



# The role of SDG in the post covid 19 recovery

BFORPLANET

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## SUMMARY

The recovery from the economic and social crisis caused by COVID19 has become a priority for all societies. It represents a challenge that concerns us all: public administration, the business world and the civil society.

Even though they were not created for this purpose, the SDGs included in the United Nations 2030 Agenda have become an excellent route towards a post COVID recovery. In this new context, these goals can adapt to the necessities caused by the pandemic, both immediate and long-term.

The SDG can work as a framework for action. However, for it to happen, there needs to be a collective and inclusive action built around global alliances. Only through a global scale commitment there would be a chance for a lasting and inclusive recovery.

Experts agree that in order to achieve the intended transformation towards a sustainable world societies must work with a global perspective that begins at local level. Likewise, health systems should be strengthened, and science should be considered as an essential ally for decision-making at all policy levels.

These have been some of the various conclusions that emerged in BforPlanet-Live I, an event held on July 9th, 2020. The event constitutes one of the first events prior the BforPlanet global meeting, which will bring together business and organizations from all over the world to Barcelona in July 2021 to discuss the essential role of SDG 17 (strengthening the world alliances for sustainable development). The references, statements and reflections included in this dossier took place during the celebration of July's meeting.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humanity has faced a series of challenges whose consequences have led to far-reaching transformations. This pandemic represents both, a challenge and an opportunity, to definitively boost our commitment to sustainability.

In this context, citizens begin to rethink concepts and reflect on their day-to-day life following to what the historian Frank Snowden states: "epidemics have had an impact similar to revolutions, wars or economic crises"<sup>1</sup>.

**We are less prepared than we thought to face global crisis.**

Despite technological advances, it has been proven that societies are not prepared to face certain crisis situations<sup>2</sup>. In this aspect, the COVID-19 pandemic is a serious warning to humanity. It has been proven that we are not only vulnerable, but that we are less equipped than we thought to be<sup>3</sup>.

Our vulnerability is not only economic. It also extends to our health systems, technology or other aspects such as the access to water<sup>4</sup>. All in all, everything indicates that the world is heading towards a stage marked by uncertainty.

For this reason, the response to the pandemic will require a common solution so we do not leave anyone behind<sup>5</sup>. This response involves establishing a new social contract that brings everyone together in order to consolidate the so-called "sustainability triangle": a good model for the planet, for the economy and for each individual<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Frank Snowden, Epidemics in Western Society Since 1600 (HIST 234). Yale University.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoWxdIGBVtI&list=PL7C32775F0529BFEF>

<sup>2</sup>Bernat Solé, Councilor of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency of the Generalitat of Catalunya.

<sup>3</sup>Teresa Ribera, fourth Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

<sup>4</sup>Manuel Pulgar, WWF International Climate and Energy Program Director and former Minister of Environment of Peru (2011-2016).

<sup>5</sup>Bernat Solé, Councilor of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency of the Generalitat of Catalunya.

<sup>6</sup>Francisco Lombardo, founder of BforPlanet.



## The SDGs: a roadmap for world recovery

COVID-19 has generated a global systemic crisis that accelerates changes. The crisis also works as a catalyst to arrange responses to improve our human economic and social relationships which in turn can also benefit our planet<sup>7</sup>.

Throughout history, humanity has found ways to resolve diverse dangers. The post Second World War era is one of the many innovative examples, in which the United Nations, the EU political project and the international regulatory framework emerged to consolidate cooperation, peace and global dialogue.

**“It seems that the SDGs were written precisely for this recovery”, because the consequences of COVID-19 directly affect the achievement of the SDGs.**

*Manuel Pulgar Vidal, former minister of Environment of Peru.*

However, as time went by, these achievements reached a limit in certain aspects. New challenges emerged and so, it was necessary to create a new agenda to face the various emerging challenges, such as climate change or inequality. In this sense, in 2015 the 2030 Agenda was born and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established.

The COVID-19 crisis can be regarded as the biggest recent global challenge. For this reason, it is important to propose a sustainable recovery plan. In line with this idea, experts exposed their various proposals in the event BforPlanet-Live<sup>8</sup>.



