

EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT

Transforming EU development policy: CONCORD calls for a long-term vision for sustainable development

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This paper is based on CONCORD's full response to the European Commission's public consultation on revising the European Consensus on Development. That response includes a wealth of comments and positions on the scope of a revised EU Development Consensus for the next fifteen years. In this paper, we highlight the key ambitions and features that the new European Consensus on Development must reflect.

*The revision of the Consensus on Development offers a tremendous opportunity to factor in several critical changes that have materialised since 2005 in the global social, economic and environmental landscape. The revision is at least a threefold endeavour as it will have to **capitalise** on the visionary features of the 2005 Consensus, to **adjust and respond** to the intervening changes and to **envision** the trends that might emerge in the coming fifteen years which will need to be addressed.*

*It is also crucial that the EU and its Member States adopt a far **more systemic approach** to addressing these challenges, focusing on the integration of all three dimensions of sustainable development and their governance angles at all times. It must address the **power structures which underpin society, the economy and global governance and which result in huge inequalities both within and between countries whilst causing massive environmental damage and climate change.***

The new European Consensus on Development should **value and capitalise on those areas in which the EU and its Member States can contribute most. It should define the shared objectives, values and principles to which the EU and its Member States have committed in their adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and constitute a strong foundation for a joint approach to sustainable development in the next decade. It should set out ways to reinforce the EU's responsibilities towards others.**

Key measures and tools must include:

- **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD):** the EU must commit to developing and implementing a binding PCSD policy including mitigation, accountability and redress mechanisms to ensure that all its policies have, as far as possible, a positive impact on sustainable development – or at minimum that they do not have negative impacts which undermine sustainable development in other countries or other countries' ability to realise the human rights of all their people within planetary boundaries.
- **Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA):** the EU is an important player at both UN level and country level in promoting human rights, democracy and good governance. The EU should therefore continue to act as a force for good in this domain but should strengthen its approach such that human rights principles and standards - as laid out in UN Conventions and other international human rights frameworks - guide all the work of the EU, not just development cooperation. A human rights-based approach ultimately means that the EU

must address power relations between people, promote empowerment, support people at the community level to be able to realise their rights and improve equality between people and countries.

- **The 2030 Agenda is more than a set of Goals:** the new Consensus must address not only the Goal and targets of the 2030 Agenda but also reflect the spirit and principles underpinning it. Three key principles are:
 - **Leaving no one behind:** the future Development Consensus will need to ensure that it comprehensively addresses inequality and focuses primarily on reaching the most marginalised people. Such people include, but are by no means limited to women, children, the disabled, minority groups and the extreme poor. The EU must assist all **people living in poverty no matter where they live including, for example, those living in middle income countries (MICs)**. Differentiation strategies should be based on an assessment of key economic and social determinants, including all factors relating to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.
 - **No sustainable development without gender equality:** the new European Consensus on Development is an ideal opportunity to take the EU's commitments on gender equality – as outlined in the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 and endorsed in the Council Conclusions of October 2015 – to the next level. The EU should commit to going beyond single actions to **comprehensively address all discrimination against girls and women**. That entails thorough mainstreaming accompanied by a wide range of specific actions and adequate gender-sensitive funding to ensure transformative change to address the structures and systems which underpin power imbalances between girls and boys and women and men.
 - **Respecting our planet:** environmental degradation and the increasing scarcity of natural resources exacerbate poverty and fuel conflict. Furthermore, climate change is putting at risk all progress in human development and impacting on water resources, agriculture, land-use, food and nutrition security and health. **The EU should mainstream environmental sustainability across all sectors and use the revision of its development policy to implement its commitments in the Paris Agreement**. These would include efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C through support for low carbon development and increasing support for adaptation, climate resilience and loss and damage.
- **Strengthening global peace and justice:** the EU should strengthen its role in **global peace and justice**. It should therefore use its influence and full range of instruments to **address fragility, strengthen resilience, reduce insecurity and prevent conflicts**. This requires a people-centred approach, oriented towards addressing the root causes of poverty, creating social justice, stabilising and building democratic and well-functioning states and institutions, containing violence in general and gender-based violence in particular and building a culture of peaceful conflict transformation within and between societies. It is of utmost importance to support civil society initiatives in this regard.
- **Effective development cooperation:** the EU has spearheaded the implementation of the development effectiveness principles, including national ownership of development processes, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. With the Development Consensus, the EU should recommit to the full implementation of these principles and to

applying them to all forms of development cooperation. **The EU and Members States should fully comply with international commitments on ODA targets, including the 0.7% target and support for LDCs. Aid should stay focused on poverty reduction and sustainable development and should not be diverted or diluted for any reason.**

