

Deutscher Bundestag

Parlamentarischer Beirat
f. nachhaltige Entwicklung

Ausschussdrucksache
19(26)16

Sustainable policies in Germany: A challenging but respectful appraisal of the National Strategy on Sustainable Development for Germany – based on the Peer Review of 2018

**By Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior adviser on Governance and
sustainability policies;**

**Stakeholder Forum, UK; PURE Consulting, Oslo, Norway and
member of the Peer Review Group – chaired by Helen Clark**

I am being asked to address the SDGs by:

To answer the following questions:

Academia and research

Do SDGs add to our knowledge and further our understanding?

Politicians and decision makers – all levels

Do we need to take them seriously`?

The NGO community/civil society

Will they empower us as watch-dogs?

The private sector

Will we make a profit if we use them?

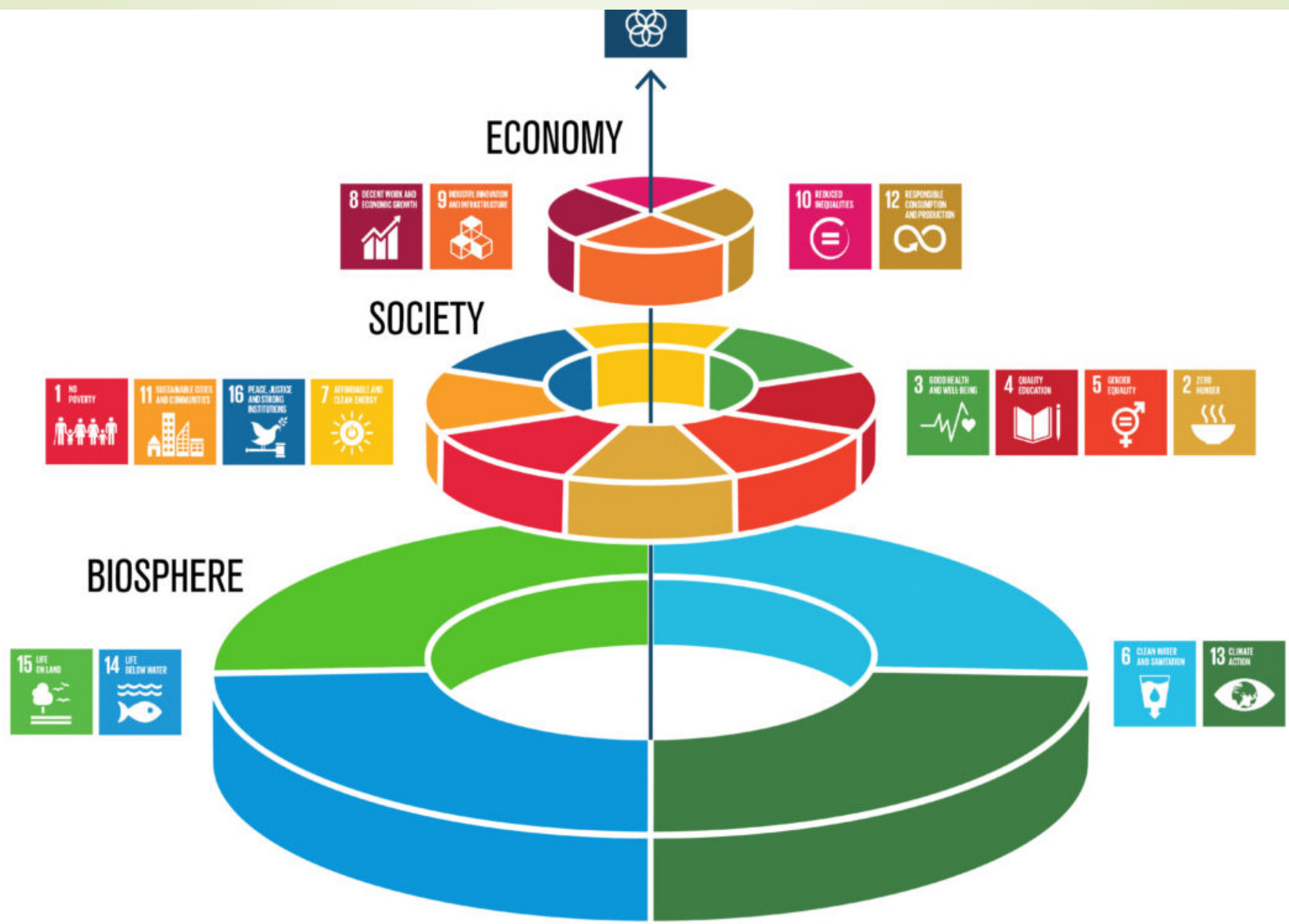
Why is sustainability important to our future in a magnitude we have never before seen – or understood?

