

RESEARCH

Enforcing Contracts for Sustainable Development: Aligning Legal Frameworks with SDG Targets

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: This article explores the use of enforceable contracts to advance sustainable development, leveraging innovative legal structures for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation and addressing global challenges such as inequality, environmental harm, and governance.

METHODOLOGY: A qualitative doctrinal and comparative study of legal sources considers the enforcement of contracts and how it relates to SDGs.

FINDINGS: Contract enforcement that supports sustainability supports SDGs such as Peace, Justice, Climate Action, and Reduced Inequalities, but inconsistent legal standards and limited awareness impede implementation.

ORIGINALITY: Contract enforcement is crucial for sustainable development. Strategies for incorporating SDGs into legal documents guide decision-makers on laws and business strategies.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS: Using secondary information and changes in the law make it difficult to generalise, underscoring the need to update current guidelines.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: Sustainability-related provisions and ethical dispute clauses in contracts encourage fairness, assist vulnerable individuals, and help achieve environmental goals.

KEYWORDS: *Enforcing Contract; SDGs; Developing Clear Laws; Sustainability Clauses; Preventing Corruption.*

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INTRODUCTION

Enforceable contracts constitute a vital yet often neglected aspect of rule-of-law promotion, characterised by precision, evidence-based outcomes, and open procedures. Aligning legal-system reform with relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets amplifies the impact of assistance and attracts high-level interest. By examining these contracts and their connection to infrastructure investment, innovation, and SDG achievement in developing economies, it becomes possible to set clear analytical and promotional priorities.

Enforceable contracts are not used to their full potential, even though they are important in the attainment of the SDGs. The literature in place is insufficient to explain how the enforcement of contracts can be systematically adjusted to SDG targets in various legal frameworks. This paper fills this gap by offering a comparative legal assessment and offering practical processes to incorporate sustainability into contractual structures.

Figure 1 depicts the steps involved in contract enforcement and their relationship to the SDGs.

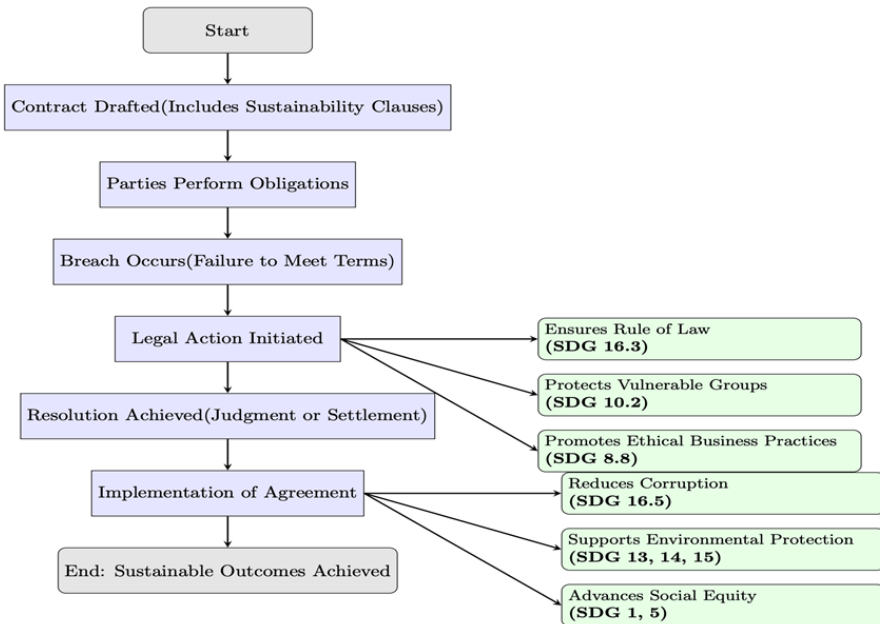


Figure 1: Contract Enforcement Steps

Source: Constructed by author

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative doctrinal and comparative legal methodology to investigate the benefits of enforceable contracts in promoting sustainable development and harmonising the law with the SDGs.

