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Why good governance of land and tenure security need to be part of the Sustainable Development Goal framework

Note by the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment and the SDSN Thematic Group on the Good Governance of Extractive and Land Resources
Revised - May 2014*

Incorporating good governance of land and tenure security in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework would:

1. **Support the protection of a range of tenure rights.** Hundreds of millions of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers, and fisherfolk rely on land, forest and water resources, yet many have insecure tenure rights and are vulnerable to displacement and loss of livelihood. Including the issues of land governance and secure tenure would encourage governments to work proactively to ensure that tenure protections are increased in accordance with national SDGs.
2. **Promote poverty reduction.** In rural areas, land is integral to livelihood strategies. Tenure security helps ensure that women and men can access the natural resources they need to grow food or otherwise earn a living, encourages productivity-enhancing investments and creates opportunities for local communities to directly manage and benefit from those resources. Tenure security can also enable women and men to use their land as collateral in order to access other opportunities. Since nearly 70 percent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas in developing countries, incorporating land governance and secure land tenure in the SDG framework would promote efforts that are vitally important for poverty reduction, in line with the SDSN proposed Goals 1 and 6.
3. **Strengthen food security.** Good governance of land helps realize food security at both a household and a global level. For rural households, tenure security is often the crucial link to sustained food security and the right to food. At a global level, good land governance can contribute to the sustainable and strategic use of land for agricultural production, contributing to long-term global food supply. Including land governance and secure land tenure would assist government efforts to achieve food security, in line with the SDSN proposed Goal 1.
4. **Empower women.** Women produce an estimated 60-80% of food in developing countries, yet they rarely have secure land rights. Improving women's access to land and securing their tenure rights empower women to meet their needs and invest in their children. Doing so is also vital to achieving better food security, health and education outcomes in rural areas. Incorporating land governance and secure land tenure would encourage governments to ensure that efforts to improve tenure security focus in particular on women, in line with SDSN proposed goal 4.
5. **Reduce resource conflicts.** Tenure insecurity can lead to resource conflicts. Climate variations threaten to exacerbate such conflicts. Good governance of land can help address potential conflicts before they occur, and can provide avenues of redress after

conflicts arise. Including land governance and secure land tenure would focus critical attention on managing land resources to reduce and address resource conflicts.

6. **Encourage responsible use and management of natural resources.** Ensuring that natural resources are used responsibly is essential for sustainable development. Land governance frameworks assist governments to manage natural resources responsibly. In addition, tenure security encourages women and men to use resources more sustainably. Incorporating land governance and secure land tenure would promote the responsible management of land and other natural resources, in line with SDSN proposed goal 9.
7. **Help alleviate the impacts of increasing commercial pressures on land.** Land is both a natural resource that attracts investment itself and one that is significantly affected by other natural resource projects, such as those in the extractive industries. Commercial pressures on land have been growing steadily, with significant implications for individuals who depend on land but lack tenure security to defend their rights and access to such land. These increased pressures, combined with weak land governance, can fuel conflict and human rights violations, exacerbate poverty and otherwise negatively affect sustainable development goals. Including land governance and secure land tenure would help governments address these concerns through explicit safeguards that protect vulnerable land users.

For these reasons, we recommend the inclusion of the following indicators on land and tenure security as part of the proposed SDSN indicator framework:¹

Target 6c. *Ensure universal access in rural areas to basic resources and infrastructure services (land, water, sanitation, markets, mobile and broadband communication, agricultural inputs, and advisory services).*

Indicator: Percentage of women and men in rural areas with secure rights to land, measured by (i) percentage with documented rights to land, and (ii) percentage who do not fear arbitrary dispossession of land

Target 7b. *Ensure universal access to a secure and affordable built environment and basic urban services including housing; water, sanitation and waste management; low-carbon energy and transport; and mobile and broadband communication.*

Indicator: Percentage of women and men in urban areas with security of tenure, measured by (i) percentage with documented rights to housing, and (ii) percentage who do not fear arbitrary eviction

This proposed indicator comprises two complementary components, documentation and perception, which provide critical information on tenure security. In addition, they both highlight outcomes and on-the-ground realities. The proposed focus on “documented rights” is flexible enough to cover a range of tenure rights in different country contexts. Because documentation alone, while important, is often not sufficient to gauge true tenure security, the perception measure provides valuable complementary information. In addition, the perception measure may facilitate more useful comparisons across countries. This proposed indicator is not yet measured or calculated in a systematic way, so there is a need to develop this for future SDG monitoring.

¹ See: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, (2014), *Indicators for Sustainable Development Goals – Working Draft*, Paris, France and New York, USA: SDSN. Available online at <http://unsdsn.org/resources>