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Globalization and Sustainable Development



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GLOBALIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Following the promulgation of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals for a sustainable future in 2000, countries adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects for people around the world. All UN Member States adopted the 17 Goals and 169 targets in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which laid out a 15-year plan to achieve them. The goals aimed to eradicate poverty, protect the environment and the planet, and live in peace and prosperity. Significant progress has been made on achieving the first two SDGs, No Poverty and Zero Hunger. It seemed unlikely that any of the remaining SDG goals would be reached by 2030, even before the COVID-19 pandemic; now, the pandemic has made it all the less likely. Talking about economics, finance, and ecology to achieve sustainable development and reach the SDGs' targets is alone insufficient. Countries must instead act with the awareness that health is as inseparable a component of sustainable development as the economy and environment are. Moreover, they must take decisive steps to improve social sustainability through equality, diversity, and democratic governance principles. For a behavioral transformation on a global scale, cooperation with civil society and participatory governance practices should be integrated at local, national, and international levels.

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Introduction

The concepts of sustainability and sustainable development have been a part of our lives since the end of the 1980s but have expanded their use in all fields of social and human science since the end of the Cold War. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the fate of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which was accepted in 2015 and aimed to reach until 2030, and how much of the 169 goals under these goals can be achieved. The SDGs, a universal call for action aiming to eliminate poverty, protect the environment and the planet, and live in peace and prosperity under 17 main headings, offer states an inclusive agenda. Within this inclusive agenda, there are 2 types of goals: the ones which have been directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic such as ending poverty and hunger, quality education, health and quality life, decent work and economic growth, gender equality, reducing inequalities, responsible production and consumption, and the ones which are indirectly affected such as goals to protect the environment. Failure to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets, thrown into doubt by COVID-19, raises the concern that sustainable development will be undermined in a manner from which it will be impossible to recover.

Although it is not the first pandemic in history, the emergence and spread of COVID-19 has created enormous uncertainties for individuals, societies, and states. Even though we may compare the 1918 Spanish Flu, today's interconnectedness due to globalization has triggered worldwide fragilities on a more profound scale. Confronted with the unknown, states initially reverted to

their security-driven instincts and practiced protective behavior by closing their borders. However, the global level interconnectedness in economics, commerce, and social and cultural relations has prevented us from keeping borders closed. In addition, it is clear that isolation and closed borders will not help us achieve a sustainable future. Attempts to take unilateral measures at the expense of international cooperation mechanisms may cause the most significant damage to sustainability goals.

After the initial protective reflex, we have started to hear statements like "We are all in the same boat!" and "The virus threatens every country in the same way!" However, due to social injustices and differences between developed and undeveloped countries, the virus does not affect us all in the same way as discussed in the sustainability debates. Although states are working hard to prevent unemployment and help small and medium-sized enterprises with various economic stimulus packages, these are limited by states' capacities and resources and are thus vastly different. For this reason, the packages offered by the states in countries with more capacity and resources increase the differentiation between developed and developing countries. Over time, restrictions were lifted, economic activities were accelerated, especially in developing countries, to reclaim the time lost economically, and the number of cases accelerated. In this framework, it is better understood that health policies and economic policies should not be considered separately from each other.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a sign for all of us to remember the importance of sustainability to humanity's future. The pandemic has made us question facets of our

daily lives, from reconsidering our working habits, transportation, and logistics practices and finding environmentally friendly solutions to rethinking urbanization, and reconstructing our concrete-embedded cities. We have realized that we need more available public spaces. All these debates and discussions show that the SDGs are more critical for our future on this planet than ever before.