- **Consider the 9 planetary boundaries –**
 - **Human activities have caused the planet great stress**
 - **We are on the brink of no return**
 - **Read the latest IPCC report on the global climate**

The planet needs help – and there are two answers:

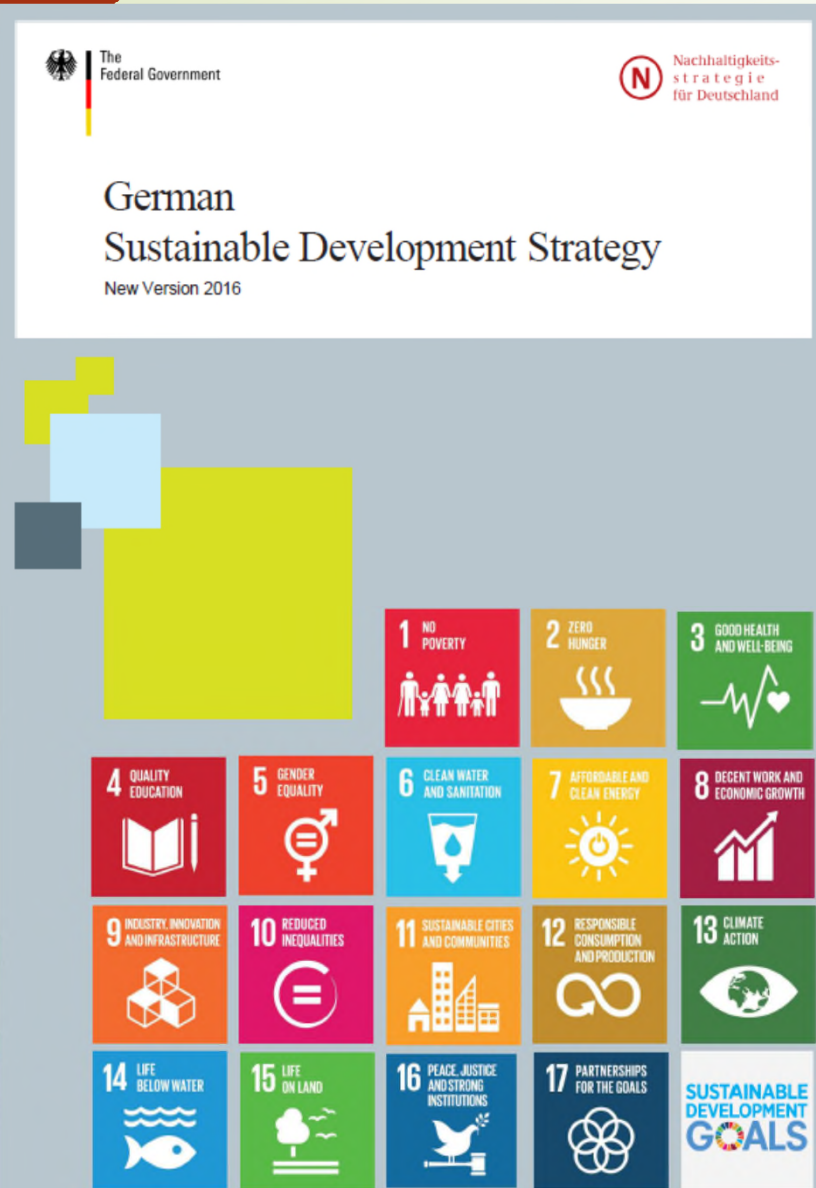
4





Germany has used the concept sustainability (Nachhaltigkeit) for more than 300 years

6



- This requires economically efficient, socially balanced and environmentally sustainable development, **constrained only by the planetary boundaries of our Earth** together with the objective of a **life in dignity for everyone**
- The boundaries of our planet's resilience, as identified by an international team of scientists in 2009, define a **“safe operating space”**, within which development, global justice, prosperity and a **“good life”** can be achieved and permanently secured. According to this research, **humanity has already left the safe operating space with regard to the loss of biological diversity, the disruption of biogeochemical cycles of nitrogen and phosphorous, climate change and land-system change.**

