

Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



What is Goal 16?

Good governance and the rule of law underpin development, as stable states encourage economic and social growth and enable the conservation and sustainable use of environmental resources. The linkage of certain hallmarks of the rule of law with sustainable development is a highlight of the SDGs. Targets in Goal 16 most directly related to good governance focus on access to information, transparency and accountability, participation in decision-making at all levels, and anti-corruption measures. These elements of good governance are those identified as most needed to realize the transformative vision of the SDGs as a whole. Achieving these elements is part of the environment for investment and growth sought by the private sector, and can foster public-private partnerships for sustainable development.

Goal 16 includes a variety of other targets related to violence, exploitation of children, criminal justice and other impediments to a secure and prosperous society for all. Goal 16 thus offers a framework for the sectoral issues addressed throughout the other goals and targets in its efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Goal 16 also recognizes the involvement of the private sector in partnership with governments and civil society and in voluntary compliance with guidelines and programs of social and environmental responsibility.

What Are The Targets?

- **1** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- **2**
End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- **3**
Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- **4**
By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- **5**
Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- **6**
Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- **7**
Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- **8**
Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- **9**
By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
- **10**
Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Means of Implementation

- **a**

Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

- **b**

Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development



Is This Possible?

One way to read Goal 16 as a whole is to recall how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was followed by two covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both covenants address basic rights needed for human life with dignity and happiness. Goal 16 in its breadth suggests combining these rights and necessities for a civic life that allows broad participation by all people in decision-making. Based on adequate information and fairness in governance, participatory decisions in turn will provide adequate measures for health, work, housing, transportation, education and food and water for all, regardless of gender, race, religion, or social group.

Perhaps the true measure of achievement of Goal 16 will be found in the achievement of other SDGs, especially sectoral goals like Goals 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and the broad targets on means of implementation found in Goal 17. New laws and regulations adopted by states to achieve

transparency, participation and accountability are another good measure of success, as there is an important educative function in the process of drafting and adopting domestic legal measures based on international standards while respecting common but differentiated responsibilities. Once laws are on the books, the next stage of enforcing binding legal obligations can begin. This process has been proven in many states in areas such as environmental law or criminal justice reform. Framing the targets in the way they are in Goal 16 suggests ways to universalize this experience.

Even before the rule of law and equal access to justice are internalized in practice, the existence of legal obligations and aspirational goals affect peoples' perceptions and desires to achieve these goals. As civil society movements build, demand grows among the general population for governments to respond and actualize the goals by applying the laws on the books. Accountability and transparency in government must develop in response, and in turn these values in society ensure greater economic growth and development. State sovereignty demands the initiative remain on the level of the nation state, but international law and policy exert ever greater influence on domestic legal norms and enforcement of those laws. Given the need of each member state of the UN to report on progress towards achievement of the SDGs, including Goal 16, through the High Level Political Forum, from 2015-2030 greater coherence in national laws, monitoring and implementation of all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals will be measurable, ensuring a better future for generations to come.

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