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Separated at birth, reunited in Rio? A roadmap to bring environment and development back together

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Tackling climate change, avoiding environmental degradation, reducing inequality and eliminating poverty are all key issues for international policy in the 21st century. Is it possible to achieve progress on poverty while remaining within environmental limits? What role can global agreements play in promoting positive action on both environmental and development issues? Fortunately, the timetable offers a unique opportunity to consider these questions:

- Debate has begun on what might follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when they expire in 2015, and as a contribution to this debate a proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been put forward in the run up to the Rio +20 Conference in June 2012.
- The 'Durban Platform' agreed in December 2011, commits countries to negotiate a new climate change treaty by 2015 – one with 'legal force' – and a new international approach to building resilience to disasters is planned for the same year.

2015 will be a defining year for international policy on development and the environment. The negotiation of both new goals and a new agreement on climate change offer an opportunity to finally reunite the twin tracks of development and environmental policy, which have remained stubbornly separate since the first Rio conference in 1992. Rio+20 will set the stage for the approach to 2015.

Clearly there are significant overlaps between these issues. Dirty development causes climate change, climate change impacts poor people, and the health of ecosystems and availability of environmental resources shapes economic growth and well-being. At national and sub-national level, these issues are becoming increasingly fused. How well countries can manage these multiple and often contradictory priorities is of critical importance to the future health of the planet and the quality of life it provides.

However, the history of trying to link development and environmental objectives through actual policy initiatives is not encouraging. 'Sustainable development', a concept originating in the Brundtland Report of 1987, has become the mantra in global policy circles since the first Rio conference in 1992, but it has had remarkably little impact on actual policy. Despite much academic work and many innovative ideas in this area, the two have remained stubbornly separate on the terrain of politics and implementation.

This paper sets out to explain why reconciling the two agendas has been so difficult at a practical level, and suggests how Rio+20 could start to bridge the gaps between the two.

What's happening? Current trends in development and environment

Discussions on how to bring together environment and development take place against a somewhat contradictory backdrop of trends. Current trends in development are remarkably positive (Kenny and Sumner, 2011; Steer, 2011). Thanks to both economic growth and effective policies, income levels and social outcomes are improving everywhere – not evenly, and not as fast as some would like, but the overwhelming feeling is of improvement and optimism. The MDG on drinking water has already been met at a global level, three years ahead of schedule (Unicef/WHO, 2012).

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The main aim of policy, then, is to maintain and accelerate current trends.

There is, however, a caveat. While these trends are positive, there is also a growing sense of increased risk and uncertainty dominating the development landscape as climate change, the financial crisis and rising food prices threaten progress on poverty reduction for some groups. There is also concern that rising inequality in some countries will act as a barrier to continued progress (Kabeer, 2010).

For the environmental sector the news is almost unrelievedly gloomy (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2006; OECD, 2012). Of the nine planetary boundaries identified by the Stockholm Resilience Centre (Rockstrom et al., 2009) – the limits within which humanity can operate safely – three (climate change, biodiversity loss and the nitrogen concentration in the oceans) have already been breached and others are close to the edge. To avert catastrophe, current trends have to be reversed, and soon.

The challenge at the heart of bringing together environment and development – the reason why it is so essential and yet so difficult – is the apparent fundamental contradiction in these trends. More resources are needed as economies grow, the population (in some countries) increases, and living standards rise. By 2030, the world will need at least 50% more food, while the demand for land faces additional pressures from biofuels and carbon sequestration (World Bank, 2007). The overall demand for water will have increased by 30% and two-thirds of the world's population are likely to live in water-stressed areas (The Water Resources Group, 2009; Bailey, 2011). The world will need 45% more energy, and at the same time will have had to achieve deep cuts in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to avoid disastrous climate change – at present only 13% of energy comes from renewable sources (International Energy Agency, 2011). These pressures will push the world further towards – or over – the planetary boundaries, and the consequences, in terms of climate change and resource depletion will, in turn, make progress against poverty harder, and may even send it into reverse.

Clearly, most of the increase in resource consumption will take place amongst middle and high income groups. Reducing extreme poverty in Africa or Asia will have little immediate impact on the scale of global resource use or on carbon emissions: numerous studies have highlighted that the effect may be marginal (International Energy Agency, 2011; Dobbs, 2011). So policies to tackle residual poverty and avoid critical environmental thresholds need to focus on quite different parts of the global demographic in the short term.

