



## 17 Development Goals for All Nations – Will the Necessary Implementation Succeed by 2030?



**Climate issues, famines, wars: The multiple crises of our time are straining the global community. A promising remedy would be the determined implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Foundations should consistently contribute to this effort – and some are already doing so.**

Let's take a brief journey back to 2015, a year marked by conflicts, tensions, and upheavals. Violence, terrorist attacks, and wars dominated much of the news. Refugee flows were significant worldwide, especially affecting Europe and Germany. "We can do it," Angela Merkel promised. Positive processes and developments at the global level demonstrate the potential of forward-looking, inclusive, and innovative cooperation: Firstly, the United Nations World Summit in September, where the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted. Secondly, the Paris Climate Conference in December, where the international community agreed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels in a legally binding treaty.

### **Holistic Approach: Everyone is Needed**

In New York and two and a half months later in Paris, there was joyous celebration. Both events were previously considered unlikely. It's clear: Without the SDGs, there would have been no

agreement on the Paris Climate Accord from the many developing countries. It's also clear that the global development goals are only as valuable as their actual implementation by 2030.

The unique aspect of the SDGs is their universality, aimed at all nations, based explicitly on the [principle "Leave No One Behind,"](#) and the understanding that the 17 goals must be pursued simultaneously. To measure the SDGs, the UN developed a set of 231 globally comparable indicators based on national data. Data for Germany and descriptive information on the indicators are provided by the Federal Statistical Office. [It's worth a look.](#)

The 2030 Agenda, which includes the SDGs, has its contradictions and shortcomings. However, continuing with "business as usual" is unacceptable. A change, a transformation, is urgently needed.

Therefore, the overarching theme of this year's Foundation Day is spot on. We should, however, avoid associating transformation with just one area. Digitalization, economic crisis, societal division – the world is experiencing multiple crises and profound changes simultaneously, as is the foundation sector.

### **Sobering Mid-Term Review of the SDGs**

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, an SDG summit has been held every four years during the United Nations General Assembly. [By mid-2023, only 12% of the Sustainable Development Goals were on track.](#) The UN's Future Summit, scheduled for late September 2024 in New York, aims to provide the necessary impetus to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This summit is also a litmus test: The preparatory process reveals more and more which countries support which international order. This could help identify potential allies for reviving the "Alliance for Multilateralism." There are also strong voices advocating for merely adjusting the SDGs post-2030, rather than renegotiating them entirely.

The first Hamburg Sustainability Conference, set for October 7-8, 2024, aims to build on the Future Summit's outcomes, enhancing and reinforcing them where possible. It will also address any shortcomings in the debate. German foundations, in particular, should engage actively.

### **The Role of Philanthropy**

The Federal Association of German Foundations has repeatedly addressed aspects of sustainable development, such as at its annual meetings. In the European context, the umbrella organization Philanthropy Europe Association (Philea) and the international philanthropy association WINGS provide ongoing guidance for more SDG implementation. Since the G20 summit in Germany in 2017, the international foundation platform Foundations 20 has made significant contributions. The roughly 80 participating foundations focus on climate issues under the SDGs' umbrella, notably Goal 7 "Affordable and Clean Energy" and Goal 13 "Climate Action."

Some German foundations are already well advanced regarding the SDGs, while others are taking initial steps or joining networks. A few examples: The Mercator Foundation has long been active in the climate sector with partner projects and supporting new think tanks like Agora Energiewende, advocating for a united, peaceful Europe. The Robert Bosch Foundation has

restructured its program to integrate climate as a cross-cutting theme in its work, especially in health, education, and global issues for a just and sustainable future. The German Federal Environmental Foundation, Europe's largest environmental foundation, focuses on sustainable business practices, innovation, and environmental protection, especially for SMEs. The nonprofit Michael Otto Foundation, the majority owner of the Otto Group, is one of the initiators of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference. The newly restructured BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt emphasizes economic transformation to strengthen societies and democracies, laying the foundation for a fairer and more livable future. The Siemens Foundation commits to sustainable societal development. The Foundation for Sustainability explicitly references the 2030 Agenda in its actions and its charter preamble. This list could go on.

### **Adequate Funding is Essential**

An SDG-aligned transformation, including addressing the climate crisis, requires substantial and modern financing. Investment in sustainability is necessary; otherwise, future generations will bear unbearable costs, and societal cohesion will be at risk. Every euro saved wrongly today will cost future generations dearly and severely impact our living foundation, a healthy Planet Earth.

A note for the specific German debate: The future constraints of a shortsighted debt brake must be removed from our perspective.

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