

# Response to the Report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda – “A New Global Partnership”

IAP is a network of 106 academies of science representing and recognising high levels of achievement by scientists from more than 100 countries of the world. Founded in 1993, it allows national academies of science to act in concert to engage with issues and deliver advice on science and policy to international audiences – particularly international organisations – in the same way that individual academies do nationally.

IAP welcomes the report of the High Level Panel. Many of the world’s scientists, and IAP itself, have been working to help address the Millennium Development Goals, and the articulation of a coherent vision for the way forward, so that all sectors of international society – governments, businesses, academia and NGO’s – can work together

## The importance of science

There has been much discussion on the progress already made in accomplishing the 2015 MDGs and on what will be needed thereafter for sustainable development worldwide. Given the scientific and technical nature of many of the world’s most pressing issues, **it is critically important that priority-setting and actions are based on sound science**, taking multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches.

National science academies ensure that the voice of science is heard on a national level. Collaborative networks of academies perform an analogous function at the regional level and beyond; for example the academy network for the Americas has been exploring issues of science education, and water management capacity to extend access to clean water and sanitation. In other recent collaborative work, a group of 14 national science academies published a Statement<sup>1</sup> summarising some of the

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<sup>1</sup> G-Science Academies Statements 2013, Driving Sustainable Development: the role of science, technology and innovation.

major global issues for sustainable consumption and development, including the challenges of population growth, demographic change and urbanisation, the provision of sufficient water, nutritious food and energy, and the goal of universal literacy—which must include universal scientific literacy, for access to basic information and tools to address these global challenges.

The High Level Panel did include a small number of scientifically qualified Eminent Persons. However, in view of the wide range of complex challenges, **IAP stands ready to provide expert, independent and concise advice** to the Panel and other structures of the international community in further developing these plans. The UN General Assembly in September 2013 will be pivotal in continuing to determine these priorities, and therefore IAP particularly reaffirms its willingness to participate in and assist in those discussions, and in follow-on actions.

## Informing priorities for the post-2015 era

We would like to comment briefly on some of the Goals proposed by the Panel, and highlight how science academies might contribute to the continuing processes of debate, verification and decision. These chosen examples are only illustrative; the interests of the academies span all of the sustainable development agenda, including priorities for health, food, water, energy, biodiversity, climate, resilience to disasters, education and governance.

- Goal 4 “Ensure healthy lives”. We acknowledge that only a broad analysis can be attempted in the Panel’s report. But we are concerned, for example, at the implicit assumption that non-communicable diseases are only a problem for high-income countries. Recent work by academies reinforces analysis by WHO which shows that the prevalence of many non-communicable

diseases and their risk factors are increasing rapidly in many African countries. This changing burden of disease has major consequences for public health systems.

As a separate but equally important point, we would like to draw attention to the rapidly growing problem worldwide of drug-resistant infections (bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic). These are becoming a major health security challenge that requires much greater attention in coordinated action to: preserve the efficacy of existing drugs; increase incentives for development of novel drugs, diagnostics and vaccines; share standardised surveillance data to improve understanding of the spread of drug resistance; and implement the fundamental research required to ascertain the origin and spread of resistant micro-organisms. Following recent deliberations during the G-Science meeting in New Delhi, 14 academies issued a statement addressing some of the key issues<sup>2</sup>.

- Goal 12 includes an objective to “Promote collaboration on and access to science, technology, innovation and development data” but the text of the Panel’s report then makes little mention of science. We advise that there be better recognition of the importance of science, particularly investment in basic science and the translation of the outputs of science into support for good practice, education and policy development as well as innovation. An increasing focus on the centrality of science has implications, in turn, for strengthening research capacity.

The report also describes the importance of improved collection, communication and analysis of data to measure progress in achieving development objectives, and highlights the principle of mutual accountability in using these data. We recommend that an independent basis for this assessment be established: the academies could usefully make an expert,

objective contribution to define, measure, monitor and evaluate progress in sustainable development.

#### IAP willingness to play an increased role

IAP – the global network of science academies has singular attributes in being free of vested political and commercial interests and in being able to draw upon the best science from all relevant disciplines and experience of the different contexts in which science has been applied, from across the whole world. IAP benefits from a well-tested merit-based academy tradition in utilising the processes of scientific culture, relying on rigorous collection of evidence, transparency in procedures, robust peer review and consensus with explicit exposure of areas of controversy.

The role that academies can play in delivering advice about the critical global issues and their potential solutions is augmented by their ability to assess strengths and weaknesses of science, technology and innovation capacity worldwide, by their engagement with the public and promotion of scientific literacy, and by their commitment to develop and support the next generation of scientific leaders.

IAP stands ready to work in partnership with policy-makers and other stakeholders to contribute further analysis and advice on the post 2015 international development agenda and the accompanying needs and opportunities for scientific research and its applications, science education and public participation.



IAP is the global network of 106 science academies representing more than 100 countries worldwide. It is run from a Secretariat in Trieste, Italy.

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<sup>2</sup> G-Science Academies Statements 2013, Drug resistance in infectious agents – a global threat to humanity.