The path from poverty to affluence will have to be much more resource efficient, less carbon intensive and more environmentally savvy than in the past if any future progress made in curbing consumption among the affluent is not to be undermined in the long term by increased consumption among the poor. The challenge is that development and environment inhabit quite different problem spaces and political domains.

Development and environment: different starting points

While the same people tend to support action on both development and environment, and while the two sets of ideas are not mutually exclusive, their traditions involve quite different ways of seeing the world and different assumptions about the nature of both problem and solution. These differences help to explain some of the difficulty in bringing the two agendas together.

The nature of the problem

The first difference between the two sectors is in the nature of the problem each addresses. The problems of poverty and development are mainly normative – the basis for the international effort towards poverty eradication is that, worldwide, governments and people have decided that it is morally unacceptable for people to live below a certain minimum standard in a world where the alternative is possible. Norms are set at a global level, as with Human Rights frameworks or the MDGs, or at a national level through national planning or the political visions of different governments, and at community level through the operation of the 'moral economy'.

By contrast, the problem in the environmental sphere is defined less on the basis of moral norms (at least for the mainstream environmental movement), and more on the basis of the science and scientific knowledge about how changes are likely to impact on the global climate or other systems.

This means that the definition of the problem, and the uncertainties around it, tend to be contested within specific scientific institutions, and shaped by the interaction of those institutions with official bodies and political processes, rather than by wider social dynamics as with development norms. Shifts in the definition of the environmental problem occur on the basis of new scientific knowledge or analysis – the nine planetary boundaries defined by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, for example, are a recent framing of earlier ideas based on new analysis, but defined in scientific rather than normative terms.

For the development sector, the unit of analysis of the measurement of progress is almost always the individual level, and norms relate to what individual people have, or what services they can access, or how they feel. The unit of analysis for environmental problems is generally a whole system – a global one, in the case of GHG emissions and climate change, or regional

and local ones in the case of ecosystem damage. The science defines probable boundaries or limits at the system level beyond which problems might occur.

The focus on science has also led to a more open discussion on the uncertainty involved in defining the environmental problem – a discussion that has opened the environmental movement up to fundamental challenges (from a small but vocal minority) as to the reality of its claims about the problems caused by environmental degradation both now and especially in the future. By contrast, the development sector can be certain that the problems it tackles actually exist – the reality of undernutrition or preventable childhood deaths is all too apparent – though the causes and solutions to specific development issues remain hotly contested.

The time frame

The solutions proposed by the two sectors imply very different time periods. For environmental policymakers, the issues are long term and action needs to be sustained over many years. Future scenarios dominate the debate – although there is increasing evidence of the current impact of climate change, action is most often called for now on the basis of what may happen in 10, 20 or even 50 years' time. Consequently, much of the action called for now is based on the impact of inaction on future generations, and environmental issues have led to interesting legal, philosophical and economic debates on the relative weight of current and future needs.

On the development side, progress is called for on the basis of the needs of current generations – it is assumed that action now will benefit people who are alive now, or perhaps their children. The MDGs had, for a development agreement, a relatively long time frame of 15 years, while individual development projects are often very short term – lasting a few years at most.

The politics of policy change

These differences in the way the problems are defined make the political dimensions of policy-making in the two sectors quite different.

In the case of environmental policy, the aim is to manage global production and consumption to remain within maximum limits – whether these are defined by the nine planetary boundaries or by the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. To do this, current trends need to be reversed, and politically unpopular decisions need to be made.

In the absence of rapid technological change, the environmental agenda implies the rationing of resource use, both through the operation of the market and through policy instruments. This makes the politics quite toxic. At a global level, there is a deep suspicion among some low and middle income countries that environmentalism is simply a cover for old-fashioned mercantilism, and that calls to develop differently are nothing more than disguised calls to develop less.

At a national level, many governments struggle to reconcile environmental and developmental goals. Countries with large numbers of very poor people and poor infrastructure confront frequent choices about what technologies to invest in to provide energy, increase agricultural production, or create employment. Often, they choose the options that are less environmentally sustainable for reasons of cost, scale or speed.

Administrative and bureaucratic barriers also make it hard to reconcile different objectives: when environmental, financial and development ministries are separate, the incentives are often for competition rather than cooperation.

