

PEACE, RECONCILIATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING  
MARCH 2, 2016, ECOSOC CHAMBER SYMPOSIUM  
Co-sponsored by the Government of the Bahamas, Global Fellowship, and Engr. Eze Foundation

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE SDGs:

**What we can and must do to save ourselves and the planet from exhaustion of non-renewable natural resources, species destruction, extreme poverty and social insecurity**

by Dr. Catherine Tinker, President, Tinker Institute on International Law and Organizations (T.I.I.L.O.)

Excellencies, Member States and representatives of civil society, I wish to thank the Government of the Bahamas, Global Unity Fellowship, and the Engr. Eze Foundation for the opportunity to join you today. Welcome also to my Seton Hall University students and interns from the School of Diplomacy and International Relations.

**UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said: “The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world’s leaders and the people.” “They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success.”**

**The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by consensus of 193 Heads of State and government at the General Assembly Summit on September 25, 2015 immediately after Pope Francis gave his address to the UN.**

**The Agenda contains the SDGs, also known as the "Global Goals", intended to transform and protect our world for present and future generations. The 17 goals and their 169 targets aim to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and achieve environmental, social and economic sustainability. The SDGs are available on-line through the websites of the UN and many NGOs.**

**Today I hope to share ideas on how each of us can be involved and contribute to making the SDGs a reality around the globe.**

I have three points today:

**first, the background and mission of *the NGO I represent, the Tinker Institute on International Law and Organizations (T.I.I.L.O.)*;**

**second, how *Goal #16 of the SDGs provides a roadmap for good governance and sustainability with the inter-connectedness of all of the SDGs*;**

**third, what *each of us can and MUST do to achieve the SDGs*.**

**I. The Tinker Institute on International Law and Organizations (T.I.I.L.O.),** was founded in 1992 for the first Rio conference on environment and development. Our mission is research and teaching about international law and organizations like the United Nations. I am a lawyer and professor of international law, and I have involved students and faculty in our work for over twenty years.

**T.I.I.L.O. is an NGO accredited to the UN through ECOSOC since 1996 and is a member of the NGO Major Group.** T.I.I.L.O. is part of interactive sessions, briefings and consultations with governments and experts in meetings here at the UN, including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), sessions convened by the President of the General Assembly and committees, and in coordination with other NGOs and civil society organizations and governments. At the Rio +20 conference and meetings of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, we helped to create the SDGs in a transparent, participatory process. This involved the 9 Major Groups of civil society in UN meetings: NGOs, children and youth; women; indigenous peoples; farmers; scientific and technical community; representatives of workers and trade unions; business and industry; and local governments. We are part of the process in action. This widespread participation increases the legitimacy of the Global Goals adopted by consensus of Member States of the UN by making all stakeholders own the goals and share responsibility for their achievement by 2030.

TILO is contributing to the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. We conduct research and policy analysis disseminated through academic studies, teaching and writing on international law, international environmental law, and the UN at universities in various countries. We lead workshops, seminars and teach-ins on the SDGs, sectoral topics like water, and international law. We are available for consultations for policy makers in governments, businesses, and organizations, both digitally and in person.

**You can learn more about T.I.I.L.O. on our website at [www.tiilo.org](http://www.tiilo.org).**

We all need to learn about the SDGs and what they mean for our communities, local and national governments, and regional and international organizations. How do the SDGs work?

Each of the 17 goals of the SDGs has a list of targets; each target has its own "indicators," measurements to gauge progress toward each of the targets in the SDGs. All nations will collect data and make reports to regional organizations and to the United Nations on their efforts to achieve each of the SDGs. Civil society and all stakeholders, including businesses and religious groups, are needed to achieve success with the SDGs and to monitor the results.

This is where we all come in. Now let's look at one of the SDGs, Goal 16.

## **II. Goal #16 is a roadmap in achieving sustainability:**

### **PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS.**

Targets for Goal 16 promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice; call for transparency and accountability in institutions; strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance; and substantially reduce crime and corruption to "ensure a peaceful and inclusive society for all." These conditions will help us reach the balance of social and environmental protection and economic growth contained in the concept of Sustainable Development, in meeting the needs of the present as well as future generations.

One target in Goal 16 is to "Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements." Indicators for this target include data on the existence and implementation of a national law or constitution guaranteeing the right to information and a legal and political framework operationalizing this right with simple guidelines for the public on how to request information from officials and government agencies.

Of course, good laws may exist on paper but not be applied in practice. In such a case, capacity building, training of judges and lawyers, and new technology may be needed with the help of global partners including PPP, NGOs, and institutions (local, national, regional and international). To meet the targets, then, and achieve Goal 16 of the SDGs may mean changing institutional habits; creating procedural steps to allow public access to information and the ability to publish and challenge it; and bringing decision-making more into the open with opportunities for citizen participation. This is important for the targets in Goal #1 on poverty eradication, Goal #8 on decent jobs and other SDGs like Goal #6 on water and sanitation, and other SDGs related to health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment, energy, forests and oceans.

\*\*\*\*\*

**For example, Goal #1** has a **target** of eradicating extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.25 a day, by 2030; and another **target** of implementing "social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieving substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable." ***Indicators***

include data on the proportion of the population below the international poverty line and the percentage of the population covered by social protection floors.

**Goal #8** has one **target** to "protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment," another **target** to promote sustainable tourism, and another **target** to end human trafficking, modern slavery, and child labor, all while "decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation." **Indicators** for these targets may measure total government spending in social protection and employment programs as a percentage of national budgets and GDP, as well as sustainable consumption and production.

\*\*\*\*\*

In *Development as Freedom*, Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen said:

**"Economic growth without investment in human development is unsustainable - and unethical."** This idea is now embodied in the SDGs and the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Sen also wrote: **"Political rights, including freedom of expression and discussion, are not only pivotal in inducing social responses to economic needs, they are also central to the conceptualization of economic needs themselves."**

The need to involve all stakeholders was central to the creation and adoption of the Global Goals or SDGs. That is why a discussion of Goal #16 is critical to the other SDGs and indeed to sustainable development itself.

**IN CONCLUSION**, I urge you to **READ** all seventeen goals and their associated targets and the indicators - the statistical measurements that will be taken in the years ahead in our communities and nations.

**PARTICIPATE** in implementation of the Global Goals on local & national levels.

**WATCH** how the results are reported on the international level here at the UN in the High Level Political Forum when the first 19 states will make their reports this summer at the UN. Reliance on self-reporting by states may not be sufficient; NGOs, religious groups, businesses, and other stakeholders may need to prepare "shadow reports" or use UN human rights mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council to track progress and identify challenges in meeting the SDGs. Regional peer review processes may also be helpful in monitoring achievements of the goals and targets.

**CONTRIBUTE** to these efforts to verify the information and generate data to report from your experience in your communities and organizations.

**OVERCOME** obstacles of failure of imagination, failure of courage, failure to plan adequately, failure to take responsibility, and failure to honor our common humanity and planetary home.

**LIVE** the SDGs in our daily lives on a personal level, in our workplaces, homes and places of worship and in discussions and interactions with friends and colleagues.

**TAKE** responsibility and contribute to the outcome.

**REMEMBER: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS are aspirational as well as practical steps, and they are part of international law and policy.**

The next fifteen years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will see us exceed planetary boundaries and destroy forms of life on this planet -- OR see the beginning of truly sustainable development.

**What will you do?**