THE INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
WORKING TOGETHER TO REALISE PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

HOW CAN THE LAND COMMUNITY ENGAGE IN THE SDGS PROCESS AND ENSURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND?
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5

WHY THE SDGs ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE LAND AGENDA 7

WHAT ARE THE SDGS AND HOW WILL THEY WORK? 7
SDGs AND LAND RIGHTS 8

HOW THE SDGs COMPLEMENT EXISTING LAND INSTRUMENTS 10
LINKAGES BETWEEN THE SDGs AND ILC’S 10 COMMITMENTS 11

SDGs OPPORTUNITIES AND SPACES: HOW CAN THEY BE USED AND HOW CAN CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGE? 15

THE IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS 15
REPORTING MECHANISM: VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 16
MEASURING PROGRESS: THE SDG INDICATORS 17
SHARING LESSONS LEARNED AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY: THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 19

WHAT THE ILC AND ITS MEMBERS DID IN 2017 AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT 23

SDG indicator development and implementation 23
Implementation mechanisms 25
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) 25
High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 25
Additional actions to be taken 26

ANNEX 1: LAND RELATED TARGETS AND INDICATORS 27
INTRODUCTION

There is often a big disconnect between organisations focused on grassroots level work, and the (global) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process. This is in part a consequence that SDG-related processes are new (and therefore national processes may be not yet well structured and participatory) but also because many grassroots organisations may not see a relationship between their agenda and the SDGs. This is also the case for many organisations working on land issues.

Many organisations and networks working on land have made a strong contribution to the SDG agenda. Thanks to their lobbying and advocacy efforts, land has been strongly included across the SDG agenda. Involvement in monitoring processes and the development of the indicators and engagement with national governments, National Statistical Offices and land agencies have been also impressive both in terms of efforts and results.

In the coming months and years, it is critical that the land community continues to engage and further strengthen its participation in SDG processes at all levels. More land organisations need to engage and more countries need to be targeted in our advocacy work. Not engaging not only means missed opportunities, e.g. in terms of policy influencing and fundraising, but also risking that at the national level, the SDGs could promote policies and programs with the potential of negatively impacting peoples’ land rights and governance.

The SDGs represent an opportunity to make progress on the land agenda. To make it happen, more work at country level is needed to influence their implementation, a process that is inextricably linked to specific Targets and Indicators.

This paper aims to support ILC Members in better understanding the SDGs and their related-processes, opportunities and risks and ways to engage at various levels. It will show the strong linkages that exist between the ILC Commitments and the SDG agenda and how major progress on land rights and People-Centred Land Governance are necessary to achieve the SDGs as a whole. In addition, this paper will also show how the SDGs represent a complementary process that can contribute to the implementation of critical land instruments, including the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGTs).
WHY THE SDGS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE LAND AGENDA AND CANNOT BE IGNORED

WHAT ARE THE SDGS AND HOW WILL THEY WORK?

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the very ambitious Agenda 2030. It is a set of 17 SDGs and 169 Targets to be achieved by 2030, by both developed and developing countries covering the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). As a package, the SDGs represent a major departure from the previous global goals: the Millennium Development Goals.

The SDGs represent a universal and indivisible agenda. Member States underlined several times that the whole agenda should be implemented and countries cannot pick and choose which Targets to implement and which to ignore.

The Goals represent the vision and ambition (e.g. eliminate hunger and poverty) but the detailed political agenda is represented by the Targets. Countries’ commitments to achieve all Targets imply that progress on one Target cannot be achieved at the cost of progress on another. This should ensure that there will be progress on all three pillars of sustainable development.

A critical element underpinning the SDGs is the commitment to leave no one behind. This means that the SDGs should focus particularly on those most marginalised.

Given the complexity and the size of the 2030 Agenda it is critical for all actors to participate in measuring their progress. For this reason, a set of 230 indicators were developed to monitor progress on the SDGs. In 2017, the indicators were endorsed by ECOSOC after long consultation that focused on finding ways to measure all Targets with the smallest possible number of indicators.
SDGs AND LAND RIGHTS

The Agenda 2030 clearly recognised that without progress on land rights, the SDGs will not be achieved. For this reason, all UN Member States agreed to include land as an important element in a number of the Targets set in the Agenda. There are a number of SDG Targets and Indicators relevant for the land agenda because of the critical importance land is to realising sustainable development and due to the cross-cutting impacts of land rights.

ILC Members focus on many different SDGs Targets and Indicators related to land and different commitments covered by the 10 ILC Commitments (see later in this paper for more information). Furthermore, different regions and countries may focus on different specific SDGs. Nevertheless, ILC needs to focus its global efforts on a relatively small number of Targets and Indicators to ensure it maximises its impact and that our efforts are not spread too thin. This does not mean that ILC should not engage on other Targets and Indicators when opportunities to achieve progresses on peoples’ land rights come up.

In order to focus ILC’s collective efforts, we can divide the SDGs Targets and Indicators into three categories:

ILC’S OVERARCHING PRIORITIES
The most transformative Targets and Indicators that are closely related with land rights and are at the basis of ILC’s mandate and its overarching priority. They are the Targets 1.4 and 5.a and the following key indicators:

- 1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure.
- 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.
- 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

THE BROADER LAND AGENDA
This is represented by the larger list of Targets and Indicators that explicitly mention and focus on land rights and land use. Those include 6 Targets and 7 Indicators (see Annex 1).

THE LAND IMPACT
This is the very large list of Targets and Indicators that rely on progress of ILC 10 Commitments and the realisation of People-Centred Land Governance. In fact, land will play a critical and direct role in achieving a much larger number of Indicators, Targets, and Goals. If we fail to secure and protect land rights for women and men, Indigenous Peoples, family farmers and pastoralists, it will be impossible to achieve or, in most cases, even make significant progress on 13 Goals; 59 Targets; 65 Indicators.

This means that land is not only crucial to achieving the SDGs, but that focusing on land rights and governance can also:

- Ensure that the Agenda 2030 will not be split into traditional silos, but will instead remain universal, integrated, and achievable in its totality.
- Ensure that the SDGs social, economic and environmental dimensions, all of which are strongly interlinked with the land agenda, will remain well-integrated.
HOW THE SDGs COMPLEMENT EXISTING LAND INSTRUMENTS

In recent years, a number of land-related instruments and initiatives have been developed at global, regional and national levels. It should be clear that the SDGs are not and should not replace the need to fully implement instruments such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure (VGGTs). In fact, the SDGs and existing legal instruments on land can and should complement one another.

The complementarity potential is clear when we look, for example, at the different characteristics of the VGGTs and SDGs. The VGGTs provide detailed guidance on land tenure governance, clear implementation mechanism and theory of change. Furthermore, they have high levels of legitimacy and buy in across a wide range of actors (from social movements to UN Member States) that engaged directly in the negotiation process. The SDGs complement them by providing high level commitment and engagement across a wide range of Ministries needed to make progress on People-Centred Land Governance, monitoring mechanisms and clear indicators to track progress.

The complementarity of the VGGTs and SDGs needs to be built and requires the commitment and effort of all actors active on land issues across both processes. If the land community fails to build strong synergies and complementarities, it is likely that our collective impact will be far lower. In the worst case scenario, both processes might undermine each other, notably at the country level, causing a significant waste of resources and efforts.

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LINKAGES BETWEEN THE SDGs AND ILC’S 10 COMMITMENTS IN REALISING PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

ILC’s goal as a network is to realise land governance for and with people at the country level, responding to the needs and protecting the rights of those who live on and from the land. In order to achieve People-Centred Land Governance, ILC has focused on making progress on 10 critical commitments.

We already showed that progress on the ILC Commitments will contribute to at least 59 SDGs targets that relate to People-Centred Land Governance. Linkages with specific commitments are complex and may be either direct or indirect.

In this section, in order to support Members working on a specific commitment to focus and match their efforts on specific SDGs Targets, we will focus on a limited number of Targets that we see as transformational and directly linked with specific ILC Commitments. We hope that this will help members to better understand how their commitment work is linked with a specific Goal and Target.

From this preliminary analysis, it is clear that ILC commitment-based work is already providing a major contribution to achieving the Agenda 2030. By focusing on the specific Targets above ILC contributions-through progress on its 10 Commitments—can play a transformative role in contributing to the realisation of the Agenda 2030 as a whole and to make progress on most of the established Goals.

NO POVERTY
Target 1.4: ownership and control over land
1. Secure tenure rights
3. Diverse tenure systems
5. Secure territorial rights for Indigenous Peoples
9. Effective actions against land grabbing

ZERO HUNGER
Target 2.3: small scale food producers
2. Strong small-scale farming systems
5. Secure territorial rights for Indigenous Peoples

GENDER EQUALITY
Target 5.a: women equal rights to economic resources, including land
4. Equal land rights for women
Target 5.5: women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership
7. Inclusive decision-making

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Target 6.b: support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management
7. Inclusive decision-making

REduced Inequalities
Target 10.2: empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all
3. Diverse tenure systems

LIFE ON LAND
Targets 15.2: stop deforestation - 15.3: restore degraded land and soils
6. Locally managed ecosystems

PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Target 16.7: responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making
7. Inclusive decision-making
Target 16.10: protect fundamental freedoms
8. Transparent and accessible information
10. Protection for land rights defenders

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Targets 17.18: increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data
8. Transparent and accessible information
SDGs OPPORTUNITIES AND SPACES: HOW CAN THEY BE USED AND HOW CAN CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGE?

Various SDGs processes and structures have been developed from the global to the national level. These processes are still at an early stage and most of them are still evolving. This opens up interesting opportunities to influence their evolution but can also cause additional difficulties, particularly linked with the different approaches across countries. Furthermore, some processes require further improvement in order to deliver on their mandates.

THE IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

In order to be implemented, it is critical that the high-level political commitment expressed during the SDGs endorsement in 2015 translates into coordinated action at the country level. Adequate coordination and consultation mechanisms, fully involving civil society, should be put into place. There are no set of criteria or agreed mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs. There is therefore a variety of approaches that will be used at the country level to coordinate the implementation of the SDGs. To move forward, several countries have already put in place inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, normally led by the office of the Head of State or of Government or by a specific Ministry.

Engaging in those national mechanisms and in various fora working on the SDGs implementation at national level can offer very significant opportunities to promote progress on the land agenda. In fact, the SDGs processes involve key Ministries that have an influence on land issues and are responsible for achieving all SDGs targets, including those focusing on land. Furthermore, in many countries SDG related processes create new spaces for civil society to engage and influence governments.

The UN and other multilateral agencies, as well as bilateral donors and other development partners are also prioritising the achievement of the SDGs in their country level work. There is also a clear expectation that all major regional and international conferences will link their work to the SDGs as the overarching global framework. This can open up opportunities to engage with institutions and at conferences on land-related issues, using linkages between land and the SDGs Targets as an entry point.
When developed in a participatory way, VNRs can be an opportunity to engage with main national actors to develop a joint assessment of the land rights situation, define the key challenges and discuss what land policies reforms are needed.

The presentation of the VNRs at the HLPF can be used to expose issues at the global level, notably by delivering questions in Plenary. Even if time is limited, there are opportunities for Major Groups (see below for more information) to ask questions to Member States on their VNRs. Options to develop parallel reporting or use side events to propose a civil society view of a specific country (or issue) situation is also to be explored in this context.

MEASURING PROGRESS:
THE SDG INDICATORS

Based on several consultations, a list of 230 Indicators were developed to track progress on the SDGs. The indicators framework was formally adopted on June 6, 2017 by ECOSOC in New York. Attention of the main actors engaged is now entirely focused on how (and which) indicators should be implemented.

The Indicators’ implementation is critical because any Target that is not measured will not be included in UN progress reports and, as such, will run the risk of falling off of global, regional and national agendas.

At the time, it was critical that the land community secured all land rights indicators (including 1.4.2; 5.a.1 and 5.a.2). However, the mere endorsement of these land Indicators is not sufficient to secure their implementation. In fact, a global process by which the SDG indicators framework will be developed and implemented has already been put into place. This process, described below, will be critical in determining whether global land indicators will be implemented and what methodology they should follow. So far, neither 1.4.2 nor 5.a.2 are in the category going toward the full implementation. The Tier classification of other land-related targets and indicators can be found on Landportal.

The process to determine the status of indicators is led by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which has a mandate to develop and implement the global SDG indicator framework. It is composed of representatives of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the following countries, representing their respective sub-regions:

> Eastern Africa: Tanzania, Uganda
> Middle and Southern Africa: Botswana, Cameroon
> Western Africa: Cabo Verde, Senegal
> Northern Africa: Algeria
> Western Asia: Armenia, Bahrain, Egypt
In order to be re-classified from one Tier to another, the IAEG-SDG established a number of criteria:

» **Tier III—> Tier II**: NSOs should be involved into methodology development; Methodology has become an international standard; Methodology has been approved by a relevant governing body; Methodology is the result of pilot studies that are regionally representatives;

» **Tier II—> Tier I**: Data is regularly produced by countries for at least 50 percent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.

Respecting these criteria is seen as critical to guaranteeing the statistical and scientific integrity of the SDGs indicators framework. However, it should be underlined that the decision to re-classify and implement indicators is also political. As such, political will and commitment to a specific target by the majority of countries represented in the IAEG-SDG is critical.

Currently, only one of the three key indicators focusing on land rights (5.a.1) is under Tier II, based on a decision at the last IAEG-SDG meeting in March 2017. The other two critical land rights indicators (1.4.2 and 5.a.2) are currently under Tier III. Custodian organisations are working diligently to fine tune methodologies and pilot these two indicators and should present relevant documentation to secure their re-classification to Tier II at the next IAEG-SDG meeting (November 11-14 in Manama, Bahrain). Custodians for indicator 1.4.2 are UN-Habitat and the World Bank while for indicator 5.a.2: FAO, UN-Habitat and the World Bank. ILC Secretariat contributed to the development of the indicators by participating in various Expert Group Meetings as well as taking part in a group of friends of the Custodians.

In order to move toward full implementation of these indicators, it is critical to engage with each NSOs participating in the IAEG-SDG and, more broadly, with all NSOs to ensure the implementation of the land indicators at the national level.

The IAEG decided to organise indicators into three different Tiers based on their level of implementation:

» **Tier I**: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant. Those indicators should be fully implemented by all countries.

» **Tier II**: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries. Those indicators should move toward their full implementation.

» **Tier III**: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested. Those indicators require work to develop and pilot methodologies and are not going to be implemented.

Only Tier 1 indicators will be fully implemented. The risk is that indicators that remain in Tier III will never be implemented and may actually be dropped de facto from the monitoring of SDGs in the coming years. If not adequately monitored, the attention on the related Targets in term of implementation will also dramatically decrease.

For each indicator, one or more agencies (the so-called “Custodians”) have been appointed by the IAEG-SDG to lead the development of the indicators, their methodology, pilot their tests and initial implementations, and move them forward towards full implementation.
Civil society organisations and other stakeholders participate in the HLPF through the Major Groups mechanisms. There are the following ‘Major Groups’: Women; Children and Youth; Indigenous Peoples; Non-Governmental Organizations; Local Authorities; Workers and Trade Unions; Business and Industry; Scientific and Technological Community; Farmers. In addition, there is a group of “Other Stakeholder” that could represent multi-stakeholder platforms or groups.

A general briefing organised by all Major Groups jointly takes place every morning at the HLPF, though a lot of work is done in smaller groups (e.g. tasked to finalise specific questions on the VNRs presentations) or within the Major Groups. Every Major Groups is organised and coordinated in different ways. Each Major Group decides their spokespersons although some of them are already established well in advance through calls for interest. Competition to take the floor is quite high because of the level of attendance and interest on the HLPF and the short sessions.

Additional Background on the HLPF and a report from the 2017 HLPF can be found here.
WHAT THE ILC AND ITS MEMBERS DID IN 2017 AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

The SDG Agenda will be the overarching global framework for the next many years. We need to maintain the Agenda on track to contribute to realise ILC’s vision of People-Centred Land Governance. This will require from the land community more and better coordinated work at global and national levels.

At the national level, it is critical that ILC’s National Engagement Strategies (NES) and ILC Members scale up their engagement with national authorities and institutions. Country level lobbying and advocacy work is critical because without it, progress made in the last years on land within the SDGs may be lost.