BROADENING THE SCOPE

7

➤ **Our goal:**

➤ **A prerequisite:**

➤ **A problem:**

➤ **Remedy (or necessity):**

➤ **Operative tools, a (possible) guarantor of success:**

➤ **Challenge:**

➤ **Optimal well-being for all**

➤ **A world that can provide this**

➤ **Resource depletion, pollution, environmental destruction; inequality at all levels: physical, social, political, economical**

➤ **Build a world totally based on the principles of sustainable development, resource sufficiency, circular economy, long term planning**

➤ **Good, functional governance with systems and institutions that function**

➤ **Understanding governance, conceptualising it, having access to governance**



A few reminders and a couple of questions



The SDGs – all 17 with all 169 targets and 230(+) indicators, and how can this be a living part of the German national strategy?

- ▶ **Integrated, interlinked and indivisible;**
 - ▶ **Hence: No Cherry picking, all must be part of planning and operation/implementation**
- ▶ **People-centred and planet-sensitive;**
 - ▶ **Hence: all must be involved with new resource and economic policies**
- ▶ **Universal – applying to all countries while recognizing different realities and capabilities – thus affecting German national and foreign policies in all aspects – EU, trade, finance, environment etc**
 - ▶ **Hence – we must all strive to succeed. We have no time to loose!**

A new understanding of economic, resource and social issues based on the 2030 Agenda:

10


The triple bottom line vs the five Ps of the 2030 agenda

THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

- ➔ **PEOPLE (2nd)**
- ➔ **PLANET (3rd)**
- ➔ **PROFIT (1st)**

THE 2030 AGENDA

- ➔ **PEOPLE**
- ➔ **PLANET**
- ➔ **PROSPERITY**
- ➔ **PEACE**
- ➔ **PARTNERSHIP**

- 
- How well are the German institutions, at all levels suited to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs effectively?
 - What alternative models and structures are conceivable and necessary to put sustainable development on a solid ground?
 - How could a multi-stakeholder approach and a stronger involvement of organized civil society with academia contribute to overhauling current structures?
 - How can the private sector wholeheartedly embrace SD?
 - **Do we need new structures? What does it take to place sustainable development on a solid institutional basis?**



A few basic thoughts:

What happens to ideas – mine and those from the rest of this and similar meetings or workshops?

- **If you think the ideas are impracticable, not possible to carry out or implement – then do the following:**
 - 1) – find proper arguments for why the ideas are impossible
 - 2) – find concrete projects or ideas to replace the elements that I have proposed
- **If you think the ideas were good, and could be implemented, then do the following:**
 - 1) – develop arguments to strengthen the ideas and to ‘sell’ them back home so the capitals can give equal support
 - 2) – develop the process through which the ideas can be implemented

What do you think?

- ➔ So many claim: There are too many SDGs, too many targets, too many indicators. It makes the 2030 agenda too complex and too diverse.
- ➔ If we accept this, it is the same as saying that the world is too complex and too diverse to understand, and to do something about.
- ➔ Consequently we refuse to see the obvious interlinkages which are all around us.
- ➔ SDG relevant institutions must reflect the interlinkages.



