

# **Pre-ARM briefing**

## Sustainable Development Goals



## Pre-ARM briefing – Sustainable Development Goals

This briefing:

- outlines the role of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and how they contribute to health and well-being;
- identifies the UK's role in delivering the goals in the UK and overseas; and
- sets out some of the key issues members may wish to consider in developing and submitting motions for the 2020 ARM.

### Background

September 2020 will mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the start of a decade of action and delivery to realise the goals by 2030. A number of high-level inter-governmental meetings focused on achieving the SDGs will take place between June-September 2020 globally.

The SDGs replace and build on the Millennium Development Goals, broadening their scope through 17 interlinked goals.<sup>1</sup> This reflects growing recognition that progress on development cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of inequality and ill health, and taking action to preserve the environment.

### The SDGs and health

While SDG 3 focusses specifically on good health and well-being, progress towards achieving all the goals will impact on health, both directly and through social and environmental determinants – for example by ending poverty (Goal 1) and hunger (Goal 2), and improving education (Goal 4) and equality (Goal 10). The SDGs have potential to galvanise urgent action on these issues, and on growing global crises like climate change and antimicrobial resistance.

The SDGs also provide a useful framework for assessing the impact of current policy solutions and focusing efforts towards evidence-based responses to these challenges.

### The role of the UK

The UK was a leader in negotiating the SDGs and has embedded them into UK-wide policy on social, economic, and environmental issues.<sup>2</sup> Going forward, the UK has a key role to play in delivering the goals domestically and overseas.

The devolved nations have also taken strong approaches to implementing the SDGs. Wales has led the way with the ground-breaking [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015](#), which enshrines commitments to sustainable development in law. Scotland has also achieved legislative backing for its SDG commitments by incorporating them into the [National Performance Framework](#), with an online [reporting hub](#) to track progress. Northern Ireland has embedded the goals into its civil service strategy and [Programme for Government](#).

### Implementing the SDGs in the UK

Overall, the UK ranks 13<sup>th</sup> on the UN's 2019 [SDG index](#) and has completed a [voluntary national review](#) of its progress. The UK is a world leader on some goals, such as universal health coverage and inclusive access to education. However, it is lagging behind in key areas from health to housing, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

The picture is similar across the European region, where high-income countries are failing to close the equity gap for their populations.<sup>3</sup>

### Implementing the SDGs globally

The UK plays a critical role in providing financial support for lower-income countries to achieve the SDGs. The UK is a major contributor to Official Development Assistance (ODA) globally, accounting for 1/8<sup>th</sup> of spending by members of the Development Assistance Committee, which represents the world's major aid donors.<sup>4</sup>

It is essential that UK aid priorities remain aligned to the SDGs, and that policies are coordinated with other major global donors in line with the [World Medical Association's statement on sustainable development](#).<sup>5</sup> This should include continued close working with EU development programmes, through which the UK currently disburses approximately £1.5 billion a year (9% of UK spending on aid).<sup>6</sup>

Global involvement will have benefits for the UK as well, enabling us to learn from highly efficient innovations and interventions in lower-resource settings.

### Further information

For further information on this policy area please contact Arielle Nylander, senior policy advisor (global health) [anylander@bma.org.uk](mailto:anylander@bma.org.uk)

#### Key issues to consider

In submitting motions to the ARM, members may wish to make proposals or set out views on the following key issues.

- Affirming the Association's support for the SDGs (as the Representative Body did with the Millennium Development Goals).
- A 'health in all policies' approach to achieving the SDGs, with a focus on the social determinants of health and particular attention given to the most vulnerable at home and abroad.
- Strengthening the role of the health community in supporting efforts towards achieving not only SDG 3 concerning health but all goals, recognising that health and other global challenges are interlinked and that many health gains will be made holistically.
- The critical importance of controlling climate change and ensuring that all policies supporting the SDGs are aligned to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.
- The UK's responsibility as a highly advanced economy to financially support achievement of the SDGs globally. The UN recommends high-income countries spend 0.7% of their Gross National Income on ODA, with 0.15-0.2% earmarked for Least Developed Countries.<sup>7</sup>

### References

- 1 United Nations, [Sustainable development goals](#)
- 2 HM Government (June 2019), [Voluntary national review of progress towards sustainable development goals](#)
- 3 World Health Organization (September 2019), [Healthy, prosperous lives for all: the European health equity status report](#)
- 4 Department for International Development (April 2019), [DFID and 0.7%: Why we should be proud of our aid commitment](#)
- 5 World Medical Association (October 2018), [WMA statement on sustainable development](#)
- 6 House of Lords (July 2019), [More views on international development cooperation after Brexit sought by Lords Committee](#)
- 7 Department for International Development (April 2019), [DFID and 0.7%: Why we should be proud of our aid commitment](#)

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