

The SDGs: an approach to the study of actors and coordinated work between companies and governments

Los ODS: una aproximación al estudio de los actores y trabajo coordinado entre compañías y gobiernos

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Abstract:

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The environment is an international society topic. The United Nations (UN) has therefore launched, within the framework of the 2030 agenda, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to halt climate change and improve living conditions in the world. The objective of this work is to provide students with an approximation to the objectives of sustainable development and to emphasize the role that the public and private sectors play as the main actors of the project of improvement of the environment in the planet. This is a descriptive work that addresses the SDGs in general and not in particular, including their most important actors and their efforts to achieve them. This work tries to show how the actors make important efforts in the matter and their relevance on this global project. It is, therefore, a work that invites for reflection on the subject of the environment for future professionals of the administrative economic sciences.

Keywords:

Sustainable development goals, Social Responsibility, International Agreements

Resumen:

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El medio ambiente es un pendiente que se tiene como sociedad internacional. Por lo tanto, la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) ha lanzado en el marco de la agenda 2030 los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible (ODS) para detener el cambio climático y mejorar las condiciones de vida del mundo. El objetivo de este trabajo dar a los estudiantes, una aproximación a los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible y resaltar que el sector público y el privado son los grandes actores del proyecto de mejoramiento al medio ambiente en el planeta. Este es un trabajo descriptivo que aborda los ODS en lo general y no en lo particular, con sus actores más importantes y sus esfuerzos para lograrlos. El trabajo trata de mostrar que los actores hacen esfuerzos importantes en la materia y su relevancia en este proyecto mundial. Es pues, un trabajo que invita a una reflexión en el tema del medio ambiente para los futuros profesionales de las ciencias económico administrativas.

Palabras Clave:

Objetivos de desarrollo Sostenible, Responsabilidad social, Acuerdos internacionales

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Introduction

Nothing is static in the study of international trade, everything is changing. It can be seen that in less than thirty years our country has redefined its commercial history, leaving behind an import substitution model and opening its markets to free trade in almost all its productive sectors. This change is most noticeable since Mexico joined the GATT in the mid-1980s. Subsequently, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) transformed the country into a different commercial dynamic from the one that traditionally existed.

Mexican companies themselves have had to catch up on international trade to compete in world markets that offer the same products with different quality levels, for example. However, the companies were not on their own, but the government provided support to help the productive sectors through their companies to have more and better opportunities to succeed in such transformations. In other words, for the great changes that have taken place in commercial matters in our country, government and companies have always acted jointly.

The establishment of the more than ten free trade agreements that our country has signed is nothing more than an attempt by the government to deliver better commercial routes or opportunities for Mexican companies to help them bring their products to other markets, not necessarily to those that are already established. However, international environment demand changes in the way they produce. The impact of the production of goods and services on the environment has been evident for many years. Humanity needs to make changes in the way of thinking and of course in the way of producing.

The United Nations (UN) is therefore committed to take action in response to the call for attention from many national and international bodies. Thus, since the beginning of this millennium, the Millennium Development Goals themselves have been drawn up in an effort to reduce economic and opportunities disparities in humanity. Environment is an important point that is taken up in these objectives. By 2015, the necessary measures had not been taken to reach the fulfilment of them, and the sustainable development goals are established by the UN itself, with a fatal due date of 2030.

Known as the 2030 agenda, it sets out the challenges that governments face in alleviating the world's environmental problems. But governments cannot do anything without the intervention of companies or the private sector. It is therefore the objective of this work to establish an approximation to the objectives of sustainable development emphasizing that the public and the private sectors, either in international trade or in domestic trade, are the main actors of this duty- This does not mean that the efforts made by individuals or by civil society in the world are not necessary or useful, only that they are not the subject of this work.

Methodology

In this paper have use a descriptive study in order to stablish the way in which governments, companies and civil society could reach results of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The revision of the literature and the highlights in this topic can help to hold the reality of the coordinated work among the three actors. At last, the intention of this work is to focus the discussion for the basis of further analysis in this arena

In order to achieve the objective, a study is made on the SDGs. Not only in its definition but also in its meaning and the scope it is intended to have in general and not in a particular objective. The approach of the international community is decisive in understanding their importance. Then, corporate social responsibility is managed as part of the efforts of the productive units as actors in this process, to meet the benchmarks by 2030. This responsibility is not an easy task because it involves both the private and public sectors as main actors for achieving the 2030 agenda on time.

Results

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed in 2015 by the UN member countries to make governments carry out actions or rather, put in place, the necessary legal framework or legal rigour so that businesses and society in general could do something to end poverty, protect the planet and provide better opportunities to all inhabitants of not just one region, but the whole world. These goals constitute the so-called 2030 agenda for sustainable development. There are seventeen SDGs in total and it is intended to reach them by 2030. [1]

The SDGs are not an isolated effort or the product of a new idea. In fact, in 2000, the UN member States declared the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were a response or work formalization, to which several social movements had been fighting years in advance. Therefore, the UN supported that claim and elevated them to a global scope United Nations Initiative. [2]

It was at the seventieth General Assembly of the United Nations, held in 2015, that the goals were signed by 193 world heads of State or Government. This happened because the MDGs established in the fifty-five General Assembly had not been achieved or had not been enacted with energy. The SDGs are part of a very ambitious agenda that aims to change the direction in which humanity is heading to correct climate change. But in achieving results for the above-mentioned goals, we cannot ignore the fact that not only goals and targets are needed, but also who may implement them. [3]

Discussion

The SDGs require a lot of effort and dedication on behalf of change actors, such as governments, businesses and the general population. It is a convergence of global level actions that will result in the improvement, or eventually ending some issues that afflict humanity as a whole. Never before has a global vision of

sustainable development been so well understood, but neither has been such a lack of consistency of governments with their actions to achieve them until the agreements were signed. But while the agenda was established by the United Nations, it is the member States duty to enact the objectives. [3]

These objectives have certain characteristics that identify them and in turn visualize their scope. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has indicated that they share three characteristics that let us give them their correct dimension: They are universal, transformative and civilizing. These characteristics help us to realize the very important role of the actors. For example, the universality condition is given because they are of observance for all the countries of the world, and, even more so for all the people who inhabit the planet. All at their respective levels, governments, companies and individuals are committed to the so-called 2030 agenda. This explains the need for actors in all countries not only at the UN but throughout the world. Not everything is an obligation since everyone will enjoy the benefits of having a healthier environment; the effects are for all inhabitants of the planet. [4]

The SDGs are transformative because they are actions whose results include a change of vision about development. It is understood that the main difference is that development must not only be pursued for itself, but in the search of sustained development. When the SDGs are reached all stakeholders, governments, businesses and civil society will not have the same vision again.

These objectives are also civilizing. This means that no one in the world is left out of this change. They assign specific responsibilities to governments, organizations and individuals so that no one is left out. This civilizing effort, must have an inclusive sense in order to eradicate forever the distinctions of race, faith, colour, sex, language or any other condition that could make a difference among them. These SDGs do not look for a change in doing things at the global level only, but they seek a universal change of thought. [4]

However, if we want to place international trade in the direction of the SDGs that correspond to it, then we can distinguish several issues, among which stand out and we will highlight the efforts of ethics in companies. Reference is made to this, because companies will not only engage in indiscriminate production, but at the time of choosing products will have to do so by means of certain guidelines imposed on them by morality in the face of the new global demand. This means that companies face a new problem, which is to produce with environmental awareness and not just to increase their profit margins. It is therefore the ethics suggested that will regulate the internal behaviour of the actors.

This topic implies entering into the study of corporate social responsibility (CSR). This topic is not new; researchers have been analysing it for more than thirty years. Since the 1970s, this issue has been seen as a fundamental tool for social progress. Corporate social responsibility is, in short, a concept that tries to combine two very important items: the achievement of the economic expectations of the company on the one hand and on the other the objectives of a society whether it is a

society where the company or the international society is inserted. [5]

In this category it is necessary to mention the creation of value. Socially responsible companies generate triple value. This is because they are immersed in business thinking, in three factors that are economic, environmental and social. Economically, they generate environments that allow them to have better and higher incomes. In the environmental field it is in the field of clean technologies, awareness in the recycling not only of its products but of its inputs. The life cycle of products is very important because they bring sustainability to development and generate an empathy with customers who make efforts for sustainability. [6]

On the social level, continues Nowalski, it is not only as the philanthropy to benefit a specific group of people with an amount of money. In addition, it establishes healthier working environments and develop social capital. Try to reduce poverty as much as possible by investing not only in education but also in physical infrastructure, with social welfare and society as a whole in mind. CSR is therefore a kind of condition for production to be thought not only in economic terms but also for the benefit of a society that is not only local but global. [6]

But not everything is easy on the issue of corporate social responsibility. For example, in the tourism sector in Mexico there are no programs that support companies or businesses that have a responsibility objective. This means, if we want more companies producing goods or services in conditions of social responsibility, we need an incentive program from governments. So they have to work together to achieve the 2030 targets to be in place for exporters or importers with inclination towards environment. Otherwise, governments and companies will work isolated and the way could be very difficult in order to reach their goals. [7]

