

POST2015/UNU-IAS **Conference Report**

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**National Implementation of the 2030 Agenda  
for Sustainable Development**

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# **National Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:**

## **Report of Workshop (29 February - 1 March 2016, Kuala Lumpur)**

### **1. Introduction**

In September 2015, 193 Member States of the United Nations agreed on an aspirational agenda entitled “Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which contain 169 targets to promote three dimensions of what they believed would further the creation of a “sustainable society”: economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection (UNGA 2015). To move this agenda forward, UN member states are beginning to engage in a process of “national implementation” involving the translation of the 2030 Agenda and its related goals and targets into their specific national contexts. As each state has different interests, capacities, and challenges, it is a fundamental expectation for governments to institute appropriate strategies for the Agenda’s implementation and to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of the global common good. This report addresses some of these challenges by presenting and comparing case studies of three countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan) encompassing developed and developing countries.

The report is based on a symposium, “Global and National Perspectives on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, convened on the morning of 29 February 2016, and a workshop, “National Perspectives on Implementation of the SDGs”, held 29 February to 1 March 2016 at Hotel Bangi-Putrajaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Presentations and follow-up discussions at the two events involved participants from the region and beyond. Attendees shared their perspectives on how the global goals may be translated into specific national contexts and on policies and processes that should be put in place to further the 2030 Agenda’s implementation. The event brought together academics and regional policy officials for substantive discussions concerning the SDGs. Representatives of developed and developing states also participated to discuss similarities and differences in the processes of implementation, and they engaged deeply with Malaysian colleagues. They presented their perspectives on the SDGs and possible ways to introduce the 2030 Agenda into teaching curricula at secondary and tertiary education levels.

The events were jointly organized by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) and the Malaysia and Japan Chapters of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). They were supported by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), the Office of the Science Advisor (under the Science 2 Action Programme), the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia (ISIS Malaysia), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and LESTARI, Keio Research Institute at SFC, the Project On Sustainability Transformation beyond 2015 (S-11 project of the Environment Research and Technology Development Fund), and SDSN Australia/Pacific.

The following case studies on Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan are framed by a set of guiding questions and introduce topics including the transitional process from MDGs to SDGs, actions undertaken towards 2030 Agenda implementation, discussions on national sustainable development goals and targets, and interlinkages between the national, regional and global levels, as well as the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in this ambitious process.

## **2. 2030 Agenda: Implementation preparedness in Indonesia**

### *Indonesia's MDG attainment and challenges*

The government of Indonesia, coordinated by the Indonesia MDGs Secretariat and the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), mainstreamed the MDG targets through the 2010–2014 National Development plan. Indonesia also set multiple national-level goals that addressed each of the MDGs and guided the implementation programmes through target-relevant ministries such as education, health and the environment. Operational and technical guidelines were provided for sub-national governments, including target projection, and indicators for provinces and municipalities.

The overall MDG attainment in Indonesia has been mixed, and much remains to be done to address inequality, safeguard the environment, and ensure equal opportunity for health and education. Indonesia has made positive gains towards reducing poverty and improving quality of life through the attainments it has made through MDG-1, MDG-2 and MDG-4 (numbers refer to goal number). Indonesia MDG Report stated that Indonesia has fully attained gender equality in all levels of education (MDG-3) and passed the target for combatting communicable diseases (MDG-6). However, its attainment on improving maternal health (MDG-5) and ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG-7) has been weak. Maternal mortality rate has fallen to 133 per 100,000 live births (2014) from 390 (1991) (BAPPENAS, 2015a), yet remains above the target of 102. On environmental targets, greater efforts are needed to increase households' access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, particularly in rural and remote areas. Indonesia has high greenhouse gas emissions, requiring special attention to enforce a policy framework if the country aspires to reach its CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction target of 29 per cent by 2030 compared to what it is currently on course for.

The main challenges for MDG implementation in Indonesia stem from four issues: regional disparities, ineffective resource mobilization and utilization, policy coherence, and governance. The wide disparities of basic infrastructure and financial accessibility across Indonesia are reflected in the geographical distribution of MDG attainment, with efforts concentrated in the most accessible areas. Regional disparities also contribute to the creation of barriers for effective financing mechanisms to implement the MDG strategies, resulting in centralized funding instead of locally-generated resource mobilization. Further, weak synergies between central and sub-national governments lead to fragmentation in the mainstreaming of the MDGs, as can be seen in incoherent regulations, and overlapping authority and responsibility between central and sub-national governments.