This picture is by no means universal – the Mexican government has just signed a law on carbon emissions, Costa Rica gets almost 80% of energy from renewable sources (Brown and Bird, 2011) and Ethiopia has an ambitious national plan for green growth. But there is enough scepticism, suspicion and lack of coherence around this agenda at the national level to make the politics of environmental policy very difficult.

By contrast, the focus on growth and improving living standards in the development field means that many of the decisions made in the name of development in both developing and developed countries are politically popular, at least with some groups. The issues are less around direct trade-offs and more around how to distribute a rapidly expanding pie.

In recent years, perhaps reflecting the general mood of optimism about positive trends, the focus within international development policy-making has been on technical issues: how to design appropriate programmes or how to roll out large scale vaccine campaigns. The big political issues of previous decades (the extent to which countries should see their debts forgiven, or the give and take of trade rules) have been largely left to one side. If the natural resource intensity of development is to be reduced, these big issues will have to come back on the agenda again – which will, in turn, increase the political difficulty of decision-making.

The economic policy of change

If the two sectors are to be properly integrated, so that they work together rather than against each other, it is in the area of economic policy-making that the change will be the greatest. The economics of development are about expanding the opportunities available to people, companies or countries to use their resources more productively and invest for the future. All of this is within the context of existing local, national and global markets for goods and services. There is disruption, and there are winners and losers from the economic

changes associated with development, but all within a context of markets and policy tools that are well established and understood, and where costs and benefits can be anticipated with reasonable certainty.

By contrast, the economics of environment are about expanding the reach of markets into wholly new areas. If the environmental costs of production and consumption are to be properly accounted for, the resources most associated with environmental sustainability – or its lack – such as carbon emissions or biodiversity, will have to be priced and new markets for natural resources created. This, in turn, will mean governments, investors, companies and consumers have the information they need to make decisions about trade-offs and opportunities in different markets.

If new markets are created to properly price environmental resources, the relative costs of different products and process might change quite dramatically. Over the long term, this should have benefits for whole societies, compared with doing nothing, as production becomes more environmentally efficient (Foley, 2007). Price changes will also provide incentives for the technological changes that will be a big part of finding solutions to climate change and other environmental problems (Jaffe et al., 2005).

Some companies are already positioning themselves to take advantage of the future opportunities presented by markets where environmental resources are properly priced. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, investment in clean energy reached a global record of $260 billion in 2011, five times higher than in 2004 (Bloomberg New Energy Finance, 2011). Efficiencies driven by new prices will also bring benefits: the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that by 2030 companies could save $2.9 trillion by increasing the productivity of key resources like land and water (Dobbs, 2011).

But there are huge unknowns, and it will not all be win-win. Individuals will see changes to real prices and to the availability of goods and services. The costs of higher energy prices that cannot be absorbed in productivity increases will be passed on to consumers. Transport costs may rise, making goods traded over long distances more expensive.

The risks – in terms of possible economic upheavals and the scale of likely gains and losses – of making the economic policy decisions that are needed to drive action on the environment are huge, much higher than in the relatively benign territory of development. However, the risks of inaction are also much greater for environmental policy. While inaction on development is likely to mean that the rate of global improvements is slightly slower than it would otherwise be, the Stern review estimates that lack of action on climate change will lead to an actual reduction in global per capita consumption of between 5-20% 'now and forever' (Stern, 2006).

Table 1: Summary of the different approaches in development and environment

Approaches	Environment	Development
Nature of the problem	Scientific	Normative
Unit of analysis	World	Individual
Time horizon	Long-term	Short-term
Focus of concern	Future generations	Current generations
Key objectives of policy change	Not exceed maximum limits – reverse current trends	Reach and exceed minimum standards – accelerate current trends
Economic policy implications	Create and regulate new markets	Insert poor people into existing markets

These different ideas and approaches have divided the development and environment sectors for many years. The current institutional structure for global agreements in these areas does not help to bring the agendas together, being composed of a myriad of overlapping institutions and lacking a clear sense of where responsibility lies or how trade-offs can be managed.

Rio+20 provides a new opportunity to create a roadmap, building on the different processes between 2012 and 2015, to bring them back together. How can the international community make the most of this opportunity?

Bridging the differences – achieving sustainable development

Where do we need to be in 2050?

