



Adoption of the SDGs

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Dear Friends,

A special Sustainable Development summit of the United Nations was held between 25 – 27th September 2015, coinciding with the seventieth anniversary of the UN at New York. All 193 member states of the UN agreed to adopt the 17 ambitious Sustainable



Development Goals (SDGs), to be implemented over the next 15 years from 2016 through 2030. Its title is: “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Administrator of the UNDP said, “Ours is the last generation which can head off the worst effects of climate change and the first generation with the wealth and knowledge to eradicate poverty. For this, fearless leadership from us all is needed.”

The then Secretary General of UN, Mr. Ban Ki-moon [3] emphasized the following characteristics of the new agenda, for the benefit of this and future generations:

- Ending global poverty
- A life of dignity for all
- Leaving no one behind
- Work in partnership
- Share prosperity
- Empower people’s livelihoods
- Ensure peace
- Heal our planet

The summit recognized the challenges in implementation of the agenda and secured new commitments from member states, businesses, civil society and international organizations for financial and partnership assistance. “The new agenda is people-centered, universal, transformative and integrated; and calls for action by all countries for all people over the next 15 years in five areas of critical importance: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership”.

We quote from the resolution [4]:

“This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. These

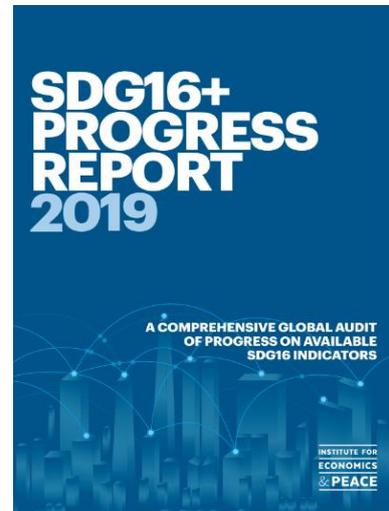
are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development”

As we enter the new decade, we have 11 years ahead of us to implement these goals for our nation. The 2019 Progress report [5] includes a cautionary note from the Secretary General António Guterres:

“It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the social and economic transformation needed to achieve our 2030 goals.”

The report highlights, among others, the following key issues:

- Increasing inequality among and within countries requires urgent attention
- The year 2018 was the fourth warmest year on record
- The pace of poverty reduction is starting to decelerate
- Global hunger has been on the rise after a prolonged decline



The Progress Chart [6] shows the progress all over the globe (divided into regions) till 2018, on two dimensions. A colour coding shows progress made towards the target and the current level of development. Our region is included in Central and Southern Asia. It shows, for example, in terms of poverty we are at the global level of moderate poverty, and the achievement with respect to the target is: fair progress but acceleration is needed.

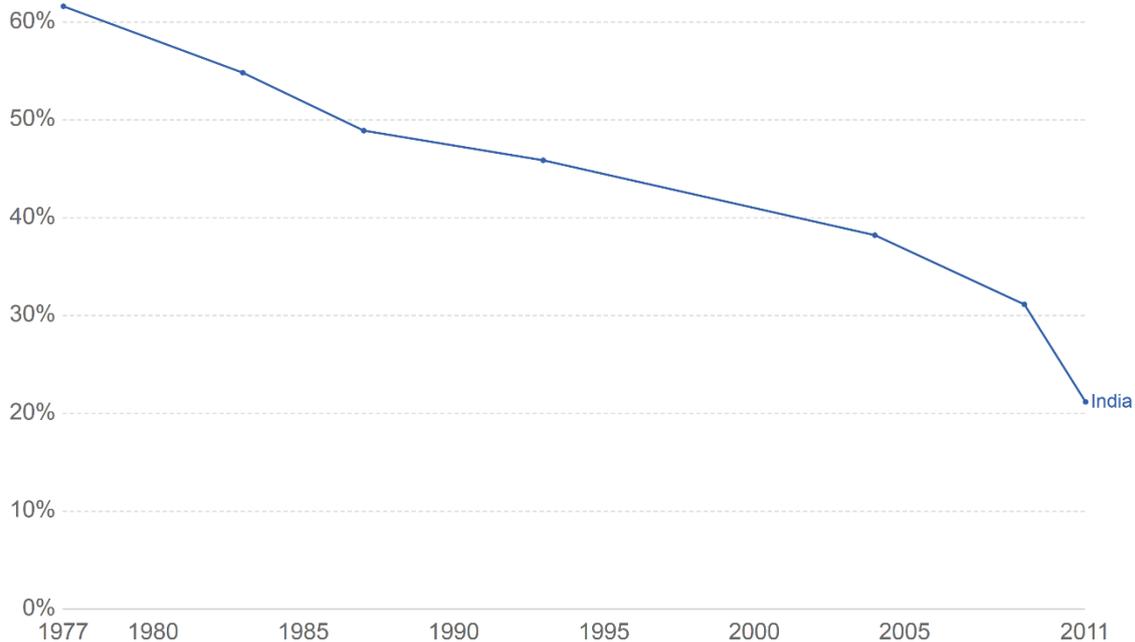
A rather disturbing trend all across the globe is noted with respect to NEET (the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training). It shows ‘Limited or no progress’ all over the world!

Another notable global trend concerns inequality within countries. No trend data is available across the globe!

A detailed reports on measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals [7] for India is shown below:

Share of the population living in extreme poverty

Extreme poverty is defined as living with per capita household consumption below 1.90 international dollars per day (in 2011 PPP prices). International dollars are adjusted for inflation and for price differences across countries.



Source: World Bank
OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY

The chart shows that for India, the share of population living in extreme poverty declined from a little above 60% in 1977 to around 20% in 2011.

In summary, the SDGs provide a new compass for measuring progress at national and international levels that is not focussed simply on GDP and let us hope that we renew our commitment to the SDGs and make our own contributions.

A final word: we generally hear the call to ‘Save the Earth’, but in all humility, one can state that the Earth needs no saving, and it would continue to orbit the sun for a few billion years at least, irrespective of what we humans do or don’t do. What needs to be saved is our own lives and the lives of all other flora and fauna on our Mother Earth.

Wish you all a very happy and sustainable 2020.

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