Observations, Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals

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1. **Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger;**
2. **Achieving universal primary education;**
3. **Promoting gender equality and empowering women;**
4. **Reducing child mortality rates;**
5. **Improving maternal health;**
6. **Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;**
7. **Ensuring environmental sustainability; and**

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By **Avril Ormsby**

LONDON | Wed Oct 26, 2011 2:29pm EDT

(Reuters) - Instead of worrying about sheer numbers when the world's population hits 7 billion next week,

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How to approach a more rigorous concept which could replace the MDGs post-2015?

Observations play a major role!

Q1

Are the terms “MDGs”, “SDGs” and “Global Sustainability Goals” similar, different, complementary or conflicting? And what are the implications for setting goals, targets and indicators and the data needs?

- For most people, those terms will appear indistinguishable – there is therefore need for a unified set of goals that respond to current societal demands.
- Observing progress towards the new goals requires definition of quantifiable targets and indicators.

Q2

Can we develop goals, targets and indicators in a manner that acknowledges the global inter-connections – some complimentary and others with trade-offs?

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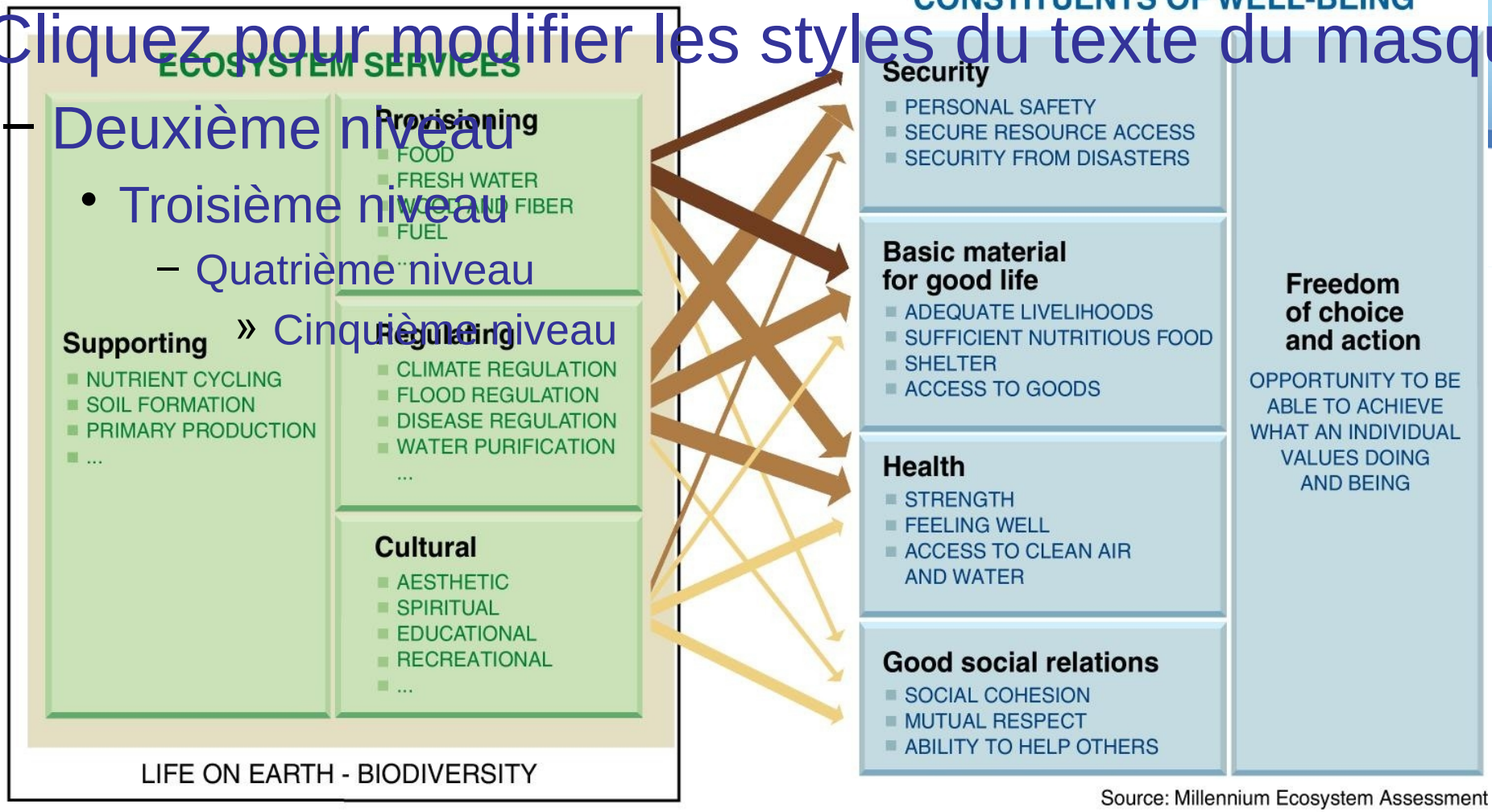


Q2

Can we develop goals, targets and indicators in a manner that acknowledges the global inter-connections – some complimentary and others with trade-offs?