Sustainability and Sustainable Development

When it comes to development, one should not think about only the models that are handled from the economic framework, but also the models that include a sustainable development. Sustainability, is defined as the functioning of the society, ecosystem or any ongoing system until an uncertain future without consuming the main resources, according to Gilman.¹ The 1972 UN Declaration of Human Environment, or Stockholm Declaration, initiated a discussion about sustainable development and the need to preserve and enhance the human environment. The World Environment and Development Commission later prepared the Brundtland Report in 1987, defining sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs."² In 2001, the OECD similarly defined sustainable development as the fulfillment of the

needs of today's generations without compromising the needs of the next generations."³

The industrial development after World War II has caused the diversification of economic activities and markets. Globalization was further accelerated after the end of the Cold War. The development of the capitalist system paved the way for the division between developed economies, developing economies, and underdeveloped economies, and the divisions between them has deepened. Meanwhile, such an understanding of development has created new environmental problems. For this reason, our understanding of development needs to change more and more, however the difficulty of producing policies in line with sustainable development actually emerged as a result of the differences between the global South-North countries during the Tariffs and Trade General Agreement (GATT) Uruguay Round.

Yet, as consumption continues unabated, it is difficult to advance a concept of social development that includes equality, justice, and democracy for all. Globalization has exacerbated the inequalities between the South and North and a genuinely global sustainable environmental policy remains elusive.⁴ Although globalization has increased cooperation by facilitating communication, problems that sovereign states cannot solve with their own efforts have come to the fore with the increasing speed in production and consumption. Climate change, the destruction of biodiversity, our damage to the

¹ Robert Gilman, "Sustainability by Robert Gilman from the 1992 UIA/AIA call for sustainable community solutions", <https://www.context.org/about/definitions/> (Access date 2 November 2020).

² Ceren Aksu, "Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma ve Çevre", Güney Ege Kalkınma Ajansı, 2011. http://geka.gov.tr/Dosyalar/o_19v5e00u1ru61bbncf2qmlcpv8.pdf (Access date 2 November 2020).

³ OECD *The DAC Guidelines Strategies for Sustainable Development*, Paris, 2001.

⁴ Ethem Torunoğlu, "Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Paradigması Üzerine Ön Notlar, TÜBİTAK Vizyon 2023 Panel İçin Notlar", 2004 https://www.tubitak.gov.tr/tubitak_content_files/vizyon2023/csk/EK-16.pdf (Access date 2 November 2020).

environment, increasing inequalities and injustices are just some of these problems.

To cope with ecological, social, economic, and political problems, the concepts of the green economy, ecological sustainability, and social sustainability also fall within the concept of sustainable development. It is argued that, based on the sustainable development approach, the countries that have the largest responsibility for creating the ecological crisis and climate change should take the most responsibility in solving them.⁵ Within the UN Environment Program, a Global Green New Deal Policy Note was prepared in 2009, which underlined that a new sustainable development model based on the Green Economy is required to prevent ecological scarcity and climate change on a global level.⁶

The Green Economy approach posits that growth is also possible by reducing resource consumption. In this context, a green economic policy package should be based on the production of environmentally compatible recyclable products and the development of a global understanding of social responsibility.⁷ UN Environment Program defines the Green Economy as an approach in which greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, resource efficiency is increased and social development is also

included.⁸ The concept of productivity in this definition is defined as "a development strategy that serves all of the aims of reducing poverty, increasing employment, protecting human rights, strengthening social peace and democracy, improving working conditions and sustainable development."⁹

Considering that the concepts of Green Economy and ecological sustainability cannot be considered separately from each other, principles such as recycling energy and materials, using fewer materials to provision goods and services, and renewal capacity¹⁰ are central. At the same time, social sustainability in the fields of healthcare and education is deemed essential. The concept of Green Economy also draws attention to issues such as access to energy as a human right, preserving the livelihoods of individuals and societies, equality in social support services, ensuring safe and healthy working conditions, and preventing forced labor and child labor.¹¹

As mentioned, since the 1980s, the UN has led worldwide efforts in sustainable development. In this context, the SDGs were introduced in 2015 as the latest phase of the UN's global steps¹² to build a sustainable future.

⁵ Serdar Altınok et al. "Küresel İklim Değişikliği Sorununun Çözümü İçin Yeni Bir Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Anlayışı", 2015 <https://www.avekon.org/papers/1393.pdf> (Access date 2 November 2020).

