

# DISCUSSION PAPER OPTIONS FOR THE SDG ENVIRONMENT TARGETS MATURING IN 2020

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## Introduction

In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations agreed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are 17 goals and 169 targets, which aim to achieve sustainable development in a balanced and integrated manner.

Most of the 169 targets have a deadline of 2030. However, 21 of these targets will mature in 2020 (or have no explicit deadline). The reasons for these 2020 deadlines vary but most of these targets are aligned with other UN agreements or plans which have 2020 timeframes.

In particular, there are 12 targets that integrate elements of the Aichi Biodiversity targets. The Aichi targets were agreed under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and are set to end in 2020. In 2020, Parties to the CBD are expected to agree, at their 15th Conference in China, a new set of targets with a deadline of 2030.

Given that most of the SDG targets in question are lagging behind in progress and will most likely not be achieved by 2020<sup>1</sup>, a clear process is required to extend efforts to 2030 and ensure the integrity of the overall SDG framework is maintained. Without a strong environmental pillar, we will not succeed in achieving Agenda 2030. Conversations on these targets need to start well ahead of 2020 to ensure buy-in from stakeholders and decision-makers.

This discussion paper provides an analysis of five potential options and relevant decision-making milestones for reviewing the 12 SDG targets which are linked to the Aichi biodiversity targets.

## The 2020 environment targets are critical to the success of the SDGs

The 12 SDG environment targets<sup>2</sup> maturing in 2020 fall within five goals: SDG 2 (Food security), SDG 6 (Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Consumption and Production), SDG 14 (Life in Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

These targets are critical to the success of the SDGs because they ensure action on maintaining and restoring natural resources that we depend on to survive. The ecosystem services provided by nature, which underpin human survival and well-being, are at immense risk. Each year, around US\$125 trillion worth of ecosystem services are provided to the global economy through drinkable water, food, fresh air, heat absorption, productive soil, and forests & oceans that soak up carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

Given the value of these targets to the success of the SDGs, decisive action is needed. A clear decision-making process agreed by relevant parties is critical to ensure coherent transition on the targets maturing in 2020 so

<sup>1</sup> The Secretariat for Convention on Biological Diversity's input to the 2018 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2018:4-5).  
Link: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18277CBD\\_input\\_to\\_2018\\_HLPF.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18277CBD_input_to_2018_HLPF.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Please see Annex B for a list of the 21 SDG targets maturing in 2020.

that they align with the ambition and deadline of the 2030 Agenda. Without effective engagement on the maturing 2020 environment targets, the delivery of all the other SDGs is threatened.

## Timeline and process to 2020

The Parties to the CBD, one of the Rio Conventions alongside the UNFCCC and the UN CCD, adopted the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in October 2010 as part of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

At the 15th Conference of the Parties to the CBD (CBD COP-15) in China in October 2020, Parties are expected to agree on a post-2020 framework that will include a set of targets to succeed the Aichi Biodiversity targets. Simultaneously, in the lead up to 2020, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has to agree how the SDG targets maturing in 2020 will be aligned with the overarching Agenda 2030 deadline.

A decision on the process to review the 2020 SDG targets would need to take place at the High Level Political Forum under the auspices of the 74th General Assembly in 2019<sup>3</sup>.

## Ensuring coherent and integrated decision-making

Alignment with existing UN agreements is an important feature of the SDGs and supports greater policy coherence and integration across UN frameworks.

For example, in 2015, SDG negotiations were ongoing while the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was still taking shape. The SDG negotiators did not want to pre-empt the discussions under the UNFCCC, or derail agreement on the rest of the SDGs while the climate change negotiations unfolded. They managed to resolve the situation by creating the space to ground the outcomes of the Paris Climate Agreement in the SDGs by inserting an asterisk in SDG 13 (Climate Change) which links to a statement acknowledging that *“the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.”*

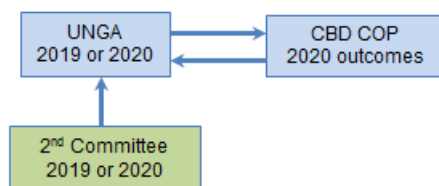
Such a two-pronged approach between UNGA and the CBD is needed to ensure that coherent and integrated global targets for environment are put in place for 2030.

## Decision-making modalities under UNGA

Depending on the sequencing between the two processes (the 2019 and 2020 UNGA sessions and the 2020 CBD COP), UNGA could follow one of the following two decision-making modalities:

- A. Centralise the decision in UNGA only, with optional input from CBD
- B. Take the decision in UNGA based on a meaningful consultation at HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC, with optional input from CBD

**A. The Centralised Approach** – UNGA is the only necessary decision-making body in regards to the SDGs and it could elect to centralise decisions on post 2020 SDG targets. An UNGA resolution on post 2020

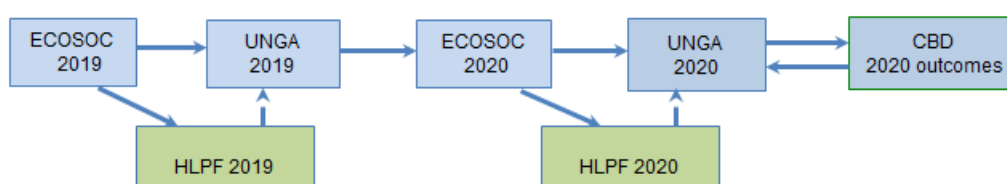


<sup>3</sup> Article 87 of the UNGA resolution A/RES/70/1 clearly states that Meeting every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly, the high-level political forum will provide high-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation, identify progress and emerging challenges and mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation. The next high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly will be held in 2019, with the cycle of meetings thus reset, in order to maximize coherence with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

SDG targets, prepared via its Second Committee, could be agreed in either 2019 or 2020. Input from the CBD could be drawn upon.

**B. Consultative Approach** – While UNGA has the mandate to make decisions relating to the SDGs on its own, it could decide to include the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) in discussion on post 2020 SDGs targets. This could be achieved through an HLPF Heads of State declaration in 2019, a ministerial declaration in 2020, and/or an ECOSOC resolution (which could adopt the HLPF declaration).

While the centralised approach will take less time and administrative effort, the consultative approach would be more inclusive and engage all of the key parts of the UN system to help ensure integration across fora and processes. The HLPF remains the forum that holds the most knowledge on the SDGs and its input is considered to be essential.



## Options for action on the 2020 environment targets

There are several options for action on the maturing targets:

1. **Non-option:** Do Nothing
2. Extend delivery date
3. Agree content of extended and updated targets
4. Agree process to extend and update targets
5. **Non-option:** Reopen the SDG framework

UNGA and its associated mechanisms can drive Options 1-4 alone<sup>4</sup>. However, under Option 4 (and to a lesser degree Option 3), UNGA would defer power to influence the decision-making to the CBD negotiations on the new CBD targets. While the CBD will pursue its own agenda regardless of the option chosen by UNGA, it can reinforce an integrated approach (such as Option 4). WWF believes to ensure continued alignment between international conventions, the selected option should ensure a strong link and cross-discussions between CBD and UNGA

Table 1 below outlines and analyses the five options<sup>5</sup> listed above. The analysis is based on considerations around efficiency gains, timelines, political acceptance, overall contribution to SDG outcomes etc.

<sup>4</sup> UNGA would also be the forum to pursue Option 1, but that is considered to be a non-option for this discussion.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that these options represent a simplification of real processes and complex negotiations for the purpose of driving conceptual discussion.

**Table 1 – Description and Analysis of Options for 2020 SDG Environment Targets**

No	Option	Process/ Actors <sup>1</sup>	Required Action	Outcome	Arguments for	Arguments against
1	<p><b><u>Do Nothing</u></b></p> <p>Leave the targets as they are and stop working on the SDG targets when they expire in 2020</p>	None	None	Pursuing this option will require least action, and will likely result in the environmental dimension of the SDGs being neglected. This will lead to incomplete implementation of the SDGs as they all rely on a thriving environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Procedural “easy option” that requires no action, but would raise questions of governments’ commitment and accountability as well as integrity of Agenda 2030.</li> <li>+ Potentially defensible approach if 2020 targets were successfully delivered (which is highly unlikely).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likely to result in the environmental dimension of the SDGs being neglected, thereby contrary to the aim of the SDGs to integrate social, economic and environmental aspects of development</li> <li>- SDGs 14 and 15 (and thereby all SDGs) cannot be achieved if countries were to stop working towards many of their targets</li> <li>- SDGs will have failed at their first test given that the 2020 targets are off track, undermining the credibility of the 2030 Agenda as a whole</li> <li>- This would undermine the achievement of the overall Agenda 2030 as a result of foundational environmental SDGs at risk</li> </ul>
2	<p><b><u>Extend delivery date for unchanged targets</u></b></p> <p>Continue reporting on current targets thereby effectively extending their deadline to 2030, without changing target content</p>	<p>UNGA, Second Committee of UNGA, UNGA President</p> <p>[HLPF under auspices of ECOSOC or UNGA]</p>	<p>UNGA resolution by 2020 to amend the deadlines in the SDGs Framework from 2020 to 2030</p> <p>[HLPF provides guidance in ministerial or HoS declaration]</p>	Pursuing this option will likely result in unambitious environment targets under the SDGs and a potential gulf between new, more ambitious CBD targets and the SDGs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Would accommodate the fact that most of the targets are unlikely to be achieved by 2020</li> <li>+ Would not require a reconsideration of indicators</li> <li>+ Probably the easiest compromise politically, but would still raise questions of commitment and ambition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks division between the new CBD targets and the SDGs which could lead to policy incoherence</li> <li>- Inefficient allocation of resources caused by two different sets of environment targets</li> <li>- Inhibits integrated approach to governance and implementation across SDGs and CBD</li> <li>- Represents a ‘missed opportunity’ to strengthen delivery of the SDGs 14 and 15 and their targets.</li> <li>- Risk to SDG credibility and could create an unhelpful precedence</li> </ul>
3	<p><b><u>Agree content of extended and updated Targets</u></b> In 2020, review the relevant targets and agree on updated version based on anticipated outcomes of CBD and other relevant frameworks.</p>	<p>UNGA, Second Committee of UNGA, UNGA President</p> <p>CBD</p> <p>[HLPF under auspices of ECOSOC or UNGA]</p>	<p>UNGA resolution via Second Committee by 2020 to amend the deadlines and content of the targets.</p> <p>CBD to advise on the content of the updated targets</p> <p>[HLPF provides guidance in ministerial or HoS declaration]</p>	<p>Pursuing this option will result in new environment targets under the SDGs, but the risk of misalignment with the new CDB targets needs to be mitigated</p> <p>(see precedence of Climate SDG agreed before Paris COP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Simpler and quicker process that allows seamless continuation of SDG implementation.</li> <li>+ Could allow to update all SDG targets that expire in 2020 in one step</li> <li>+ Follows precedence of SDG13 on climate, that was agreed with the caveat that it depends also on the final outcome of the Paris Climate COP</li> <li>+ Could allow UNGA to draw on CBD expertise and to base suggested targets on best available knowledge of likely outcomes on the new CBD framework.</li> <li>+ In keeping with the spirit of Agenda 2030 which strives to meaningfully link the SDGs with other UN frameworks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks misalignment between the new CBD targets and the SDGs which could lead to policy incoherence</li> <li>- Trying to predict updates on a target by target basis could become messy and risk re-opening the whole SDG framework for discussion</li> <li>- If the SDG targets have a lower ambition level, it could lower the bar for CBD targets</li> <li>- Could distract resource and attention from CBD process during one of CBD’s most critical decision-making moments</li> <li>- If the SDG and CBD targets diverge too much, it could inhibit integrated approach to governance and implementation across SDGs and CBD</li> <li>- Could require updated indicators</li> </ul>

No	Option	Process/Actors	Required Action	Outcomes	Arguments for	Arguments against
4	<p><b>Agree process to extend and Update Targets</b> First agree by 2020 on process for updating targets. At a later date review and update the relevant targets in alignment with the new CBD and other frameworks, once they are agreed.</p>	<p>UNGA, Second Committee of UNGA, UNGA President</p> <p>CBD</p> <p>[HLPF under auspices of ECOSOC or UNGA]</p>	<p>GA resolution agreeing on process</p> <p>CBD reaches agreement on new CBD targets</p> <p>GA confirms amended content and deadlines of targets</p> <p>[HLPF and ECOSOC providing guidance through ministerials or a HoS declaration.]</p>	<p>Pursuing this option would entail two steps:</p> <p>First UNGA agrees on the process according to which the targets will be extended and updated, which includes agreement to align updated targets with the new CBD framework.</p> <p>Once the CBD framework is agreed, the targets will be updated and formally confirmed by UNGA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Enables a universal approach to updating targets under the SDGs targets that is not limited to the environment targets only</li> <li>+ In keeping with the UN approach to agree the process before discussing the content</li> <li>+ Would ensure that updated SDG targets align with ambition levels and content of new CBD framework</li> <li>+ Enable greater integration and policy coherence with CBD and therefore the broader UN System</li> <li>+ Reduces the strain on resources and experts, focussing dedicated attention on the CBD process as the alignment happens after the crucial decision-making moment</li> <li>+ In keeping with the spirit of Agenda 2030 which strives to meaningfully link the SDGs with other UN frameworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires an additional step to actually update the targets</li> <li>- Will create a time gap between the deadline of the 2020 targets and the agreement on the updated targets which can delay efficient SDG implementation</li> <li>- Reliant on CBD, and risks a 'no deal' situation for biodiversity targets if CBD negotiations fail</li> <li>- Could require updated indicators</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Re-opening SDGs Framework</b></p> <p>It is a non-option to open the entire SDGs Framework for renegotiation and update via the Second Committee of the GA.</p>	<p>UNGA, Second Committee of UNGA, UNGA President</p> <p>[HLPF under auspices of ECOSOC or UNGA]</p>	<p>GA resolution agreeing to change in SDGs Framework</p> <p>[HLPF provides guidance in ministerial or HoS declaration]</p>	<p>Pursuing this option may or may not result in the integration of the CBD targets as new SDGs environment targets, and risks endangering SDGs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Would allow for a comprehensive revisiting of all SDGs targets, not just the 2020 targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contravenes the clearly expressed wish of Member States not to re-open the SDG framework for discussion</li> <li>- Risks weakening the SDGs as Member States may see this as an opportunity to renegotiate challenging SDGs which would go against the principle of non-regression</li> <li>- Risks incoherence across UN system if processes and outcomes such as CBD targets are not taken into account</li> <li>- Threatens the credibility of targets set under the UN system</li> <li>- Will require updated indicators</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The deadline of 21 SDG targets in 2020 represents the first real political challenge to the landmark agreement that is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The decision on updating these targets ultimately lies with UN Member States meeting in the General Assembly.

It is crucial for the continued credibility, integrity and ambition of the SDGs and the UN system, as well as the prospects of achieving sustainable development, that there should be a clear transition from 2020 to 2030 targets which builds on the integrated decision-making approach adopted during the Agenda 2030 negotiations.

For the 12 targets maturing in 2020 that are linked to the Aichi biodiversity targets, the relationship between the UNGA process and the CBD post-2020 negotiations must be clarified as early as possible to avoid misaligned CBD and SDG targets post-2020.

We have briefly outlined two decision-making modalities, centralised and consultative, that the UNGA could pursue as its members work on addressing the maturing 2020 SDG targets.

We have also outlined and analysed five options, of which two are non-options, negotiators can pursue in order to update the environment SDG targets maturing in 2020.

Regardless of the option and decision making modality that is pursued, **it is critical that the process discussions start as soon as possible**. Only if governments agree early on the process, will it be possible to have a well-prepared roadmap when the targets mature in 2020.

