

Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: Sustainable Development Goals in the UK, HC 596

Wednesday 23 November 2016

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Members present: Mary Creagh (Chair); Peter Aldous; Peter Heaton-Jones; Kerry McCarthy; Dr Matthew Offord.

Questions 61 - 116

Witnesses

I: Steve Waygood, Chief Responsible Investment Officer, Aviva, Geoff Lane, Senior Partner, UK Sustainability and Climate Change Team, PwC, and Dr Christine Chow, Associate Director, Hermes Investment Management.

II: Dominic White, Head of International Development Policy, WWF, Stefano D'Errico, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Manager, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and Nienke Palstra, Policy and Advocacy Adviser, UNICEF UK.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Aviva](#)
- [WWF](#)
- [IIED](#)
- [UNICEF UK](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Steve Waygood, Geoff Lane and Dr Christine Chow.

Q61 **Chair:** I would like to welcome our panel: Dr Christine Chow, Associate Director at Hermes Investment Management; Geoff Lane, Senior Partner at PwC for Sustainability and Climate Change; and Dr Steve Waygood, Chief Responsible Investment Officer at Aviva. Thank you all very much indeed for coming to talk to us today about this very transformational agenda for sustainable development goals; particularly Dr Waygood, I am sure Aviva is very busy at the moment dealing with the impact of Storm Angus, so thank you for taking the time.

I am not going to ask you why businesses should do that because I think everybody in the room understands why businesses should contribute to this agenda, but I would like you to set out what you think businesses' responsibility towards this agenda is and what you think the role of business is. What can you do that Governments and civil society cannot do? Who would like to start?

Steve Waygood: Happy to, thank you, Chair. I think businesses have moral duties and I think there is a moral duty to future generations encapsulated within the sustainable development goals. That is at the heart of sustainable development. But, of course, we are commercial entities and so from a business-case perspective, what the business case associated with sustainable development goals looks like is crucial.

Now, they would not exist as goals if the markets were functioning properly. I think the SDGs represent 17 market failures. The role of business could be therefore—with Government support, with better-defined markets, with rule of law more clearly specified, with other incentives set out—to help deliver, close gaps and provide solutions, particularly in areas like health care, education, climate-friendly energy solutions. So, there is money to be made with market development. They would not exist as problems if the markets were not failing; it is a self-evident fact.

In addition to the moral case and the business case, there is also a franchise risk associated with if you get things badly wrong—for example, human rights or poor labour standards—how do you remedy that situation. From a corporate responsibility perspective I think it is incumbent on companies to think about how they impact on the goals, not just how the goals impact on their cash flows.

So, how do they become relevant to the goals? PwC does a lot of work in this space. How should companies consider what they, at their best, could do to help support the delivery of the goals? That is the kind of franchise-risk argument.

Then the fourth—and this is perhaps the most obvious and the most simple, but it would be wrong to overlook it—the role of philanthropy.



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Businesses in giving away some of their profits to society can help support the SDGs.

There are other specific areas that you could look to claim capital from; for example, the orphaned assets that sit in the financial services sector, if they helped to finance big society capital. There are other orphaned assets beyond banks that exist in insurance companies, financial institutions elsewhere, globally, and I would be very keen to see a global discussion about what I think is tens of billions that could be harnessed to help support the SDGs.

There is also the role of dividends. If dividends are unclaimed, does that provide a new source of capital, potentially for philanthropy associated with the SDGs? I have seen very little exploration of that.

At a very high level that is the sort of fourfold framework that I would propose and I am very happy to go into details about any of those elements.

Geoff Lane: Building on Steve's comments, I think many leading businesses these days are talking about purpose and trust. They want to be trusted by their customers, by their employees, by their investors, by the key stakeholders, by the communities in which they operate. They are getting clearer that they want to be seen to have a positive purpose in life, whether that is at a brand level or at a company level. Those two things increase the obligation on businesses to take account of their impact on society and therefore to take account of the sustainable development goals, so therefore a key responsibility to deliver the goals. How they do that depends on the nature of the business, their sector and the countries they operate in, but they obviously have an obligation to comply.

I believe that they have an obligation also to use resources—natural, human and other resources—efficiently and effectively on behalf of all their stakeholders, but for many businesses, or, I believe, for leading businesses, they also have an obligation to leverage the assets they have at their disposal. By that I mean brands, their customer base, their suppliers, their supply chain, other things that perhaps companies have not historically thought about in the context of delivering the SDGs. Right at the top of all of that, I believe they have an obligation to leverage their business model and the core fundamentals of their business to create more positive impact in the world and less negative impact. Even for companies that we would probably all agree on as leaders, you could probably put some sort of matrix up that says, "This area of their business is creating positive impact; there are parts of those business, stranded assets, call them otherwise, which are, at the moment anyway, generating negative impact in the round".

So, I have a similar sort of progression to Steve, from compliance through to that leadership obligation.



Dr Chow: If I may add to that? If we look at roles of businesses, the fundamental role generally as we understood it, is to deliver goods and services that are required by society, for the customers. But I think that if you go beyond that, this is when we have been talking about the stakeholder system, or the ecosystem of a business, which is part of the licence to operate. How sustainable and long-term oriented a business is depends on how well they have engaged with all those stakeholders. The integrated reporting framework that we have been looking into for some time is one that has been advocating that thinking, in the sense that when we look at capital we should not look at capital for businesses from only just the financial capital perspective but other types of capital that we have overlooked, such as social capital and environmental capital. I think what is missing—we have not been leveraging enough—in that framework is we have not made it into a sustainable cycle. So, if you look at the integrated reporting framework you have very different capitals that go through the business system and then you have the output of that. But if we look at it from the perspective of SDGs, all these outputs can be leveraged and understood. For example, if I provide more innovative training for underprivileged youth I will be able to create a better understanding of a different potential customer segment that I do not understand. How are these businesses leveraging this new understanding and new intellectual capital in their business models? This is not clear at the moment and I think there is a lot of potential to be able to harness there, if we bring that to their attention.

This is what I do generally when I do engagement with businesses. For example, I head up the human rights and labour practices theme in the Hermes engagement team. I align some of the SDG goals that we have identified and map them with corporate goals and highlight it to them and say to businesses, “You have a responsibility; you also have an opportunity”. It is the goal alignment that is going to make that commitment to SDGs much stronger because it ties in the organisation, the businesses, to the SDGs a lot tighter.

Q62 Chair: It sounds to me that it is almost like permission to operate—“licence to operate” were the words you used—and it is almost like we are going back to the honourable companies and the notion of the honourable trader; the worshipful company: they were worthy of worship because their word was their bond and your handshake was your contract. But how do we stop the companies using philanthropy just as a way of selling indulgence?

So, fine for BP to have the Deepwater Horizon disaster but they have built some basketball courts somewhere else. I don’t know whether they have built basketball courts, but what I am saying, that is an environmental and social catastrophe on every possible level. BP has had a corporate Green Action plan—and I am using BP as an extreme example but there are lots and lots of other corporate examples—and then they say, “By the way, we sponsor this artistic exhibition or this community sports facility”. That is just selling indulgences, isn’t it? How



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are you going to inoculate and educate the business community against that type of almost transactional philanthropy, which is more about opportunities to go to social events and be seen to be at charity galas and dinners than it is about the transformational work that you have all said you think business can achieve? Can you see why the NGO sector might be a little bit sceptical?

Steve Waygood: You are right. They would be absolutely right to be sceptical. There are two answers.

The first is that DfID and others have already been supporting the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, which has set out to convince businesses around the world—so, business to business—convince other chief executives around the world of the business case, of the opportunity, if you like, to embed the sustainable development goals in their corporate strategy. So, philanthropy was only one of the four. If you recall, I was also talking about opportunities. So the Business and Sustainable Development Commission will be reporting just before Davos in January. I have seen early drafts of the final report and it makes a very strong commercial case for companies around the world embedding the SDGs.

Now, what about if they don't? What kind of coercion could we, as civil society, we as investors, others, citizens—how do you create visibility of corporate practice? Something we have been promoting—and DfID has expressed significant interest in it, so has Ban Ki-moon, so has the UN Foundation, so have various departments that we have spoken to at European Commission—we think that the time has come to take the data that companies publish, sustainability reporting, and turn it into a public good. How many of us can genuinely claim to have read a good number of the sustainability reports that companies produce? Yet they are aimed at us all. They are particularly aimed at the people in this room. Now, why haven't we read them? Because it takes time and also sector-related expertise to be able to compare companies in a particular sector.

Now, I know that can be done. I buy analysis. We, as Aviva investors, spend nearly £1 million a year getting analysis that exists already, ranking companies on human rights, labour standards, climate change, and so on. There are Vigeo Eiris, Sustainalytics and so on; there are institutions that have evolved in recent times, mostly over the last decade, although not all of them, to sell that data. The problem is, you will not see it unless you pay for it. In your case, they will probably make an exception but most people—

Chair: I wouldn't bet on that.

Steve Waygood: They would be silly not to.

Chair: *The Sunday Times* doesn't.