The German strategy on sustainable development and the Peer Review

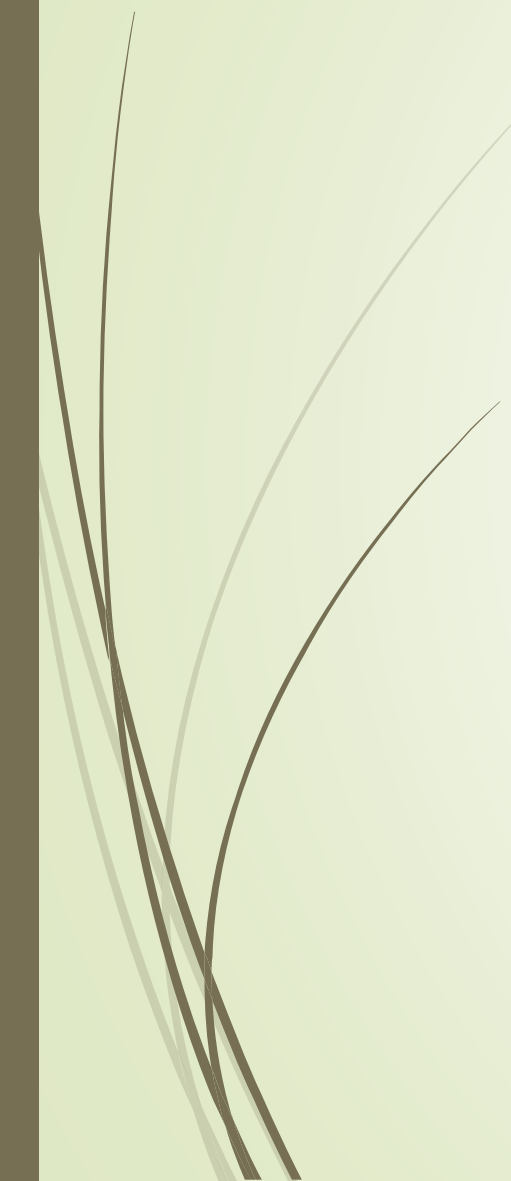
Change – Opportunity – Urgency: The Benefit of Acting Sustainably



- The 2018 Peer Review on the German Sustainability Strategy
- Report by the International Peer Group chaired by Helen Clark
- Berlin, May 2018



Germany has a strategy for sustainable development – not many countries do

- **In the Peer Review: There are 11 chief recommendations, several of which address the questions of institutions**
 - Each of these recommendations are supplied with more specific sub-items, in all there are 67 added recommendations to the 11 main ones.
- 

Four of the key recommendations from the Peer Review

18

- Keep what works, elevate what is good, and change what has failed to deliver.
- Make the institutional architecture charged with implementing the 2030 agenda more effective.
- Raise the level of ambition for what can be achieved.
- Foster a more conducive enabling environment for Leaving No One Behind

2. Make the institutional architecture charged with implementing the GSDS more effective

- ▶ jumpstart the institutional architecture and re-energise its working modality;
- ▶ send strong public signals of leadership on and dedication to advancing the GSDS in this term of government;
- ▶ promote understanding of the triple approach and streamline it with operational measures;
- ▶ strengthen the GSDS solution capacity in an ever more complex society, including by strengthening the science/society interface;
- ▶ consider anchoring the principle of sustainable development in the German Constitution.

3. Raise the level of ambition for what Germany can achieve

- moving towards zero net land degradation;
- reversing the trend on biodiversity losses; realising the fundamental changes the dairy and meat industry and our diets need, similar to the scope of the Energie-wende;
- phasing out fossil fuel and nuclear energy generation and putting even more emphasis on driving a global change towards achieving sustainable energy for all;
- speeding up the drive towards more circular consumption and production patterns; and
- leading an informed debate on all dimensions of sustainable development.

4. Foster a more conducive enabling environment for Leaving No One Behind

- reflect on the concerns we heard from a number of social organisations and businesses which saw the GSDS as currently being of little relevance to them. *They perceived sustainable development to be an environmental agenda, when in reality it also encompasses the economic and social spheres.* Government should find ways to foster broader engagement with the Strategy through innovative dialogue-based processes;
- address in a meaningful way the LNOB issues of jobs that are neither decent nor fairly remunerated, of gender gaps, and of the wider issues of limits to social cohesion – in particular the feeling of fragility and of living in precarious circumstances and times;
- continue the regional RENN network until 2030 in order to strengthen regional coordinating efforts and collaboration between stakeholders, the Federal Government, and the provinces (Länder);
- include the regional RENN network in top-level stakeholder forums run by Government; and
- better localise the GSDS and encourage Länder, cities, and rural areas to contribute further to its implementation and monitoring loops.

Parliament: there needs to be more powerful parliamentary scrutiny

- **Transform** the Parliamentary Advisory Council on SD (PBnE) into a more powerful committee which is empowered to scrutinise progress on the GSDS closely and to focus in particular on the off-track indicators;
- **Improve access** to sustainability assessments prepared for policy decisions;
- **Anchor** the cross-cutting principle of sustainability in the German Constitution; and
- **Reflect** the GSDS in the Government's budget.