*Progress towards SDG implementation*

Indonesia has stated that implementation of the SDGs should be based on existing frameworks, lessons learned, and best practices observed in achieving the MDGs, and continues the unfinished business of the MDGs.<sup>1</sup> Indonesia did not specify any nationally-owned SDGs during the process of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG). Following intergovernmental negotiations, through a series of consultations with civic society and private sectors at the national level, Indonesia mapped the synergies between its National Priority Agenda, National Development Plans and the proposed SDGs, in order to identify goals and targets relevant to the Indonesian context. The national focus remains on accelerating development through a pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-poor and pro-environment strategy, in which each SDG and targets will be addressed under the relevant national objectives and subsequent programmes (BAPPENAS 2015b). The government of Indonesia through BAPPENAS has also set targets and indicators against which the results of the National Development Plan and the SDGs will be measured at the national level. Like the MDGs, the implementation of the SDGs in Indonesia will be mainstreamed from the national to the local level through provincial and local development plans.

Plans are to build the institutional framework for the SDGs based on the existing MDG framework, with adjustments made with participating agencies to take into account the more interlinked characteristics of the SDGs. BAPPENAS is set to be the coordinating agency for the implementation of the cross-sectoral SDGs at the national level. A joint committee comprising representatives from sectoral ministries and nongovernmental actors has been established and tasked to oversee the policy and institutional coherence. Further, the central government has proposed additional coordinating committees to be set up at the sub-national and provincial levels, to coordinate sub-national implementation and monitor progress with the SDGs.

Regarding partnership for SDG implementation, Indonesia and the United Nations System in Indonesia have recently committed to collaboration to support the overarching goals of the SDGs in four key priority areas, including (1) poverty reduction, equitable sustainable development, livelihoods and decent work, (2) equitable access to social services and social protection, (3) environmental sustainability and enhanced resilience to shocks, and (4) improved governance and equitable access to justice for all. Each of these priority areas responds to the cross-cutting priority areas relevant to Indonesia's development context relating to human rights, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, youth, and statistics and data management (UNICEF 2015). Joint programming and results monitoring will be pursued by multiple agencies, through three main working modalities of policy advocacy and advice, capacity development, and knowledge sharing.

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by H.E. Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia at the United Nations Summit on the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, New York, 26 September 2015.

### *Localizing SDGs in Indonesia*

One of the many limitations to MDG implementation in Indonesia was weak local ownership of goals and targets. For the SDGs to be successfully attained, they need to be localized and translated into local objectives relevant to local circumstances. In Indonesia, localizing the SDGs will require local stakeholders to adopt and integrate the SDGs into local plans, strategies and policy instruments without losing sight of the global and national objectives.

Currently, an initiative to localize the SDGs is taking place at the provincial level through joint collaboration between the provincial government, an SDG philanthropy platform and UNDP Indonesia. The aim of the initiative is to establish a provincial framework and roadmap to accelerate progress on the SDGs, and to develop an inclusive SDG governance structure, follow up and review process. The initiative has yet to extend to the local level. Thus far the central government has not developed the framework to identify selected goals, targets and indicators that would be relevant for the engagement of local governments in both urban and rural areas. A local process to consider local implementation and local implications of the SDGs for communities is also yet to take place.

On the issue of financing development, of particular importance to localizing the SDGs is ensuring the commitment of local stakeholders to make the SDGs a development priority, so that they will be reflected in local budget allocation and monitoring mechanisms. When decentralized planning and financial systems are in place, domestic resource mobilization for SDGs in Indonesia will demand the active participation of local stakeholders to generate local resources and redirect them towards SDG-relevant programmes. To create local momentum, a strong legal basis and incentive schemes will be required if the local level is to support SDG implementation and unlock economic, social and environmental gains.

## **3. National implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Malaysian perspective**

### *Introduction*

Historically, Malaysia has been an active player in global environmental governance efforts. Malaysia played a key diplomatic role in the G-77 group of developing nations, leading to Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) meetings and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which resulted in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992. Recognition of its leadership role is evident in the appointment of Malaysia as the founding Chair of the United Nations Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD) in 1993. Malaysia's international diplomacy also translated into efforts for sustainable development at the national level.