⁶ UNEP Global Green New Deal Policy Brief, Geneva, 2009 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7903/A_Global_Green_New_Deal_Policy_Brief.pdf?sequence=3&%3BisAllowed= (Access date 2 November 2020).

⁷ Mustafa Özçağ ve Hakan Hotunluoğlu, "Kalkınma Anlayışında Yeni bir Boyut: Yeşil Ekonomi", *CBÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol 23, No 2, June 2015, p. 303-324.

⁸ UNEP Green Economy Developing Countries Success Stories, Geneva, 2010 <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/case-studies/green-economy-developing-countries-success-stories> (Access date 2 November 2020).

⁹ Joseph Prokopenko, *Verimliliği Teşvik Kuruluşları: Evrim ve Deneyim (ILO Yayınları)*, Çeviri. MPM Yayın No:675, Ankara. 2004 içinde Nurettin Peşkirioğlu, "2030 Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri: Küresel Verimlilik Hareketine Doğru", https://www.academia.edu/35678484/2030_S%C3%BCrd%C3%BCr%C3%BClebilir_Kalkınma_Hedefleri_K%C3%BCresel_Verimlilik_Hareketine_Do%C4%9Fru (Access date 2 November 2020).

¹⁰ Frank D. Vivien, "Sustainable Development: An Overview of Economic Proposals", *SAPIENS*, Vol 1, No 2, 2008 p. 1-8.

¹¹ Muhammed Yunus Bilgili, "Ekonomik, Ekolojik ve Sosyal Boyutlarıyla Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol 10, No 40, 2017 p. 559-570.

¹² 1992 Rio de Janeiro – UN Environment and Development Conference, 2002 Johannesburg – World Sustainable

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Targets

The Sustainable Development Goals are built on the goals adopted by the United Nations at the Millennium Summit in 2000. At this summit, the member states set 8 goals to be achieved by 2015 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, ensure universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, fight HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and advance global cooperation for development.

The 17 SDGs adopted in 2015 are a continuation of these goals;

SDG 1: No poverty

SDG 2: End hunger

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

SDG 4: Quality education

SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

SDG 13: Climate action

SDG 14: Life below Water

SDG 15: Life on land

SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The 169 targets under these objectives guide states to end poverty, protect the environment, take measures against the climate crisis, foster the equitable sharing of welfare, and achieve peace by 2030.

These SDGs are also a response to criticisms of the concept of sustainable development. While the concept of sustainability should be related to the sustainability of life, one of the most frequently leveled criticisms was that the concept was mostly about the sustainability of development. SDGs are, in other words, emphasizing the relationship between economy and environment in favor of the economy.¹³ Considering the SDGs and their sub-goals, providing sustainable fresh water supply to solve the problem of water scarcity under the purposes such as clean water, clean energy, prevention of climate change, protection of life on land and water, and significantly reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity; strengthening resilience and adaptation capacity to climate-related hazards and

Development Summit, 2012 Rio de Janeiro – UN Sustainable Development Conference (Rio+20).

¹³ Fevzi Özlüer, "Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmanın Ekonomi Politikası", 27 February 2014, <http://www.fevziozluer.av.tr/2014/02/27/>

surdurulebilir-kalkinmanin-ekonomi-politigi/ (Access date 2 November 2020).

natural disasters in all countries; take action for the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems and the restoration of oceans to have healthy and productive oceans; targets such as conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems in wetlands, mountains and arid areas in line with the obligations arising from international agreements have been determined. These goals and targets underscore that the SDGs place emphasis on the environment.

Two interrelated criticisms of the previous definition of sustainable development pertained to ignoring the waste-transfer phenomenon. It was argued that the transfer of waste from developed countries to developing countries contradicted the ideal of sustainable development. As far as the SDGs are concerned, *SDG12: Responsible Production and Consumption* answers the first part of the criticism. By 2030, it is targeted to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels; to reduce food losses in production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses; and to ensure environmentally sound management while phasing out harmful incentives that degrade environment and restructuring the taxation.

