

## COP21, Paris, Climate Action and Sustainable Development: *An Overview of the UN's 2030 Agenda's Plan of Action*



By **Dr Ted Christie, Environmental Lawyer & Mediator, 23 October 2015**

### **Disclosure Statement:**

*Ted Christie does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.*

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Over 20 years of UN climate change negotiations precede the upcoming 2015 Paris Climate Conference, COP21. The stage is now set for UNFCCC Parties to approve a legally binding, universal climate agreement to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2°C or 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.



Obligations under both UN Climate Treaties as well as statements by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon - reinforce the linkage between climate change and sustainable development: *That climate change and sustainable development are interdependent and mutually supporting.*

A major step to address the global challenge posed by climate change for sustainable development was reached by the UN General Assembly on the 25 September 2015: The Assembly formally adopted the new framework: *Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [the “2030 Agenda”] .

The aim of the 2030 Agenda is to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and to tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

In his opening address to the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General recognized the new framework as an Agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership:

*“It conveys the urgency of climate action. It is rooted in gender equality and respect for the rights of all”; and  
 “The 2030 Agenda compels us to look beyond national boundaries and short-term interests and act in solidarity for the long-term. We can no longer afford to think and work in silos” (2).*

**The 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Development Goals & Targets**

To chart sustainable development for people and the planet by 2030, the framework for the 2030 Agenda contains 17 interrelated *Sustainable Development Goals* [“SDGs”] and 169 *Targets* to achieve these Goals (3).

The following diagram outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals:



Source: UN in collaboration with Project Everyone

**The SDGs and Targets are “integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable” - subject to one qualification: Different national realities, capacities and levels of development are to be taken into account –and national policies and priorities respected.**

- *The 2030 Agenda also recognizes that Targets are both aspirational and global.*
- *In setting and applying its own National Targets, each government - subject to national circumstances - will be guided by the global level of ambition.*
- *Each Government will decide how these aspirational and global Targets are to be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies.*

## Climate Action, Sustainable Development & the 2030 Agenda

The Goal specific for sustainable development and climate change is SDG13, “Climate Action”. Its goal is to:

*“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” (Acknowledging that the UNFCCC is the primary international, inter-governmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change).*

Having “Climate Action” as one of the 17 SDGs in a global model for sustainable development – *where the aim is to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change* - is clearly supported by the following conclusions in the IPCC Report “Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability” **(4)**:

*“Throughout the 21st century, climate-change impacts are projected to slow down economic growth, make poverty reduction more difficult, further erode food security, and prolong existing and create new poverty traps, the latter particularly in urban areas and emerging hotspots of hunger (medium confidence)”;* and  
*“Climate-change impacts are expected to exacerbate poverty in most developing countries and create new poverty pockets in countries with increasing inequality, in both developed and developing countries”.*

The Agenda 30 SDGs and Targets that guide sustainable development decision-making over the next 15 years come into effect on 1 January 2016.

## Conclusions

Adopting the 2030 Agenda’s SDG13 for Climate Action and its Targets at COP21 would emphasize the UN’s commitment to a new climate agreement in which climate change and sustainable development were seen to be interdependent and mutually supporting.

Adoption and an immediate start for the 2030 Agenda's SDG13 and its Targets at COP21 would facilitate negotiations for reaching an ambitious and universal, new climate agreement at Paris.

## Dr Ted Christie and Environmental Dispute Resolution

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**Read More “About Dr Ted Christie”:-**

<http://www.environment-adr.com/uploads/Bio-Law-ADR-Christie.May2015.pdf>

## End Notes and Hyperlinks

1. Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
2. Secretary-General's remarks at UN Sustainable Development Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda  
<http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=901>
3. **2030 AGENDA, GOAL 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.**  
**Target 13.1** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries  
**Target 13.2** Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning  
**Target 13.3** Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning  
**Target 13.a** Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible  
**Target 13.b** Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities
4. [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5\\_wgII\\_spm\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf)