



About Scotland's International Development Alliance

We are the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. Our membership brings together a diverse range of organisations and individuals including over 160 NGOs, businesses, academic institutions and public sector bodies that operate in over 100 countries. We endorse the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and align our objectives to them. By joining the Alliance members do the same.

We welcome this Member's Debate on the SDGs in Scotland, having authored the chapter on Goal 17 in the Oxfam-UWS Partnership's report 'On Target for 2030?'.

Why is this debate important?

The 17 SDGs are part of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 "Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".¹ This international agreement, was adopted by 193 governments at the United Nations in September 2015. The purpose of the 2030 Agenda, as stated in its first sentence is to act as a "plan of action for people, planet and prosperity".

The SDGs are therefore the closest we have come so far to an internationally agreed blueprint for sustainable development. They act as a guideline for all countries and can unite the world on the focus and direction of action, as well as setting out clear objectives for resolving the greatest challenges facing humanity today. The SDGs have the potential of driving large scale change towards a more sustainable, poverty-free world.

The holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda, and the interconnected nature of all 17 SDGs, emphasises the need for joined up thinking and action. The achievement of one goal should not come at the expense of others, neither domestically nor internationally. This need to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of Scotland's commitment to sustainable development must be a priority both for Parliament and across government.

The global-domestic linkages of this international framework require alignment of all local, national and international policies that Scotland adopts. These linkages call for an understanding of how policy, domestic or otherwise, affects sustainable development outcomes everywhere, both now and into the future.

Why is Goal 17 vital to the overall success of the SDGs?

Goal 17 is about strengthening the means of implementation and building partnership for achieving the Goals. In this globalised age, it is impossible to ignore the fact that our actions here and now have a profound effect on people and planet, elsewhere and into the future. No longer can we allow ourselves to be limited by a narrow unilateral focus as we attempt to solve local and global problems. Working together, sharing ideas and fostering innovation at all levels of society are essential for creating a sustainable future. These are the principles of Goal 17 and are at the centre of the whole 2030 Agenda.

Key to this is creating the space for partnership and cooperation, both physical and virtual. Examples include partnerships between schools in different countries, North-South and South-South civil society partnerships and networks linking the public, private and civil society sectors. At a geo-political scale, it is also about ensuring richer countries and regions do their bit to help poorer countries and regions achieve the sustainable development goals through development financing, policy coherence, and technology transfer.

Goal 17 is of specific importance to us as an internationally focused membership body because the Goal's targets relate specifically to global partnership and cooperation in areas such as international development finance, global trade and tax systems, technology and capacity building.

What is Scotland's progress against Goal 17?

As a devolved administration, Scotland is limited as to how much progress it can make against the targets under Goal 17. This is due to the fact many of these relate to reserved powers currently decided at UK level, such as overall aid and development finance, global governance and international trade. Nonetheless, within the scope of its operation Scotland can be said to have no significant dis-alignment with SDG 17ⁱ, and contributes meaningfully across several areas, particularly in leading by example as a good global citizen with its International Development Fund and Climate Justice Fund.

However, although the powers to create fairer trade and investment rules (SDG targets 17.10 and 17.12) lie outwith the powers of the Scottish Government, there may nonetheless be opportunities to actively promote fairer rules to other national governments as part of Scotland's own trade and investment strategy. The Scottish Government should also adopt procurement policies that take human and environmental impact into consideration, and identify publicly when supply chains and investment strategies undermine sustainable development elsewhere in the world. In this sense, we can say Scotland could do much more on Goal 17.

Crucially, Goal 17 also includes a specific target relating to policy coherence (target 17.14), a concept that underpins the entire 2030 Agenda. It asks decision-makers to look at the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development holistically, balancing tensions and competing agendas wherever possible. At its simplest, this is about making sure that actions taken by one part of government, or other sector within society, do not undermine the positive actions taken by others; and preferably, support and reinforce one another. With 17 diverse Goals to achieve by 2030, this premise becomes complex but wholly necessary.

There is a commitment in the International Development strategy (as well as in Scotland's National Performance Framework and further related strategies) to policy coherence; but a more detailed analysis of where policy incoherence might arise, and how key synergies might be leveraged, is not present.

Some work has been undertaken on specific thematic areas that reinforce Scotland's international development work, such as on climate and global citizenship education, but this work is not systematic, and although promising, only scratches the surface.

What more can Scotland do to achieve Goal 17?

We believe Scotland can do much more and demonstrate global leadership on Goal 17, particularly through its commitment to policy coherence. What was once solely about how domestic policies affect outcomes in developing countries, now extends to how any policy, domestic or otherwise affects sustainable development outcomes everywhere, both now and into the future.

In order to enhance policy coherence in Scotland, the Government should:

- **Work collaboratively with other sectors** to develop systematic ways of enhancing coherence, including using and developing this [open source wiki on policy coherence](#)ⁱⁱⁱ in Scotland.
- **Ensure responsibility for achieving the SDGs is embedded and aligned** vertically (national through to local) and horizontally (across sectors & across-ministerial portfolios) at all levels of government to ensure a joined-up approach to SDG implementation.
- **Develop accountable and transparent structures that promote joined-up thinking** on SDG implementation. The inter-ministerial group on policy coherence that was announced by Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development in September

2019 could be a great example of this, but it remains to be seen what the remit this group will have or how it will operate.

- **Measure its global footprint holistically.** As indicators are developed that aim to measure progress towards the 11 National Performance Framework Outcomes, particularly our 'positive contribution internationally', we must ensure they go some way to measuring coherence in relation to our global footprint across a full range of sectors, such as trade & investment, supply chains in procurement and waste management.

The Scottish Parliament also has an important role to play enhancing policy coherence in Scotland. It should:

- **Ensure systematic scrutiny of government legislation and activity using a policy coherence approach.** For example, all new bills and legislation should be assessed through a sustainable development lens. Existing tools can be used for this, such as the Parliament's own Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool^{iv} developed by SPICe.

This tool has been found to highlight cross-cutting issues and unintended consequences, and could help to mitigate committee silos, thus supporting policy coherence. It is not currently being routinely used in committee scrutiny, as there is no staff resource in place to support its use.

- **Ensure Parliamentary Committees align their remits to both SDGs (and targets) and NPF Outcomes** to improve understanding of where responsibility to achieve the SDGs lies.
- **Commit to holding regular debates like this one** on SDG and NPF progress and implementation, to hold government account on their commitment to the achieving the SDGs.

For more information, please contact Lewis Ryder-Jones, Policy, Advocacy and Communications Officer for Scotland's International Development Alliance: lewis@intdevalliance.scot

i <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

ii <https://scvo.org.uk/policy-research/evidence-library/2019-the-sdgs-and-scotland-a-discussion-paper-and-initial-analysis-including-alignment-with-national-performance-framework>

iii https://pcsdscotland.miraheze.org/wiki/Main_Page

iv https://pcsdscotland.miraheze.org/wiki/Scotland%27s_tools