SDG17: Partnerships for the Goals encourages increasing official development aid. Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and to 0.20 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries. Considering the needs of developing economies, targets

include the mobilizing of additional financial resources and the adopting and implementing of investment incentives for the least developed countries. In this context, it can be said that the SDGs are a guide for increasing aid, not preventing the development of developing countries. However, there are still questions regarding whether aid bring benefits to developing countries. Furthermore, the factors involved in the provision of aid could lead to the continuation of the countries' unfair relations, by perpetuating the hierarchical relations embedded in the system. There is no way to respond to these concerns within the framework of the SDGs. For this reason, it is hoped that these discussions, especially in the field of international political economy, will shape future sustainable development models.

The Effects of the COVID-19 on the SDGs

After the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020, governments started to taking measures to combat it. In this context, borders were closed, people's mobility was restricted, schools were closed, most companies switched to remote-working models, and restaurants, theaters, cinemas, and shopping malls were closed. Everyone, except those working in essential services, was asked to stay at home. Curfews were imposed around the world, although they varied from country to country. Of course, the effects of such measures on the economy were immediately felt, businesses began to close, and unemployment figures rose.

It is expected that the pandemic will cause the number of people living below the poverty line of \$1.9 per day to

increase by more than 80 million and the number of people earning below the \$3.2 per day line to increase by more than 130 million.¹⁴ Thus, the pandemic will place many into poverty, especially in the world's poorest regions and erases the gains made in *SDG 1: No Poverty* and *SDG 2: Zero Hunger*. Before the pandemic, it seemed that progress was made within these two objectives. Although the negative effects of this progress on the SDG 11-15, which are especially related to the environment, are criticized,¹⁵ it is expected that all SDGs will regress with the pandemic. According to the 2020 Sustainable Development Report, a certain level of progress was achieved before COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. However, progress in reaching the SDGs has been made mostly in East and South Asian countries.¹⁶

According to the OECD, COVID-19 especially affected developing countries negatively. The necessity to use financial resources for urgent needs that emerged during the pandemic depleted the financial resources allocated to the SDGs. As economic activities are constrained, resource mobilization will suffer. Thus, developing economies that are already struggling will attempt to find alternative financial resources for social and economic interventions.¹⁷ With the announcement of the

pandemic, the International Labor Organization announced that 81% of the world workforce was affected as of April 2020 as a result of full or partial restrictions. Besides, the world economy is expected to shrink by 3% in the most optimistic forecast and 10% in the most pessimistic forecast.¹⁸ Following these most optimistic and most pessimistic projections, the World Bank predicted that 40 to 60 million people would be pushed into extreme poverty due to COVID-19. On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank predicted that 158 million to 242 million people would lose their jobs.¹⁹ The pandemic also produced uncertainty and prevented individuals, societies, and states from making long-term projections. States distanced themselves from international cooperation. The isolation of states has consolidated power asymmetries and deepened the gap between the rich and the poor.²⁰

Considering the economic impacts of COVID-19 accompanied by the structural problems of development models, it has now become more challenging to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. It is noted that the political will required for the development of policies compatible with the SDGs has weakened. Given the supply chain problems due to pandemic, the reflex of

¹⁴ Andy Sumner et al, "Estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty", *WIDER Working Paper* 43, 2020 p.5.

¹⁵ Edward B. Barbier ve Joanne C. Burgess, "Sustainable development goal indicators: Analyzing trade-offs and complementarities", *World Development*, Vol 122, 2019 p. 295-305.

¹⁶ Guillaume Lafortune et al, "The SDGs, COVID-19 and the Global South: Insights from the Sustainable Development Report 2020", 16 July 2020, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/07/sdgs-covid-19-global-south-insights-sustainable-development-report-2020/> (Access date 2 November 2020).