Other key - recommendations

5. The Federal Government should strengthen the executive's central co-ordination capacities and address off-track indicators promptly
8. Revamp communications
9. Enhance both capacity for systems-thinking and education for sustainability
10. Indicators: expand budgets for and activity on tracking progress
11. Deal with emerging issues and apply the principles of the GSDS to Germany's global interactions

What could be strengthened – a personal view

- The entire progress report could be more developed, the indicators were of a mechanical nature, a better and a more complete narrative should be developed.
- Explicit policies on integrating the three dimensions of SD
- The strategy: did it represent a challenge, an opportunity or a risk? Admitting the risks, but focussing on opportunities?
- Leading by regulations is always difficult. Clearly the government must agree to regulate in the name of sustainable development, and we see this being done all over the world.
- More focus on economic issues and consumption – longevity of products, long term planning, ethical and impact investments (Frankfurter Stock Exchange)
- Germany leading on sustainable energy – highlighted and exported
- Stronger focus on SD education

Leaving no one behind – implementing the SD strategy through meaningful partnerships

- “Leaving no one behind” goes to the heart of partnerships. Partnerships in implementation clearly must involve all stakeholders at all levels on an equal footing.
- An often stated truism is: unless governments own intergovernmental processes, policies will never be taken seriously. Another is: unless people feel ownership with development, little will be implemented. This is a basic challenge of partnerships, of Leaving no one behind and of successfully implementing the sustainability strategy.
- A well-crafted and well implemented sustainability policy, with a focus on Leaving No One Behind’ is the best anti-dote to the extreme right polices we see now emerge all over Europe.



Stakeholder engagement – how?

(See slide 40 for a further explanation of slides 27, 28, 29)

Level	Systems/stakeholders active at different levels	Opportunity, engaging in implementing SDGs	Impact of using SDGs in planning and actions
Local ²⁷	Municipalities, business, civil society, sub-national governments	High	High
National	Government, private sector, civil society, academia & research	Varies, some good examples, too many poor examples	Varies, some good examples, hardly enough
Regional	Larger institutions, private sector, UN system; regional organisations, the Nordic council, EU, OAU other regional intergovernmental systems and NGOs	Varies, the 2030 agenda has created a momentum, there are opportunities, the fear is that they might decrease, it depends upon governance	Varies, and it reflects the available opportunities.
Global	OECD, the UN system, large corporations, academia & research INGOs	Symbolic to real participation of all stakeholders, could be decreasing over time due to fragmented governance and understanding of the 2030 agenda and the SDGs	Uneven picture, impact possible and growing in certain areas, though impact reflect opportunities and understanding

Stakeholder positions vis-a-vis SDGs – I (source JG Strandenaes)

28

	LOCAL	NATIONAL	REGIONAL	GLOBAL
INFLUENCE				
Government	High	High	High	High
Business	High	High	High	High
People (academia)	High	High/ Lessening	Less	Little (?) (context dependent)
INTEREST				
Government	High to inconsistent	High to inconsistent	Inconsistent to High	Varies to High
Business	Less	High	Growing	Growing
People (Academia)	Varies to High	Varies to High	Less (Context dependent)	Even less (Context dependent)

Stakeholder positions vis-a-vis SDGs – II (source JG)

Strander
29

	LOCAL	NATIONAL	REGIONAL	GLOBAL
ABILITY to implement				
Government	High	High	High	High
Business	High	High	High	High
People (Academia)	H/Varies	H/Varies	Less	Even less
PREPAREDNESS				
Government	Few	Varies to High	More	Varies
Business	Few	Growing	Growing	A few
People (Academia)	Growing	Growing	Few	Not really

Prerequisites for involving all and Leaving No One Behind -

What is being done must respect and understand:

- **Relevance**
- **Participation**
- **Access**
- **Information**
- **Knowledge**
- **Understanding**
- **Being listened to and taken seriously**
- **Promises followed up**



Summing up – are we rewarded for being sustainable?