- **Sustainable development finance:** we are concerned by the use of tools such as public-private partnerships or leveraging private finance through instruments such as blending. Our concerns centre on the financial and developmental additionality of such tools, the need for poverty reduction and sustainable development to be prime objectives, development effectiveness, the opportunity cost of using public ODA money and last, but perhaps most importantly, the total lack of transparency, accountability and regulatory frameworks to hold private sector actors to account. The EU and its Member States should apply sustainable development principles to all projects where public finance is used in conjunction with private finance.
- **Partnerships: partnerships with other actors** are likely to form a core component of the EU's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. For the new Consensus to act as an effective framework for such partnerships, it must set out the parameters to be respected. Key among these are the need for **full transparency and for all actors to be held to account for their part in achieving the 2030 Agenda**, including respect of environmental and human rights standards. Since such accountability must also be applied to the **private sector**, the Commission should envisage going beyond the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by putting in place a binding corporate accountability framework.
- **A new paradigm for economic progress:** the EU should take this opportunity to reflect on **what it considers progress to be in the new sustainable development context and how that should be measured**. It is well accepted that the benefits of *economic growth* do not trickle down to the majority of a population and do not benefit everyone equally. GDP is at best a very limited measure of economic progress and at worst actually masks rising inequality. The revised Consensus should therefore include a more **comprehensive notion of economic progress and find alternative measures for such progress, which also reflect social and environmental costs**. The EU must work together with other countries to ensure that, globally, ***the economy is reoriented towards people and planet***.
- **DEAR (development education and awareness-raising) and GCE (global citizenship education):** the universal 2030 Agenda and the SDGs will not become a reality without active citizenship. The EU should recognize this critical role in the future Development Consensus and invest in DEAR and GCE to build societies of critical thinkers, problem-solvers and active citizens in order to promote values inherent to just societies, such as solidarity, tolerance and cultural understanding, while also educating citizens to become responsible consumers and environmentally-friendly human beings.
- **CSO enabling environment:** civil society is a crucial actor in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, through service delivery, contact with communities, idea generation, and monitoring and oversight roles. Civil society is instrumental in defending civic space, promoting the rule of law and transparency, ensuring the participation of people and reaching the most marginalised and vulnerable people. **The EU should thus ensure participation of and engagement with civil society in the design, implementation,**

monitoring, review and accountability of policies. The EU should support local and international civil society organisations in Europe and in partner countries with appropriate and predictable levels of funding. It should also work with partner governments to ensure that civil society has the necessary **enabling environment** – including full respect of all civil and political rights - to fulfil its functions. **Development cooperation must be based on thorough consultation with national authorities and a structured dialogue with CSOs.**

- **Well-managed migration and human mobility:** development cooperation should be sensitive to but not dictated by migration and security concerns. Well-managed migration and human mobility are potentially development enablers. As such, the new Consensus should recognise migration as positive element. Therefore, **development assistance should not be diverted to assist Member States in managing migration and there should be no conditionality of aid based on border control, managing migratory flows or readmission agreements.** Alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development in partner countries must remain the key objectives of development cooperation.

*Lastly, CONCORD strongly urges the European Commission to organise **an open and transparent public consultation based on a draft of the new Consensus.** Civil society has considerable concerns about the current direction and shape of EU development cooperation and it is only through such a consultation that civil society – and other actors – can genuinely and constructively provide feedback on the Commission’s proposal for the future direction of EU and Member State development cooperation.*

Concord would also like to emphasise that development cooperation is only one of the policy areas that must be reviewed if the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement are to be achieved. Given the scale and complexity of the global challenges we face and the inescapable interlinkages between them, it is of the utmost importance that the European Commission adopts a comprehensive approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda, involving all Directorates-General and all policy areas. Such an approach must be set out in an overarching strategy to guide the work of the whole Commission, the other EU institutions and the EU Member States as appropriate.