¹⁷ *OECD The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis on development finance*, 24 June 2020, [http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-](http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-on-development-finance-9de00b3b/)

[of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-on-development-finance-9de00b3b/](http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-on-development-finance-9de00b3b/) (Access date 2 November 2020).

¹⁸ Necati Çıtak, "COVID-19 ve Sınıfsal Eşitsizlik", *TTB COVID-19 Pandemisi Altıncı Ay Değerlendirme Raporu*, https://www.ttb.org.tr/kutuphane/covid19-rapor_6/covid19-rapor_6_Part56.pdf (Access date 2 November 2020).

¹⁹ Manuar Mukarram, "Impact of COVID-19 on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol 44, No 3, p.254.

²⁰ Francisco Santos-Carrillo et al, "Rethinking the Governance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the COVID-19 Era", *Sustainability*, Vol 12, No 18, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/18/7680> (Access date 2 November 2020).

protecting domestic markets may increase export controls, making it more challenging to reach the SDGs.²¹

It is projected that the pandemic's economic effects may also have adverse effects on other specific SDGs, such as *SDG 4: Quality Education*. As a result of schools' prolonged closure, existing inequalities are expected to worsen, which will profoundly affect future generations. According to UNICEF, more than 460 million students do not have access to distance education.²² Students who do not have a regular and stable Internet connection and the necessary technological infrastructure and devices no longer have access to education. The closure of schools also prevents children from accessing regular food. According to the World Food Program, 265 million children worldwide cannot access a certain part of their daily meals.²³ According to a projection, 200 million children will be out of education by 2030. Thus, the targets of SDG4 also are likely to be missed.

Considering the unemployment caused by the economic recession, together with the increase in the number of children who do not attend school, child labor is expected to increase. According to the International Labor Organization, an increase in child labor has been observed for the first time since 2000.²⁴ The increase in child labor is a socio-economic phenomenon that is observed in times of economic crises. Employers who

want to avoid paying taxes often prefer informal child labor. This situation leads to an increase in the informal economy and the state's inability to collect taxes. Thus, the allocation of money for social services will be curbed. If a social security system loses its social inclusion capacity, poverty will deepen and inequality between the social classes will increase. Within this vicious circle, it is not likely to achieve the targets of *SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth* by 2030.

Curfews and lockdowns due to COVID-19 have also raised concerns within the framework of SDG 5: Gender Equality. The fact that the workload of women increased with the moving of business life into the home, the responsibilities of the education of children mostly belong to the mothers with the closure of the schools and the increase of domestic violence,²⁵ which is already a big problem, showed that there are losses in this field. According to the studies of UN Women, there was a 25% increase worldwide in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ Studies by the UN Population Fund found that the pandemic significantly affected women and girls, increasing inequality. It is predicted that 1 out of every 5 girls aged 0-14 will be in extreme poverty, and 53% of the poor population aged 55 and

²¹ *The consequences of COVID-19: reduced chances of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?* IISS Research Papers 30 September 2020 <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/research-paper/2020/09/covid-19-reduced-chances-of-achieving-sdgs> (Access date 2 November 2020).

²² *COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?*, UNICEF, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/remote-learning-reachability-factsheet/> (Access date 2 November 2020).

²³ *Global Monitoring of School Meals During COVID-19 School Closures*, WFP, <https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/index.html> (Access date 2 November 2020).

²⁴ Necati Çıtak, *ibid*.

²⁵ Marko Hakovirta ve Navodya Denuwara, "How COVID-19 Redefines the Concept of Sustainability", *Sustainability*, Vol 12, No 9, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/9/3727> (Access date 2 November 2020).

²⁶ *Explainer How COVID-19 Impacts Women and Girls*, UN Women, <https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html> (Access date 2 November 2020).

over will be women.²⁷ With the closure of schools, UNESCO estimates that 89% of students (including universities) worldwide were dismissed from school.²⁸ If this process continues, it is easy to predict that marrying girls who cannot attend school, being exposed to domestic violence, and undertaking domestic care services will multiply exponentially.