Steve Waygood: They really should. But what that means is the rankings, which I think have public-good characteristics, are privately



sold. Some of that information could be turned into a corporate race to the top. If we were to take the SDGs, all the listed companies, map them on to each other, and then, sector by sector, issue by issue, produce these corporate league tables—it is not a trivial task—to build the criteria in an open-source way, with the best expertise of NGOs, policymakers, academia, and others, and companies, and investors, will take time, but it can be done. I have seen it done in the area of medicine, the Access to Medicine Index; nutrition, the Access to Nutrition Index; and we are just building one in corporate human rights, the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, with support from the UK and the Dutch Governments. It would take time and effort and money but I am very pleased that we already have the support of, for example Ban Ki-moon, David Nabarro, and others at the UN, for this idea. What it will now take is the next phase, and we are hopeful the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, where my chief executive is a commissioner, will be allowed to bring this idea to the fore and with the support of the UK Government give it greater shape over the ensuing eight months so that we can launch something spectacularly in September at the General Assembly.

Geoff Lane: To add to that, an area where PwC, as I think others would say, have been playing a leading role is around this area of impact measurement and management. Building again on Steve's comments, until stakeholders, including internal employees and external stakeholders, are able to compare and contrast companies within a sector and say, how is it that this company, X, is reporting on these impacts and is being open and transparent about their impact on natural capital, social capital, economic impacts and tax impacts—a subject close to our hearts, of course—if one organisation is able to disclose and report on those things, and another company operating in the same or similar sector is not disclosing on those things, then that raises some questions. I think a really interesting and leading example of that, I am optimistic, is going to be the work of the FSB taskforce on climate-related financial disclosure, one very important subset of the SDGs—

Chair: Can you say that again, slowly?

Geoff Lane: The Financial Stability Board, a taskforce on climate-related financial disclosure, is reporting pretty soon and their report will go out to consultation early in the new year. If I am not being too overly optimistic, that will create a framework that will require all leading international companies to disclose their response to climate change. You can imagine oil company A may say, "We believe in a 2-degree scenario" or, "We believe in a 4-degree scenario" or, "We believe in somewhere in the middle". A similar company in the same sector may say, "We don't believe in any of those things; we have a different approach". At least that will enable investors then to compare and contrast and understand what risks they are taking on and other stakeholders, as well, in terms of making decisions about their views of that company. Climate, I think, is driving the comparability agenda but we are going to see it on a whole range of other things, including the social agenda. That impact



measurement and management leading into the integrated reporting space, is the way in which you are going to get that window-dressing issue that you mentioned earlier addressed.

Dr Chow: Talking to companies about the difference between CSR and how to integrate SDGs into the business model has always been a challenge but I think that has been changing quite rapidly in the last at least three years. In order to encourage that transition, besides highlighting the different reporting framework that we can do, at the same time I try to also give case studies. Businesses find that if there is a best practice case study it is easier to visualise what might be the paths and the milestones they need to achieve in order to do that.

If I may take a little bit of time just to give two very simple examples? One, a health care insurance company had a CSR initiative to combine a health programme with the health insurance; initially it was a CSR initiative but eventually they found that it was so beneficial to the business that it allowed it to collect better data on individuals, the customers, to be able to grow that programme. It allows better pricing of the product and better access to finance products and access to health. In a way that is encouraging a more integrated way with the SDG.

Another way we engage with companies is also to encourage them to understand the business ecosystems. For example, say, the UK manufacturing brands; we have been talking a lot about the Modern Slavery Act and the importance of monitoring the supply chain, which brings a UK perspective to the world and brings it back to us. Some of the suppliers found that the biggest problem that causes human rights issues in these emerging markets and manufacturing, is the spiralling debt, even for the highest paid factory workers. I understand that some of these suppliers have approached banks to set up corporate umbrella-type accounts and from the banks' perspective on access to finance, it is a better way to provide access to finance and access to customers because they know that if it is a good corporate they will be able to provide salary cashflow on time and it is a beneficial business ecosystem that benefits suppliers and benefits the banks. The challenge of one business might be the opportunities of another.

Q63 **Chair:** Okay. You could also argue they could pay their workers more and then they might not fall into debt. That is another—the arguments around—

Dr Chow: I think there was a bit of a legacy issue as well, because debt could spiral from whatever has happened before.

Q64 **Chair:** Historic. Okay, got it.

Now, there is a real alphabet soup around all these reporting things and we are all innocents in this. We need very slow handholding. There is a Global Compact. Is that the initiative that you were talking about, the UN's global compact?



Steve Waygood: It isn't, although—

Q65 **Chair:** It is a different thing, okay. In our briefing there have been 9,000 companies that signed up to that and 3,500 delisted for failing to report, so it does not sound like that is going too well.

Steve Waygood: Indeed.

Chair: So what was the initiative that you were mentioning?

Steve Waygood: The benchmarking idea, we have a working title, and it is only that, of World Benchmarking Group. The problem with that is, of course, World Bank Group, so we can't use that. Anyway, the idea is that we would take the data that the alphabetti spaghetti you referred to makes companies disclose, encourages them to disclose. We do not really worry about the GRIs and the SAS BIs and all the rest of it; we worry about what the companies are reporting and how they are performing. We then rank them on the basis of how well they report, how well we govern these issues and how well they are performing. We would embed the World Benchmarking Group—working title—within the UN Foundation to begin with. That is the idea. We are in conversation with them. They have not finally approved that but we are talking to the deputy chief executive and have had a number of very positive conversations with them. Then we would work with the Business and Sustainable Development Commission to create this new initiative.

Q66 **Chair:** Where does the Business and Sustainable Development Commission live?

Steve Waygood: Their fiduciary is the UN Foundation. One of their major funders is DfID and it is doing extremely well with DfID support.

Q67 **Chair:** How does that map across to EU reporting regulation requirements? How could EU regulation requirements be used and built on? Or are they totally separate and not usable?

Steve Waygood: They are not separate at all. The Non-Financial Reporting Directive, which comes into effect early next year, I was on the expert group for that, and it encourages companies to disclose essentially most of the SDG issues. So, human rights—

Q68 **Chair:** That is incredibly helpful, because it is a law that is going to force large companies to do what you wanted them to do anyway.

Steve Waygood: The top 6,000 companies across Europe will be encouraged to do it and, as you say, it is a directive. What it does not do is provide the analysis and the comparative performance easily and quickly.

Q69 **Chair:** Is that not open data? Will that not be open source, given that the EU is requiring it?



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Steve Waygood: It exactly is. So, company by company by company, you will now see, probably, thousands more companies producing better data.

Chair: Excellent.

Steve Waygood: But it has not democratised data. You have flooded the market with lots of noise; how do you make it tractable? How do you allow citizens, civil society, to understand it quickly? League tables. In every other area where you have a complicated problem like this league benchmarks drive that race to the top. Any board of any real brand would be worried if they were at the bottom of a robust, credible benchmark.

We have spoken to Lise Kingo and Gavin Power, the top two people at the Global Compact and most of the other alphabet spaghetti, and they are in favour of what it is that we are setting out but we could not host this idea within the Global Compact because it will be controversial. With the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, we have already experienced pushback from one or two countries to the other countries that are funding us, particularly because they expect that, for example, the gas and oil companies in their jurisdictions to not do so well in the rankings. If we were to embed it in the UN, for example in the Global Compact, it would be exposed to too much political pressure. I think this needs to be a market-based response, with support from leading Governments.

Q70 **Chair:** On SMEs, this European reporting standard: I have just come from Berlin, where I have been discussing this with the Germans, who are perhaps a little bit further ahead than we are on some of these reporting things. They say that in Germany for the European reporting requirements there is just a website and small companies can access those reporting requirements. Is there anywhere in the UK where UK small businesses could access those reporting requirements, because then that would cascade all that good behaviour and help large companies with their audit requirements down the supply chain, wouldn't it?

Steve Waygood: Small companies can access the directive and the requirements and they can then choose whether or not they wish to use that as a framework to report. The vast majority of the directive is aimed at larger, not just listed but particularly listed, companies. Germany in the progress of that directive fought hard against it applying to SMEs because of the nature of their economy. They argued that it would be an unnecessary burden. They allowed them to opt in, if they wished to, and then provided a mechanism to enable that, rather than requiring them to disclose.

Q71 **Chair:** Okay. That is the same for us in the UK?

Steve Waygood: Indeed.

Q72 **Chair:** I want to come back to you, Mr Lane, on this, because you have developed a framework-mapping tool as well. How do you stop



companies picking and choosing, saying, "We will talk about the SDGs that we are good at and then we will gloss over the wages issue or the pollution issue"?

Geoff Lane: There isn't an easy way to do that, of course. We work with clients and ultimately it is their decision about what they choose to disclose and how far and how fast they want to embrace the SDG concept. It is their choice. Our job is to give them good advice. We will always advise them that a total impact approach is the best way to do it; that it has the most integrity. You cannot progress your level of sophistication, your level of maturity, against economic, social, environmental and tax reporting all at the same levels, so we also have another tool, a reporting-maturity tool, which helps organisations explain to their stakeholders how they are on a path, on a journey, towards developing reporting in different areas. In the financial area, it is well developed; broader economic reporting or natural capital, social capital, is less evolved.

Ultimately companies are using the tool we have developed in many different ways. Maybe just a word on that. It is being used to help inform strategy at the top of organisations. It is being used to help organisations think about the supply chain: sourcing particular commodities in particular countries; what are the SDG priorities in those countries; what could they be doing about it through their direct sourcing; really interestingly, what are the partnerships that they could put in place using DfID money, donor money, which may not be core business activity for them, but where they can leverage their asset, going back to the point I made earlier, their relationship with their suppliers, to bring other funders in on perhaps non-core activities but things that other people are going to finance. We have learned that going with a one-size-fits-all approach on the SDGs into companies does not work. You cannot pre-judge how it is going to work for them. They may be focused on particular countries, particular issues, particular parts of their business. The important message from us is that we want to get people started on this journey and trying to do the whole company in one go is pretty complicated. With that in mind we have just this week launched, or we will be launching, an app so that the tool that we have developed will be free to do that first level of analysis. You will be able to punch in the countries you operate in and it will give you, based on 200 data points, the SDG priorities in those countries and the reasons why they are priorities. So at least it gets people into the game.