Experts agree that the SDG<sup>9</sup> constitute a roadmap, a common thread, that can help organize priorities towards a sustainable recovery and serve as a support for a new economic model<sup>11</sup>.

The importance of the SDG in this recovery process could be very well summarized in the words of Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, former Minister of the Environment of Peru: “it seems that the SDGs have been written precisely for the recovery” because COVID-19 consequences affect directly the success of these objectives.

An example of these negative consequences represents also an opportunity to advance along the goals set by the SDGs. Ángeles Moreno Bau, Secretary of State for International Cooperation of Spain, during the 75th General Assembly of United Nations defends this point: “The latest figures for July 2020 showed that before COVID-19, progress was being made in terms of reducing multidimensional poverty.” According to her “this was data for hope, but the simulations carried out on the impact of the pandemic in two dimensions, nutrition and school attendance, showed the effect it can have on development indicators” This shows that the impact of COVID-19 goes far beyond health.

Regardless of the perspective, the evidence is that there is a need to pursue decisively in the implementation of the SDG. It is particularly important to have “green”

<sup>7</sup>Jaume Collboni, First Deputy Mayor of the Barcelona city council.

<sup>8</sup><https://bforplanet-live.org/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

<sup>10</sup>Francisco Lombardo, founder of BforPlanet.

<sup>11</sup>Manuel Pulgar, WWF international climate and energy program director and former minister of Environment of Peru (2011-2016).

<sup>12</sup>Event of the Poverty and Human Development Initiative of the University of Oxford (OPHI) and the NUD <https://mppn.org/es/>

<sup>13</sup>Manuel Pulgar, WWF international climate and energy program director and former minister of Environment of Peru (2011-2016).



recovery, since the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic will be temporary, but its repercussions could be structural and long lasting<sup>13</sup>.

To make this a reality, BforPlanet-Live participants considered that, if SDG are considered as a framework, it is necessary to:

- Create an alliance policy, following SDG 17: “Revitalize the Global Alliance for Sustainable Development”<sup>14</sup>.
- Global scale commitment. Acting collectively offers better chances for success<sup>15</sup>.
- The empowerment of civil society.
- Strengthening cooperation and public-private collaboration.

Although it has become clear that the crisis caused by COVID-19 has drawn us away from achieving SDG, especially Goal 1, causing the number of people in extreme poverty to increase between 70 and 100 million in the world<sup>16</sup>, experts agree that the crisis represents an opportunity to push forward these goals: it is the perfect guide to face current problems and to relocate humans and their relationship with the planet<sup>17</sup>.

In a way, the SDG represent a convergence of world agendas. The uniqueness of the 2030 Agenda is notorious: while the Millennium Goals were designed specifically for governments, the SDGs are oriented towards companies and civil society<sup>18</sup>. Overall, as the world prepares for social and economic reconstruction, the SDGs offer the opportunity to rethink with clear guidelines about the future we want<sup>19</sup>.

## Meeting I BforPlanet-Live Speakers:



Teresa Ribera



Pedro Duque



Francisco Lombardo



Pau Relat



Jaume Collboni



Bernat Solé



Yolanda Kakabadse



Manuel Pulgar



Joan Tristany



Augusto López-Claros



Damià Calvet



Juan Costa



Nicolás Cock



Jose Carlos Díez



Daniel Truran

Video BforPlanet-Live I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jje-ik62HPs>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/globalpartnerships/>

<sup>15</sup>Teresa Ribera, fourth Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

<sup>16</sup>Augusto López-Claros, Director of Global Indicators and Analysis of the World Bank.

<sup>17</sup>Teresa Ribera, fourth Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

<sup>18</sup>José Carlos Díez, Member of the Advisory Council for Latin America of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

<sup>19</sup>Manuel Pulgar, WWF International Climate and Energy Program Director and former Minister of Environment of Peru (2011-2016).



## Alliance policy based on SDG 17: a need for a systemic vision

Despite being immersed in a highly polarized environment, it is necessary to keep building bridges between companies, governments, NGOs, and even religious institutions around the world, such as the Vatican<sup>20</sup>. In this way, we could work towards a systemic dialogue in which all will have a say, especially women, for their role is crucial to achieve equality.

The pandemic has shown that women's empowerment is essential on multiple levels. A recent study by the World Bank indicates that, even though only 7% of the countries in the world are headed by women, they account for 40% of the successful cases of the COVID-19 crisis management<sup>21</sup>.

