Dear Ambassadors Kamau and Kőrösi,

Why we need to include natural resources in the SDG framework

The SDSN Thematic Group on the Good Governance of Extractive and Land Resources has followed closely the progress of the OWG to define the sustainable development agenda and shape a preliminary set of goals and targets. We commend you for the excellent progress you have made, but are writing to express deep concern that the emerging priorities no longer include a focus on natural resources.

Our group comprises leaders from academia, civil society, private companies, international institutions, and government agencies, who contribute in their personal capacity. We feel strongly that governments and their private sector partners need to commit to the effective and transparent management of resources in order to support inclusive economic development and the achievement of all the SDGs. Many of the world’s poorest countries are facing the challenge of harnessing natural resources for sustainable development. The good governance of extractive and land resources cuts across all the dimensions of sustainable development and involves actors in government, civil society, and the private sector, and therefore must feature explicitly in a target within the SDG framework.

The magnitude of the challenge is evident. Over 61 low- and middle-income countries are dependent upon natural resources as a major share of their exports. This is a 33% increase in only 14 years, from 1996, and the level of dependency, especially since 2005 has increased sharply. The number of mineral-dependent countries is expected to increase further in the near future.

More than 1.5 billion people live on less than two dollars a day in resource-rich countries despite the resource wealth. According to the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), the share of people living under two dollars a day in resource-rich countries will rise to 50% in 2030 (up from 20% in 1990). Another analysis by the NRGI finds that the share of the population living in poverty is significantly higher in resource-rich countries with weak governance than in those with strong governance.
Therefore any serious attack on extreme poverty must include better use and management of natural resources. It can be done. Better governance and corruption control is demonstrably associated with increased income per capita in resource-intensive countries.

**Recommendations**

We recommend that the sustainable and transparent management of resources be explicitly included in the OWG’s proposed SDGs, as follows:

Amendment to Proposed Goal 15 (added language in italics):
Protect and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and natural resources, halt desertification, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Target 15.7 (to be placed under Proposed Goal 15 as amended):
All governments and businesses commit to the sustainable, integrated, and transparent management of land, mining, and hydrocarbon resources to support inclusive economic development and poverty reduction.

We call on the Open Working Group to note our conviction that the Sustainable Development Goals framework would be incomplete without a target on natural resources and hope that this important issue will not be overlooked in your final recommendations.

Sincerely,

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