Q73 **Chair:** Excellent. Okay. What is the app called?

Geoff Lane: It is the SDG Navigator app. We will send you details.

Q74 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Very interesting so far. I want to explore a little bit the extent to which you think business is aware of the SDGs, but not only aware at surface level but also have some understanding of what their impact might be. Mr Lane, you can probably guess where I am moving to now. PricewaterhouseCoopers did a survey of businesses,



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pretty much 1,000 businesses; 980-something.

Geoff Lane: Yes.

Peter Heaton-Jones: High headline rate of awareness of the SDGs, 90% or so, 92%, but a bit self-selecting. No one is going to reply to a survey by choice and say, "No, I have never heard of this".

When you dig down and you ask the next question, which is, "What is your role in this?" you are way down to about 13% that had any understanding. Looking at that figure, what we might say is the more worrying one, do you think that is fairly typical? Do you think that shows accurately the extent to which there is a lack of understanding among businesses?

Geoff Lane: I am involved in a number of collaborative organisations: the World Business Council for Sustainable Development has made the SDGs one of its priority workstreams, along with climate change; Business in the Community, in the UK. So hopefully I am in a reasonable place to see how the business community is responding. I also get the insight of working with companies, a privileged insider, going in and meeting senior executives and asking them their views on these things.

My overall analysis is probably a bit similar to yours. I think there are a lot of companies that recognise the SDGs but, honestly, they are probably the leading companies; we could compile a list of them and we would probably all agree who those companies are, both the international ones and the UK ones. Once you get outside those bigger companies, the international ones, it tails off very fast in terms of probably even awareness.

Q75 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** I agree that is probably the case, but my point, rather more, was even among those bigger international companies where there is headline awareness, when you start digging down, that really falls away, doesn't it?

Geoff Lane: I agree. I mentioned the tool we have developed. We are applying that with a number of organisations and ourselves; I can talk about PwC, as well. I think it is true to say we are all at the starting point of a journey. There are certain areas where we may have made great progress on particular issues and we will say that on that particular goal, these targets we are quite a long way ahead with; we have a committed response. But when you take the totality of the goals and working out which ones are most material to our business, directly or indirectly—and it is the latter one that is a bit more complicated, of course—then I think most businesses, even the leaders, are really still at just over the starting line but in the first phase of assessing.

Q76 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Dr Chow, would you agree?

Dr Chow: Yes. Looking at some of the companies that we have come across, you will find that there are different approaches to addressing SDGs. Some would probably have a goalpost-themed approach, for



example, maybe specifically on water, and they have dedicated a certain amount of money to that. Some might have global-product approach, a particular product that would allow access to health, for example, to certain populations. Some would have a more UK bias, so a business-related-theme approach to that, maybe waste related. What I have found that is missing, though, is co-ordination between businesses within the same sector.

Take food waste, since we have just talked about it. There are different types of food waste along the whole chain. You have waste at the farm level, which is the upstream; it could be wasted at the farm. What can the purchaser do to reduce that? There is the downstream, which is the customer part. How can you incentivise customers to reduce waste? So, the whole chain needs to be thought out more thoughtfully at the sector level, and they could co-ordinate their programmes. I don't know what is the best platform to do it—maybe trade associations; we need to go into a discussion—but certainly better co-ordination within the same sector, within the same country, so that we can encourage better use of frameworks and efficient use of money that is dedicated to SDGs.

- Q77 Peter Heaton-Jones:** Thank you for that. If awareness is fairly high at a headline level, among even some of these quite big multi-nationals, what can we do to ensure that they are fully aware of what their obligations are, what their responsibilities are, and, frankly, what impact they, as big business, can have on the SDGs? Because we cannot just have a situation, surely, where somebody, probably at a relatively junior level in a company, ticks a box to say yes we are aware of it and then that is filed away; we have done that for the next six months, sort of thing. What can we do to get the right people to understand the granular detail of what they need to be doing? Dr Waygood?

Steve Waygood: Thank you for the question. Partly it is about marketing. The Business and Sustainable Development Commission will be doing that in Davos and they will be doing business to business, chief executive to chief executive, marketing of the opportunity of SDGs. That is part of the answer. The second part is ranking them. Rank the companies in relation to how they are embedding the SDGs.

- Q78 Peter Heaton-Jones:** Name and shame?

Steve Waygood: And fame; the good guys as well.

Peter Heaton-Jones: I will make a note of that.

Steve Waygood: That is the benefit of a league table. Everyone wants to be top. You make this a competitive sport, you will generate the race to the top. Building those benchmarks is absolutely essential to bringing the buy-in and clarity of the rest of the companies that have not.

Then, third, what is the role of the owner of those companies? We believe that there are duties of ownership and the Stewardship Code has set that out for a number of years, now, in the UK; the pioneering Stewardship



Code in the UK that has now been replicated elsewhere. But how do we vote at company AGMs on behalf of our 33 million clients and how can they see that we have voted to promote better action on the SDGs on things like gender, on human rights issues, on climate, on education, on well-being. Now, I would love to think that in addition to these league tables we can also create a very quick and easy way of everybody being able to compare and contrast good, responsible fund management from irresponsible fund management. If you want chocolate or coffee that has good labour standards, you ask for a Fair Trade logo. Where is the equivalent logo for your pension or your ISA? It does not exist. We could build that.

Q79 Peter Heaton-Jones: I want to explore this a little bit more. You have described how it is generally the bigger multi-nationals who are more aware. In some ways that is understandable. If you are an SME, you simply do not have the time or the resources, frankly, or the energy, to sit down and look at this sort of stuff. What can we—by which I mean not only the business community that you represent, the academic community, maybe, and Government—collectively do to help SMEs who, frankly, are using every single spare moment they have just to make their business work and don't think that they can be bothered to do this? What do we do to persuade them to be bothered and to help them?

Geoff Lane: You would expect me to focus in on measurement and frameworks again. At the moment the tool we have developed, and other similar tools, are helping business to understand that the priority SDGs link to their business activities, but we also need Governments, of course, around the world, to take the global goals and translate those into national plans and national actions, the UK Government included. What we then need is a joined-up measurement framework. There is no point in business measuring its contribution if that does not connect with the similar measures that Governments are using. I know the ONS in the UK is looking at that but we need comparability between the two frameworks, otherwise businesses' contributions will be not measured in an appropriate way in terms of country-level impact. It is getting that framework right. To the extent that the UK Government has an impact and influence around the world, promoting that discussion around the world is pretty important, particularly for international businesses.

For your SMEs, then it is being really clear about what is the one thing that you can do. They do not need to cover the whole framework; it is too complicated. That applies to big businesses. So if there was one thing that you could do in this sector, what is it? For PwC, we have done our analysis that we can play our role across many of the SDGs, but for us the sector we are in, the service sector, being a big employer, education, gender inequality—no surprise that the core of our contribution when you looked at the UK's priorities, is around social inclusion. That is the one. We can clearly afford to do other things as well. But if you had to boil it down to one thing, what is it? It is around inclusion.



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Q80 **Chair:** That is what you will be doing, is it?

Geoff Lane: Luckily—we have done our analysis using our tool and thankfully, we already have a number of programmes in place, whether that is apprenticeship schemes or taking away UCAS points requirements or issues about gender or other aspects of diversity. It is not that we have cracked all of those issues but thankfully we are in the right place in terms of many of the things that were already priorities for us.

Q81 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Chair, can I do a quick fire along the panel? If there was one thing that you would say Government should do tomorrow to raise awareness of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs among businesses, what would it be? Let's go along left to right; in a sentence, Dr Chow.

Dr Chow: Can I respond a little bit on the SMEs first? For SMEs there is always a resource constraint. They are usually growing very quickly. Coming from my background of teaching impact investing and social innovation, I find it very helpful that you encourage SMEs to have a problem solving approach to business, which corresponds to SDGs. It strengthens the growing culture and also organisation and staff commitment. I think that that is a very important element. If impact is at the core of our investment approach, that problem solving should be the corresponding business approach. I just wanted to say that.

Peter Heaton-Jones: All right. Now, one thing the Government could do, should do, in your view, tomorrow, to raise awareness.

Geoff Lane: Just take the top two or three priorities—I don't much mind as I accept they cannot do everything straight away—so of all the SDGs, which are the ones we are going to focus on in the UK, and then embed those in the key levers within Government, whether that is public sector procurement, or international development, two or three key bits of Government machinery that could be used to drive those particular goals

Steve Waygood: On an international basis, in order to show how good the UK companies are at this, I think we need to build those best practice benchmarks and then rank companies against them and publish the results in the form of a league table.

Q82 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Could that be done by Government?

Steve Waygood: Government can and should support the creation of that public good because it will need to be financed, but I don't think it should just be financed by Government. I think foundations have a role, philanthropy, as I was arguing earlier, as well as there is potential for maybe some licences that could be built on the back of that. But foundations and Government funding will be the lion's share of how this public good gets created.