**The role of the business sector and civil society will be essential for the construction of a network of alliances that can manage social and economic transformations.**

The systemic vision involves both, men and women, from all spheres, in line with its recent successes. This collective work has simultaneously produced a transfer of power from the states to civil society organizations, proving the fact that empowerment is one of the key ingredients for development in today's world.

The great international agreements of the last twenty years, like the 2015 Paris Agreement, would have been impossible without the participation of the civil society. This needs to be taken to account as we face global problems that require solution through international cooperation and civil participation. The transition to a more sustainable world will be promoted by the institutions. However, the role of the business sector and civil society will be essential to create a network of alliances that can subsequently manage the social and economic transformations in their respective fields. In addition to this,

having a strong public sector will be essential to join all forces and intensify the relationship between administrations and companies to combine skills and capacities for a sustainable future<sup>22</sup>.

**The concept of sustainability should not only be seen from an environmental perspective. It is comprehensive, it has social, economic and political elements.**

Recovery, therefore, will only be possible with a global attitude. There is only one way to overcome climate change and the current emergency in which we find ourselves, which is to do it together<sup>23</sup>. This means combining efforts with the active participation of the private sector<sup>24</sup>.

Likewise, it is important to be clear that the concept of sustainability should not be seen only from an environmental perspective. It combines social, economic and political elements. The importance of a supra-state commitment towards a sustainable world is essential, more so if we take into consideration the words of the director of Global Indicators and Analysis of the World Bank, Augusto López Claros, which considers that "national sovereignty has come to an end".

Cooperation is going to mark the new decade and has to be executed around a new narrative about what progress and success means<sup>25</sup>. In this process of redefining our priorities, it will be key to differentiate what is essential and what is secondary so as to orient progress through the creation of interconnected bridges between the different fields of civil society<sup>26</sup>.

While local governments have the immediate management capacity, it is civil society that has the most useful tools and capacities to identify and diagnose chronic problems in their environments, especially in developing countries.

With particular reference to Latin America, it is necessary to tackle the recurring structural crises at once, which must be resolved as a condition to advance towards sustainability<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>20</sup>Daniel Truran, B corp in B lab Europe Ambassador.

<sup>21</sup>Augusto López-Claros, Director of Global Indicators and Analysis of the World Bank.

<sup>22</sup>Jaume Collboni, First Deputy Mayor of the Barcelona city council.

<sup>23</sup>Damià Calvet, Councilor of Territory and Sustainability of the Generalitat of Catalunya.

<sup>24</sup>Jaume Collboni, First Deputy Mayor of the Barcelona city council.

<sup>25</sup>Juan Costa, Head of the International Division on Climate Change from Ernst & Young.

<sup>26</sup>Daniel Truran, B corp in B lab Europe Ambassador.

<sup>27</sup>Manuel Pulgar, WWF International Climate and Energy Program Director and former Minister of Environment of Peru (2011-2016).



For progress to be generated and sustainability be achieved, the systematic fight against poverty, corruption and inequality is vital.

Overall, all this arguments suggest that a ‘rebirth’ is necessary: it is necessary to recreate, to rethink and restore dynamics that allow us to build a different world from the previous one<sup>28</sup>. In this new paradigm, market opportunities can and must also be taken as an advantage, investing on a regulation that limits inequalities and maximizes investment in technology. The role of private companies in the transition to this new model is thus, fundamental<sup>29</sup>.



## Pacts for science and health

SDG 17 serves as a catalyst for the development of the sustainable goals. Its importance is even more evident now that we are living in a pandemic context of large proportions. The pandemic has highlighted the paramount importance of reaching, without delay, a great pact for health and science.<sup>30</sup>

**«There cannot be a healthy human being in a sick planet».**

*Yolanda Kakabadse, former Minister of the Environment of Ecuador*

Strengthening health systems and guaranteeing essential services for all must be a top priority for all societies as they will set the direction for gradual change that will avoid falling into the same mistakes of the past. We should overcome the current exclusionary capitalism and work towards an inclusive capitalism that guarantees equal opportunities, with social responsibility and respect to the environment.

