

Sustainable Development Goals: Windows of Opportunity for Applied Linguists?

By Geoffrey M. Maroko

Department of Linguistics and Languages

Machakos University

ABSTRACT

The Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 during the Organisation's seventieth anniversary, decided on 17 new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and complete what they (MDGs) did not achieve. The SDGs are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. It was envisaged that all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. Some questions abound. What language-related challenges spring from the SDGs in such key areas as poverty, hunger, health, environment, energy, housing, and justice? In the envisaged stakeholder engagements around these issues, what is the place of applied linguists? Drawing examples from efforts at implementing selected SDGs, this paper explores language-related concerns which can be taken up by linguists to complement inputs by other stakeholders in a bid to develop and implement life changing interventions. The paper will provoke linguists to venture into more practical and policy-engaged linguistic efforts geared towards improving the quality of life by 2030.