The current politics of both environment and development will limit the scope of possible agreement in 2015. However, in trying to marry ambition with a sense of the politically possible, it might be helpful to think about the world in 2050 and to consider how the path to 2015 and beyond can most constructively overcome the barriers identified above and create fusion between development and environment policy communities in the decades to come. What outcomes are needed to achieve real sustainable development by 2050?

The 'best 2050 world' would have new characteristics of global governance to promote action on climate compatible development and development compatible climate and environment policy:

1. **New goals.** Bringing together global objective setting on development and environment might be hard to achieve but will be a crucial underpinning of a new system for sustainable development. By 2050, we might hope to have global goals enforcing safe limits for the use of all the world's

resources, alongside development goals setting minimum standards of living for the entire world population. These goals would cover all countries, albeit in a differentiated way, and would ensure that, at a global level, the need for progress on development is reconciled in a fair way with the need to remain within planetary boundaries.

2. **New financial and market regulation.** Global social and sustainability standards that shape global markets would be essential for the implementation of effective combined goals. This would include a comprehensive carbon market system, regulated in such a way that it didn't discriminate against the poorest, and a system of incentives to support a transition to low-carbon production systems in all countries. Tougher rules on transparency and evaluation will be needed to ensure that the flow of public money for sustainable development supports both poverty reduction and the environment. New global rules on technology transfer would be needed to better marry commercial objectives with social needs.
3. **New institutional architecture.** As well as global mechanisms, any new goals would be implemented mainly through national policies. For individual countries, making decisions about, for example, whether or not to exploit new-found coal or oil reserves will bring their commitments to poverty reduction and their environmental undertakings into direct conflict. Markets that price environmental damage more effectively should help to resolve some of these trade-offs, but disputes will still arise. What one government does in this area will affect others, so, as with trade policy, some form of global coordination, monitoring and enforcement mechanism is needed. Possible institutions could be:

   - a new intergovernmental panel on sustainable development to ensure policy is shaped by the best possible science
   - a new international court for environmental issues. The international impacts of environmental exploitation and the need to regulate disagreements over the use and control of scarce resources such as water, energy and land will require an institution to resolve disputes that has the option of a tough enforcement mechanism.
   - a new national institutional landscape where the need to pursue environmental goals is more firmly embedded in the thinking of powerful ministries.

How can the Rio+20 conference help to get there?

The Rio+20 conference has set itself the task of bending the two tracks of environment and development back together. There are good reasons for this: they are linked both in the lives of individual people and at the level of global trends. Unless they are brought together, progress in one area could undermine the other. This is not controversial. But agreeing on and implementing common actions that are framed to achieve both simultaneously has been surprisingly difficult. Expectations for concrete outputs from the Rio conference are not high.

Two issues: green growth and possible 'sustainable development goals' have dominated the agenda in the run up to the Rio+20 conference. We assess the extent to which these are likely to be both politically feasible and effective in forging a new global action plan for sustainable development, given the differences noted above.

Both are about trying to tackle the key problem of how to meet human needs while reducing resource use at a global level. At a national level, green growth strategies are useful in identifying specific bottlenecks and opportunities, trade-offs and win-wins. At a global level, goals on human progress that contain some targets on the resources used to achieve this progress might help to pave the way for a more comprehensive approach to global goal setting on environment and development.

Green growth

'Green growth' is an attempt to show that the apparent contradiction of attempting to consume more while using fewer natural resources is not insoluble, and that growth can be 'decoupled' from damaging resource consumption. The aim, as defined by the UN High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, is 'to foster economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets and environmental services are protected and maintained' (United Nations Secretary general's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, 2012).

Globally, 'green growth' was a feature of South Korea's tenure as chair of the G-20 in 2010, and it remains a priority for the Mexican Presidency this year, which is hoping to set up a working group on 'inclusive green growth'. Increasingly, international agencies like the World Bank are also talking the language of green growth, and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), initiated by Korea, is about to be established as a new international organisation to help developing countries take up this challenge.

Several countries – at all levels of development – are already doing so. They are driven both by concern about climate change and immediate issues such as the potential fiscal effects of rising oil and other commodity prices for importing countries. Some are also more narrowly interested in the potential to raise money for investment through climate finance schemes. Several developed countries are interested in green investment as a means to drive an export-led recovery (such as the UK), while many emerging economies see green growth as a means

to shift towards high-value added sectors (for example, China is shifting from manufacturing to services).

