



# Put people first to solve the world's growing problems

*Collective commitment is needed to end poverty, fight injustice, and fix climate related problems*



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GREEN VIEW

Getting a group of people together and having them agree on a solution to fix a certain problem can be quite a challenge. I find it nothing short of a miracle when governments get together to come to an understanding when it comes to solving issues like world peace, poverty and hunger, etc. That is exactly what 193 countries did in early 2016 when they came together and unanimously signed off on some very ambitious anti-poverty goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There are a total of 17 Sustainable Development Goals that cover topics such as no poverty, affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities and communities and more. These universal goals have within them 169 targets, which in turn have at least two indicators under each target to measure implementation.

The SDGs are the sequel to the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) that have helped reduce global poverty by 50 per cent. MDGs have also made significant progress in ensuring accessibility of drinking water to a large number of people, and made considerable gains in fighting malaria and tuberculosis. The MDGs primarily applied to developing countries. In contrast, the SDGs are more universal and realise that the scope of problems and challenges are more global in nature, and not country-specific.

Each country is responsible for prioritising amongst these 17 SDGs and setting their own national plans by taking into account local circumstances. This will help ensure that respective governments, civil societies, private sector and others feel a sense of ownership and set realistic targets that have a strong local impact and influence the bigger picture, too.

The common factor for all these 17 universal goals and their 169 targets is the commitment to ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and fixing climate change among others. If each of the goals is met, we can witness a truly different world by 2030.

When launching the SDGs, the former UN secretary-general Ban Ki Moon stated on behalf of the 193 signatory countries that nobody would be left behind when it comes to addressing these pressing global issues. I also believe that it is extremely important that nobody overlooks his or her

responsibility when it comes to realising these goals. The more people know about SDGs, the more successful they will be. Every government, every organisation and every educational institution needs to know about these goals, work on spreading the knowledge and contribute towards achieving them with their time, effort and resources. There is a wealth of information available online on each of the SDGs, and I urge all companies and people to read more about them.

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The SDGs are not just an achievement or a responsibility of the governments and large organisations, they represent human struggle to improve the world we live in.

Each one of us can be a better person, if we read about the SDG targets and actively change our lifestyles to become more responsible and considerate human beings. From the 17 goals, pick the ones you are most passionate about, and think about how you can contribute towards them. I have been an environmental activist for more than 25 years. And it is something that I will continue to fight for along with other causes such as gender equality and climate action. I am sure there is an SDG that can benefit from your energy and wisdom. Always remember that the change starts within you and with you.

*Habiba Al Mar'ashi is the President and CEO of Arabia CSR Network.*