



U.N. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

On Friday, September 25, to cheers, applause, and probably a tinge of relief, 17 global goals that provide a blueprint for global development over the next 15 years were ratified by 193 U.N. member states in New York City.

After speeches from Pope Francis and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai and songs from Shakira and Angelique Kidjo, the ambitious agenda—which aims to tackle poverty, climate change, and inequality for all people in all nations—was approved, kicking off a three-day U.N. summit on sustainable development.

APA members and staff were deeply involved in the process leading to adoption of these goals and will continue to participate in events leading up to Habitat III next October in Quito, Ecuador.

Follow the discussion and find opportunities to be involved at planning.org/international/habitat.

Here are some points to make if the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals come up in your community and work:

- The last 15 years saw progress toward achieving the previous Millennium Development goals.
 - The number of people living in poverty was halved.
 - Overall health improved in terms of child mortality, HIV, and other diseases.
 - It is important to set targets and measure progress.
- The process has been open, transparent, and broad. This was not a top-down process dominated by a few people meeting in isolation.
- The U.N. and its partners conducted the largest consultation program in its history to gauge opinion on what the SDGs should include. Hundreds of local, national, and international non-profit, private, educational, and philanthropic organizations were involved.
- Each country undertook its own outreach to solicit opinions and ideas on how to create more sustainable places.
- The SDGs are suggestions, not mandates. There is no authority or way to compel countries and cities to follow them. In fact, nations have complete control over whether the goals even will be adopted as recommendations. It's up to each country to engage its own people, cities, and organizations in how the SDGs can best be used. Nothing is binding or mandatory.
- Yes, the goals sound lofty, but they are meant to be inspirational and challenging. Indicators such as "Reduce solid waste production" and "Provide transportation choices" are very specific and manageable.
 - Point out that the goals are for a fairly long (15-year) period. However, the metrics for each goal are more specific and can be incorporated into existing city planning efforts and reported regularly to the public. The key is the balance between aspiration and practicality.
 - The goals and their indicators offer a good way to engage the public in specific actions that can make a community better.



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TALKING POINTS FOR PLANNERS

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- Plenty of opportunities for participation remain. Indicators are only suggested; they are still being developed and won't be finalized until March 2016.
- Here are some suggested responses if you are confronted with a statement like, "The U.N. is trying to take away property rights":
 - Ask what the community should be doing to prepare for the future.
 - Say that the goals are only one way to help the community decide its own path and choose the tools it uses to get there.
 - Don't be confrontational; keep the discussion focused on how to plan for the future.
 - Stay positive and emphasize the goals of good planning: economic benefits, better living conditions, and more choices for everyone.

To learn more about APA's international activities, contact Jeff Soule, FAICP, at jsoule@planning.org.