Low-income countries are also engaging in the green growth agenda. Ethiopia, for example, aims to achieve middle income country status by 2025 while keeping carbon emissions at 2012 levels, through a four-pronged strategy: reducing the environmental impact of agriculture; protecting and re-establishing forests; deployment of renewable power generation; and leapfrogging to advanced technologies in industry, transport (including substituting big roads for electric powered rail) and buildings (FDRE, 2011).

While there is a huge amount of analysis and thinking around the idea of green growth, much of it extremely useful and informative (Bass and Steele, 2006; OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2011; Halgatte, 2011), two key political issues pose major challenges to the agenda. First, it is highly complex – it needs national and regional specificity, a huge range of actors are involved and a very broad range of policy areas are covered. This has made negotiating actual text for the Rio+20 outcome document extremely difficult. Second, it can be controversial and unpopular. For example, the dismantling of fossil fuel subsidies, which totalled $409 billion in 2010 and which favour particular interest groups, is a major political challenge. Nigeria's recent attempt to reduce fossil fuel subsidies was met with widespread unrest and the plan was slowed down considerably (Benson, 2012).

The task at Rio+20 is, therefore, two-fold. First, to take initial steps that incentivise and enable more governments and businesses to take up the challenges, without forcing a non-existent consensus that might make future agreements more difficult, and second to help governments to understand and navigate the politically difficult trade-offs involved.

Both will be made very much easier if there is a binding target for carbon emissions agreed by 2015. Such a target would provide clear signals to governments and, crucially, to the private sector, which would change the incentives and make action on green growth more likely. It may provide the 'nudge' that markets need to start adapting to environmental realities and overcoming some of the market failures identified in the Stern report.

Currently, the job of governments that navigate this agenda is made more difficult by lack of information about the trade-offs and synergies between growth and environmental objectives. This lack makes it more difficult to overcome the political and economic barriers to sustainable development. One specific way in which a global agreement at Rio might help to inform and promote national level action on green growth would be to agree to establish **a common system of national natural capital accounting** (World Bank, n.d).

Indicators of economic progress rarely include an assessment of the natural assets of a given country and the extent to which they change over time. This can distort incentives: the cutting down of forests for timber shows up in national accounts as a gain for GDP, for example, but the loss of other services that forests provide, like carbon sequestration and air filtration, are not counted as losses. As a result, it is impossible to assess the trade-offs between the two.

Current systems of national accounting don't help policy-makers in any country to make decisions that reconcile growth with environmental sustainability. Instead, the incentive is to ignore the 'green' and just focus on the 'growth'. Putting the two on an equal footing in national accounts, as some governments are starting to do, would be a first step towards providing the information that could ensure that environmental resources are priced properly in markets. This, in turn, would help governments to make economic policy that supports environmental objectives as well as economic growth objectives.

A common system has already been developed to account for material resources like timber and fisheries. Extending this to other environmental resources would then allow for the development of national reports on natural capital, to encourage international collaboration and learning. To encourage countries to adopt the new standards, a **voluntary peer review mechanism** looking at both levels of natural capital and the institutional and policy environment underpinning their use would enable countries to share best practice and could help develop a global consensus on a regulatory framework for sustainable development over the longer term.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

While growth policies and scrutiny of those policies can probably best be tackled at a national level, global monitoring of progress towards specific targets is also being discussed at Rio+20. The MDGs have demonstrated how global targets, even if not legally binding, can concentrate political attention, cooperation, and resources on crucial issues, and are an attractive model to replicate for sustainable development. The proposal by the governments of Colombia and Guatemala to agree 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) at Rio+20 has generated much interest as a concrete way to overcome some of the political barriers and bring the sustainability and development agendas together (Republica de Colombia, 2011).

However, agreement on specifics has been hard to come by. This reflects, perhaps, the difficult and different politics of various parts of the proposed agenda. The original proposal included development goals such as reducing poverty, environmental goals such as maintaining biodiversity and the manage-

ment of the world's oceans and forests, and goals at the intersection of the two, including on consumption patterns and food, energy and water resources. Unlike the MDGs, where progress is measured mainly in terms of what happens in developing countries, the SDGs would apply to all countries.

