the public sector, business and academia.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?

The comprehensive approach of the 2030 Agenda requires that policy areas are operating in an aligned mode to advance the implementation and to avoid that activities are carried out in the opposite direction to its objectives. Hence, to display and tackle conflict of interest between policy areas and stakeholders is a crucial task in the implementation.

What advice would you like to offer to others?

Invest in policies and functions designed to increase the collaboration, transparency and coherence between the stakeholders involved in the implementation. Engagement from the highest political level is crucial.
Country: Tanzania
HLSG member: President Dr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli

Rapid progress towards achieving the aspirations of 2030 agenda requires individual and collective commitment to invest in broad-based economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental conservation. Thus, integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to national development plans would augment our efforts and create a solid launchpad to achieve those broad goals at national level. This obligation tests our generation, particularly in the developing world, where the development strides needed are huge and the responsibility of fulfilling the right to development for all looms large. Collectively and individually, we have the responsibility and duty to ensure the world is free from hunger and poverty by 2030 if we all remain determined to fully achieve this Agenda.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?
Dialogue and consultations, as well as sensitization campaigns are made continuously to effectively engage stakeholders. Tanzania was one of 50 countries that initiated national consultations and surveys to generate issues for consideration in the post-2015 development agenda. It has been gratifying to see that most of the concerns that were raised during that stage also became part of the 2030 agenda. The Government has encouraged all local and regional authorities to mainstream SDGs in their plans and budgets. Furthermore, a robust monitoring system to enable reporting on SDGs at Sub-national level is being developed. The system will be linked to a database to ensure that it captures indicators at regional and local levels.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?
As with the MDGs, consistence in coordination remains key as inadequate human and financial resources and lack of necessary technical capacity to collect, collate and disseminate necessary data stand in our way to reach areas where poverty is most felt. Concerted efforts and partnership at local, regional, and global levels are indispensable to get it right this time.

What advice would you like to offer to others?
Enhanced capacity for mobilization and allocation of resources to harness broad-based growth is needed to ensure that no one is left behind. Leadership at all levels is key together with the effective involvement of the private sector, civil society and development partners. Protection of the environment, fighting injustice and refusing systematic segregation of the weak and vulnerable would ensure the realization of this noble endeavour – the 2030 Agenda.

Economic prosperity and people’s welfare

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?
Being a low-income country, Tanzania needs to make socio-economic transformation central to our development agenda as people are both the ultimate beneficiaries and the key contributors to development. It is in that spirit, the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and its implementing tools such as the National Five-Year Development Plan II, 2016/17-2020/21 (FYDP II) integrate aspects of economic transformation and human development, which are critical aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

How are you organizing the work?
The SDGs have been integrated into national development plans through the FYDP II. This has ensured incorporation of the SDGs into strategic plans at all levels and they are now being implemented through Annual Development Planning and budgeting processes.
The Government has also prepared frameworks for implementing the SDGs in collaboration with other stakeholders. These include: evidence-based policy and decisions; translating targets into the local context and language to ensure equal access for all.
Achieving SDGs through Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?

As a post-conflict country, peace and stability have been at the core of Timor-Leste's development objectives. Nation and state building in Timor-Leste require a solid foundation of peace and stability and our recent experience proves that there can be no development without peace, and likewise, without development, there will be no peace. Achieving the SDGs will be important for us to further enhance peace and stability, the preconditions for development towards a more sustainable future. The Government is committed to engaging all sectors of our society as well as our development partners to work together to achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

How are you organizing the work?

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is part of our national priority. Following the Government’s adoption of the SDGs in September 2015, the National Parliament passed a resolution endorsing the Government’s position. Subsequently, the Government established a task force, the SDGs Working Group, chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister, to coordinate the operationalization of the SDGs. The SDGs are now integrated into the Government’s planning and budgeting mechanisms and will soon be incorporated into our national Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. The SDGs Working Group also engages with all sectors of society, to foster greater ownership of the process to achieve the SDGs.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?

Stakeholder engagement is central to the Government's efforts. As an all-encompassing call to action, every sector of our society is expected to contribute actively towards achieving the SDGs. The Government has engaged the stakeholders in discussions to realign priorities, and on how to work collaboratively towards achieving the Goals. The Government also works with our development partners, including the UN and its agencies, and other local and international organizations, to achieve specific objectives. Moving beyond our borders, Timor-Leste also works closely with member countries of the g7+ to promote peace and stability as foundations for sustainable development. This year Timor-Leste held the Global Conference on the 2030 Agenda: A Roadmap for SDGs in Fragile and Conflict-affected States to explore mechanisms for cooperation among members of g7+ and beyond to achieve the SDGs.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?

Although the SDGs are consistent with Timor-Leste’s national Strategic Development Plan, aligning the objectives and priorities of the two agendas is critical. Our challenge is to ensure that the objectives of both can be achieved together, timely and effectively, and that one needs not be traded off for the other.

What advice would you like to offer to others?

Open and frank discussions with all stakeholders will allow us to build a stronger platform from which to mount concerted efforts towards realizing all the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
Country: Tunisia
HLSG member: President Béji Caid Essebsi

“Tunisia has adopted the ambitious goals of the Sustainable development Goals 2030, and is sparing no effort in its implementation through making this Agenda a component of its national development policy. On this occasion, Tunisia urges its partners to redouble their efforts in order to help developing countries achieve the SDGs, and provide the needed support, especially for African countries in order to help them meet the many economic, social and environmental challenges”.

President Béji Caid Essebsi, 71st regular session of the General Assembly – New York 2016

A whole-of-government approach

Why is this a key issue for the 2030 Agenda?

A whole-of-government approach is a crucial and fundamental pillar for consolidating achievements and progress made so far, and for successfully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an emerging democracy like Tunisia. Such an approach, where national, regional and local levels are seamlessly interconnected and communication, participation and partnership are its cornerstones, will better mobilise political leaders and higher authorities, as well as civil society, the communities, the public and the media.

How are you organizing the work?

On 2 December 2016, the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs announced the launch of the Tunisian national plan for implementing the SDGs. That same day, he also signed an agreement with the United Nations in support of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

Could you share examples of fruitful cooperation with stakeholders?

The active and constructive involvement of multi-stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, including government and local representatives, civil society, non-government organizations, academics, researchers and experts, led to the setting out of an ambitious Five-Year Development Plan (2016–2020): a national plan for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable development model that is aligned with the commitments Tunisia has made to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Which are the main challenges/lessons learned so far?

The Government strongly believes that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require concrete international support, resource mobilisation, innovation, technology transfer, experience sharing, and an active partnership between the government, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutes, as well as regional and international Institutions.

What advice would you like to offer to others?

Investment in human capital, particularly youth and women, reinforcement of gender equality, improvement of education and health, instil a culture of tolerance, and environment protection should be the main components of the national development policy.
It is our joint mission to ensure that no one is left behind!

The informal high-level group in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda