

Backgrounder – The U.N. Sustainability Development Goals and Silver

(January – 2019) In 2000, the United Nations (UN) agreed to begin a wide-ranging program of work committed to improving the quality of life of the world’s poorest communities. This agreement led to the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were eight measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases, and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities. The MDGs were in place for 15 years, and according to the UN key achievements directly associated with the goals included:

- More than 1 billion people being lifted out of extreme poverty (since 1990)
- Child mortality dropping by more than half (since 1990)
- The number of out of school children dropping by more than half (since 1990)
- HIV/AIDS infections falling by almost 40 percent (since 2000)

However, while there was considerable success across the eight goals, there was a recognition that the MDGs didn’t go far enough in places. This led to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 193 heads of state and governments at a special UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. There are 17 SDGs which, according to the UN, are unique in that they cover issues that affect the whole of society and reaffirm international commitment to end poverty and involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for all humanity, leaving no one behind.

As can be seen in the figure below, in addition to the original MDG focus on poverty, hunger



and healthcare, the 17 SDGs have a clear extended aim of impacting climate change, clean energy and responsible production, all of which are subject to their own specific SDG. However, ultimately, there is strong intercorrelation between all the targets; progress made on a specific goal will positively influence others, and vice versa. More details can be found on the UN's dedicated website here: [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The mining sector is ideally positioned to play a considerable role in delivering the targets set out in the SDGs. Unlike many sectors, mining is not linked to just one or two of the goals; operations have the potential to contribute to several at any one time. The International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) has researched the link between mining and the SDGs at length, and state that this potential "is due to the multifaceted impacts (both positive and negative) that companies and operations can have on communities, ecosystems and economies. These, coupled with the fundamental importance of metals and minerals to modern life, the influence of mining on all of the SDGs becomes apparent. In addition, many mining and metals companies have acquired valuable experience of working in partnership with governments, civil society, and development agencies in order to operate effectively in some of the world's most remote, environmentally sensitive regions that also need assistance in building institutional capacity and governance. This knowledge and experience needs to be captured and shared in new ways in order to unlock the potential that mining can bring to the ambitious, integrated global agenda represented by the SDGs."¹

Many of the Silver Institute's mining company members manage large-scale mines around the world, making significant contributions to society via their responsible operations. Indeed, our members place their people, their local communities and the environment at the heart of their activities, in direct alignment with the key SDGs. They provide highly paid careers with opportunities for development, considerable local infrastructure investments and responsible environmental stewardship among many other positive and progressive initiatives. Additionally, over half of the silver produced is utilized in industrial applications, many of which are central to modern technology and directly related to specific SDGs. We are all connected thanks to silver's critical role in the electronics sector, and we all benefit from the reliable and efficient operation of many cutting-edge clean technologies that rely on silver's unique chemical and physical properties.



Silver is a unique metal whose production and uses are fundamentally linked to the SDGs, and we believe this is a story worth telling. Accordingly, this year the Silver Institute will launch its Silver Sustainability Initiative to illustrate how our members contribute to a better society. We will highlight their efforts as well as focus on how silver impacts our lives for the better.

¹ <https://www.icmm.com/en-gb/metals-and-minerals/making-a-positive-contribution/sdgs>