A review of Malaysia's planning processes shows that efforts have been taken to move towards policy integration. Holistic development is enshrined in planning process and has been articulated in Malaysia Plans, the five-year overarching economic development plans of the nation. Evolving from the previous environmental protection policy agenda, the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996–2000) set the basis for sustainable development by stating that economic growth should

be achieved by taking into consideration both social and environmental component (Ahmad et al. 2013). Malaysia's overarching New Economic Model unveiled in 2010 prescribes sustainability as one of its three pillars, alongside high income and inclusiveness—further consolidating this aspiration.

The current Malaysia Plan (2016–2020) has a strong interconnection with the various goals and targets of the SDGs. While efforts have been made to integrate those three pillars of sustainable development and translate the international agenda to the local context, the policies and plans have yet to result in concrete outcomes. A national consultation on sustainable development in the run up to the Rio+20 Earth Summit in 2012 outlined four key challenges for implementation: policy coherence; governance; human capital; and monitoring and evaluation. Two sections below focus on the first two.

### *Policy coherence*

According to Dror (1971: 74), very little that can be done to improve policies without reforming the policy-making system itself. Deeply rooted in a country's history, social contract and constitution, meta-policy issues are resistant to change and to new ideas. Policy integration can be seen from a practical perspective where it consists of a set of measures that aim to change the process of sectoral policy-making. Jordan and Lenschow (2010) presented three perspectives to distinguish policy integration approaches based on their logic of intervention:

- (1) *institutional* approach, towards organizational structures and procedures that are capable of delivering more coordinated governance amongst various parts;
- (2) *political* approach, focusing on the role of political will and leadership; and
- (3) *cognitive* (informational) approach, focusing on a set of ideas or principles that provides structures to the thinking within a policy sector.

The case study in Malaysia demonstrates the different forms of policy integration approaches adopted with the aim of coordinating implementation across multiple agencies and levels. They highlight various challenges—in particular, the need to link to institutional and structural realities within the government system. What is evident is that most of the cases consist of either institutional or cognitive approaches, or in some cases, a hybrid of the two. There was little evidence, however, of the political approach being applied for policy integration and for sustainable development. To drive the implementation of the SDGs administratively, more attention should be devoted to the political circumstances that increase the likelihood of the adoption of sustainability-oriented policies and policy integration. Getting the politics right is therefore a prerequisite to getting the policies right.

### *Governance*

The Rio+20 process identified governance generally, and institutional coordination specifically, as key implementation challenges. As sustainable development is a cross-cutting and a meta-policy affair, the need to coordinate multiple actors and organizations has become more urgent due to the proliferation of new actors and the diffusion of political authority over major governance functions (Haas 2004). This systemic challenge requires both horizontal integration across the different sectors and stakeholders, and vertical integration across the different levels of government—federal, state and local.

Malaysia has no explicit institutional framework for sustainable development or for the SDGs. For the many years since the 1990s, the mandate of sustainable development planning remains under the purview of the Environment & Natural Resource Economic Section of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department. This mainly "environmental" portfolio constitutes one of over twenty divisions under the EPU's planning jurisdiction. But with sustainable development and the SDGs involving different sectors, the negotiation of the SDGs has been put under three different sections within the EPU, namely, the Distribution, Social, and Macroeconomics sections.

In terms of vertical integration, Malaysia faces the challenge of federalism, with different functions falling within the jurisdiction of different levels, or as shared functions primarily between the federal (national) and state levels. This challenge is exacerbated by the current political reality, with various states divided between the opposition and the ruling party of the federal government. Horizontally, consultations demonstrated that meaningful interaction across the different stakeholders (i.e., government, civil society organizations, private sector and academia) is still a challenge. An institutional framework that provides a space or forum based on the SDGs provides an opportunity as a way forward.

### *Discussion*

The SDGs provide an opportunity as a device to link the various and key actors together towards implementing sustainable development. With the policy direction providing high relevance to Malaysia's development, the challenge of translating policy aspirations and policy integration into implementation sits at the heart of the study on effectiveness of the SDGs for years to come. Moving forward, the ability to use the SDGs as a tool to catalyse institutional change, with the necessary policy and institutional reforms, will define the utility of the SDGs for future development of Malaysia and beyond.

## 4. From MDGs to SDGs: Japan's contribution to development of the post-2015 agenda

### *Japan's contribution to the development of the post-2015 agenda: From MDGs to SDGs*

Before full-fledged discussions got underway in international society, Japan was playing a lead role in discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. For example, on 2–3 June 2011, Japan co-hosted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Follow-up Meeting in Tokyo, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The meeting was attended by ministers from 24 countries, and over 100 representatives of countries, international organizations, civil society groups and academics. Its aim was to track current activities and monitor progress since the 2010 United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to start international discussions for the period beyond 2015. On the initiative of Japan, the Post-MDGs Contact Group (CG) was also launched in December 2011, for informal policy dialogue on the development agenda beyond 2015. Government officials and policy-makers representing about 20 countries, as well as major international organizations, foundations, research institutions and NGOs participated. The CG held six meetings between December 2011 and March 2013.

The government of Japan formulated "Japan's Strategy on Global Health Diplomacy" in May 2013, which made global health a priority in Japan's foreign policy and lead to efforts to include the concept of universal health coverage (UHC) in the global context of the post-2015 development agenda. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida presided over the event, and in his concluding remarks stressed the significance of human security and UHC in order to address challenges in the health sector, and emphasized that they should be positioned appropriately in the post-2015 development agenda. Prior to United Nations General Assembly that year, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe contributed an article, entitled "Japan's strategy for global health diplomacy: why it matters," to reputable medical journal *The Lancet*. This can be seen as one of Japan's efforts to mainstream the concept of UHC into the post-2015 development agenda. Japan also participated actively in intergovernmental negotiations which started in January 2015. As a result, ideas stressed by Japan to reflect the concept of human security, such as "people-centered" and "no one will be left behind", were included in the Outcome Documents.

### *Shaping actions towards implementation of SDGs*

As the 2030 agenda for sustainable development was adopted at the United Nations Summit in September 2015, the Group of Seven (G7) Summit in 2016 was a prime opportunity for world leaders to show their commitment to implementation of the SDGs. Prior to that summit, which was held in Ise-Shima on 26 and 27 May, Japan launched the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, on 20 May 2016, and as the G7 Presidency announced initiatives in the following areas (MOFA 2016):

- (1) cooperation for the stabilization of the Middle East;

- (2) global health; and
- (3) promoting further engagement of women.

Prime Minister Abe held the first meeting of the SDGs Promotion Headquarters at the Prime Minister's Office on 20 May 2016, attended by the relevant ministers for the SDGs. They discussed the challenges that the ministers needed to address for the implementation of the SDGs, and included the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan; Minister of State for Gender Equality; Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Minister of the Environment; Minister of Education, Culture, and Sports. Environment Minister Tamayo Marukawa indicated that her ministry would support stakeholders on the SDGs, organize a stakeholders meeting to acknowledge and share advanced actions, and address the implementation of the SDGs through joint efforts of the public and private sectors.

As one of the summit's seven themes was the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a G7 Environment Ministers' Meeting was convened in Toyama, Japan, on 15 and 16 May 2016, for the ministers to share information about their domestic actions to implement the SDGs. Participants included environment ministers from the G7 countries, the European Commissioner for the Environment, heads and senior officials of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Global Compact, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, as well as representatives from cities. In the meeting, the G7 ministers adopted a communiqué expressing support for measures and including examples of actions by G7 members (MOEJ 2016).

### *National goals*

According to a comparative study of all 34 OECD countries conducted by Germany's Bertelsmann Foundation on the basis of 34 indicators for the 17 SDGs for 2030, Japan ranks thirteenth out of 34 countries across all dimensions of the SDG Index (Kroll 2015). Japan is considered to have strength in the area of sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12), agriculture and nutrition (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), and education (Goal 4). On the other hand, it is also pointed out that Japan performs particularly poorly on gender equality (Goal 5). Currently, Japan has one of the highest labour market gender gaps among the advanced economies. The "Japan Revitalization Strategy" approved by Cabinet in 2013 set the target of increasing the employment rate of females 25 to 44 years of age from 68% (2012) to 73%, and increasing the ratio of female employees returning to their jobs after birth of their first child from 38% (2010) to 55% by 2020. Moreover, it declared that the ratio of male employees who take parental leave should be raised from 2.63% (2011) to 13% by 2020 (POST2015 2016).