The paper is founded on the study of secondary sources, such as international legal instruments, national law, academic literature, and reports of international organisations. A comparative approach is applied to evaluate the differences between civil, common and hybrid systems as far as the enforcement of contracts is concerned.

A thematic analysis is also employed in the study to analyse the impact of the mentioned areas on SDG-related outcomes: judicial efficiency, dispute resolution mechanisms, and digital contracts.

It is policy-oriented research that attempts to offer practical recommendations on how law systems can be enhanced. However, it is restricted as it relies on secondary data and there is a lack of primary empirical evidence.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: CONTRACTS, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

An extensive theory of contracts has been developed since the emergence of modern economic analysis in the mid-twentieth century, followed by the emergence of contract theory in development economics and governance (Walsh *et al.*, 2022). Contracts lie at the heart of financial transactions and are the principal means for clearly defining expectations and sharing risks. Apparent and obscure deficits, especially in the water sector, infrastructure, energy, and other essential sectors, reinforce the need for sustainable development and reliable contracting. Secure rights, protection against arbitrary changes, and predictable, timely resolution through formal courts contribute to effective governance; appropriate contract prioritisation helps maximise results.

Reliable contracting significantly influences investment, innovation, infrastructure, and the public-private partnership (PPP) sector. Existing mechanisms through which reliable contracting contributes to infrastructure, energy, and PPP outcomes can be illuminated by understanding contracts as formal risk-allocation devices that contain incentives, response mechanisms linked to contract design, and other vital features (Almarri and Boussabaine, 2025). In the infrastructure domain, predictable, speedy, and non-arbitrary resolution enhances financing prospects by enabling investors to make informed decisions. Public-private agreements can assign performance incentives that improve service quality.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND SDG ALIGNMENT

Unpacking SDG alignment reveals varying degrees of relevance across the 17 SDGs. During the drafting of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations (UN) unequivocally acknowledged that no single goal would suffice for the required transformation; all now form an integrated whole that continues to generate debate (Abd Aziz and Basir, 2018). For developing economies, the link between enforceable contracts and sustainable development remains strong and, crucially, interest is tangible, as further progress helps unlock additional funding from donor countries and organisations. The emphasis of the original 77th General Assembly debate remained intact and enforceable; widely available contracts are essential for developing sustainable infrastructure through a multitude of avenues, including the highly visible, high-impact, and fungible areas of energy and transport infrastructure, as well as PPPs. Consequently, compliance is chiefly concerned with SDG Target 16.3; enhancement offers possibilities to contribute to Targets 8.1 and 9.5.

Table 1 outlines significant improvements in contracts that align legal agreements with the UN SDGs. These developments provide a means to directly incorporate sustainability principles into business agreements. These contractual instruments show how private contracts might be used to further, broader goals of global growth.

Table 1: Innovative Contractual Clauses and their Alignment with Specific SDG Targets

Contractual Innovation	Description	Linked SG Target(s)
Sustainability Clause	Requires adherence to environmental standards	SDG 13 (Climate action), SG 15 (Life on land)
Anti-Corruption Provision	Prevent bribery and unethical practices	SDG 16.5 (Reduce corruption)
Gender Equality Commitments	Ensure fair treatment of women in agreements	SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
Social Impact Metrics	Track contributions to community wellbeing	SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 3 (Good health)
Dispute Resolution Mechanisms	Include mediation or arbitration clauses	SDG 16.3 (Access to justice)

Source: Constructed by author

Targets 16.3, 8.1, and 9.5: Access to Justice, Efficient Markets and Innovation

The SDG targets 16.3, 8.1 and 9.5 all emphasise the importance of enforceable contracts in fostering access to justice, economic efficiency, and innovation. Goal 16.3

of the SDGs is to provide everyone with equal access to justice and empower the rule of law based on effective legal and institutional frameworks (Caldwell and Jamali, 2025). Some of the key measures involve judicial independence, transparency in legal procedures and availability of remedies in case of breach of contract. Namely, judicial independence prevents courts against outside influences and delays, granting them the right to resolve a dispute in a timely and fair way.