For the achievement of the SDGs that are proposed by the international community, the actors known as companies, in general and the exporters also, have to focus in CSR. In fact, if a company has this kind of responsibility, it immediately obtains a competitive advantage factor, not only in the domestic market but in the international one. So people know or suppose that such products are made with deep respect for nature and even with social causes. It is very important that the actions of companies must fit to the legal norms of each country. This means that governments have to do their part together with companies to achieve progress around the SDGs. [7]

These objectives will aim, where companies have to go. They also become an important strategy for the design of government plans. This applies to all levels of government in the countries. Mexico is organized in three levels called, national for all the country observance, for States of the federation and municipal in the order of cities and towns. We can traduce the Mexican organization in the public administration of other countries. It is at this point, where the convergence of governments, the private sector and society in general is on the road to making the SDGs a reality. [5]

The Government, as an important factor in achieving the 2030 agenda, implements actions to facilitate processes and obtain results. In this regard, the

Government of Mexico has always supported issues of international interest that are aligned with its objectives as a country. As a result of the work on the Millennium Development Goals, the Specialized Technical Committee for the Millennium Development Goals Information System was established in Mexico in 2010. This is to contribute in the fulfilment of the great global task that is ahead. However, in response to the SDGs in 2015, the name of this technical committee was changed to become the Specialized Technical Committee of the Development Goals Information System. [8]

In the field of the SDGs, the presidential decree of the government of Mexico is made, creating the National Council of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on April 26, 2017. Even with its subsequent reform in 2021, where this organism is strengthened, it continues linking the work of the federal government with those of each federal entity. But also, coordinate these with the private sector, civil society and academia. The role of this Council is important in the coordination of actions among the actors. So, it coordinates actions for the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies, policies and programmes to enable them to achieve the goals they have in this arena of sustained development. [8]

These organisms have provided reports, assessments and comments to the United Nations, particularly the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). This is important to note that as a Mexican government, social and environmental policies and programs are being aligned with international level. In this forum the National Voluntary Reports are delivered. The Mexican State has submitted a total of three reports in 2016, 2018 and 2021. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda published a report in which not only the federal, but also the local government, were discussed. The private sector, civil society representatives and academics, among others, also participated. It is for far, the SDG exercise that has been most inclusive, bringing together as many actors as possible. [9]

Therefore, both actors are contributing solutions to the achievement of the SDGs in their respective responsibilities. We can see how they are positioned as important actors in the change of direction that the world requires for its conservation. Companies, governments, and SDG's must all remain together in their roles, covering the different areas of their exercise. We are now in a position to conceptualize the SDGs with the actors that are fixed in the present work that are governments and companies.

The SDGs establish issues that are necessary, to have a better planet to inhabit. In the same way, the governments of the signatory States of the UN are not the only ones who will make this real. There is where we can see who has the responsibility to carry out these objectives. This is because governments alone will not be able to do the entire task. To know who are responsible of all the actions imposed by the SDGs will be seen what and how many objectives are.

However, table 1 shows the SDGs in their original numbering with their titles in general and in the last column the way they are written in the UN resolution. This

is useful, to emphasize the importance of the objectives. Not only in speech and implementation, but in the spirit of the United Nations document itself. For example, if you only read objective two entitled "Zero hunger", you may miss the correct interpretation of UN, it is not just food security, but also the part of nutrition and the promotion of sustainable agriculture. [1]

Table 1 Sustainable Development Goals

Number	Title	UN resolution
1	End of poverty	End poverty in all its forms and throughout the world.
2	Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3	Health and well-being	Ensure a healthy life and promote the well-being of all at all ages.
4	Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5	Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6	Clean water and sanitation	Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7	Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8	Decent work and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructures, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10	Reduction of inequalities	Reducing inequality within and between countries
11	Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12	Responsible production and consumption	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13	Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its effects.
14	Underwater life	Sustainably conserve and use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15	Life of terrestrial ecosystems	Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, facilitate access to justice for all and build accountable, effective and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17	Partnerships to achieve goals	Strengthen means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Own elaboration by the author based in the Economic Comisión for Latin America and Caribbean and United Nations data. 1, 4

So, the importance of remembering the original text is very necessary. Thus, in goal five, gender equality, in the document of the United Nations goes beyond the search for equity to visualize the empowerment of women and girls. The objectives will not be analysed in a simple way but with a vision of the world in which we try to live in 2030. It is precisely in the context of what is being pursued for that year that it is certain that it is mainly two entities that have the strongest workload in this regard and that it is State governments and companies.

Regardless of the fact that the people who inhabit the planet also have responsibility in this matter, the importance of the other two factors cannot be denied. Thus, within their own spheres of action, both have an intrinsic and complex relationship since it is not just a government with a company in its environment, but it can be a government with companies from other countries or transnational corporations coordinating work and effort with many governments. In all this way, we find the actors working for join all efforts to reach the goals.

This is not an isolated work or a task that can only be carried out by companies, but governments must support it. This can be seen with the laws that sometimes seem to put a stop to the changes that are wanted in the scope of companies (SIRSE, 2020). In the state of Hidalgo the so-called "Hidalgo 2050 climate agenda" was shared (Milenio, 2022). That agenda recognizes the effort of the federal entity in environmental matters that takes on five commitments in environmental matters. These are that in seven years there will be no deforestation in Hidalgo and in a span of 20 years that federal entity will be a benchmark in electro mobility with sustainable mass transport, will recover the water basins and compensate what they call the environmental liability in Tula. [10, 11]

It is important to say, that among all the commitments made and the vision of the Hidalgo agenda, the three scopes of government are aligned. This means that the agreements between the three levels of government will have a very important role to achieving the commitments that are being made. This is a good example to consider the reality of the coordinated work at the federation and the federation entities levels. But it is seen in the same way that the presence of private initiative and its commitment in Hidalgo is not noticed. Likewise, the gap between the 2030 agenda and that of the States is at least 20 years. This highlights the fact that the government, as an extremely important actor in this process, must seek to coordinate efforts between one level of government and another.

It is importance to achieve the agreement of the actors that influence the achievement of the SDGs. Sustainability is everyone's responsibility and can be achieved with the joint and coordinated effort of government actors and private companies. In this context, it can be noted that when the SDGs address the issue of poverty reduction, they do not refer to government or companies working in isolation but together. For example, when it is proposed that "... the reduction of poverty and sustainable development through a true liberalization of

trade that helps to maximize the same as is established in this Agenda for Development.". It highlights the fact that in order to achieve trade liberalization there must be a work of both actors, namely the government and the private sector. In all the SDG's you want to study, in a trade liberalization enter into scene both, the companies that produce a good or service and the States that through their laws and international treaties open the trade routes. [12]

But free trade agreements also play a restrictive role towards business in achieving sustainable development. Most of the free trade agreements that Latin America has signed have a strong commitment towards sustainability. In the case of the free trade agreement in the Central American region, the trading partners are obliged to comply with the environmental legislation of the governments of the partners themselves. Thus, if any company in its production shows deterioration in the environment, they are sanctioned and obliged to repair the damage caused, within the framework of the treaty itself. Then the treaties prefer socially responsible companies to achieve economic growth without impacting the environment. [6]

Despite the long debates against the free trade agreements all over the world, they are the legal framework in which world trade operates. In the same way, they strongly support a more friendly international trade with the planet and the environment. These international instruments need to promote trade in goods and services in green environments. But it is not just a production issue; they also have an interest in respecting human rights in companies so that more SDGs are met along the way of the production process.

The concern of the international community is real in setting the sustainable development goals. Not only are the speeches of a negotiation, but all States members of the United Nations take them as their own. The environment is compromised, but the SDGs are not only going to avoid climate change but also trying to change and reduce the social gaps. It is therefore a transformation in the orientation of humanity towards better living conditions.

Conclusions

The SDGs have to be landed in companies so that they can be reached. In the same category, productive organizations have to transform their mentality in order to achieve what is required of their products. Nowadays, social responsibility is not a luxury for investors but rather a necessity that leads them to have access to other markets and therefore to profits that they would not have without the implementation of CSR.

The governments have a very important role in the achievement of the objectives. They have to observe and enforce a legal framework that leads companies to have better opportunities to reach with the international commitments that have been signed. It must also align legislation with plans and programmes to support entrepreneurs so that their efforts go in the same direction. These two actors have to put attention in the general economy of the country.

International legal environments such as free trade agreements have a strong inclination towards

environmental conservation and sustainable environments. In the free trade agreements, there are chapters dealing with the issues of respect for human rights and respect for the environment as a fundamental part of sustainable development. Trade, international and domestic, must not deviate from the principles of sustainability and respect for life and people. The correct and coordinated work between governments and companies will help us to achieve the goals of the 2030 agenda and the preservation of life and our countries.

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