According to UN data, 70% of those working in the field of healthcare are women.²⁹ Therefore, when we talk about the problems experienced by those who fight against the pandemic on the front lines, it is crucial to emphasize women's extra burden. In some countries, temporary accommodation was provided for healthcare workers to prevent the risk of carrying the virus to their homes. However, the majority of female healthcare workers did not enjoy this opportunity, since they were the primary caretakers of their homes, and it became complicated for them to balance home and work life.³⁰

As most of the funds allocated to healthcare have been directed to fight the pandemic, restrictions were imposed on funds allocated for family planning and reproductive health. Thus, women benefited less from health services worldwide. According to the UN Population Fund projections, it is estimated that over 47 million women in 144 countries will get pregnant

unintentionally because they cannot access reproductive health services. This will result in an increase in population and exacerbate economic and ecological problems.³¹

From the beginning of the pandemic, discussions about protecting the planet, prohibiting the trade of wild and exotic animals, placing greater importance and attention to distributing renewable energy sources were prioritized as necessary steps for environmental protection under *SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*, *SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*, *SDG 13: Climate Action*, *SDG 14: Life below Water*, and *SDG 15: Life on Land*. In the first months of the pandemic, especially when economic activities were paused, we observed a reduction in air and water pollution. The silence due to curfews allowed us to hear birds in the mornings, even in big metropolises. We enjoyed a cleaner sky and environment. In particular, the difficulty of life restricted in small apartments reminded us how much we need green spaces within cities. In this context, a new imagination of public spaces at both the local and national levels have emerged following *SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*. Although the efficient use of land is one of the keys to sustainable land use, in 59% of all cities, the amount of space consumed for each new house has been increasing.³² With COVID-

²⁷ Meltem Ağduk, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020 <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

²⁸ *Covid-19 school closures around the world will hit girls hardest*, UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-school-closures-around-world-will-hit-girls-hardest> (Access date 2 November 2020).

²⁹ Mathieu Boniol et al, "Gender equity in the health workforce: Analysis of 104 countries", *Health Workforce Working Paper 1*, 2019 <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf> (Access date 2 November 2020).

³⁰ Aslı E. Mert, "COVID-19 Salgını Sürecinde Farklı Yönleriyle Kadınların Durumu", *KOÇKAM Blog*, 30 Mart 2020, <https://kockam.ku.edu.tr/covid-19-salgini-surecinde-farkli-yonleriyle-kadinlarin-durumu-asli-e-mert/> (Access date 2 November 2020).

³¹ Meltem Ağduk, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020 <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

³² Gül Sayan Atanur, "COVID 19 ve Neden Evinizin Yanındaki Bahçeye İhtiyacınız Var?", *Türkiye Sağlıklı Kentler Birliği*, <http://www.skb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19-ve-Neden-Evinizin-Yanindaki-Bahceye-Ihtiyaciniz-Var-Doc.-Dr.Gul-Sayan-Atanur.pdf> (Access date 2 November 2020).

19, it has become clear that we need to rethink the quality and quantity of urban housing.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, greenhouse gas emission levels have decreased by 8,8%.³³ The main factor behind this decrease is pandemic-related restrictions on transportation activities. This decrease has also had a significant impact on energy markets. Global energy demand decreased by 3,8% in the first quarter of 2020.³⁴ It is expected that greenhouse gas emissions will decrease by 5% by the end of 2020.³⁵ After the pandemic, optimists expect a decrease in the demand for fossil fuels in favor of environment-friendly energy resources, accelerating a global level of low-carbon energy transformation. However, we have already observed that our old habits have returned with the easing of restrictions. On the other hand, critics of renewable energy sources note the environmental damage caused by the mining activities required for wind turbines or the production of batteries for solar panels.³⁶ According to IPSOS MORI, public opinion is optimistic about implementing policies to prevent climate change worldwide.³⁷ However, during the pandemic, states have focused on their health and economic crises rather than environmental issues. The declines that we have observed in greenhouse gas emissions also began to rise again as soon as economic activities accelerated. This

shows us that economic priorities are still more important than environmental priorities.