Effective enforcement of contracts also directly benefits SDG target 8.1 by improving the efficiency of the market and economic growth. Quick and timely implementation minimises transaction costs, boosts investor confidence, and promotes mega investments and innovation. When there is certainty in the legal systems, investors will find it easier to enter into new markets and generate employment (Parry *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, effective justice systems enhance credit markets by enhancing the confidence of lenders in debt recovery. According to empirical evidence, an increase in investment rate can be boosted by 1.6% by a 10% decrease in the cost of bankruptcy (Hamdani and Yafeh, 2013). Although financial instruments such as insurance can be used to reduce risks, they do not substitute effective legal remedies.

Target 9.5 is focused on SDG 9; this is becoming more and more supported by the secure and technologically advanced methods of contracting. Electronic signatures and digital authentication improve the enforceability and reliability of contracts, minimising fraud and risks of transactions (Tullis *et al.*, 2024). Innovations such as blockchain and smart contracts enhance the certainty of the contract even more; this is because they allow automatic verification of the contract, keep the records safely, and perform the agreements efficiently. Such innovations enhance complicated transactions, enhance confidence between the parties, and aid the growth of contemporary technology-driven markets.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ENFORCING CONTRACTS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Enforceable contracts constitute a core component of well-functioning economic frameworks and empower private-sector involvement in sustainable development. The UN's SDGs identify ensuring the enforceability of contracts as a high-priority development objective at minimum cost. Actions to enhance legal frameworks and increase the enforceability of contracts support investment, innovation, infrastructure, and technology; these are critical enablers of sustainable development and key indicators within the SDGs (Lytvyn *et al.*, 2023). Aligning law reform with the SDGs provides a reference framework and clear, internationally recognised goals for governments and

stakeholders. Targets 16.3, 8.1, and 9.5 facilitate an integrated approach to shore up legal systems and join the development and sustainability agendas.

A comprehensive comparative survey identifies alternative approaches and their respective strengths and weaknesses. Legal frameworks governing contract enforcement vary considerably. Civil-law jurisdictions are based on codified rules and rely on statutes to fill gaps and resolve ambiguities. Common-law systems depend on precedents derived from prior court decisions. Law type measurably influences the effect of contract enforcement on investment and development. Both civil and common law offer general guidance for enhancing contracting as a means to further sustainable development. Jurisdictions that combine elements of both provide opportunities for alternative methods specifically designed to support such objectives.

Civil Law Traditions and Formal Contracting

Civil-law jurisdictions build on comprehensive, legislatively formalised systems that promote certainty and predictability through general laws widely accepted and easily accessible to users. Enforceable contracts reinforce public and private financing of infrastructure development by providing legally and operationally secure projects. Legal frameworks grounded in common-law principles and practice portray contract enforceability in a more nuanced manner, although tools exist to better align enforceability with sustainable development objectives. Civil-law countries should consider aligning their domestic laws with international guidelines on contract enforcement. Such measures would incorporate non-discrimination principles and support multi-modal delivery and cross-border co-operation, while other jurisdictions remain precluded from signing comprehensive treaties formalising such measures.

Formal contracts govern relationships between the parties in civil law environments. As a result, explicit rules codify the contract types available under the law and standard language constrains the design options open to the parties. Since they facilitate decision-making and interaction, contracts are typically not amended after execution. Therefore, interesting cases or the emergence of new types of contracting are the principal sources of inspiration for innovative, longer-term contracts (Vig, 2023). The main backup provisions supporting these contracts include legal capacity, commencement and termination conditions, pre-emption rights, and justifications for non-execution.