**We suggest that scenario pieces like this one could be the basis for an inclusive discussion between the HLPF, ECOSOC, UNGA and CBD leading to a decision on the way forward by UNGA 2019 at the latest.**

Ultimately, the challenge of agreeing how to handle the maturing 2020 targets will be a test of whether the UN system can deliver on the principles of integration and coherence agreed under the 2030 Agenda. Failure to agree a coherent process early may well threaten the successful establishment of post-2020 environment targets under the SDGs. Without these targets, the achievement of all the other SDGs is impossible as a strong environmental pillar is the foundation for humanity's survival and wellbeing.



### **Side Note: Non-Environment 2020 SDG Targets**

We recognise that other stakeholders may also have recommendations for other targets with a 2020 deadline. For example, there are 2020 targets on road traffic accidents, education, youth employment, universal internet access, disaster resilience, climate change financing, trade and data capacity building. As many of these targets connect to or impact the environment targets, we would welcome a discussion with stakeholders working on these targets to investigate options for a unified approach to updating the 2020 SDG targets.

We welcome any feedback and further suggestions on any aspects of this discussion paper.

Please contact: Claire Blanchard: [cblanchard@wwfint.org](mailto:cblanchard@wwfint.org)  
Dominic White: [dwhite@wwf.org.uk](mailto:dwhite@wwf.org.uk)



## Annex A – Relevant Actors for 2020 SDG Targets

Actor	Mandate	Relevant Output
The UN General Assembly (UNGA)	UNGA is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. Its powers are to oversee the budget of the UN, appoint the non-permanent members to the Security Council, receive reports from other parts of the UN and make recommendations in the form of General Assembly Resolutions. It has also established numerous subsidiary organs.	GA Resolution
The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	ECOSOC is the UN's central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development, and serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, and supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic, social and environmental fields.	ECOSOC Resolution
The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)	The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the global level. The Forum meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the UNGA for two days.	Ministerial Declaration (ECOSOC)  Heads of State/Government Declaration (UNGA)
The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Committee of UNGA	2 <sup>nd</sup> Committee is one of the six main standing committees of UNGA. The Second Committee deals with issues economic growth and development such as macroeconomic policy questions; financing for development; sustainable development; human settlements; globalization and interdependence; eradication of poverty; operational activities for development; agriculture development, food security and nutrition; information and communications technologies for development; and towards global partnerships.	Report to UNGA
The Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)	CBD is an international legally-binding treaty with three main goals: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.	Decisions by the Parties on strategic plans, goals and targets and protocols



## Annex B – List of maturing 2020 SDGs Targets

[21 targets – those highlighted are the 12 environment targets discussed in this paper]

Targets highlighted have been identified as lagging behind in progress<sup>6</sup> according to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- 1) 2.5 - by 2020 maintain genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at national, regional and international levels, and ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge as internationally agreed.
- 2) 3.6 - by 2020, halve global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents
- 3) 4.b - by 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships for developing countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS and African countries for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training, ICT, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- 4) 6.6 - by 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
- 5) 8.6 - by 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- 6) 8.b - by 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the ILO
- 7) 9.c - significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the internet in LDCs by 2020
- 8) 11.b - by 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels
- 9) 12.4 - by 2020, achieve environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment
- 10) 13.a - Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the UNFCCC to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
- 11) 14.2 - by 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans
- 12) 14.4 - by 2020, effectively regulate harvesting, and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics
- 13) 14.5 - by 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information
- 14) 14.6 - by 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, and refrain from introducing new such

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<sup>6</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18277CBD\\_input\\_to\\_2018\\_HLPF.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18277CBD_input_to_2018_HLPF.pdf)

subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiation<sup>7</sup>

- 15) 15.1 - by 2020, ensure conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements
- 16) 15.2 - by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
- 17) 15.5 - take urgent and significant action to reduce degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
- 18) 15.8 - by 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
- 19) 15.9 - by 2020, integrate ecosystems and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts
- 20) 17.11 - significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDCs' share of global exports by 2020
- 21) 17.18 - by 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

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<sup>7</sup> Taking into account ongoing WTO negotiations and WTO Doha Development Agenda and Hong Kong Ministerial Mandate