

Bond SDG Group Response to the Zero-Draft of the Political Declaration - 2023 SDG Summit

12 May 2023

The following analysis was led by the Bond SDG Group, with inputs from other Working Groups within the organization, in response to the Zero-Draft released by the co-facilitators Ireland and Qatar on 8 May 2023. While not exhaustive, it is intended to provide the sector's recommendations on how the Political Declaration can be strengthened ahead of the next round of negotiations.

General Comments

- The Zero-Draft prepared by the co-facilitators, Ireland and Qatar, presents an excellent starting point for negotiations towards a strong, actionable and concise Political Declaration to be adopted by Member States at the 2023 SDG Summit in September.
- We welcome the approach taken to keep the outcome document cross-cutting and to articulate key structural and political reforms, particularly around the international financial system.
- We strongly support the retention of language around the importance of maintaining the integrity of the 2030 Agenda, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions.
- We welcome the mainstreaming of the promise to leave no one behind throughout the text and we encourage Member States to support this approach.
- As outlined in the Secretary-General's Progress Report, it is important to recognize that even before the arrival of COVID-19, progress towards the SDGs was off track, with significant gaps between and within countries. We would encourage Member States to include this in Section II.

Specific issues

Climate change, inequality and poverty

- The zero draft pays an appropriate level of attention to poverty eradication, inequality, and climate change but the link between these crises is not recognised sufficiently. Climate change is a threat multiplier to poverty and inequality, and these issues cannot be addressed in isolation. We urge in subsequent versions greater coherence in policy commitments and efforts to address both the poverty, inequality and climate crisis. Shock responsive social protection systems are a critical policy lever in addressing both poverty and just transitions yet the zero draft does not given due attention to social protection measures.
- We welcome the mention of funding needed to respond to loss and damage associated with climate change, but would encourage Member States to commit to establishing the Loss and Damage Fund by 2024 and to set an ambitious collective New Quantitative Climate Finance goal beyond \$100 billion per year prior to 2025.

Health & Water

- We welcome the commitment to strengthening pandemic preparedness, prevention and response and we recommend that a One Health approach is adopted, to protect the health of people from spill over of zoonotic disease like covid-19.
- We also call for a recognition of eye health as a development issue given the critical role vision can play in unlocking human potential by reducing intersecting inequalities and improving educational outcomes, enhancing the ability to engage in decent work, balancing gender inequities, increasing household and national income, and facilitating leadership and participation.
- Water should be highlighted alongside poverty, hunger and malnutrition as one of the top global issues. While we welcome the acknowledgement of efforts and commitments from several processes and recent events, including UN Water Conference, Food Systems Summit, Oceans Conference etc (paragraph 29) we urge Member States to go further and commit to accountability mechanisms to ensure agreed outcomes are delivered.

Transformative actions

- Overall, we are concerned that there is currently insufficient tangible and time-bound commitments in Section III. We would encourage greater clarity and commitments in Section III in order to move beyond rhetoric and ensure the Political Declaration drives the necessary actions to accelerate delivery of the SDGs at scale.
- We note that language on the VNRs could be stronger and linked to actions/commitments.
- We welcome the pledge to strengthen efforts to collect and report data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other characteristics. However, the declaration could be stronger in its articulation as to the need for inclusive data, as a way to identify where investment is most needed in reaching the SDGs, ensure that progress towards the SDGs is equitable for all population groups and that no one is left behind. We urge Member States to also commit to including citizen generated data into SDG review processes, and to participatory methods of data collection to involve civil society and its monitoring on the implementation.
- While Section I and II acknowledge the importance of the transformative principles of universality and indivisibility, we note the absence of specific language on improving policy coherence for sustainable development (SDG Target 17.14) in Section III which is critical for the delivery of the SDGs at all levels and the need to prioritize integrated policies and programmes that create positive synergies and reduce trade-offs among the various SDGs.
- We welcome the commitment to engage with all stakeholders including civil society but would like to see stronger language on the need for meaningful, inclusive and deliberate engagement with civil society in all stages of SDG implementation.
- We welcome the calls to deliver 0.7 per cent ODA target and re-channel unutilized SDRs to countries most in need of urgent development finance, however we need much stronger asks and commitments on debt - besides multilateral coordination we need cancellation and refresh of global debt architecture; more lending will not be enough; we need more concessional finance. We also need climate finance which has not been explicitly mentioned at all despite a 2 trillion USD gap annually to adapt to climate change.
- We strongly welcome commitment to the reform of international financial architecture and especially a mention of governance as a critical element of the reform agenda and the role and place of developing countries in international economic decision making.
- It is disappointing to see no mention of tax in this document at all which is crucial finance for development. We need strong and urgent commitments to tackle tax avoidance and introduce 'polluter pays' taxes to incentivize more sustainable and climate neutral business models.

Endorsement of and support for the UN tax convention on tax would demonstrate global political will to set up a just global tax system.

- The declaration briefly mentions “the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies” and “are based on the respect for human rights”. This is a very general and weak mention of SDG 16. The Declaration should include stronger language on SDG 16 recognizing the critical enabling role for achieving all the other SDGs (including education, health, water and sanitation, land, gender, climate action, infrastructure and connectivity) and addressing the complex challenges. In particular, it should also mention human rights that are critical for the implementation of SDG 16 and for all other human rights including the right to freedom of expression and the right of access to information.
- We welcome efforts that “will further localize the SDGs” but would like to see more details and ambitions, given that the implementation of SDGs will only work if they are implemented and owned at local level.

About the Bond SDG Group

Bond is the UK network of over 400 UK organisations working in international development. The Bond SDG group has over 150 of these organisations as members and is advocating for the full implementation of the SDGs with a strong focus on their global impact. We focus on the implementation of the SDGs by the UK International Development Sector and the UK Government.

The current co-chairs of the SDG Group are Lilei Chow (Save the Children) and Andrew Griffiths (Sightsavers)