Common Law Systems and Procedural Efficiency

Insulating contracts from political whims, commercial uncertainty, and infringing claims forms the core of the law and economics literature. This paper frames the high-

level discussion of how contracting, development, and sustainable outcomes are linked in this tradition. First, the theoretical foundations for linking contracts to enforceable climate-adaptive investments, domestically or abroad, are prominent in development policy. Reliable contracting affects investments in core public goods, such as infrastructure and energy, shaping their quality, quantity, and speed. Second, contracts channel finance towards development-enhancing sectors that otherwise face resource constraints by allocating risk and setting incentive structures. Third, contracts mitigate social disorder by equitably and transparently sharing benefits, thereby enabling ex ante investment (Du *et al.*, 2022). Access to precisely defined property and ownership interfaces, infrastructure, energy, and PPPs underpins these benefits.

Investments grounded in clear rights through infrastructure, energy, and partnerships realise the third link. Ensuring that financing reaches the least and most fragile nations through ratchet-like minimum thresholds represents a fourth mechanism. Enhanced access establishes simple but insightful evaluation criteria for the enforceable contracts agenda against SDG targets 8.1 or 9.5 rather than obscure raw scores or naive rank counterfactuals (Poncibo, 2022).

Selecting legal frameworks that equate with formal contracting through clear, universal rules and enduring principles reinforces these theoretical points. Contracting systems marry rights definition with predictable adjudication timeliness. Common-law systems stand out for narrowly focused, yet crucial, procedural efficiency attributes. Legal design reviews contracting under SDG targets as guidance for identifying feasible systems that stress formal contracts equivalently (Baroncini *et al.*, 2025; Osifo, 2019).

Mixed Jurisdictions and Hybrid Approaches

Most jurisdictions rely on either a civil law or a common law system. Hybrid legal traditions mixing both systems have emerged in locales where colonial powers exported legal doctrines that coexisted with indigenous systems. The effect on enforceable contracts remains unclear. Jurisdictions affected by substantial climate change are often mixed or hybrid, and contractual compliance influences investment and innovation essential for adaptation. Countries that are highly dependent on a single natural resource have also followed a mixed or hybrid path.

Civil and common law doctrines stem from different formations of the legal system. The civil law tradition gives primacy to legislative rules contained in statutes, codes, or other binding materials issued by the legislature. In contrast, the common law system emerges gradually from court precedents.

MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Well-functioning contractors are essential to achieving allocative efficiency in development as they enhance investments, innovation, and infrastructure. In turn, these goals support SDGs 8, 9, 11, and 16. World literature identifies, defines, and measures the enforcement elements critical to sustainable development (Ozili, 2023). International and comparative law scholarship suggests institutional reforms and policy levers that improve timeliness, certainty, and predictability, enabling more productive contracts at lower transaction costs.

A thriving business ecosystem requires mutual trust, and contract enforcement plays a critical role in promoting reliance on formal contracts. Unreliable enforcement increases the risks associated with contract breach, thereby encouraging contractual parties to resort to informal modes of business, which are usually less efficient. These two links explain why promoting reliable contract enforcement is a critical element in developing high-quality infrastructure and, more broadly, ensuring the effective and sustainable operation of PPPs, energy systems, and transport networks.

Judicial Reforms and Timeliness of Remedies

Judicial timeliness is essential for contract enforceability and law-based development. Performance targets for case resolution, case-management systems that alleviate bottlenecks, and capacity-building programmes are needed.