A key lesson from the development of the MDGs was that the discussion of specific goals and targets is not the place to forge a new political consensus (Melamed, 2012). Rather, the MDG targets reflected an existing consensus, built up over more than ten years of global conferences, research and policy proposals. With this in mind, any discussion of future goals that incorporate both sustainability and development should consider where the existing consensus lies, how to develop effective goals on that basis, and over what timeframe.

There is some common ground, reflected in the Rio+20 discussions and the politics of many national governments, around the idea that attempts to meet social goals should increasingly take account of the need for care in the use of global resources. It is here that the idea of SDGs might usefully inform discussions on post-2015 goals for human progress and the successors to the MDGs.

There is far less consensus on how global resources such as oceans should be managed and what principles should inform the overall distribution of rights to use common resources. The failure to agree a strong and binding climate change deal in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to date is the most glaring example of this. Attempting to use goal setting processes to resolve these issues would probably end in failure and would jeopardise or at least dilute the commitment to poverty reduction that gave the MDGs their impact.

Given the difficulty of reconciling these very different types of goals and levels of ambition, it is increasingly likely that the Rio+20 conference will recognise and endorse the value of the idea of SDGs, while leaving the elaboration of specific goals and targets to a process led by the UN Secretary General, informed by external advice and reporting to the General Assembly.

One approach would be to **develop targets for poverty reduction that also incentivise reduced resource use**, in areas where the information is sufficient and where consensus exists or could be readily created. The 'Sustainable Energy for all' proposal stands as a good example (Ban, 2011). The single goal is followed by global targets relating directly to both poverty (universal access to modern energy sources) and sustainability (doubling the rate of improvement of energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix). Other possible areas that might be politically ready for the development of similar goals and targets could be in the areas of water and sanitation, or food and nutrition. In both cases, a target for universal access could be combined with a target for staying within the relevant planetary boundary. Some initial ideas for what this might look like, and how such targets might be agreed, are sketched out in the box below.

Such goals could be agreed in 2015 as part of a new framework focused on ending absolute poverty, and would help to focus the attention of both public and private sector actors on how to meet the needs of individuals within a constrained global environment. The experience of goal setting and then of monitoring and implementation might help to focus minds on how a more comprehensive and ambitious range of sustainable development goals could be developed

Box 1: Possible goals to integrate sustainability and development, modelled on the Sustainable Energy for All proposal

Energy (UN Secretary-General's proposal)

Sustainable energy for all by 2030

- Ensuring **universal access** to modern energy services.
- Doubling the global rate of improvement in **energy efficiency**.
- Doubling the share of **renewable energy** in the global energy mix.

Developing goals using this model would depend both on the information on which to base the targets and indicators, being available and on the possibility of a political consensus. Natural wealth accounting would help to develop the informational base on trends, and the work of the Stockholm Resilience Centre on planetary boundaries could help to establish the level of ambition that would be needed to avoid irreparable environmental damage.

If the political consensus did not exist in 2015, which is extremely likely, the universal access targets could be agreed in 2015, with sustainability targets added in subsequent years. There is precedent for this – the current Millennium Development Goals contain several targets that were added after the initial set of goals and targets were agreed in 2001.

Eventual goals and targets combining poverty targets with targets on remaining within environmental limits could be:

Sustainable water and sanitation for all by 2030

- Ensuring universal access to improved drinking water sources
- Ensuring universal access to improved sanitation
- X% reduction in per capita global freshwater use by 2030

Sustainable nutrition for all by 2030

- Zero incidence of child stunting by 2030
- X% reduction in rate of biodiversity loss by 2030
- X% reduction in nitrogen levels in the world's oceans by 2030

in the longer term, to incentivise and monitor the bigger changes needed in global patterns of production and consumption if sustainable development is to become a reality.

Unless the development and environment agendas are brought closer together, it is hard to see how progress on both can be sustained. However, previous attempts to make policy in this area have not been encouraging. Changing the story this time requires a careful analysis of why the two agendas have proved so resistant to creating those linkages, and what opportunities exist to do that better in the current climate.

The political interest in the proposal for Sustainable Development Goals at the Rio+20 summit shows that the will is there. Translating that will into reality has, historically, been a failure. But for the sake of achieving both development and environmental objectives it is to be hoped that history does not repeat itself this time. There are ways to change the story in 2015, if enough governments have the will to do so.

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