Q83 **Chair:** That is internationally. What about domestic application?

Steve Waygood: The British Standards Institute could build the standard for responsible fund management.



Q84 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** So a sort of kitemark?

Steve Waygood: Exactly that. In fact they have trademarked the kitemark phrase, apparently.

Q85 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Dr Chow?

Dr Chow: In September this year, some of the European large pension funds came out and said that they have done studies on how they can align investment objectives with the SDGs. It would be good to encourage some of the UK-based funds to look into that so that we can better harness private capital.

Peter Heaton-Jones: Interesting. Thank you.

Chair: Food for thought.

Q86 **Peter Aldous:** I think we have largely covered it to an extent, but could you outline the opportunities and risks that the SDGs present to businesses in the private sector?

Geoff Lane: On the opportunity side, for leading companies, or for the most progressive, there are opportunities particularly around new business models and new products or extending existing products. So really drive the engine room of innovation and growth inside the business. There are not so many companies that are using the SDGs as growth engines. I can talk about some. Unilever is declared on that. There is a smaller B2B business, business-to-business organisation, called Novozymes in Denmark that I am working with, who base their whole innovation platform around delivering enzyme products, which are complicated but basically which help deliver against the SDGs. There are some pretty big businesses out there that are using the SDGs as a frame for innovation and growth going forward. That is the opportunity space.

There are probably more businesses who are thinking about managing the downside, whether that be modern slavery or climate risk or others. There are probably more businesses thinking about it in that context.

I don't know if that answers your question; it gives you just some food for thought.

Dr Chow: On the opportunity side, as we look human rights—because I am the human rights lead on engagement—we look a lot at the alignment of access. There are four fields: access to resources; access to information; access to health; access to medicine. We use that kind of framework or perspective because we want to encourage businesses to think of SDGs not from just a risk management perspective but also it is about new opportunities; how you create new opportunities through this lens.

In terms of risks, it comes back to impact, which we talk a lot about. TOMS Shoes, I think, is a very well-known example. It was a social business that tried to encourage customers from the developed markets



to buy one pair and then they donate another pair of shoes to those who do not have shoes. What they realised after a while was that they were killing the local shoes businesses. So, understand the framework of impact assessment, social return on investment, and apply that framework. Then before we start our businesses on any sustainable development kind of initiatives do a full analysis first.

Steve Waygood: On the opportunity side, the draft I have seen of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission report talks about a figure of over \$10 trillion as the opportunity that businesses have to help provide the solutions to the SDGs. It requires Governments to also create those market opportunities, so it is implied that will happen by the SDGs. Now, the figure is a bit higher than \$10 trillion but I will wait until the report is finalised before being 100% convinced that it is true.

On the downside, just looking at climate risk, we commissioned the Economist Intelligence Unit last year to look at what is the present value at risk to climate change. As an insurance company, Aviva is obviously exposed to climate hazards. That was referred to by the Chair at the beginning. Our addressable market is shrinking. The way we price product, our actuarial assumptions: they are having to change. There is a value at risk in our investment management business but it is poorly understood. The EIU, the Economist Intelligence Unit, modelled two, three, four, five and six degrees change by 2100 and then we discounted that future hit to a present value: \$43 trillion could get wiped off. Six degrees by 2100, which is scientifically possible—it is not likely but it is unfortunately possible—and what also matters is whether we use market or Government discount rates. That figure is using Government discount rates and that is why I quote it here. If you think about the asymmetry, in terms of fat tail risks there is a huge risk of not delivering on the SDGs. I think the biggest opportunity to business is avoiding the very significant negative macroeconomic consequences of the markets failing to be sustainable.

Q87 **Peter Aldous:** You are three global businesses and you have very much engaged with the SDGs. Would it be fair to say that you are the exception rather than the rule? If it is the exception, what can we do to get other businesses in the private sector to engage?

Steve Waygood: It is unfortunately fair to say we collectively, and there are others, are the exception, not the rule. I would go back to benchmarks. If you rank companies, you create the competitive environment; you generate the race to the top. I have highlighted that as a potential solution already.

There are also fiscal interventions that you could make, and market mechanisms that could be created—internalise the externalities, as it is called—but if we were to explore that, then you are starting to incur the role of the Treasury and whether the Emissions Trading Scheme is fit for purpose, and it broadens your scope so much; so I will stick with benchmarks.



Geoff Lane: From our perspective, I think there are many things we can do but the most practical thing we can do is engage with our own supply chains. I am not in charge of this but we spend something like £1 billion in the UK on procurement each year, in goods and services, so although you would not necessarily associate a big service-based organisation with having a big direct impact—

Q88 **Peter Aldous:** What sort of feedback have you got from your supply chain?

Geoff Lane: It breaks down into specific areas, of course, but we have had a very well tried and tested sustainability initiative through our supply chain. We are doing all sorts of innovative things. For example, around the circular economy, which is around resource efficiency, consumption and production, if you look on our website there are all sorts of examples of case studies where we have been looking at our waste in the office, at uniforms, all sorts of things that we use. They are not necessarily in large volumes but by us applying our leverage and our analytical skills, we can help to develop approaches that others, hopefully, can pick up. With Business in the Community right now, I am on the Circular Economy Taskforce, we are talking about an initiative to try to get the service sector engaged—not the obvious place to start—in the circular economy so that you can then leverage the huge contribution that we all have through our supply chains, to get more companies active around that one aspect of the SDGs. So, working through our supply chains is key.

Dr Chow: Through our engagement experience over the years, in different parts of the world and in the different sectors, we have found that the co-ordination between using effective sticks and interesting carrots tends to work very well. In terms of disclosure and reporting, that is one way to push the compliance of a company to explain what they have done, but at the same time it is through engagement that we help them to understand why it is important and how we can continue to align the goals as we sail through this journey together. That needs to be constantly reinforced because there are people movements within a business, for example, so even if we say today, six months later you might have to deal with different people. You must constantly reinforce that message through engagement.

Q89 **Peter Aldous:** You have set out how you are advocates for promoting SDGs through your supply chain. Do you sometimes feel you are on your own and the Government do not give you enough support?

Geoff Lane: I could probably tell you some stories about that.

Chair: Can we tempt you?

Geoff Lane: I think what I mentioned earlier, public sector procurement, and in the past in various places we have tried to get initiatives going, working with big suppliers to the public sector around the Social Value Act, for example, to say how do we get more innovation going on in



public sector procurement, whether it is around resources, social impact, whatever it may be. How do we drive that? You will know probably more than I about the way in which public sector procurement is currently working, but while there is good work being done there, is that consistently being done across all public-sector procurement? We probably know the answer to that. I do think there is a lot more that could be done potentially using public sector procurement to drive behaviours within the private sector.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed, fascinating stuff.

Q90 **Kerry McCarthy:** Again, I think we have probably covered quite a bit of this. I am trying to find a way that we do not force you to repeat yourself. What I am trying to get at is we have 17 goals, a huge number of targets, even more indicators, and talk that the UK will bring in its own national indicators. Looking at the evidence we have been given, for some companies there are some goals that they are literally not interested in at all. My question is I suppose for starters: do you think that companies ought to be looking—I think only 1% of companies said that they were going to look at 17 goals across the board. Do you think that is acceptable? Do they need to focus just on the ones most relevant to their business or should efforts be made to encourage them to look at things that would not automatically spring to mind as being relevant to them but they could have an impact on?

Geoff Lane: I think you are right. I have mentioned the tool that we have developed. Just a little word on that: basically, it takes a huge amount of public data and information, 200 different sources of data. Obviously, it works with the goals as defined and the targets you mention. Basically, it enables you to drill right down to an individual country level to the targets that are applicable to that country and then works out what the priority goals and targets in that country are and what is driving them.

My favourite example is Switzerland. If I was to ask what the priority goals in Switzerland are I would not know, but my colleague developed this tool. You crunch the tool. It comes up with water quality—it is a landlocked country, a lot of agricultural runoff, so maybe not so surprising—and women's empowerment and equality. I know anecdotally from talking to my female colleagues in Switzerland that that is a real issue. If you have a baby in Switzerland and go back to work, as a woman it is difficult. It is not intuitively something that I would have thought was a priority in Switzerland, but the more I tell that anecdote people say, "You are right, yes, it is".

Kerry McCarthy: I think inequality was very low down in terms of the interest.

Geoff Lane: Yes. To follow your question through, you are right that you do need some systematic assessment of the issues because otherwise you will just pick on the obvious things that you are probably already



doing. I was with a company yesterday where environmental impact is key. They are involved in laundry and detergents, those sorts of things, and they were saying environmental impact is key. We got on to an interesting discussion. A senior executive said if you in developing countries could reduce the amount of time that women spend on washing and laundry activities, that could play a huge role in economic empowerment, getting more women into the workforce. That is a very glib statement, of course, but they were not making that link. Is that their issue to work with or should they be working at an industry level, to Christine's point, to address that issue? That is the discussion for them to have, but I do think organisations need some sort of systematic assessment rather than just cherry-picking the things that are most obvious to them. That is why we and others have developed tools like the ones that I mentioned to try to help companies to do that very quickly.

Dr Chow: Most large companies do materiality analysis already and that could be better linked to SDGs.

Steve Waygood: I think Christine is right, materiality analysis is important. That is the company assessing whether the issue is going to hit their cash flows. I would like to build on that, though, and say it is about relevance. Is the company going to harm the issue, not just whether the issue is going to harm the company, harm or help? I absolutely agree with what Geoff was saying in terms of a systematic approach. I believe the guiding mind of the company, the board, should sit down with the 17 SDGs and their strategy and work out how they map and for those issues that are relevant to the business work out what the business at its best can do to help and not harm, and then report that thinking ideally periodically in the integrated report that Christine has already mentioned.

A systematic approach is necessary. I think the governance function has been overlooked. I think every company should appoint a non-executive director who has a duty to look at the SDGs and do that mapping with the rest of the company. One thing that we could do in the UK is update the Corporate Governance Code accordingly to say specifically that there should be a non-exec who has the responsibility to oversee this area.

Q91 **Kerry McCarthy:** To what extent do you think there is scope for outside interference in terms of telling businesses they ought to be looking at goals that they are not that interested in? This is all very much what you have been saying, it is all very much about businesses doing the analysis, reaching the views, you facilitating that, but there is still a danger that they will cherry-pick things that are easier or things that are more obviously beneficial to them as opposed to things where they are causing harm.

Geoff Lane: I am hopeful. Many businesses, the ones I have worked with over many years, would say that they are subject to those pressures all the time from a plethora of different stakeholders, so determining what is material is a devilish issue. Even if they do determine it, there will



be many people who will continue to say, "You are not addressing my issue". I am hopeful that the SDGs, which have been reached at great consensus and are based on science and everything else, the best knowledge we have, provide at least some common platform that Government, business and civil society organisations can agree on and say, "This is the agenda globally" and then, once we have the national plans, "This is the agenda at the national level". If the business can then say, "We hear you but these are the things that the country in which I am operating has agreed is a priority. They link to my business. I can explain them"—and Steve has mentioned why I can have them— "and that is why I am focusing on those issues. I hear you on the other issues, but I am focused there". I am optimistic it will provide a framework that will avoid the cherry-picking and help to focus on the material issues.

- Q92 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Dr Waygood, the issue about every firm having to put a non-exec director in charge of this, is there not a danger that if you do that it becomes a bit of a ticked box? The chairman or the CEO says, "I have to deal with this, appoint him or her non-exec director, done", chairman and chief exec never worry about it again. Surely the push always has to come from the very top, hasn't it?

Steve Waygood: Yes, there is that danger so we would need to think through what the role of owners is. The stewardship code confers on us as owners of these businesses an obligation to check whether the board is being well governed. The comply or explain environment in the UK would then have the non-executive director, if they have not done their job, they would have to explain why not, so there is some coercion through the annual report and accounts. You are right that there is an issue, but it would be without a non-executive director if you do not make that recommendation. Of course, it could be the chair. You could say it is the chair. Any company could say, "It is our chair's job". Without that obligation, I do not think the governance function will function properly in the area of the SDGs.

Chair: Okay, thank you, that is helpful.

- Q93 **Dr Matthew Offord:** We had discussions with representatives from the Office for National Statistics last week, and one of the areas that I was concerned with was needing the support of additional organisations. What are your views upon the Government needing the support of business and the private sector in particular to buy into the whole SDG agenda?

Geoff Lane: Maybe just to start and build on a comment I made earlier, I think what is really important is that whatever framework and measures are developed—and, of course, progress does ultimately need to be made at a country level—they are compatible with the measures that business would be using to measure its own contribution. If they are disconnected or they are not using the same language or measurement points, then business is going to find it very hard to demonstrate why it is doing what it is doing. I think at the very least there needs to be active business



input into whatever the measures are going to be so that they are business friendly.

I do think that business has some core skills and data analytics and all those sorts of things, which could be very useful as well. I am sure the ONS has lots of that information as well. We are seeing a slightly different approach around impact measurement. There is a public sector approach to it and a private sector approach. We have our total impact tool, which is based on good science and academic practice, etc., but is what I would call pragmatic and relatively fast. We have another part of our business in international development where there is a whole approach around monitoring and evaluation, which is also based on good science and academic rigour and everything else but is pretty exhaustive and intensive and takes a long time. They are trying to do the same thing ultimately, which is measure the impact of a business or a programme, and I do think somewhere in the middle lies the truth. I understand absolutely the need for rigour in the public sector, but I do think there is a need for a bit more of a pragmatic approach that the private sector might bring as well.

Steve Waygood: When I read the ONS proposals, the ones that were submitted back in March for the indicators, I was honestly disappointed, the reason being that there were very, very few that pointed to business as business. In fact, I can only remember one of the 270-odd, and that was talking about how many companies have produced a standalone sustainability report. Given that the goal is companies integrating sustainability into their report and accounts—that is goal 12.6—that is the wrong indicator. That is an indicator saying how many of them produced a standalone sustainability report. The reason why we have promoted this idea of benchmarks, which is a substantive, detailed analysis, sector by sector, issue by issue, is the ONS does not get anywhere near that. As Geoff says, you have two worlds that have emerged. There is the world of the ONS ranking what countries are doing and then there is the world I work in and Christine works in, which ranks what companies do in the area of sustainable development, good corporate governance and so on. Unfortunately, the ONS has not looked at that yet.

Q94 **Chair:** They will be launching their consultation on 29 November, so next week it will come out, so you will have a chance to feed back into that. We are hoping that that will be better. Of course, there are some areas where there just is no data or where certainly at national level the data does not exist, only for about 70%. Dr Chow, did you want to come back?

Dr Chow: I think issues with data collection are always difficult. I engage with companies a lot in emerging markets and data is always an issue. When data is an issue, we find it helpful to go back to the companies and go all the way down to the frontline people and say, "What is important and what can you collect? Is it consistent?" I think there needs to be a lot more discussion with business at the frontline to say, "What tells us what you are doing?" in order to get that feedback.



Q95 **Dr Matthew Offord:** You have kind of pre-empted my next question. Certainly, Dr Waygood, you seem to be quite a spokesman of the private sector in many ways for Aviva. What kind of encouragement was your company given to engage in the SDG agenda and what more could the Government introduce to allow others to be as involved as certainly you are?

Steve Waygood: Thank you very much indeed. It is very kind of you.

Dr Matthew Offord: You seem very passionate about it.

Steve Waygood: We are.

Dr Matthew Offord: That is great. Not everyone is.

Steve Waygood: That is unfortunately true.

Chair: We are going to widen this circle with this report.

Steve Waygood: Let's do that. We have been inspired by the work of the Global Compact, which was effectively policing those bad-performing companies and getting rid of them. We have been a long-term member of the Global Compact since its inception, a long-term member of the Principles for Responsible Investment as conceived 10 years ago, and done a lot of work with the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the Department for Environmental and Social Affairs, and so on. We have worked a lot with the people at the UN who have given us a lot of expertise, time and space.

The space was particularly important a few years ago when they provided our chief executive the opportunity to speak at the opening session of the General Assembly, an hour and a half after the Pope spoke. It was a privilege to be in the General Assembly Hall and watch him deliver our strategic approach. As you can imagine, the consequences on the morale in the business that I represent, having your chief executive—well, someone described it as a historic moment. We have been around since 1696 and in our 300-year history it is the first time that the chief executive of Aviva spoke at the General Assembly. So that sent reverberations around my business.

I am not suggesting you can provide the same opportunity for every other listed company in the UK or, indeed, any other SME, but that kind of inspiration that you give at the board level and the space, a platform, for the leaders of business to speak, the visibility that then provides to the other people who work within those companies that the top of the company thinks this is important and, therefore, if you want to stay in the company you need to work out what it is that you need to do, if you think about the incentives.

Would you mind one more minute? If you look at the financing—

Dr Matthew Offord: I told you you are passionate.



Steve Waygood: You were right. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which was agreed in July, is the financing framework for the SDGs. Paragraph 38 talks about the need to align the incentives in the supply chain of capital so that fund managers, investment consultants, stock exchanges, brokers, investment banks in other words, their personal incentives and their institutional incentives are aligned with the SDGs and goals around long-termism.

Another answer to your question is that it should not just matter to their soft incentives, provide a platform, it should matter to their hard incentives, too. My experience so far, even when I look at the interagency taskforce that DESA runs, which is analysing which of the SDGs are being followed up, paragraph 38 is a really important paragraph and no UN agency that I am aware of is working on that incentive piece in the supply chain of capital. That is another answer to your question, forgive me.

Geoff Lane: When I joined PwC 25 years ago, some time back, we had a recruitment slogan that was around all the London stations, which said, "Join us, together we can change the world". At the time I think it was a great slogan, but I am not sure which direction we needed to change the world in. At the beginning of this year I was pretty optimistic. We had the Paris agreement and we had the SDGs and we had a plan. Okay, it was not necessarily a perfect plan on climate change or the broader sustainability agenda that we have spent a lot of our time and careers working in, but it was a plan. If you give business people a plan, then they can get on and do things. I was optimistic because I felt we were at a point where business leaders now were being given not instructions but guidance on what they could do and how they could move forward. The need from Governments is to reinforce the idea that, okay, it is not perfect, but this is the plan and if you start moving in this direction we will back you and we will support you.

Dr Chow: At Hermes, we have a special team. We have 26 people in the engagement team. We bring together likeminded asset owners who have always had a culture and a mission to encourage sustainability, which ties in very well with sustainable development goals. We have been doing it for many, many years. Throughout the years, we have done case studies. We have proven to businesses that if you engage with investors who have the right mindset, who are long term, we are able to help create the change that they themselves would see the results.