Judicial speed is critical for effective contract enforcement and law-based development. Various mechanisms may influence this aspect of dispute resolution, two important mechanisms being case-management systems that alleviate bottlenecks and passing down judicial capacity-building programmes. As the speedy resolution of disputes through the court system directly benefits afflicted parties, it warrants examination. Courts regularly publish cycle-time indicators on how fast matters progress through the judicial system. While these numbers may vary widely depending on starting points, they establish tangible benchmarks for judicial speed and enable comparative assessments. Judicial governance may also highlight hot spots, monitor changes, and recommend solutions. Beyond the judicial loop, smooth civil processes and instruments should guide external case management by parties, with attention to arbitration procedures and methods. Avoiding delays, impeding judicial mediation, preparing the terrain for conciliation, and leveraging the momentum from Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) remain premature considerations for many jurisdictions,

even if such system design attributes are becoming clear in at least the more developed realms of contract law and, by extension, in the compartmentalised hybrid system of dedicated jurisdiction-specific regional economic communities.

Benchmarking and Transparency in Contract Resolution

Timely, transparent, and clear resolution of contractual disputes is crucial for reducing uncertainty, encouraging investment, stimulating innovation, and promoting sustainable development. To ensure that disputes are resolved transparently and efficiently, governments should adopt public dashboards that give an overview of the contract resolution process, the state of pending disputes, time and cost estimates for resolution, and the expected effectiveness of available remedies. This information should be aggregated and made easily accessible. The visualised benchmarking and peer-comparison aspects of the data encourage further scrutiny, analysis, and debate within the country, while also facilitating international learning and the sharing of experiences on contract enforcement issues (Deb and Raj, 2023). The relevance of transparency as a means of upholding the rule of law and improving contract enforcement is underlined by the establishment of the Multilateral Development Banks' Anti-Corruption Task Force in 2013.

Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Remedies

Access to fair, impartial, and efficient dispute-resolution mechanisms, such as ADR methods (e.g., mediation, neutral evaluation, arbitration, and expert determination), is crucial for securing remedies in settlements and enforcing contracts (Zhang, 2024). Public sector contracts often include explicit dispute-resolution mechanisms. In contrast, infrastructure and PPP contracts routinely include stipulations on contract management, monitoring, and governance, specifying the modality and framework for engagement with a variety of stakeholders. Access to institutional ADR at minimal or no cost enhances effective engagement and consideration of dispute-resolution alternatives.

Adaptive measures, such as assessments of adverse weather and rising sea-levels, climate risk and vulnerability analyses, monitoring of extreme weather events, service redundancy enhancements and other elements, are frequently included in energy-sector contracts, thereby enhancing credible commitment to deliver reliable energy under contractually defined conditions (Le Coq *et al.*, 2025). PPPs can facilitate the delivery of public infrastructure and services effectively and efficiently, creating sustainable and inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. Leveraging the private sector's efficiency, flexibility, and innovation can improve public service delivery, thereby creating attractive investment opportunities.

Digitalisation, Smart Contracts, and Blockchain Implications

Technological advances such as artificial intelligence (AI), digitalisation, automated machine learning, big data analysis, the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain raise questions about aligning legal regimes and regulations with the SDGs. New technologies generate concerns regarding the recognition of new digital shapes, formats, and forms (Heidari *et al.*, 2024). Technological developments offer new opportunities while creating uncertainty about the legal and institutional frameworks required to develop digital applications and precise information (Ramos and Mannan, 2022).

Smart contracts are defined as a set of promises specified in digital form that establish a contractual transaction. Correct smart contracts are compiled into code and submitted to a blockchain network by the smart contract developer to ensure high execution rates and reduce latency. Implementing law through smart contracts might significantly enhance the operation of the legal framework, and such contracts can play an important role as we enter the digital and blockchain era.

SECTORAL IMPACTS: INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY, AND PPPS

Enforceable contracts are pivotal for infrastructure financing, sustainable energy projects, and PPPs. Uncertainty about the impact of enforcement on sectoral outcomes complicates the design of legislation and institutions aligned with SDG Target 16.3. Empirical evidence links legal frameworks for contract enforcement to sector-specific outcomes, helping focus reforms.