Finally, the pandemic also negatively affected the SDGs that include concepts of social sustainability such as inclusiveness and democratic governance (See *SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities* and *SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*). Facing a serious threat to their health and wellbeing, people expect effective and efficient policies from their governments. Particularly in developing countries, access to health services has become more difficult with the pandemic. Thus, the gap between the rich and poor in terms of accessing healthcare services has become more visible, and the targets in the scope of *SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being* have been significantly undermined. During the pandemic, societies and individuals have come to expect to quickly and effectively ensure the delivery of social assistance and services, but this expectation paves the way for the normalization of anti-democratic practices rather than consensus and negotiation. The rise of populist discourses and anti-democratic practices reveal that autocratic tendencies have strengthened during the pandemic.

Steps for a Sustainable Future

To reach the SDGs, especially in the transition to a green economy, we need to consider alternative financial

³³ A. Cem Gündoğan, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020 <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

³⁴ Hal Brands ve Francis J. Gavin, *COVID-19 and World Order*, John Hopkins University Press, 2020, p. 137.

³⁵ *World Energy Outlook 2020*, <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-outlook-2020/overview-and-key-findings#abstract> (Access date 2 November 2020).

³⁶ Tilak Doshi, "Post-Covid-19 'Sustainable Development' Means Little In Precision or Practice", *Forbes*, 28 August 2020,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tilakdoshi/2020/08/28/post-covid-19-sustainable-development-means-little-in-precision-or-practice/?sh=98e0e4c487b6> (Access date 2 November 2020).

³⁷ Walter Leal Filho et al, "COVID-19 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Threat to Solidarity or an Opportunity?", *Sustainability*, Vol 12, No 13, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/13/5343> (Access date 2 November 2020).

models such as environmental taxes, subsidies applied in the energy sector, and other related financial reforms. However, the pandemic has prompted some to suggest that the SDGs be reviewed³⁸, as financial resources were directed to pandemic-related support programs at the expense of funding the transition to a green economy. Due to this disconnect, many economies will move away from the SDGs. On the other hand, others consider COVID-19 an opportunity and oppose the revision of the SDGs.³⁹

Among those who view the pandemic as an opportunity, Ottersen and Engebretsen recommend new approaches to thinking about the global governance system, namely to rebuild the system to protect future generations against wars and pandemics. In this framework, organizations such as the WHO should be strengthened, and the SDGs' spirit should improve universal health policies.

Agenda 2030 is based on non-binding guiding principles. The pandemic shows us that in times of crisis, states can easily ignore such principles. It is thus clear that we need principles that reinforce multilateralism. However, of course, those who should accept multilateralism also prefer unilateral actions during the pandemic. Thus, it is a complicated task, to say the least, for international organizations to reinforce multilateralism.

A quick reading of the literature on the nexus between COVID-19 and sustainability highlights the primacy of creating more resilient and more robust societies. Thus,

extra attention should be given to global solidarity, shared responsibility, and more inclusive policies towards societies' vulnerable sections.⁴⁰ It is also agreed that there is a need for a multi speed institutionalized structures that are integrated with civil society at national and international levels.⁴¹

Besides creating environment-friendly economies, another vital factor in achieving the SDGs is to increase green employment opportunities, which will help governments to reduce poverty and achieve the targets under *SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth* and *SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure*. In this framework, it is recommended to develop a production system that preserves the ecological base necessary for development and an economic system that can provide sustainable surplus and technical knowledge.⁴² During the pandemic, digital technologies have gained prominence and become an inseparable part of business life. The digital economy should be considered within the framework of SDGs 8 and 9, in line with the employment opportunities generated by uninterrupted audio and video broadcasting over the Internet, videoconferences, and e-commerce. It is expected that developments in these areas will continue after the pandemic.