Q96 **Chair:** What is the awareness among UK pension funds, who are huge institutions?

Dr Chow: We started out in the UK and we actually have a UK base. If we look at the engagement of stewardship and looking at what sustainability is about over the years, we started out as a UK team but, of course, asset owners have a global portfolio. We started looking at globally how we can support sustainable development or align that with sustainable investment. Over time we realised that there are common



sector issues. Some of them we have talked about earlier. We added a sector lens to give a helicopter view on how we can support and help solve more sector-based issues.

More recently, we have added another lens, which is a theme lens, whether it is waste pollution or tax or human rights and labour practices. Because people think and people are passionate about themes and issues, we can connect them with individuals. We are talking about individual pension members who can understand, "I care about climate change. What are you doing on that? But I do not know anything about mining or utilities because they do not connect to sectors". I think that is important and through that kind of Rubik's cube approach we are able to connect hopefully the ultimate capital owners with businesses a bit better.

Chair: Great. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for taking the time to be with us today, very helpful.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dominic White, Stefano D'Errico and Nienke Palstra.

Q97 **Chair:** I would like to welcome our three guests. We have Stefano D'Errico from the International Institute for Environment and Development, Nienke Palstra from UNICEF, child protection specialists, and Dominic White, head of international development policy at WWF. I have just been talking to one of your German colleagues yesterday. We have had some very interesting exchanges. Thank you all very much for your patience. We do not normally meet this late in the afternoon, but obviously it has been a very big day for the country with the Autumn Statement. I think some of you I spotted sitting in the first panel. The Government are ranked 10th out of 169 countries. We heard about name, shame and fame. When we have had evidence from the Government, they have said that the UK already meets or is on track to meeting the SDGs. Do you agree? Let's start with Nienke.

Nienke Palstra: Just to clarify, I am also representing the Bond SDGs group here today as co-chair. From our perspective, the UK has a long way to go to meet the SDGs. All high-income countries have an incredible challenge ahead of them. When you think of the ambition of the agenda to eradicate and end phenomenon like violence against children, modern slavery, it is no easy task. For that reason, we really would like to see greater prioritisation by the Government on domestic implementation because 15 years is a very short period of time to get this agenda done. What we want to see is leadership and that is one of the things we have been missing. The tone from the top really matters and we have not seen many public statements that refer to the SDGs. The sign that we now



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have DfID leading on this agenda, we are glad that they are picking up the mantle for this but, of course, it does raise questions about whether this is seen as simply an international agenda as opposed to a domestic one.

Dominic White: I do not think we are a sustainable country at the moment. We are, of course, very high in developed country rankings, but compared against the targets of the SDGs this is a very ambitious framework and we would be careless to be complacent that everything is okay in the country. We can see the rise in inequality around the country. We saw the statistics coming out from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation about the level of child destitution across the country. We see massive opportunity but also similarly failings in terms of our renewable energy policy and the amount of renewable energy the country is producing. In the Paris agreement recently we just had 47 other countries commit to 100% renewable by 2050 and the UK has not made that commitment yet.

I do not think our ranking in the SDG index as it stands is really helpful in saying where we should be going. We need to be looking at the SDGs as a floor and raising the bar across all the targets and all those areas of society and economy and the environment where we are falling short. The amazing thing about this framework is it presents an enormous opportunity for the country to make huge leaps to help society across a whole number of fronts. We can see massive opportunity arising, of course; not least eradicating poverty in this country has been quoted as saving £87 billion a year. Recovery of our natural assets: just look at the fish stocks and the increase to the fishing industry if we recover our fish stocks properly, another £1.5 billion accruing to the fishing industry. You could look at this in terms of soil loss, another extra £1.2 billion. All this data comes out of Government sources and all point to areas of opportunity. Let's not look at how we are ranked necessarily at the moment compared to these other countries. Let's look at what we need to do across society and let's look at developing that plan, getting the leadership in place, pulling that plan together with a variety of stakeholders to take us forward even further still.

Stefano D'Errico: I agree with colleagues. I think that if the Government do not take these opportunities it would be a real shame. I just want to mention that I think it is important that this debate needs to be embarked on three major points. There are three main issues to be considered. One is what needs to be done domestically to improve and to guarantee a sustainable future to the next British generation. To this extent, we have seen data, as colleagues have said, that inequality is on the rise, and also poverty. In overall poverty, as we can see from reports from the Office for National Statistics, the UK is not doing great. The rate is around 16.8%, which places the UK as the 12th highest out of the 28 EU countries from a report published in 2014. That is telling, actually.



At the same time, the second point is what needs to be done domestically for a better world. What is it that needs to be done domestically that can have an impact on the global environment? For example, the UK can take domestic actions by tackling food waste and reducing food losses along the production and supply chains. This is one of the targets of goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns. If we think that the UK consumers throw away something around 7 million tonnes of food and drink a year and there is an estimated 200,000 tonnes of food waste created annually in the retail sector that could be prevented, surely there is something that can be done to diminish the impact on the global sustainable development targets.

At the same time it is an amazing opportunity for the UK to provide a leadership role for a better future. To this extent, I just want to mention the opportunity to play a leading role to achieve goal 14 about the sustainable use of the oceans where the UK could support the current negotiation process on a UN agreement of biodiversity for the high seas.

As you can see, there is a multifaceted way of looking at the SDGs. These are great opportunities for the future British generations but also to provide leadership and to show leadership to the rest of the world as the UK has always done.

Q98 Chair: Can I just ask you how sustainable or suitable you think the international framework is for tackling issues in the UK? The ONS said we do not have data for everything. The private sector said that they have not been included. We have some data that just is not collected in any forms, but the data that we have is sometimes—just reading about it, for me to read that babies under one are the age group most at risk of death in this country, violent murder death, is very, very shocking and I don't think it is particularly well known. Can you see areas where it is suitable and areas where it is not suitable? For me, the child statistics around murder were very shocking. On the other hand, there are other things that do not necessarily tally across perhaps on health, where the National Health Service means that we all have not affordable but free access to healthcare.

Nienke Palstra: I think the point here is that the global indicator framework provides us with a framework that will be comparable across countries, but these really need to be contextualised. There will be data sets, as we now know, that simply do not exist in many high-income countries. We are not in a position where we can always compare at the moment across these countries, but we do know that there are very serious issues related to violence against children and that the UK does have other data sets that we should be looking at.

That is also where we should think about the role of non-official data and to what extent that can be used. If we are only looking towards this global framework, we will never feel maybe that it quite fits the specifics of the UK context. That really means we need to contextualise it and before we can say this indicator or this specific target does not apply in a



UK context, it needs to be based on evidence and we need to have done that baseline analysis. Otherwise we are making assumptions that simply might not be the case. I would point to the specific example of air pollution where many people I think are surprised to know of the incredibly dangerous levels of air pollution and the number of schools in the UK that are located in these areas of dangerous air pollution. I think it is over 3,000. Again, many people would think maybe that would not be an indicator of particular relevance here but, of course, it is.

Dominic White: I think the framework is eminently suitable for us to drive towards a sustainable development pathway across the UK. The reason for that is what it does as a global framework is bring a levelling for all countries in terms of sharing this aspiration. There are many universal issues that pertain to every country. Whether it is clean air, renewable energy, inequality, sufficient and nutritious food, decent housing, a whole bunch of those issues are expressed through the sustainable development goals and their targets. Of course, that is a global agreement and that has to be landed in each national situation and tailored according to what we need. As you heard from the ONS last week, we will develop an appropriate indicator process for measuring what we do in the UK.

I think it is important to recognise that all countries face very common issues and, of course, recognising that it is not just a donor-recipient type relationship when we think of development now. We are all countries in different stages with big advantages and lesser advantages. I just think it allows that levelling and then the opportunities for sharing and learning between countries and taking different policy experiences and seeing what works. To that extent, I think it provides a very good framework. It provides the vision and ambition and then we have to adjust the ceiling for our respective situations.

Stefano D'Errico: I want to build on Dominic's point because I think the ambition and the vision is the key in the framework rather than the indicators. We heard a lot about the indicators, which, of course, are very, very important. Without the data we cannot make the assessment. At the same time, having the data is not the end of the story. In fact, in Agenda 2030 there is a lot of emphasis on voluntary national review processes and how these processes could feed into implementation. There are already countries that are thinking very seriously about this. I can mention, for example, Sweden but also Colombia, where they have a very complex and integrated M&E system to identify national priorities that can be assessed, evaluated and monitored during the course of the implementation.

This is the kind of leadership that we really need, to look to what the ambition is, rather than just thinking, "Oh, gosh, we do not have the data. How can we do this?" To be honest, the indicators are divided into three tiers. You have tier 1, which is basically indicators with sound methodologies and standards and the data, so the good ones. Then you



have tier 2 where you have sound methodologies but less data. Then we have tier 3, which basically is pretty much wishful thinking. On paper they look good but we do not have standards nor the data. Now, it is frightening to say, but basically only 44% of the current indicators are tier 1.

Q99 **Chair:** Are you talking about the UK context?

Stefano D'Errico: No, I am talking about the global ones.

Chair: Thank you for that. We know that we have 70% of the data in the UK context. We heard that last week.

