IRF2015 presents framework for assessing possible sustainable development goals and targets

Port of Spain, May 9, 2104 - The Independent Research Forum (IRF2015) has developed a practical tool for selecting and designing goals and targets for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda currently being prepared in the United Nations.

The framework can be used to assess the transformative, universal and integrated nature of possible goal areas and the SMARTness of proposed targets. It builds on discussions and insights from three informal member state retreats organised and facilitated by IRF2015 and is structured around the core concepts of a sustainable development agenda as called for in The Future We Want and other key guidance to the United Nations Open Working Group (OWG) leading the effort to draft the new development agenda. IRF2015 will continue to develop the framework in response to user feedback and as the process for designing and selecting sustainable development goals and targets progresses.

The document presents the tool and the results of its application to the latest version of the OWG Co-Chairs’ ‘focus areas’ paper: the working document for the 11th session of the OWG. IRF2015 members used the framework to generate overarching comments on the whole document and more detailed illustrative assessments of three of the sixteen focus areas: sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition; gender equality and women’s empowerment; and economic growth, employment and infrastructure.

This review of the OWG-11 ‘focus areas’ paper reveals an ambitious vision that largely reflects the spirit of leaving no one behind. The Co-Chairs have incorporated inputs from OWG members so that many of the necessary elements are present. Our review identified opportunities to build on this solid foundation as the OWG continues its work:

- The current package of goals and targets does not yet amount to a transformative agenda as some systemic barriers and drivers remain to be targeted.
- Inter-linkages have not yet been systematically addressed and this would be a valuable step in the near future as the framework takes shape.
- The differentiated responsibilities within a framework of collective action are not sufficiently explicit and will need to be clarified as the means to implement the goals and targets are agreed.
- Many of the targets, as currently drafted, are not sufficiently SMART and will need further sharpening as the framework is developed.
These conclusions suggest the need for the OWG to assess the overall framework for its transformative, integrated and universal nature before moving on to individual focus areas.


The Independent Research Forum (IRF2015) is a collaboration of research institutes from across the globe that provides an independent source of critical thinking, integrated analysis and awareness-raising on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a post-2015 development agenda. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a member of the IRF2015. For more information see www.irf2015.org.

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About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 20 years. Our mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing natural resources critical to development. Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships.

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