In order to improve global cooperation and get closer to the SDGs, the 2020 Sustainable Development Report recommended greater visibility of exemplary practices, strengthening financial mechanisms for developing countries, paying particular attention to hunger and

³⁸ Robin Nadioo ve Brendan Fisher, "Reset Sustainable Development Goals for a pandemic World", *Nature*, Vol 583, 2020, p. 198-201 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01999-x> (Access date 2 November 2020).

³⁹ Ole P. Ottersen ve Eivind Engebretsen, "COVID-19 puts the Sustainable Development Goals center stage", *Nature Medicine*,

9 October 2020 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-1094-y> (Access date 2 November 2020).

⁴⁰ Manuar Mukarram, "ibid. p.257.

⁴¹ Francisco Santos-Carrillo et al, ibid.

⁴² Muhammed Yunus Bilgili, ibid. p. 562.

poverty, ensuring social inclusiveness, and supporting the development of new drugs and vaccines.⁴³ These recommendations again underscores that healthcare is a crucial component of the SDGs, along with the economy, environment, and society. As stated by Demiralp, it is impossible to achieve economic development when the health problem is not under control.⁴⁴

Another suggestion offered for the success of the SDGs is to move towards cost-effective policies that increase economic activities, create employment, reduce poverty, protect the environment and bring outcomes in the field of health in order to create synergy between the SDGs. Barbier and Burgess provide 3 examples of such synergetic policies; granting incentives to move from fossil fuels to clean energy investments, developing countries using incentive swaps for clean water and sanitation investments and introducing a tropical carbon tax.⁴⁵ It is also underlined that the green elements in states' incentive packages are insufficient within the scope of combating the pandemic. It is crucial, therefore, to design incentive packages that include green elements but are tailored to the unique conditions of each state.⁴⁶

One of the goals emphasized by COVID-19, and closely related to *SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being*, was *SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*. Economically disadvantaged individuals live in overcrowded residences and neighborhoods, which are more prone to spreading

the virus. The scarcity of green areas, the high population density, and the limited access to healthcare systems have revealed the depth of the inequalities between the classes. Creating sustainable cities at the local and national levels is crucial. In this context, *SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities* contains the following targets: ensuring access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and essential services; strengthening capacity for improving slums; and planning and managing participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlements, especially for disadvantaged groups. To ensure universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible green spaces and public spaces, new cooperation mechanisms are included in the agendas of international organizations. Furthermore, it is essential to use existing cooperation mechanisms between municipalities, states, and international organizations at local, national, and international levels effectively and to ensure financial mobilization. As Algan underlines, it is necessary to consider cities as ecosystems and implement policies to protect urban biological diversity.⁴⁷ Such mechanisms require active governance models that account for the interplay between local and international levels. Considering that today's political tendencies are towards populist and anti-democratic governance models, it is very important to take steps in this field in order for the SDGs to be successful, although these

⁴³ Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Woelm, F. 2020. *The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁴ Selva Demiralp, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020 <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

⁴⁵ Edward B. Barbier ve Joanne C. Burgess, "Sustainability and development after COVID 19" , *World Development*, Vol 135,

2020 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20302084?via%3Dihub> (Access date 2 November 2020).

⁴⁶ A. Cem Gündoğan, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020 <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

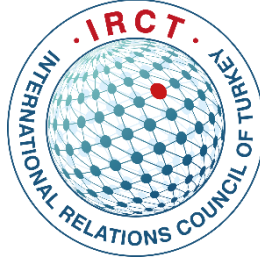
⁴⁷ Nesrin Algan, Global Academy Talks, 15 October 2020, <http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/>.

mechanisms are considered difficult to function and accept.

Lastly, for full-fledged sustainable development, the concept of social sustainability should be integrated into economic, financial, and ecological principles. Social sustainability ensures equality, diversity, and democratic governance principles and increases societies' resilience against external shocks. For this reason, cooperation with civil society at local, national, and international levels and participatory governance practices are crucial for transforming human behavior on a global scale.



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