Q100 **Kerry McCarthy:** In terms of raising ambition, that is obviously why the SDGs exist—we are trying to achieve more than we would do if we were not signed up to them. When the International Development Committee looked at this, they criticised the Government for seeming to say, “This is all in our manifesto. This is what we were elected to do”, which suggests that they do not really think that the SDGs will drive any extra ambition. You have mentioned a few issues. Air pollution is a classic one where it has only been external pressure—the court cases—that is very slowly now forcing the Government into action. I just wondered if you could say a bit about how the Government should prioritise issues to take forward and where that would sit in relation to the democratic ideal of being elected on a certain manifesto and those should be the priorities instead.

Dominic White: We do see that, of course, there are some commitments in the manifesto that do contribute and would help deliver and support sustainable development in the UK, but the manifesto came before the global framework was agreed. The manifesto is for five years and, of course, we are talking about a 15-year horizon for sustainable development. That presents other opportunities and challenges for planning for 15 years, whereas the manifesto is a little bit limited on the time bit.

We have also identified some contradictions that we can see in the manifesto that perhaps do not support a more holistic and integrated sustainable development idea. Maintaining fossil fuel subsidies, for example, while trying to tackle climate change are incongruous from our perspective in terms of meeting renewable energy targets and rolling back policies that help support that. I do not think that alignment is ideal and the ambition of sustainable development sets a whole new area of possibilities for this country. It is being developed and designed with civil society and private sector engagement at global level, unprecedented United Nations negotiation, which has been incredibly inclusive, so the opportunity of taking that at a country level is to build a constituency of stakeholders who can get behind this ambition and this vision and come together to deliver it.

In terms of then setting out the priorities, what we are missing and what we are short of, I think you saw a little bit of a sense from some of the work Newcastle University presented last week, which was about



analysing where we are and what those transformational targets are that we need to focus on to get going. All the goals and targets are important, but clearly we are well developed along some of those at the moment. Let's get that analysis together that shows where those opportunities are, the real shortcomings that we have ambition and objective to overcome across the whole framework. Let's do that analysis systematically where we perhaps may be deficient in policy terms or in terms of just gathering data to measure particular targets in a certain way or whether we can enrol other stakeholders to get behind particular implementation activity to help support and move the country forward.

I think there are a whole range of preparatory steps that we need to take first to get us in a position to then look at that analysis of all the target areas first and then develop a plan from that basis.

Q101 Kerry McCarthy: In terms of the importance of having an implementation plan rather than just referring to other documents, other commitments already made, you think that would be important in terms of driving the agenda forward?

Nienke Palstra: In the Government's response to the IDC report, they explained that the manifesto, the single departmental plans and the aid strategy would be sufficient but, as Dominic has pointed out, on the side of the manifesto that is clearly not the case for the single departmental plans. The goals are only referenced in DfID's single departmental plan and the aid strategy, of course, also does not really provide an implementation plan but rather uses the SDGs as part of the framing and the overall context for the UK's future work on aid.

I think what we would want to see is a strategy that pulls together the international and the domestic part of implementation, makes clear that this is a cross-Government agenda and that there are clear lines of accountability and specific departments will be responsible for delivering on the agenda. By having a strategy, this will go a long way to creating a domestic accountability agenda as well where civil society and the public will know what the UK Government sets out to do on this agenda and can hold them to account for that. In the absence of having one, we do not have clarity on how they intend to take this forward.

Q102 Kerry McCarthy: I am interested in the question of cherry-picking and how we can use the SDGs as a way of changing Government thinking. You mentioned Colombia and the peace process, which obviously is going to be an incredibly important priority for them, but it is something that Colombia has very much embarked on already. It should not be, "This is the priority for us and, therefore, we have a good reason not to look at the other SDGs". That is just a simplistic example, but is there a danger of that in the UK of the Government cherry-picking certain goals either that they know they could achieve or that fit in with their other objectives and other things being left behind? If so, how can we tackle that?



Dominic White: If we are able to get into a position where we have a comprehensive plan and approach across the whole framework, then we can see other opportunities emerging where different stakeholders and private sector organisations can come together and work towards some of these targets. We have to have accountability across the whole piece and clearly some areas will be less important for the UK to keep investing in. I also co-chair the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development platform and we did some work with the Office for National Statistics on what was more or less important across a variety of stakeholders around the country. No one said access to water and sanitation is important, so clearly it is pretty much sorted, we are there, good, make sure we can maintain 100% access, more or less, and move on. Some things will raise themselves as less relevant and other things are clearly crying out for attention, whether it is inequality or renewable energy. There is a whole spectrum of things we need to work on, but we need a systematic approach to analysing what is more or less important.

Then the opportunity arises from enrolling other stakeholders in that process so that you have different areas of leverage and energy to bring into delivering development around the country. It is not all going to be public sector funded and driven necessarily. There are plenty of other actors doing some really good things, but we need to approach it collectively and together. Then we will have a much more accessible framework with commitments laid out and we can use that for accountability purposes, so then we will see who is doing what.

Stefano D'Errico: I think engaging different stakeholders will be very important. In the spirit of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals, it will be key to have consultation processes as well to decide what the priorities are. It is very dangerous if the goals will be cherry picked because the whole point of having so many different goals and some goals that are cutting across the piece is that these were interconnected and, therefore, there might be one case in one goal that could undermine achievement under another one. That is why an implementation plan and synergies across ministries is important.

Kerry McCarthy: I was looking in a previous session: life below water came bottom in terms of companies' priorities, but it is not just something that is below water in its own hemisphere, if you like. It is something that would have a massive impact, say, on climate change or whatever. Thank you.

Chair: Very interesting. I wonder if water companies had been in the room if they would have said a different thing; 14 water companies in moderate water stress. It is quite interesting. It shows the bias of who you ask the question to. If you do not talk to everybody about everything, certain things get left out. We might be fine for water now, but that might not be the case in future.

Kerry McCarthy: The ocean is also the lungs of the earth as well.



Chair: Yes, the largest body of water. Fascinating.

Q103 **Dr Offord:** In the United Kingdom, the Whitehall Department has been responsible for the implementation of the sustainable development goals as DfID, by the very nature of its name, has an emphasis upon the international arena. I understand that there has been some criticism of the Government for that designation. Are you aware of any actions that DfID has taken in the last six months or so to address that criticism and also to focus more on the domestic agenda as well with the SDGs?

Dominic White: Yes, I think across a number of civil society organisations we have maintained that we think the Cabinet Office is probably better suited for cross-Whitehall co-ordination because DfID is excellent on the international side. That is what they exist for. They are outward facing and they think and work in that way.

However, we have seen some very positive statements from DfID, not least in their evidence to this Committee, where it talks about the Government being firmly committed to implementing the goals internationally and domestically. We hear from colleagues inside DfID that there is a lot of noise around sustainable development and that they contribute. They are thinking about how everything they are doing is supposed to be geared towards sustainable development, which is all very positive. However, recent policy—for example, the last piece of policy that came out of DfID was the Civil Society Partnership Review—made no reference to the sustainable development goals. That is funding civil society to deliver sustainable development internationally but, of course, that is a critical agenda for international development. We also see that the aid strategy did not really refer to the sustainable development goals even though it was written after that agreement was in place. We have some inconsistencies, shall we say, but we know that the Prime Minister acknowledged the sustainable development goals in her speech a couple of weeks ago, so that is positive. What we need is some really affirmative leadership that absolutely gets behind this agenda and describes how we are going to develop a plan across the Government, with stakeholders, with what the process is arising around developing that plan, and then also subsequently in terms of accountability mechanisms that will be in place and available. We need that to be clearly laid out.

What we need is some more positive, affirmative noises, which we have seen, as I have said, being written sporadically, but we do not have the vocalisation of that, and the statements, and the discussion going. There is so much opportunity here, and that is the bit that we need to leverage, which would be such a missed opportunity if we could not get that. Perhaps some promising noises, but we need to get a lot more consistency, and involve and excite people with this agenda.

Nienke Palstra: To build on that, the Government's response against the IDC, they had said that there are meetings happening at different levels of Government on the SDG agenda. While we welcome that, we are



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not entirely clear on how often these are happening and what the outcome of these meetings are. We would be very keen to understand in what way this is working and how effective it really is. I also wanted to recognise the incredibly positive role that the ONS has been playing in this context in terms of how collaborative, open, and transparent they have been as they develop the national indicator framework on SDGs. We were involved in an earlier consultation this summer to prepare the proposal that they will be coming forward with in the next few weeks on SDG indicators. I think to be positive about domestic implementation, we are seeing very positive signals from the ONS on data.

Q104 Dr Matthew Offord: One of the things that Mr White mentioned was that you would prefer to see the Cabinet Office being the lead department responsible. The Cabinet Office has said that they will assist DfID in particular but, without trying to lead you too far, you do not seem too convinced of that.

Dominic White: What we need is the leadership, the preparation and the planning that brings the mechanics together. I am not going to fight really hard for one or the other, but that is what we need to see happen. Whichever department is responsible, let's get towards this condition where we have a plan, we have leadership, we have enrolment and engagement, but we can get all the mechanics in place. If DfID can do that, that is fantastic. DfID could bring a lot of experience from international development into the UK as well, not least, but that is a whole different dynamic. I would not get absolutely obsessed by that point, but I think let's look at what we need to move forward, and whoever is best placed to get us there, that will be great.

