

Can the Sustainable Development Goals Strengthen Existing Legal Instruments? The Case of Biodiversity and Forests

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted this year to address unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and newly added sustainable development issues. Some of the SDGs target improvements in previously untouched areas such as sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and sustainable cities. Other SDGs, however, will aim to strengthen measures against issues already covered under the MDGs as well as other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Not only is biodiversity covered under the MDGs, it is also covered by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Aichi Targets. Some have argued that including biodiversity under the SDGs is unnecessary duplication which could ultimately confuse the implementation of both the SDGs and other relevant MEAs, especially the CBD and the Aichi Targets. This fear is based on evidence from discussions among UN Member States on how to design SDGs and targets on biodiversity and ensure consistency with existing ones. While this paper fully agrees with the need for consistency, especially with the CBD and the Aichi Targets, which already have functioning reporting mechanisms, it argues that the rapid decline in biodiversity necessitates an integrated approach with other goal areas as well as the elevated status and heightened awareness of issues that the SDGs could potentially deliver. Drawing upon examples of the transposition of the CBD and the Aichi Targets in Japan, this paper argues the SDGs have added value and complementarity to the existing legal instruments in international efforts to conserve biodiversity.

Key words: Aichi Targets, biodiversity, consistency, Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), forests, implementation, reporting, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. Introduction: Biodiversity and Forestry as a Global Issue as Part of Global Agenda

Biodiversity is steadily declining on a global scale. The Living Planet Index released by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) in 2012 indicates that approximately 28 percent of biodiversity has declined worldwide compared to 1970. Further, even conservative estimates indicate that 5.2 million hectares of the world's forests are lost annually (average for years 2000 to 2010) (FAO, 2010). The world population at present is approximately 7.2 billion with an annual average increase of 78 million. By the year 2050, the global population is expected to reach 9 billion people. (UNFPA, 2012) Thus, the strain on the earth's ecosystems may increase as a result of rapidly increasing human population and activities, and there is no sign of it decreasing. Particularly important are the forests, which are said to be home to 80% of terrestrial biodiversity (WWF, 2015). The way forests are managed has a large impact on the fate of biodiversity and these issues need to be addressed in an integrated

manner.

Forests and biodiversity are indispensable to the pursuit of human health and well-being. We have wide-ranging uses for forests and forest products, including as food, medicine and daily commodities, as well as recreation. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment defines ecosystem services as the benefits people obtain from ecosystems and categorizes them into four different groups; (1) provisioning services such as food, water, timber and fibre; (2) regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes and water quality; (3) cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits; and (4) supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). This assessment is written from the perspective of humans – an anthropocentric view – but one can also argue that the earth's ecosystems and species do not exist solely for the well-being of humans but have value in their own right; from such an eco-centric perspective, biodiversity and forests should be preserved for the survival of other

living beings as well, irrespective of the services they provide for humans.

Moreover, as shown in the MEA, forests are used not only for timber, but serve other functions that make their existence essential to both humans and other living things, such as purifying air, improving water quality, enriching soil and preventing soil erosion. In particular, carbon dioxide absorption by forests is extremely important in mitigating climate change, a pressing issue faced by the human race. According to the IPCC, approximately 17 percent of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere are the result of deforestation (IPCC, 2007). More recent studies suggest the percentage is lower, around 10 percent (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2011), but it still is a significant contributing sector together with transport and agriculture. Due to the importance of forestry in addressing climate change, in recent years, initiatives that focus on the benefits of forest preservation have gotten underway, whereby the international community provides financial benefits for activities carried out by developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, referred to as REDD+. The 'plus' means it covers not only the activities of deforestation and forest degradation but also the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (UN REDD Programme, 2015).

In today's globalised society, the flows of food and raw materials are extremely complex. It is routine for someone living in Japan, for example, to consume fish and fruits harvested on the other side of the planet. The raw materials used in making the electrical appliances we use come from all over the world. In this sense, there is a limit to what one country can do to preserve biodiversity. Also not all biodiversity is found within the territories of states. Animals, for instance, walk across borders and there are also regions beyond any country's jurisdiction such as the high seas and polar regions. We therefore need global partnerships for the sustainable management and use of biodiversity and forests worldwide. Governments are chiefly responsible for managing much of the world's biodiversity, including forests, but many are struggling to do this well. This testifies to the need for the preservation of biodiversity and forests to be managed at the global scale as well, and for this reason, the establishment of a global-scale agenda is essential.

Whether the SDGs will be well-received or not, they are expected to receive greater attention than the existing biodiversity targets, i.e., the Aichi Targets. The formulating of the SDGs has been significantly more participatory than that of the MDGs. The UN Development Group conducted a series of consultations and compiled views from over 1 million people from all over the world (United Nations Development Group, 2013). In other words, they can shine a bright light on the current status of the implementation of other international targets where progress has been slow, and can potentially stimulate more financial and other

support, which is currently lacking. They can raise awareness of biodiversity and forests substantially among policy makers and other stakeholders, including ordinary citizens, who could potentially play significant roles in achieving SDGs.

2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2012, 20 years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held again in Rio de Janeiro. At this conference, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were proposed as development goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals that are to reach their target completion date in 2015, and agreement was reached on their formulation. It was determined that the SDGs, unlike the MDGs, would involve integrated responses to the three aspects of sustainable development (economy, society and the environment) and would be universal, applicable to all nations, including both developed and developing countries. Furthermore, based on lessons learned from the MDGs, agreement was reached that the goals were to be action-oriented, concise and ambitious, and were to be limited in number (Open Working Group, 2014). The SDG proposals were made in the context of a common recognition of the necessity to incorporate the standpoint of sustainability further into the development goals, including the idea that a sound global environment would be the basis of humanity's survival and the idea that this environment had encountered its limits. The SDGs were adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

In order to formulate the goals, the Intergovernmental Open Working Group was established in March 2013. Representatives from over 70 nations participated, and negotiations continued for over a year. During the negotiations, each representative attempted to include all items he or she thought to be important. For this reason, in the course of compromising, proposals tended to become long lists of prioritised items. Agreement was reached at Rio+20 on a limited number of goals, a draft containing 17 goals and 169 targets was presented in July 2014 and this draft became the basis of the SDGs. The number of goals and targets remained unchanged in the SDGs that were ultimately adopted, as developing countries insisted that the SDG draft should be non-negotiable and the number of goals and targets should not be changed. Of these 17 goals, forests and biodiversity were addressed in one particular goal (Goal 15). Goals related to marine life were set forth in a different goal (Goal 14). These separate goals can be viewed as an important step forward, considering that the MDGs included only one goal, MDG7, "Ensure Environmental Sustainability," that encompassed multiple issues, including access to safe drinking water

and the preservation of biodiversity. Furthermore, given the lessons learned from the MDGs that inadequate attention has been paid to interlinkages, in the SDGs, interlinkages of goals have been carefully considered. One example is that targets are included regarding forests and ecosystems in the goal for water, such as “by 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.” This inclusion together with other similar cases can be regarded as recognition of synergistic effects among the goals and targets.

On the heels of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs involve goal-setting on a global scale that happens only once every 15 years. As such, they represent an unrivalled chance to raise awareness of development issues such as biodiversity and forests. Put another way, issues not incorporated into the SDGs may be left off the agendas of development conferences and the planning documents of national governments and may therefore be neglected by the international community and national governments. Actually the attention given at development conferences to the issues of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases that were incorporated into the MDGs made a major difference. The SDGs contain stand-alone goals on biodiversity, for example, but do not contain a stand-alone goal on children, and some observers say that this could be a failure on the part of organizations such as UNICEF and others specializing in children, although children’s issues have been mentioned in many goals, e.g., on poverty, education and health in this report.

3. Existing Legal Instruments – Convention on Biodiversity and Aichi Targets

Numerous goals related to sustainable development have been established to date, but implementation has proven to be problematic. Forest areas and biodiversity are no exception and to date, target-setting and monitoring have been carried out based on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was

signed at the Earth Summit in 1992 and took effect the following year. The CBD has 193 parties to date and has achieved quasi-universal membership with a major exception being the United States. The Convention has three main objectives, 1) conservation of biological diversity, 2) sustainable use of its components and 3) fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources. Global targets have been developed twice under the auspices of the CBD, i.e., the 2010 Target (formulated in 2002) and the Aichi Targets (formulated in 2010). The 2010 Target was adopted with the following wording in 2002, “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.” State parties reported on their progress in achieving these targets, and Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 (GBO3) was prepared by the CBD Secretariat and released in 2010 as a review of this target.

The GBO3 states that the 2010 Target “has helped to stimulate important action to safeguard biodiversity,” whereby at present approximately 170 countries have national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and initiatives have proceeded to expand protected areas. On the other hand, assessments to date suggest that of the 15 assessment indicators, nine exhibited a worsening trend (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2010). When examined overall, the results show that the goal to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, which is the objective of the 2010 Target, has not been achieved. Although instrumental measures such as formulating national biodiversity strategies and expanding protected areas have progressed somewhat, the current state of affairs reveals that outcomes have not yet been achieved on significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss (Fig. 1).

There are several reasons for the lack of achievement of the overall objective despite achievements in instrumental measures. Without effective management, increasing the area of protected lands does not lead to the preservation of biodiversity. Also some argue that all land is not equal and it varies in importance for

Goal 1. Promote the conservation of the biological diversity of ecosystems, habitats and biomes

	1.1: At least 10% of each of the world's ecological regions effectively conserved.	Not achieved globally, but more than half of terrestrial eco-regions meet the 10% target. However, management effectiveness is low for some protected areas. Marine and inland water systems lack protection, though this is increasing.
	1.2: Areas of particular importance to biodiversity protected.	Not achieved globally, but an increasing proportion of the sites of importance for conserving birds, and those holding the last remaining populations of threatened species, are being protected.

Goal 2. Promote the conservation of species diversity

	2.1: Restore, maintain, or reduce the decline of populations of species of selected taxonomic groups.	Not achieved globally as many species continue to decline in abundance and distribution. However, some efforts have resulted in the recovery of targeted species.
	2.2: Status of threatened species improved.	Not achieved globally, as species are on average at increasing risk of extinction. However some species have moved to lower risk categories as a result of actions taken.

Fig. 1 Status of subsidiary targets agreed on in the 2010 biodiversity target.

(Source: excerpts from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2010) Global Biodiversity Outlook 3.)

biodiversity conservation. So-called biodiversity hot spots deserve more protection than biodiversity cold spots and preservation of biodiversity in the hot spots tends to be more difficult, as these areas tend to coincide with areas of high economic value. This raises the need for updated science to be reflected in such targets and strategies as the Aichi Targets. For the implementation of the SDGs, the science-policy interface has been frequently discussed. This is critical, especially for the implementation of environment-focused SDGs, such as those on climate change and biodiversity. It remains to be seen whether the SDGs' implementation mechanisms could cater to this need to strengthen the science policy-interface.

Furthermore, while an increase in official development assistance (ODA) for biodiversity is shown in a positive light, the standards for determining what funds are being put toward biodiversity are unclear, and therefore doubt remains as to the credibility of the level of achievements. In the SDGs, the ODA target remains at 0.7% of GNI, which had been previously agreed to internationally. It may be too much wishful thinking to hope that a larger proportion of ODA be devoted to the purpose of biodiversity conservation, given that many equally important issues have been listed in the SDGs.

On the basis of the synopsis of the GBO3 and in continuation of unfinished business in biodiversity conservation, a new strategic plan for 2011 to 2020 (the Aichi Targets) was agreed upon in 2010 to fill the blank period between targets. These included a target stating, "By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan." As mentioned above, at present approximately 170 nations have national biodiversity strategies and action plans. This accounts for about 90 percent of all party nations and this high number itself is an achievement of the CBD. Further effort, however, is required for the remaining state parties to formulate strategies and plans. More importantly, the setting of targets and drafting of action plans alone are unsatisfactory; rather, it is essential to strengthen implementation through science-based monitoring and assessment in order to bring about results. The SDGs may add political authority and heighten awareness but do not guarantee successful implementation and require conscious efforts to improve the existing monitoring and review processes and increase financing.

4. Consistency between the SDGs and Aichi Targets

The target years for most of the existing Aichi Targets are set at 2020, so they are still valid and will remain in effect after 2015 when the SDGs and Post-2015 Development Agenda are adopted. These targets were adopted following a difficult negotiation process carried out over a long period of time and cover 193

countries which are party to the CBD. Therefore, based on the same long-term vision, it is essential they should be incorporated in a consistent manner into the SDGs. The issue of the relevance of the existing agreements to the SDGs, such as the idea that biodiversity and forest targets need not be included in the SDGs due to the existence of Aichi Targets, was debated at the beginning of the SDG negotiations. This is also the case for the SDGs and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Nevertheless, the mainstream stance on this issue today is that sustainable development cannot be discussed without discussing biodiversity and climate change because they are too fundamental to be omitted from the SDGs. They were both eventually included in the SDGs.

Consistency is of paramount importance as state parties have already taken steps to implement the CBD and Aichi Targets. As the SDGs' target year has been generally agreed to be 2030, it was necessary to harmonize the target years of the Aichi Targets and the SDGs. The Co-Facilitators of the Post 2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations suggested rectifying different target years and increasing the level of consistency by keeping the same target year of 2020 but adding the phrase "take further action as needed by 2030" (Co-Facilitators of Post 2015 Development Agenda Negotiations, 2015). In this manner, it could keep consistency and achieve the same ambition level as the Aichi Targets. This seems to be a repetition of the Aichi Targets at best, but whether the SDGs are well-received or not, they are expected to receive greater attention than the Aichi Targets, and this is a golden opportunity to reconfirm the commitments. The process of the SDGs' formulation has been more inclusive and participatory and they were adopted at the UN Summit in September 2015, with the heads of states and other ministerial level of delegates participating. In this sense, as the Aichi Targets were reconfirmed by the SDGs, efforts toward their realisation may be accelerated.

The Aichi Targets consist of 20 targets, which are categorised in five strategic goals. Under SDG 15 on biodiversity, there is less room for targets due to the requirement of limiting the number of targets under the SDGs. Thus there are twelve targets under the goal of which three are targets on means of implementation. Consequently the SDG targets are less concrete and leave out several issues that were contained in the Aichi Targets. Target 3 of the Aichi Targets, "By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts..." and Target 15, "By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration..." are two examples that were not taken up in the SDGs. Also numerical targets contained in the Aichi Targets such as "restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems" of Target 15 are also missing from the SDG targets. The Aichi Targets have been approved by states

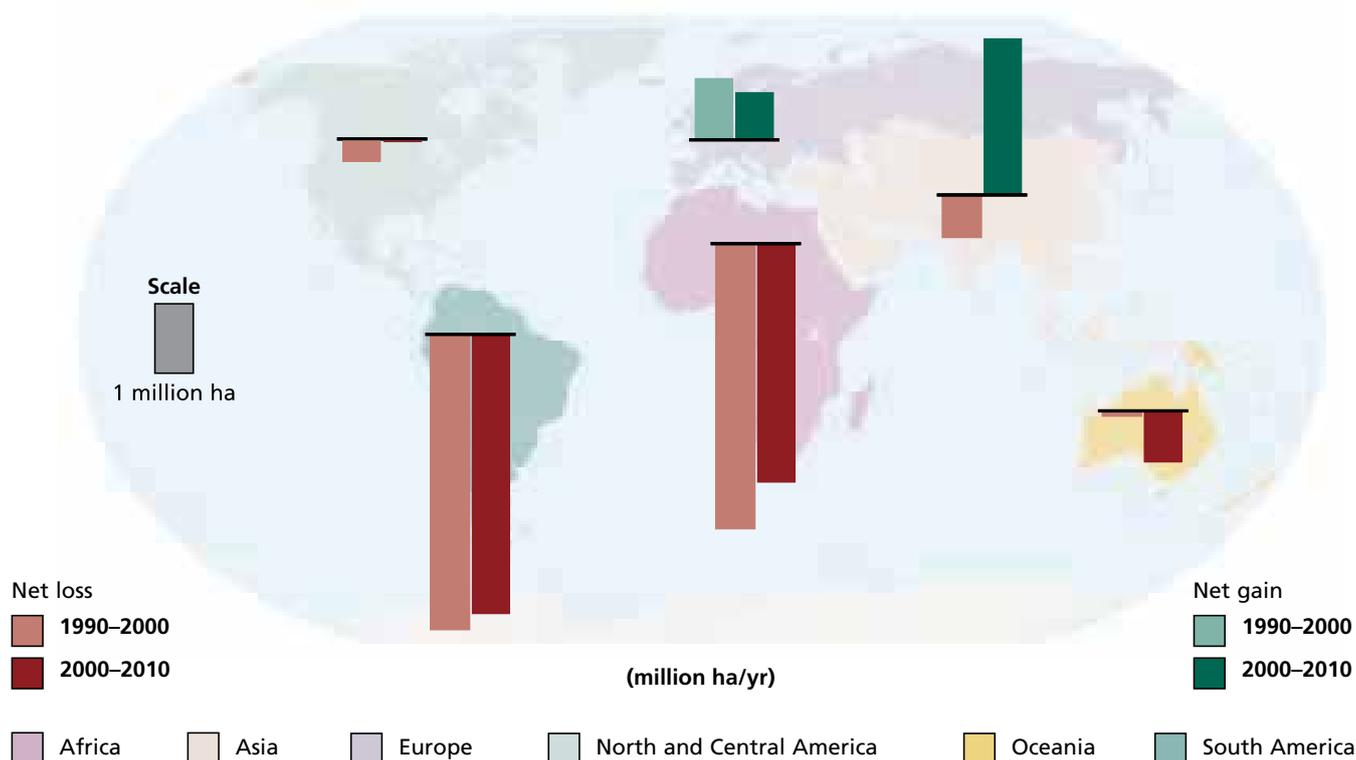


Fig. 2 Annual change in forest area by region, 1990 – 2010.
(Source: FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010.)

party to the CBD and it is not as if those targets which have not been adopted under the SDGs would stop applying. The importance of biodiversity to sustainable development and the CBD and the Aichi Targets were repeatedly stated by the Member States during OWG 8 on Forest and Biodiversity (IISD Reporting Services, 2014) and SDG 15.1 could be understood to summarise the overall objective of the CBD, which is to conserve biological diversity. It needs to be understood that the SDG on Biodiversity and the CBD and the Aichi Targets are complementary and not substitutes.

5. Implementation and Follow ups

Unlike the MDGs that were targeted at developing countries, agreement has been reached that the SDGs are to be targeted at all countries, including developed countries, and questions have arisen on how the SDGs will be put into practice in each country. The nature of problems and priority issues of each country of the world are diverse, making it difficult to establish common targets that are appropriate and acceptable to all nations. Developed nations have already achieved eradication of extreme poverty and access to safe drinking water for all people. Likewise, the reduction of forest areas is not taking place in the same manner all over the world. While forests in tropical regions of South America, Africa and Southeast Asia are rapidly decreasing, forested areas have been on a slight increase in parts of Europe and East Asia due to reforestation (Fig. 2). Furthermore, causes of deforestation vary. In

the period from 2000 to 2010, the forested area in Australia decreased due to droughts and forest fires (FAO, 2010). Meanwhile, the large-scale reduction in forests of Brazil, Indonesia and Nigeria was due to conversion to agricultural land and over-exploitation of wood for fuel (FAO, 2010). There is no need to mention that the capacities of each country differ substantially as do their geographies. The international community needs to be cognizant of these differences.

The 2010 Targets and the Aichi Targets called for the formulation and implementation of national strategies and action plans on the part of the party nations. In order to link the SDGs to implementation, there must be a similar devolution of targets to the national level requiring the formulation of targets and strategies by each country. This process is also essential to increasing the motivation of countries and reflecting the various circumstances and priorities of each respective country onto national strategy suitably. For the MDGs, responses by developing countries varied. As the level of dependence on financial support from overseas was high for the least developed countries (LDCs), many of these countries incorporated MDGs into national plans in accordance with the policies of donors. Emerging nations such as China, however, did not adhere much to the MDGs, creating their own independent five-year plans. Although the SDGs are mere goals without any legally binding power, and processes such as these cannot be made compulsory, global goals drafted on the basis of assembly and agreement of all nations of the world could be equally influential in setting targets

under legally binding conventions. For the areas of biodiversity and forestry, there are legal instruments already in place and they are in the same spirit as SDG 15, so there would be no need to reinvent the wheel for the reporting and monitoring mechanisms of these instruments. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine that the SDGs, similar to the MDGs, will wield great influence on the policies of governments and other entities such as international organizations and civil society organizations without resorting to legal force.

The CBD enjoys quasi-universal membership, among which 170 countries adopted the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. This represents 88% of all the State Parties and 86% of all the countries in the world. Also the CBD requires each state party to report “on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the provisions of this Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this Convention” (Article 26). This reporting system has not been without challenges such as late submission, low rate of submissions and difficulty in assessing the overall situations and the effectiveness of measures taken (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2003). Also even when state parties submit reports, the quality of their reports varies and the information presented is sometimes of limited use.

Learning from these experiences and recognizing the limited capacities of developing countries, the Global Environmental Facility, the financing arm of the CBD, funds activities to prepare national reports. This said, though, only 143 countries have submitted their fifth national report thus far (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2015) and these reports have been used to prepare the Global Biodiversity Outlooks. They provide valuable information on the status of biodiversity around the world and a measure of the effectiveness of the CBD and the Aichi Targets. This is already a functioning system and should not be duplicated for reporting on the SDGs but rather strengthened and complemented by the SDGs. It is of paramount importance to avoid the duplication of reporting mechanisms, as many government officials in charge of drafting and compiling these reports, including those of developed countries, have complained how cumbersome these UN reports are. Overburdening government officials might risk the reports being written for the sake of satisfying the reporting requirement with no basis in evidence. After all, reporting is not an end in itself but a means to achieve the end.

Japan, party to the CBD, established its first National Biodiversity Strategy in 1995 and revised it several times to refine the content. In 2008, it adopted the Basic Act on Biodiversity based on the existing patchwork of laws related to biodiversity to deal with the issue in a more holistic manner. It is noteworthy that this law was developed in full consultation with civil society organizations and it also clarifies responsibilities for multi-stakeholders, including national governments, businesses and citizens. This participatory process of

law-making is the result of a global trend manifested by the Rio process. The national government is required to report annually on the status of biodiversity and its measures for conservation and sustainable use. Under this act, prefectural as well as local strategies are to be developed, reflecting unique local circumstances of ecosystems. This is a good example of the transposition of an international agreement down to national and local levels for implementation. It must be born in mind, however, that legal and policy measures do not always lead to desired results and continuous follow ups and reviews are necessary for genuine change to take place. For example, the responsibilities of citizens are provided in the law but if citizens are not aware of these responsibilities, no substantial behavioural change can be expected. Also whether local strategies have been developed and whether they have been implemented by the respective stakeholder need to be regularly verified.

6. Complementarity of SDGs in the Case of Biodiversity

It goes without saying that governments have the role of drafting the necessary laws and policies to facilitate the creation of sustainable societies and in the case of Japan, this process of transposition has gone rather smoothly. It is difficult, however, to realise sustainable societies relying solely on the actions of governments. Climate change mitigation or the preservation of biodiversity are no exceptions in that actions on the part of the private sector and citizens are indispensable. As mentioned above, the Act on Biodiversity exists and stipulates the responsibilities of stakeholders, but often they themselves are not aware of their responsibilities. To fill this kind of gap, the SDGs could function as an important tool for raising the awareness of citizens and the private sector.

In order for these goals to become effective tools for raising awareness, it is essential they be concrete, concise, easy-to-understand and consistent with the existing laws and commitments. While Agenda 21, adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit, was an action plan to realise sustainable development, it also constituted a massive amount of materials, including 40 chapters and over 350 pages that could not easily be digested by anyone except experts. As the MDGs were eight concise goals, they were reputedly successful in arousing global concern over poverty eradication. In order for the SDGs to mobilise citizens and the private sector, it would surely be necessary to make them into a manageable number of easily understood targets. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets and are not concise enough to be spread around the world as an effective awareness-raising tool. There need to be more efforts by NGOs or the UN to make the SDGs more accessible to the public by way of summarizing them to a more understandable form, for example, on the Internet.

The SDGs are expected to spur citizens' awareness of the environment and sustainability and also

incorporate actions for sustainable societies. Some companies have already adopted goals for their operations to be more sustainable. For instance, P&G has established a mid-term target to “procure 100% of wood fibre, excluding recycled material, from third-party certified sources by 2015,” and was able to raise its rate of third-party certified procurement to 97% in 2013. In the area of renewable energies, the target of “raise the rate of renewable energy use to 30% in factories by 2020” was set forth, and a rate of 7.5% was realised as of 2013 (P&G, 2014). This is just one example among thousands of others of influential multinational companies taking steps toward sustainable development. These kinds of actions are expected to be spurred by the SDGs.

The New York Declaration on Forests made in 2014 at the UN Climate Summit, which aims to “cut natural forest loss in half by 2020, and strive to end it by 2030” is unique and different from past major declarations of the kind in that major multinationals and NGOs joined forces. It is a non-legally binding political declaration that grew out of dialogue among governments, companies and civil society (United Nations, 2014). This reflects a recent trend in the international community to recognize the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration. The fact that 34 multinational companies whose activities have significant impacts on world forests and biodiversity such as Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg’s, L’Oreal, and Marks & Spencer joined this declaration is of paramount importance. It is a concern that this specific wording to cut natural forest loss in half by 2020 has not been used for the SDGs.

Ideally the SDGs will become the type of goals that spur the setting of similar types of targets and implementation on the part of multi-stakeholders such as the private sector, local governments and citizen groups. “Coalitions of the willing,” groups of corporations or citizens that independently set sustainability targets and aim for their implementation, have increased sharply of late. A few of these notable examples are the Consumer Goods Forum, with the participation of the world’s leading companies in the distribution industry and daily goods manufacturing, as well as the Global Electricity Initiative, whose members include major global corporations. Ideally these trends will be boosted even further by the SDGs.

7. Inter-linkages and the Wholeness of the SDGs

In order to guarantee the earth’s sustainability, measures are required from multiple perspectives. From alleviation of poverty and corruption, to preservation of biodiversity and climate change, it is no exaggeration to say that all human activities are interrelated. An easy-to-understand example of a stream of multiple benefits is when the spread of renewable energies leads to forests and biodiversity being preserved due to less consumption of fuelwoods, and as a result climate

change is mitigated with further benefits to health as indoor smoke is eliminated. It is not quite so easy to comprehend the correlation between preserving biodiversity and solving the problem of poverty. The preservation of biodiversity is not merely the protection of wild animals, but the maintenance of a better living environment for humans. It is consequently linked to the well-being and healthy lives of humans. In other words, preserving biodiversity is a means of implementing other goals. The use of edible crops as raw material to produce bio-fuel as a type of climate change mitigation measure could conversely lead to food shortages and deforestation.

The SDGs will give an overall picture of sustainable development ranging from poverty eradication to sustainable consumption and production. They will show policy makers and citizens alike the interlinkages between different sectors and the need to carefully assess them when pursuing sustainable development. In the midst of correlations among numerous goals and issues, further assessments of the SDGs must demonstrate the need to properly coordinate and achieve synergistic implementation.

8. Conclusions

Some have argued that including biodiversity under the SDGs was unnecessary duplication which could ultimately confuse the implementation of both the SDGs and other relevant MEAs, especially the CBD and the Aichi Targets. This fear is based on evidence from discussions among UN Member States on how to design SDG goals and targets on biodiversity and ensure consistency with existing ones. There is a need for consistency with the existing Convention and Targets, which already have reporting mechanisms and have also been transposed to national level legislation in Japan and other countries. We need to utilize the existing reporting mechanisms fully so as to avoid confusion and overburdening those who are responsible for reporting under these mechanisms. The added value of SDGs on the ground is to raise awareness among many stakeholders that the rapid decline in biodiversity necessitates further efforts and an integrated approach with other issues contained in the SDGs. The SDGs could be functional tools to raise awareness and accelerate efforts by the existing “coalitions of the willing” among companies, NGOs and general citizens if followed up properly and developed as accessible and digestible models for goals.

The same challenges as those of the MDGs remain, such as a lack of means of implementation. Accordingly, development finance and related issues need to be addressed continuously. There are high expectations, however, that the global community will overcome the issues faced by humanity through a mind-set of cooperation rather than rivalry.

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Tetsuro YOSHIDA has been working for the Institute of Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) since 2011 as senior policy researcher and his research focus has been on international environmental governance including SDGs and renewable energy and biodiversity and sustainable development. Previously, he worked as protection and programme officer for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and his assignment included the management of environmental projects (e.g. in energy, agro-forestry, reforestation and environmental education) in refugee camps and their hosting communities in Asia and Africa and policy formulation to guide its environment and climate change related activities. He has lived and worked in various countries around the world, including Cyprus, France, Switzerland, the UK, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, and the USA. He has obtained Master of Arts in public international law and international development from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and Master of Science in environmental science and policy from Imperial College London.



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Eric ZUSMAN is a senior policy researcher/area leader at the Institute for Global Environmental Studies in Hayama, Japan. Dr. ZUSMAN holds a bachelors degree in Mandarin Chinese from Rutgers University, a dual Masters Degree in public policy and Asian studies from the University of Texas at Austin and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles. For much of the past decade he has worked on environmental issues in Asia. This has included publishing articles and book chapters on water scarcity, air pollution regulation, environmental law and state capacity in greater China. It has also included working with China's Yellow River Conservancy Commission and the Chinese Research Academy on Environmental Science. He also held research assistantships with the Woodrow Wilson Center's China Environment Forum as well as Taiwan's Academia Sinica. In his current position, he is looking at the co-benefits of climate policies in developing Asia. He recently published an edited volume on co-benefits in Asia's transport sector entitled *Low Carbon Transport in Asia: Strategies for Optimizing Co-benefits*.

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