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has demonstrated interconnected goals and targets for one large segment of human well-being (its foundation on biodiversity and ecosystem services). Further conceptual work is possible in order to

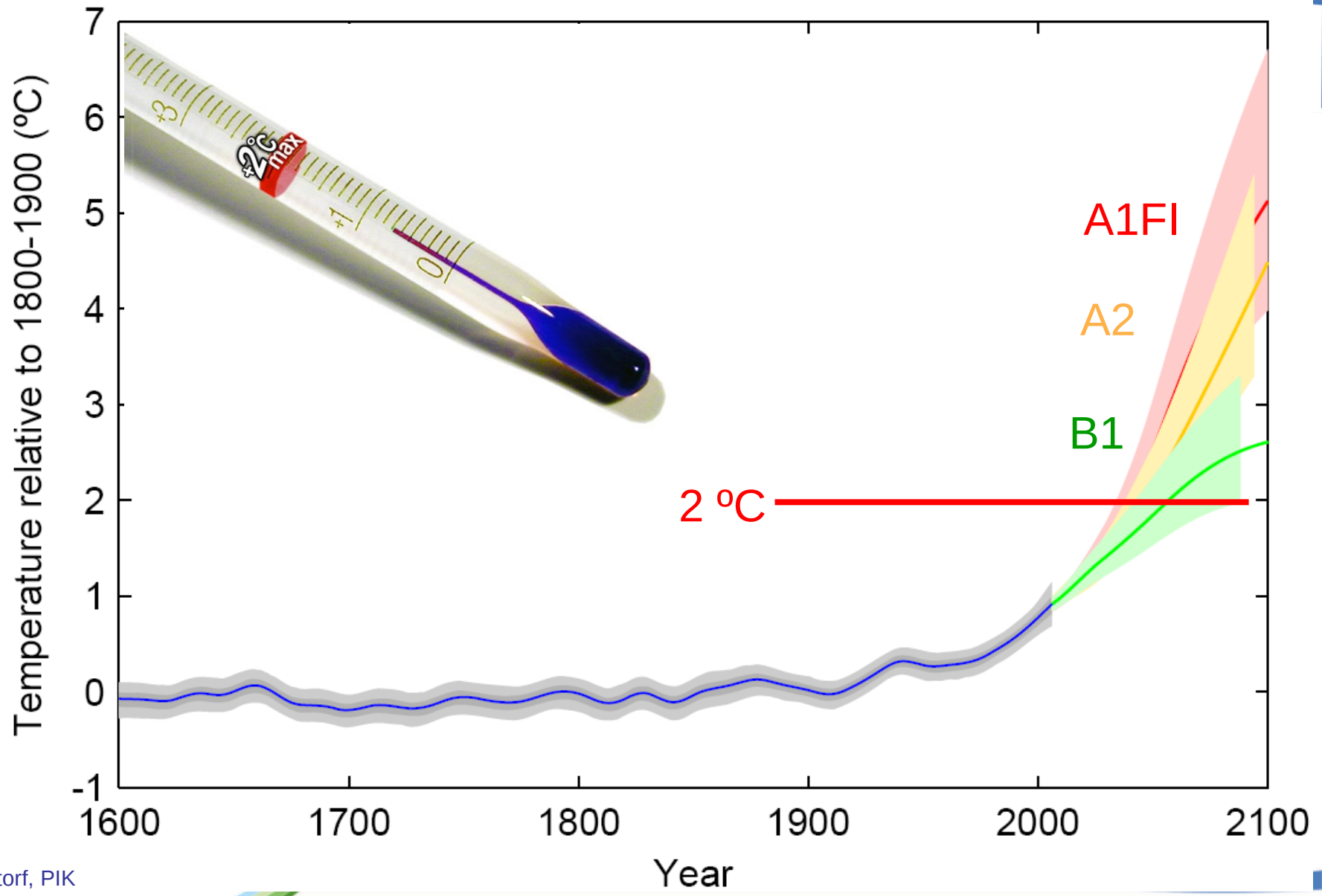
- extend this framework, and
- define suitable observation systems

Q3

How do we develop global goals, targets and indicators that capture explicitly the need for collective action to achieve these targets?

The goals and targets will be related to the need for collective action – however the indicators and observation systems will not themselves have to be built around any such principle.

The 2º “guard rail”



S Rahmstorf, PIK

Strategic goal A. Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss

Target 1: By 2020, … People are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Target 2: By 2020, … biodiversity values are integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and national accounts …

Target 3: By 2020, … incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, .

Target 4: By 2020, … Governments, business and stakeholders have plans for sustainable production and consumption and keep the impacts resource use within safe ecological limits.

Q4

...spatial and temporal scales across the natural and socio-economic sciences...

The problem is well-known and arises from the different spatial and temporal structure of natural phenomena and human society. It has no obvious solution except for approximative solutions (geographical information systems).

Q5

What will be the main challenges in reconciling the data and information needs from the natural and socio-economic systems to ensure comparable concrete, quantifiable and time bound goals, targets and indicators?

1. Coverage in less developed areas
2. Coverage of social topics such as education, nutrition, health, income etc.
3. Coverage of demanding natural variables such as biodiversity
4. Free and open access, long-term storage

Q6

What will be the main steps for the scientific community to take in order to contribute to the post-2015 development framework process initiated by the UN?

- conceptual development (interdisciplinarity)
- infrastructure (censuses, remote sensing, field inventories)
- free access to data
- working and credible science-policy interfaces

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