Infrastructure financing hinges on expectations regarding funding treatment, payment guarantees, and dispute-resolution arrangements. Enforceable contracts facilitate reliable long-term funding by clearly defining these variables. Legal frameworks that strengthen predictability, clarity, and timeliness of enforcement are therefore essential (Carvalho and Spataru, 2018).

Sustainable energy projects depend on the precise allocation of contractual risk. Contracts typically stipulate tariffs for generated power, off-take risk, and performance bonds. Well-defined remedies, speedy resolution, and operational performance indicators enhance payment security by enabling prompt remedy when obligations are unmet.

Infrastructure Financing and Enforcement Certainty

Governments and international organisations, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, consider that infrastructure financing lays the groundwork for the SDGs (Mansell *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, adequate infrastructure financing, including

building upgrade guarantees, guarantees on Concession and Coverage Funding, and Insurance against Project Delay and Debtor risk, needs to be made available to ensure that long-term contracts for utility or network-type projects are not refused or delayed. If the contractual documents, procurement conditions, or instruments guaranteeing the project are subject to lengthy disputes, preparation delays will continue, and infrastructure or utility projects will not be able to start quickly.

Sustainable Energy Projects and Contractual Risk Allocation

Sustainable energy projects aim to provide clean, affordable, reliable, and modern energy services (UN ESCAP, 2020). Their successful implementation hinges on clear risk allocation in exploitation contracts with power-off-take partners. Such agreements typically stipulate the deliverables and associated payment terms for distributed energy, including electricity, heat, fuel, carbon credits, raw materials, and other commodities. Off-take risk arises when anticipated returns from committed energy products fail to materialise. The associated economic loss compels project parties to collect longer-term performance bonds from prospective off-takers, thereby enhancing the project's reliability and accelerating its financing.

Performance bonds safeguard projects against non-execution by quantifying the value of committed products or services. Appropriate expedited procedures for realising these bonds, together with provisions to extend and endorse others, further bolster the undertaking's viability. In hybrid regulatory systems encompassing national and local or municipal legislation, alignment between project contracts and national law remains essential for seamless realisation of all lawful obligations. Full realisation on either tier reinforces commitment and provides an additional contractual foothold, facilitating the endorsement or renewal of permits or other approvals essential for sustained operation (Hickey, 2022).

PPPs and Governance Clauses

Governments increasingly rely on PPPs to mobilise financing and expertise in infrastructure services, yet these contracts often lack enforceability (Berrone *et al.*, 2019). Donor countries should advocate for stronger governance frameworks around PPPs by specifying oversight, accountability, and long-term sustainability criteria in contracts. In addition to their impact on infrastructure financing, contracts play a critical role in sustainability objectives for renewable energy projects. When governments seek to facilitate private investment in energy generation, they typically provide clear tariff schedules, off-take risk sharing, payment guarantees, and security interests in

facilities and assets to reduce contractual uncertainty. Such terms are necessary to attract investment in large-scale, capital-intensive projects and to achieve the Paris Agreement goals on climate change and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND ROADMAPS FOR REFORM

Well-designed legal frameworks that improve contract enforcement can underpin various aspects of sustainable development. They can have significant impacts on investment flows, innovation, and the attainment of specific SDGs.

Understanding what constitutes an enforceable contract is essential. The Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR), adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in 2021, defines an enforceable electronic contract as one “that is enforceable under the applicable law in the same manner as a comparable contract in written form” (ALSheyab, 2025; Bartram *et al.*, 2018).

While contracts themselves may not represent the ultimate goal of development, the benefits of secure contracts for infrastructure projects, energy, and PPPs are recognised in multiple disciplines, including law, economics, political science, and engineering. Among the numerous contracts that might be considered, contract theorists have focused on legally enforceable contracts, which remain a necessary condition for sustainable development.