Q105 Peter Heaton-Jones: This is not a million miles away from what Matthew has just been discussing with you, so if there is nothing much more to add, do not feel you need to. It is about the accountability of Government and how Government in the UK can be held accountable for adhering to the goals. The line at the moment is that we will be held accountable, judged on what we said in our manifesto and what the individual departmental plans have said. I guess it is a very straightforward question: do you think that is enough? Is that sufficient, and is that really a justifiable way that the Government can be held accountable, or an effective way, indeed? We will start from there.

Nienke Palstra: From my perspective it is not enough. We really would expect to see an implementation plan. We have seen other countries developing their plans, for example Germany, Finland as well, in a very collaborative way, and supported by the highest levels of Government in terms of driving that plan forward. As I mentioned before, and as Dominic explained, the manifesto has an entirely different purpose from delivering the SDGs. The single departmental plans as well cover a certain period of time and were developed prior to the SDGs being formally agreed. Then the aid strategy, of course, as well uses SDGs in their framing, but not in terms of a plan. So we need one document that pulls everything together, that would also be the basis for consultation



prior to that being finalised, which clearly sets out what the UK intends to do within certain time periods to deliver on this agenda, and that would be something that we could hold them to account for. I do not think we expect them to have a perfect roadmap until 2030, but at least to start thinking in five-year segments what needs to be done to deliver on an incredibly ambitious agenda.

Q106 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Does anyone disagree with the thrust of that?

Dominic White: No.

Q107 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** I suspected as much. Can I move on to ask this then: how do you judge accountability? This is a labyrinth of targets, indicators and goals. Kerry was listing them earlier, the numbers that there are of each of these. How on earth can a layperson start to understand whether or not a Government has achieved what it is supposed to be achieving when there are so many boxes that apparently need to be ticked, or not, as the case may be?

Stefano D'Errico: Yes. I think Agenda 2030 stressed strongly how important national review processes are and how this process should help the acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs. This for me is the key, because the indicators are really, really important. We need the data, but at the same time we need processes to establish value or the merit, which include and engage with different stakeholder groups in the country. This is what is needed in order to come across this very difficult question.

The question is how to put in place functions that can help to assess how the Government are doing. These functions could report to the Parliament, or could report to the Government themselves, but we need function that will go beyond the numbers to have processes to establish the value. Also because, as I said before, some goals and targets are much more relevant to the UK than others and that is the reality of what it is. We need those processes to establish what is relevant for the UK to prioritise that engage different stakeholder groups, from businesses to civil society, to the Parliament and the Government themselves.

Q108 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Mr White, just to come to you, the IDC recommended biannual reporting, I think; the Government said no. Does that decision need to be reviewed, or do you have any sympathy for the Government saying, "No, that is not something we can do"?

Dominic White: I think the Government said specifically around reporting on policy adherence for sustainable development points particularly. There are two parts to this. One is: the ONS are already measuring an awful lot of data that reaches across the sustainable-development targets for the UK. I know there was a combination of their national well-being index with the previous sustainable-development indices they were using. Then there is the exercise, as you heard they are launching next week, around looking for other contributions, non-official



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data sources to measure this. I think we will be surprised how much the ONS think is possible to be measured for a start.

The average layperson is not going to read 231 indicators and the progress of the Government of achieving those. But there are technical specialists outside of Government who have a stake in that, and could contribute to that, and would be interested in understanding their specialist area, so it is still important that we measure across all the goals.

In terms of reporting, again, the other day I was quite surprised; already ONS report—sometimes twice a year—on the national well-being indicators. In terms of some data sources that are readily available and accessible that is not so complicated. Whether we get a full report across all targets at the same time, perhaps let's see. I think what we do not want to do is say, "Because we have not agreed every indicator we need to measure we will just wait until we have that". No, let's start reporting now. Remember, 22 countries have already reported after less than one year's activity at the high-level political forum. We would like to see over the course of the next 15 years the UK Government reporting at the United Nations high-level political forum at least three times over the course of the next 14 years. I think the first time the UK should report will be 2018, and then subsequently from there as appropriate.

Q109 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Just in one word, have the Government agreed to that?

Dominic White: No, not at the moment.

Q110 **Peter Heaton-Jones:** Are you still asking them?

Dominic White: We certainly will be, yes.

Q111 **Chair:** Reassuring. Can I just be clear, has the Government said it will not produce an implementation plan? Because our brief says it is delayed, so is it delayed or is it not going to happen?

Nienke Palstra: I think it is around the wording. They have said they will produce an implementation report, but the IDC had recommended that this equate a substantive report with clear lines of accountability and a forward-looking strategy. But the report, as we understand, is likely to be organising what the Government is already doing under specific goal areas. It won't necessarily mean changing the way we do things, but rather reporting what we are already doing in a new framework.

Q112 **Chair:** Okay. Thank you, that is helpful. Final question: we have heard a little bit about the problems of big data and then translating that into small messages, and we need, I think, some data poets to come in and translate it all. Anyone who has any ideas on that would be very welcome. You are all sort of internationally-focused charities, and I do not think we have had a lot of evidence from UK-focused charities. Do you think there is enough awareness? For example, ACEVO, the Association of



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Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations—if that still exists—is the obvious place for this to start with domestic implementation. Do you think they know about this? Do you think UK charities know about this? Do you think JRF knows about this? I have not really got a feeling.

Dominic White: You are absolutely right, and the answer is: absolutely not enough yet. This other group that I am a part of, the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, includes private sector and NGOs. There is a growing level of interest in uptake. We are just getting started—typically resource constraint and the usual story—but the ambition is to help, inspire and support stakeholders around the country drive towards a sustainable UK. We have the obvious suspects, if you like, people who are attuned to this, enrolled already, including a number of private sector organisations. But our reach to those social development organisations who are engaged is very limited.

You are right, perhaps NCVO, the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations, has even more reach across the country than ACEVO does. Yes, it would be helpful to have their capacity to commit to this agenda. We are doing a certain amount of outreach to those obvious reaches that we have already, but it is just about at capacity and reach. What would be so helpful would be a Government plan for domestication of this agenda, cascading through obvious channels that exist already.

UKSSD is a network of networks. We have a variety of networks already participating, so people who are interested in education for sustainable development, they joined the UKSSD but we need to support and reach out to their network. We could cascade leadership statements and support for this agenda through a whole variety of mechanisms, but it does require a certain amount of resourcing to get there. We could see the Government supporting road shows to go out to different cities, and often the mayors' offices are very engaged in this sort of agenda. It lands locally very well in terms of number of domestic, local issues that need attention. I think a bit of that central leadership cascading down through existing networks would be an enormous benefit to reach, as you say, across all sectors of society that is organised in different ways at the moment.

Nienke Palstra: Just to add to that, I think around the indicator's process, that is where a lot of domestic organisations would be quite interested to know what sort of new indicators the UK would be reporting on and how they can have a role in helping to shape those. Also, I would say that using existing processes and anchoring the SDGs in them is a useful way, rather than trying to create something entirely new and standalone. In our case, the reporting on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this year the concluding observations and the recommendations were specifically linked to SDGs. I think that was a very good way of prompting organisations to start thinking about those linkages and the levers that we can use as a part of the SDGs to be pushing this agenda as well.



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Q113 **Chair:** Do you think the Children's Commissioner knows about the SDGs?

Nienke Palstra: I do think so. I hope so, yes.

Q114 **Chair:** We are hoping. We do not know. Just to say, this Committee is taking our road show out tomorrow to Birmingham to engage with young people, so we are doing our little bit as far as we can. It sounds to me like you are waiting for the Government to do something, and I do understand that. Are we in a bit of a chicken and egg problem, which is you are waiting for the Government to do something, and the Government are saying, "It is going to come, but in bits and pieces", and so the awareness is not building that would force the Government to do something? Do you think that is a problem?

Dominic White: Yes. The logic of fuelling public interest and getting that demand heard loud and clear is not happening. I have some faith, perhaps, that the current delegation of responsibilities will come through and that we will start seeing a bit more traction on this agenda, but otherwise we will drive towards sustainable development by some other means. I do not know what that would look like without public support. There is a lot of interest in this agenda. What a missed opportunity it would be if the Government cannot send signals to the UK private sector to keep going with what they are doing, to grow it, and deliver more of it, because the benefits accruing to society would be massive. It would just be terribly disappointing to not see that leadership and buy-in, that understanding of how this opportunity will materialise itself through everyone else's actions.

Q115 **Chair:** Is there any anxiety in the domestic charity world about the advocacy clauses and the anti-advocacy part of the bill about a chilling effect? A lot of this is very political, ending violence, ending hunger, ending poverty. I do not think we are going to get to that by 2020. A criticism of Government failing to reach certain things could be taken as or seen to be a political criticism. Is there any concern about that in the charitable sector?

Dominic White: I think there is. I have not seen it directly related to this specific agenda, but of course it crosscuts everything so by implication it assumes to do that. Of course, that closing down of civil society space is happening and people are feeling that. I think sometimes their concerns are not as substantially founded as is perhaps talked about. We exist with a social mission to improve the lot, if you like, in all sorts of different specialisms and areas, and making statements along those lines, whether they have become politically interesting or not, does not restrict our ability to act. But perhaps it has clipped people's vocalisation of some of the concerns that they have and some of the direction of travel in terms of closing that civil society space is absolutely less than satisfactory.

Chair: Okay. Thank you. Any other witnesses wish to comment on that? Okay, I think blood-sugar levels are running low. Thank you very much.



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Thank you for staying to the end of our meeting. We really appreciate the time you have taken to come with our international panel here to share your wisdom with us today. Thank you very much indeed.