If, as Yolanda Kakabadse, former Minister of the Environment of Ecuador, affirms, “there cannot be a healthy human being on a sick planet”, we cannot afford to ignore a new approach in which science plays a central role. This means that scientific interpretation and scientific approach to problems are at the very heart of public policies.

In a pandemic, science is the most valuable ally. But beyond the pandemic, it will be vital to design sustainable development with a scientific perspective, in which research and innovation need to play a decisive role.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Yolanda Kakabadse, former Minister of the Environment of Ecuador.

<sup>29</sup>José Carlos Díez, Member of the Advisory Council for Latin America of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

<sup>30</sup>Jaume Collboni, First Deputy Mayor of the Barcelona city council.

<sup>31</sup>Pedro Duque, Minister of Science of Spain.



## Conclusion: we need to rethink progress and future

Throughout history, human beings have improved their ability to achieve goals through collaboration. For this reason, experts agree that the COVID-19 crisis should be seen as a driver of unalterable social, political and economic changes. It is an opportunity to rethink what world we want, a world in which resilience and security should center all debates.

To face all the overwhelming challenges, it is essential to create value through cooperation. This requires a new appealing narrative to link all generations towards common goals.

The most urgent objective will be to launch, monitor and support initiatives that are capable of responding effectively to the consequences of the pandemic. Such solutions must be inclusive and participatory, with the aim of achieving a broad consensus that can be consolidated and last throughout time.

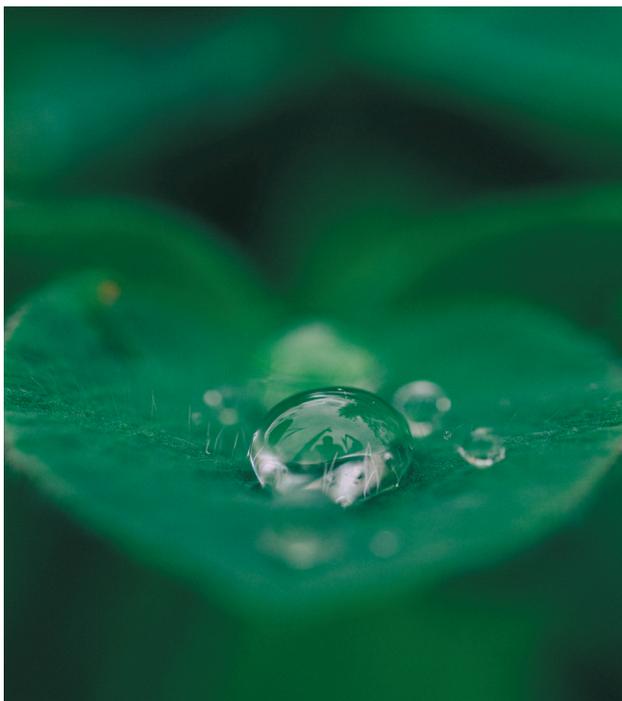
Societies must work towards a new “social contract” in order to advance towards a new social and economic

model. The key is to find a new legitimization for the relationship between governments and citizens, and also, between the Earth and the human being.

The SDG goals are an excellent guide to start building this new reality. A reality in which science and innovation will not only be a key factor for economic growth, but also an essential tool for the designing of public policies. In this sense, companies and civil society are agents of change and creators of interrelated alliances with each other.

Alliances, at the end of the day, will make the transition to a new system, because they will demonstrate the effectiveness of public-private collaboration in a context of growing multilateralism.

As it has become evident, the global alliance at all levels is no longer an aspiration to become a unique alternative on which we must continue working. An obligation that concerns us and for which every encounter is an opportunity and a call to action. BforPlanet - Live I, whose development served as an enlightening thread to approach some of the most important questions of the so-called post-Covid-19 recovery.



BforPlanet-Live is a platform for virtual meetings with various actors, to discuss the importance of a policy of alliances to achieve the SGD. It is also a preamble to the global event, scheduled for May 2021.

BforPlanet is the main global meeting for sustainability. It brings international business together to debate and suggest solutions to the great challenges that humanity faces. The event aims to create a platform for the development of alliances of the SDG, based on the spirit of Goal 17: strengthening the means of implementation and the revitalization of global alliance for sustainable development.

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