Domestic Reform Pathways

To address civil law restrictions and promote a sustainable investment climate, domestic reform should encompass both substantive amendments and institutional implementation. Substantive legislation must harmonise the law of contracts, evidence, and administration. Jurisdictions should mandate e-signatures, establish digital land registries, and recognise the enforceability of smart contracts. Transparent criteria will determine which contracts are deemed acceptable for these purposes. Institutional reform must enhance operational capacity. Special case management mechanisms should prioritise enforcement-sensitive contracts, with performance benchmarks for judges and specific remedial timing for state agencies.

The following steps will enhance access to:

- promote mediation, arbitration, and other forms of settlement;
- provide training, outreach, and information for users in both official languages;
- create public registers of mediation and arbitration clauses;

- empower courts to stay proceedings pending voluntary resolution;
- establish standards for enforceable mediations; and
- develop an integrated information system linking the judiciary and relevant administrative authorities to facilitate the full execution of settlement agreements (Sherman and Momani, 2025).

Fast, affordable, and easily accessible contract enforcement is key to unleashing investment, job creation, and growth.

Regional and International Co-operation

Establishing a reliable and predictable enforcement framework for contracts that support sustainable development primarily relies on domestic reform actions aligned with the evidence-based rationale linking secure contracting to development. Nevertheless, international and regional collaboration can play a leadership role in five areas:

- i. co-ordinating measures to facilitate progress, especially in countries with weak domestic institutions;
- ii. proposing new treaty instruments or implementing protocols that embed strong rules for contracting in specific sectors;
- iii. recognising the interdependence of contract law across jurisdictions and encouraging gradual alignment and interoperability;
- iv. promoting harmonisation of key aspects of the institutional infrastructure underpinning contract enforcement across countries; and
- v. ensuring that the multidimensional nature of SDG Target 16.3 is addressed consistently across co-operative undertakings (Osifo *et al.*, 2025).

At the highest level, governments could commit to working in harmony at the international and regional levels to enable progress towards SDG Target 16.3 on access to justice; to reaffirm their support for an open-market trading system, including the rule of law; and to underscore the importance of enforceable contracts for investment and growth (Jebarah *et al.*, 2025). A simple framework of mutually supportive arrangements would allow each country to pursue its own objectives, based on domestic priorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

Sustainable development monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks gauge progress towards integrated global objectives and ensure delivery of national commitments. Such frameworks influence project investments and accountability in countries committed to international climate or sustainable development agreements. Appropriate targets,

measurable indicators, and periodic reviews enable policy prioritisation and resource allocation, signal adherence levels, guide long-term initiatives, and inform regional co-operation (Kazanskaia, 2025). Mapping the sustainable development elements of enforceable contracts against relevant SDGs facilitates the assessment of legal and institutional arrangements within comparative perspectives.

Contract specificity, enforcement speed, and judicial independence affect access to public services, influencing infrastructure investment incentives. Precise specification of financial terms, recovery periods, and participant roles enhances the attractiveness of PPPs. Financial flows, project viability, and performance-linked tariffs influence electric-power investments. Articulating enforceable-corporation elements, formalisation level, and regulatory clarity shapes an effective rallying framework and guides transparent reforms. Enforceable contracts directly affect wellbeing transfers; comparative indices gauge alignment with Targets 16.3.1 and 16.3.3. Specialisation classification facilitates sector-target alignment; sustainable-energy activities align with Target 7.2 and renewable mobilisation.

CONCLUSIONS

Enforceable contracts underpin sustainable development. While SDGs acknowledge predictable, enforceable contracts as a priority, legal reform is generally isolated from commitments. This neglect stems from a fragmented understanding of sustainable development, inadequate norms for contract enforceability, limited data on contractual determinants, and obstacles to reviewing legal frameworks: aligning institutional reform and legal frameworks with indicators for Targets 8.1, 9.5, and 16.3 addresses this challenge. Baseline assessments of administrative, regulatory, and judicial dimensions inform relevant policy options. Legal reforms ensure congruence between investment and sustainability (Krauss *et al.*, 2022).

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