## 5. Comparisons between countries

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Foundation jointly published the *SDG Index and Dashboards - Global Report* in 2016 to present a comparative perspective on national implementation processes for the 2030 Agenda worldwide (Sachs et al. 2016). Taking into account a set of indicators for each of the 17 SDGs, the report ranked 149 states and assigned each a score between 0 (worst) and 100 (best). Indonesia ranked ninety-eighth with a score of 54.4 points, Malaysia sixty-third (61.7 points) and Japan eighteenth (75.0 points). To illustrate similarities and differences between the three countries covered in this paper, the table below summarizes some of the initial measures taken by national governments.

**Table:** Central governments' initial domestic responses to the 2030 Agenda

Activity	Indonesia	Malaysia	Japan
<b>1. SDGs translated into local language(s)</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>2. Mentioned in prominent domestic policy statements</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>3. National action plan prepared</b>	Yes (National Development Plan 2015–2019)	No (as of Sept. 2016)	Under preparation (by end of 2016)
<b>4. National SDG committee established</b>	Yes (in 2016)	Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department is responsible for coordination.	SDGs Promotion Headquarters headed by the Prime Minister, established 20 May 2016
<b>5. National stakeholder process organized.</b>	Yes (in 2015)	No (as of Sept. 2016)	Yes, through SDG stakeholder meetings organized by Ministry of Environment
<b>6. Encouragement of local SDG activity (including indirect funding).</b>	No (as of Sept. 2016)	No (as of Sept. 2016)	Concept stage, via engagement with proactive municipal governments
<b>7. Direct national funding of local SDG activities.</b>	No (as of Sept. 2016)	No (as of Sept. 2016)	No (as of Sept. 2016)

Note: Table structure informed by Lafferty & Meadowcroft (2000).

## 6. Conclusion

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in September 2015, but the complex and challenging process of translating an aspirational global agenda into national policy-making and meaningful action has just begun. The case studies of the three countries in this report (Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan) suggest that many of the details of future follow-up and review frameworks remain unclear and monitoring processes are still convoluted, even for developed states. Another vexing aspect of the 2030 Agenda relates to questions of accountability and transparency, and the role of the private sector in furthering specific material manifestations of sustainability.

In addition, regional institutions such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have yet to prepare for implementation of the 2030 agenda. On the other hand, regional institutions have great potential to help translate global goals and targets into national contexts. This is even more true with regard to indicators. The workshop covered by this report (“National Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 29 February - 1 March 2016, Kuala Lumpur) revealed potential roles for regional institutions. The capacity of regional institutions to coordinate the follow-up and review process is impeded by a lack of common statistical standards and vast disparities in national capacities to collect viable data. In this regard, capacity building represents a great importance for effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Developing states are in many respects better prepared to introduce this new agenda because of their experience with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They had more than a decade to internalize the goal-target framework in policy-making processes and many have deployed national planning institutions to drive goal achievement forward. In comparison, OECD states generally have not yet deployed policy instruments by way of the formulation of national plans for ambitious, long-term, goal-driven policy-making and development of scenarios to achieve the goals.

More often, developed states have treated global agendas such as those anchored to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as tools for leveraging greater influence via the operation of their own foreign aid policies. Although the 2030 Agenda with its principles of universality aims to initiate a transformation in both the developed and developing world, many OECD states—at least to date—have not fully embraced this ambition and integrated it into domestic policy-making. As a result, preparations vary greatly for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in industrialized states. Some countries with strong governmental leadership, such as Germany or Switzerland, have engaged in active policy-making processes while others have taken fewer steps (UNDESA 2016).

There is a risk that the SDGs will be regarded as a mere continuation of the MDGs, but the underlying principle embedded in the SDGs is totally different from that of the MDGs. The SDGs are viewed by many governments of developing states as an opportunity to benefit from increased foreign aid flows, and if so, transformation could be triggered, in part, by transforming foreign aid policies under the guidance of the SDGs. Governments and other donors need to

be vigilant to not ignore the universal and interlinked nature of the 2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, the mainstreaming the SDGs in national planning may advance sustainable development in developing countries even more effectively than in industrialized countries. If global sustainable development is to be more than an aspirational ideal, however, societies in the industrialized world also have to undertake fundamental transformation. This will involve profound shifts in how people live, relate to each other, and interact with the natural world.

Universality is a new challenge facing the SDGs, considering national uniqueness while taking into account global goals. Between global and national levels, there are spaces at the regional level for maneuvering of the SDGs, even more than any other policy and political opportunities. A crucial next step is to identify those spaces.

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