

## Open eLetter on Sustainable Development Goals, Research and Higher Education

**To:** Division for Sustainable Development  
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**Object:** Proposed revision of two Sustainable Development Goals (Goals 4 and 9) and their targets

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### Introduction

We the undersigned signatories of this letter are convinced that open scientific practices are essential to sustainable development and to the contribution that higher education and research institutions in developing countries could bring to it, especially regarding social and technological innovation.

After carefully reading the list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals proposed in the [Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#), we propose to revise 2 Goals in order to mention more explicitly the role of open scientific practices and access to knowledge : Goal 4 and Goal 9.

This proposed revision is based on the 16.10 target about public access to information. It proposes to explicitly extend it to the areas of education, research and social and technological innovation. Better access to scientific knowledge improves the quality of university education, primary and secondary education. It also fosters socially responsible research and innovation (social and technological). Digital technology makes this possible through web open access to scientific resources (publications and data). Two conditions are essential for countries to

develop their research capacity and put their scientific production in open access: 1) access to the Internet for everyone all over the world, together with a basic training in digital technology and culture and 2) strengthening the funding of public universities. We also want to emphasize the importance of open access to science for non-profit organizations and persons without scientific training.

Our proposal is based on a set of documents that clearly show the United Nations Member States' commitment to support scientific research and higher education institutions that contribute to sustainable development, in particular by encouraging openness and accessibility of scientific knowledge through digital technology.

These documents remind us that:

- The collective right to “freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” is mentioned in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948, article 27 -1) and has been restated in the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (1976, article 15);
- Action 35-1 of UN [Agenda 21](#) (1992) about *Science for Sustainable Development* states that it is “essential to enhance scientific understanding, improve long-term scientific assessments, strengthen scientific capacities in all countries and ensure that the sciences are responsive to emerging needs”;
- UNESCO formally committed itself to open access to scientific information for the benefit of socio-economic development on a global scale and for knowledge societies in its reports [Towards Knowledge Societies. A UNESCO World Report](#) (2005) and [Towards Knowledge Societies for Peace and Sustainable Development](#) (2013);
- Article 28 of the [Declaration of Principles Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium](#) states that “We strive to promote universal access with equal opportunities for all to scientific knowledge and the creation and dissemination of scientific and technical information, including open access initiatives for scientific publishing” (2005);
- The [Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development](#) “call on Member States of the United Nations to acknowledge that access to information, and the skills to use it effectively, are required for sustainable development, and ensure that this is recognised in the post-2015 development agenda” (2014);
- The thematic report to the UN Human Rights Council on [Copyright policy and the right](#)

[\*to science and culture\*](#) presented by the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights at the 28th session of the Human Rights Council states the collective right to science without any legal or financial barriers : “113. Public and private universities and public research agencies should adopt policies to promote open access to published research, materials and data on an open and equitable basis, especially through the adoption of Creative Commons licences”.

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Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, **notably through open educational resources and open access to scientific and technical information**

- 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
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- 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, **using new technologies and open educational resources [especially in technologically least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries]**
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- 4.4 By 2030, increase by [x] per cent the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical, **digital** and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
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- 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education, ensure equal access for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations, **and eliminate all forms of discrimination at all levels of education and vocational training**
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- 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and at least[x] per cent of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy, **develop their capacity for analysis, synthesis and understanding of the world in which they live, and acquire basic digital literacy**
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- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for

sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non- violence, **recognition of local knowledge**, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

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- **4.8 By 2030, all researchers and students put their scientific output in open access so that it can improve the quality of primary and secondary education, vocational training and higher education**
- **4.9 By 2030, significantly increase support for public universities and their technical, digital and library infrastructure, particularly in the least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries**
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- 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
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- 4.b By 2020, expand by [x] per cent globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- 4.c By 2030, increase by [x] per cent the supply of qualified teachers, including through **responsible** international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

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Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and **foster socially responsible technological and social innovation and research capacity with affordable access to the Internet for all**

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- 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable, **socially responsible** and equitable access for all
- 9.2 Promote inclusive, **socially responsible** and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries
- 9.3 Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in

developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets

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- 9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, **socially responsible** with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities
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- 9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging **technological and social** innovation and increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people by [x] per cent and public and private research and development spending
- **9.6 Improve access to science for non profit organizations and people without scientific training in order to increase the quality of public debate about innovation and its social acceptability, including in the least developed countries**
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- **9.7 Increase access of non-profit organizations to the Internet and to training in digital technology, in order to increase their capacity for social innovation and their efficiency**
- 9.a Facilitate sustainable, **socially responsible** and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
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- 9.b Support domestic technology development, research and **social and technological** innovation in developing countries **by reinforcing the financing of higher education institutions and open access to scientific resources**, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities
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- 9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

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