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The Millennium Development Goals: Milestones for a sustainable development?

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Abstract

Hardly any multinational treaty ever won the support of so many countries and their political leaders as the Millennium Declaration and the entailed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did. Together they shape the face of today's global development policy. Nevertheless critics accuse them to substantially weaken commitments towards sustainable and social development e.g. made at the Earth Summit in Rio or the World Social Summit in Copenhagen.

Against this background the core question explored in this study is in how far the MDGs are in accordance with the ideal of sustainability. To gain a deeper understanding the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs are first put in connection with their context, the international debate on development, and then are both presented in more detail, analysing their commons and differences in contents as well as in political influence. Their implementation, crucial for the relevance of every treaty, is analysed by casting light at the pursued organisational structure and strategy as well as results achieved so far. Finally an overview on the bandwidth of existing critics is provided and the MDGs are measured against central criteria of sustainability to highlight whether their entailed understanding of development fits into a sustainable one or not.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, Sustainability