

# TACKLING CORPORATE POWER

**L**AST week, three major events on education took place around the world that could have significant impact on future generations worldwide. First, on Sept 28, the world witnessed a launch of another global agenda — the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2016 to 2030. This was in conjunction with the United Nations General Assembly that took place in New York, where world leaders converged last week to endorse the SDGs. This came at the heel of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiated in 2000 and will end this year, hence the SDGs. This is especially important because the MDGs have a number of “unfinished” businesses and must be taken into account in achieving “sustainability”.

There are, however, fundamental differences between MDGs and SDGs to be leveraged to make the attainment of “sustainability” more meaningful. For exam-

ple, the former is very much aimed at developing countries, generally regarded to be “unsustainable”, with high levels of poverty and hunger, poorly educated individuals with high maternal and infant mortality rates and so on. These are coupled with the threat to “environmental sustainability”. Indeed, it is undeniable that many issues of sustainability also originate from the so-called “developmental” activities carried out in developed economies. It has been said that the resources needed for this to happen may range between three and five planets in equivalence. They con-

tinue to be wasteful and live unsustainably as their developing counterparts struggle for the much needed resources to make sustainable development a reality.

Unlike MDGs however, SDGs were devised more comprehensively without breaching the nexus between developed and developing states, North-South, East-

West or any other divides. This means that the elements of collaboration, networking and partnerships must be fully enhanced as a means to make sustainability a truly global goal for humanity across all divides rather than being contextualised between national borders and boundaries.

For that reason, the SDGs are organised in such a way that they are all interconnected. That there are 17 goals in the SDGs show that there are still many gaps that need to be filled. And, the linking up is imperative to get into the bigger picture, as well as find more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. The perspective of this, as provided for by the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, subtitled, “Envisioning the post-2015 future — Global Impact by 2030”, reads: “A world where extreme poverty has been eradicated and where the building blocks for sustained prosperity are in place. A world where no one has been left behind, where economies are transformed, and where transparent and representative governments are in charge. A world of peace where sustainable development is the overarching goal. A world with a new spirit of cooperation and partnership. This is not wishful thinking.”

Yet, not all are fully convinced, with some raising concern that the power of corporations, regarded as “fundamental to the staggering levels of inequality which afflict the world” are not well addressed in the new sustainability agenda. In fact, there are those who consider themselves as being at the centre of an economic model, quite prepared to burn the planet in its drive for ever more profit. It is, therefore, deemed as impossible to realise the targets of the SDGs without tackling corporate power. More so, it is also noted that unless the flow of knowledge is facilitated to expedite the process towards achieving the SDGs, much of the work will be hampered. To date, there are still no signs as to how governments will improve the flow of knowledge around the world without breaking the ever more ferocious intellectual property regime that allows corporate giants to monopolise that knowledge. These are issues that are bound to hamper the achievements towards a better and sustainable world.

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