ILC will be able to support Members at country level through Commitment Based Initiatives and National Engagement Strategies. In term of supporting global, regional and multi-country work of ILC Members, activities related to the SDGs could be supported by integrating them into relevant Commitment Based Initiatives.

In this section we will underline some of the key elements and processes within the SDG Agenda which we should focus. A lot of work has already been done in 2017 and we tried to reflect it here based on our best knowledge. We are certain that many other activities related to the SDGs were led by ILC Members across the world. Based on the experience of previous work on SDGs and the current stage of different processes, we will present what we believe we need to do next. A few actions will need to be taken urgently to influence the implementation of the SDGs indicators, others will require more thinking and planning within ILC.

Regional Conferences and the 2018 Global Land Forum will be critical moments for ILC Members to come together and strategise on how collectively we can move the SDG agenda forward at all levels.

SDG INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 2017, many ILC Members engaged at various levels to move the three main land rights indicators towards their full implementation. In addition to advocacy and lobby work, this included participation in a series of Expert Group Meetings (EGMs), and engagement as or support to Custodian agencies to develop a sound methodology for the indicators.
The ILC will contribute to further deepening its understanding on land governance and tenure rights at the country level, notably through the development of the ILC Global Dashboard.

After the IAEG meeting in November, ILC needs to strategise on how we move forward, with the Core Group playing a role in facilitating the discussion.

**IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS**

Focus on the various implementation mechanisms within national governments as well as international agencies will be needed. Indicators and monitoring mechanisms are critical but we should not forget that, in order to be monitored, SDGs will need to be implemented first.

Every country will set up different implementation mechanisms. National civil society organisations should assess how to engage in those mechanisms and see how to use them in moving forward the land agenda. If existing mechanisms are not relevant, existing land platforms, such as National Engagement Strategies, may be used.

**VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNRs)**

Various ILC Members participated at various stages in the development and presentation of the VNRs.

NES and other ILC Members at the national level should assess whether engaging in the development of the national VNRs planned for 2018 (and beyond) is worth it from an advocacy perspective. Collectively, we need to ensure that land is well included in several VNRs to maintain it high in the HLPF and global agendas.

Engagement can range from participating in national consultations, preparing questions for the HLPF Plenary, organising side events or even developing parallel reporting.

Organizations at the global level can support those engaging in VNRs at country level by connecting them with the HLPF and ensuring they have access to the experience and lesson learned from others that participated to last years’ VNRs.

**HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF)**

Participation and engagement in the HLPF is needed to ensure that land remain high in the SDG debate. In 2017, several ILC Members came together to influence the HLPF Ministerial Declaration and meeting. The outcome was positive with land tenure clearly mentioned in the Ministerial Declaration and land issues being visible at the HLPF.
At the 2018 HLPF, we should build on this experience and strengthen our impact. By bringing together all interested ILC Members well in advance we will have a bigger impact on the HLPF and on its Ministerial Declaration. Influencing the Ministerial Declaration and, more broadly, the HLPF will also require some targeted engagement at country level in key moments. Organisations following the 2018 HLPF may provide joint messages and positions on the Ministerial Declaration that NES and ILC Members working at country level could use.

If you are interested to join the group of ILC Members that will engage in the 2018 HLPF please contact the ILC Global Secretariat.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

Given the importance of the SDG framework over the next several years, we should better communicate within the land community how our work is contributing to specific SDG Targets and the Agenda 2030 as a whole.

The SDGs agenda also offer the opportunity to engage with and reach out to constituencies that are not yet engaging on land issues. This opportunity should be part of our communication efforts to reach out non land specialists with easy to understand and impactful, messages on land rights.

Finally, land related SDGs should be well integrated into the agendas of the main international agencies and donors. This would require engagement in relevant processes to mainstream SDGs into various organisations.

**ANNEX 1**

**LAND RELATED TARGETS AND INDICATORS**

1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure.

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.a.1(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control.
11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate.

11.3.2 Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically.

15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area.
THE WORLD’S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES – UP TO 2.5 BILLION WOMEN AND MEN – POSSESS OWNERSHIP RIGHTS TO JUST ONE-FIFTH OF THE LAND THAT IS RIGHTFULLY THEIRS.

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