The 2030 Agenda invites cross political unity

It gives us a new over-arching planning tool

- It challenges us to think long-term and develop systems that can give us predictability in ways we have not used before, it can be an antidote to the fear of uncertainty
- It gives us a way to handle and deal with future in a sensible manner
- In a fragmented world it offers continuity and gives us an understanding of world that is connected in a systematic way
- It is the first planning tool developed globally that has relevance for each nation and all administrative levels
- It fosters dialogue, and can contribute to dampen extremism
- It outlines the hazards of not acting, and delivers a new way to look for opportunities, opportunities we have not seen or understood before

A conflicting future

33

This we know


- Diminishing access to resources
- Increased consumption
- Growing pollution
- Nature's capacity to replenish undermined and reduced
- Growing population
- Growing disparity
- Short term focus

This we have to do:

- Regulate
- Reduce
- Recycle
- Adapt
- Distribute
- Rethink
- Long term planning

Global demand for new infrastructure could amount to more than \$90 trillion between 2015 and 2030, which means (average 6 trillions/annum):

- **It will almost double the estimated \$50 trillion value of the world's existing stock.**
- **we will literally be rebuilding our world over the next 15 years.**
- **(from a MacKinsey report, 2015)**



➔ We have changed the world in a wrong direction by mistake.

➔ We can save it and make it better by intent

- ➔ **These are the themes for 2019 and they are connected:**
- ➔ **UNEA:** “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”
- ➔ **UN HLPF:** “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness”




In our political debates, remember that

- Complexity is not the same as fragmentation
- Fragmentation is not diversity
- Criticism is not the same as being against
- We need to find ways to act and think outside the ‘silos’ while at the same time retain expert knowledge on issues

Finally: if we are resourceful, we allocate resources – if not, we fail.

- “Doing more with less” is not a truism, it is a disaster. We are faced with the biggest challenge in humanity’s existence – saving the globe. We cannot afford not to give our ideas adequate resources. We will never be able to calculate the cost of not doing enough. That cost will be astronomical and incalculable. Will you take the responsibility for such a financial disaster – or will we just leave the problems for our next generations – the youth of today and just leave everybody behind?

- 
- **The overarching idea of the 2030 agenda is: Leaving no one behind**
 - **Let us get to work – we have no time to loose**



Thank you for listening to me

- Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
- Senior adviser on governance and sustainability policies
- Stakeholder Forum
- jgstrandenaes@gmail.com

Explanatory note for slides 27, 28 and 29, source for slide 5.

40

- The 'grid' shows in a simple way the position or interest the various stakeholders show in relationship to the SDGs. Slide 27 gives a general assessment of engagement by various stakeholders in seeing and understanding how to engage with the 2030 agenda and the SDGs. Slide 28 indicates that Governments are in a 'high' or strong position to influence how the SDGs are viewed at local, national or regional level whereas 'people/academia have a strong position at local level, but decreasing level as we go to the international/global context.
- The next column shows the same tendencies, but this time in regard to how the general interest in the SDGs are viewed. There are obviously different reasons for this, awareness and knowledge of the SDGs are but one explanation.
- Slide 29 shows first how the various stakeholders may implement the SDGs, their ability to do so. Governments and business have a high degree to implement the SDGs, locally people/academia have the same possibilities, globally less so.
- The final element in 29 shows how prepared the various stakeholders are in implementing the SDGs. Despite the presentations by governments at the UN Headquarters in New York, July every year in the High Level Political Forum, HLPF, the coordinating unit for the SDGs, few governments are truly prepared to implement the 2030 agenda, and only partially, ie selecting a few, or referring to all 17 in a general way. The picture changes looking at real preparedness at national level, as a growing number of countries actually incorporate elements of sustainable development and hence also the SDGs (almost by default). The picture is also different at regional level, where the EU is the real unit making efforts to work on the SDGs. And several countries have engaged in global sustainability policies, some as a continuation of their MDG, (Millennium Development Goals) commitments, some to fulfil their obligations made in relations to the environment conventions. A growing number of businesses engage – again EU is the exception – but few globally; people/academia's real preparedness is still not there, at least not globally – through their NGO relations.
- SOURCE: My personal observations at HLPF every year, and discussions there with government delegates and NGOs including UN staff. Slide 27 is from lectures and notes developed by me in lecturing for the Oslo University College, Norway, a series of annual lectures called: "From the end of WWII to the SDGs; an overview of world development from 1945 to 2020 seen through the UN, geo-political actors and the growing intergovernmental system, the growth of civil society and stakeholders with rights based and sustainability agendas". (I apologise for the long title, it is shorter in Norwegian).
- Slide 5: The source for the pyramidal organisation of the SDGs are Professor Johann Rockstrom and CEO Pavan Suckhdev. Their presentation was at the Stockholm EAT Forum in 2016. The presentation is found at:
<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-21-looking-back-at-2016-eat-stockholm-food-forum.html>