

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European task force key recommendations for EU & MS

"To achieve all people's human rights and well-being for all within planetary boundaries"

September 2015

- 1 **Prioritise People and Planet:** We urge the EU and its Member States to lead the way in taking urgent action to put itself on a low carbon development trajectory. We call on the EU and its Member States to recognize and act on the wealth of economic thinking that refutes the need for economies to grow ad infinitum, and that offers alternative models of progress.
- 2 **Integrate fully the economic, social and environmental dimensions of Sustainable Development:** We look forward to the EU and its Member States' plans for taking forward the agenda in an integrated, coherent and balanced way, addressing interlinkages throughout future policy and action – in line with the vision set out by the Council Conclusions in December 2014.
- 3 **Universality... means All Countries, All Goals:** We recommend that the EU and its Member States demonstrate how they are going to respond to the principle of universality by setting out, in comprehensive plans, concrete actions and timeframes to implement not only all the goals and targets, but also the Means of Implementation contained in the agenda.
- 4 **Achieve Equality:** We urge the EU and its Member States to focus specifically on prioritising those people and countries which have until now been left furthest behind and to measure progress both qualitatively and quantitatively. This implies that in designing future policy and action, the EU must prioritise progress for the most marginalised groups and those furthest behind in its both its own domestic implementation and in its international cooperation. Eliminating all discrimination against women and girls by 2030, in line with the Agenda 2030 vision, should be a key priority for EU leaders. The EU must also ensure that its policies do not impact negatively on the ability of partner countries to address inequality in their contexts.
- 5 **Empower People through Participation:** We encourage the EU and its Member States to guarantee the involvement of civil society and other stakeholders as soon as implementation and accountability discussions begin. A fully participatory process has to be guaranteed and institutionalised at every stage.
- 6 **Introduce Alternative Measures of Progress:** We urge the EU and its Member States, which have been investing time and resources in investigating alternative measures of progress for over ten years, to pilot such measures urgently as a contribution to the global process.
- 7 **Implement Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development:** The EU and its Member States should ensure that they take a 'whole of government' approach to its implementation of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development. The EU should set the example, given its considerable experience in this domain, to strengthen its institutional mechanisms – including for providing redress to people who are victims of 'incoherent' policies – and to demonstrate the value of policy coherence for sustainable development.
- 8 **Provide Requisite Means of Implementation:** We urge the EU and its Member States to identify far more clearly than it has to date in its preparations for the Addis Ababa Conference, how it will undertake its share of responsibility on financial and non-financial means of implementation, particularly regarding those which require actions and transfers to partner countries, and to set out a timeline for delivery which would enable transparency, accountability and ensure that those countries will be able to take them into account in their planning to achieve the Goals and targets included in the Agenda.
- 9 **Clarify "The Global Partnership":** We ask the EU and its Member States to put in place mechanisms to clarify roles and responsibilities of both state and non-state actors and ensure effective accountability as part of its implementation plans.
- 10 **Measuring Up To Commitments: Accountability:** Finally, we expect the EU and its Member States to establish participatory processes involving all stakeholders at national and regional (EU-wide) levels to develop implementation plans and to engage in a systematic way in monitoring, accountability and review.

CONCORD-Beyond 2015 ETF analysis of the outcome document '*Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*'

Prioritise People and Planet

We welcome the overall emphasis on people and planet and the commitments to realise all people's human rights, to leave no-one behind and to restore and protect the planet for present and future generations. We believe that the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Agenda 2030) demonstrates the will to tackle some of the root causes of poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation. Given the strength of the Preamble and Declaration on these points, we rely on States to translate the spirit of those sections when implementing the Agenda.

We welcome the recognition of the need to address climate change as a major impediment to sustainable development and the need to decouple growth from environmental degradation, although we would have preferred to see growth decoupled from the use of natural resources.

However, the continued call for sustained economic growth – for all countries – undermines a meaningful focus on people and the planet, as it fails to recognise the limitations of a growth-based agenda particularly if we are to remain within planetary boundaries and is at odds with many of the proposals and commitments towards human well-being, equality, planetary health and shared prosperity.

We urge the EU and its Member States to lead the way in taking urgent action to put itself on a low carbon development trajectory in order to avoid the irreversible impacts of climate change. Similarly, we call on the EU to recognise and act on the wealth of economic thinking that refutes the need for economies to grow ad infinitum, particularly as regards developed countries, and that offers alternative models of progress.

Integrate Fully the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* can only be truly transformative if it is an integrated agenda, recognising the many interlinkages between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and related governance issues. We appreciate that the Agenda has indeed covered all three dimensions of sustainable

development, but regret that the result is still somewhat silo'ed. The Preamble and Declaration sections of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* underline that the goals and targets "are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development" and that "the interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realised".

It will be particularly important that the interlinkages are recognised and strengthened as indicators are developed. The indicators must encompass social, economic, environmental and governance indicators.

We look forward to the EU and its Member States' plans for taking forward the goals and targets in an integrated, coherent and balanced way, ensuring synergies and addressing inter-linkages throughout future policy and action – in line with the vision set out by the Council Conclusions in December 2014.

Universality ... Means All Countries, All Goals

We welcome the fact that the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* refers to the indivisibility of the Goals and targets and to the need for implementation by all countries. It is very important that the universality principle is respected by all countries and that the 17 Goals and 169 targets within the *2030 Agenda* are not approached as a menu of options. Otherwise progress in one area will be undermined by lack of action in another.

There are already some early indications in national-level discussions on implementation that 'cherry-picking' is taking place and that some goals are being selected and others ignored. While some prioritisation may be necessary, all countries should clearly set out how they will contribute across the full extent of the Agenda.

As the process of selecting indicators proceeds, the universality principle will be equally crucial to ensure the indicators are relevant and appropriate for countries in various stages of development.

We recommend that the EU and its Member States demonstrate how they are ready to respond domestically and internationally to the principle of universality by setting out, in comprehensive plans, concrete actions and timeframes to implement not

only the Goals and targets, but also the Means of Implementation contained in the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Achieve Equality

We welcome the pledge to leave no-one behind, the wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society and the endeavour to reach the furthest behind first (§4). However, previously proposed language wishing to see all Goals and targets met 'by all social and economic groups' would have been much more powerful and actionable.

We welcome the vision (§8) of *"a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met."*

However, we preferred the previously proposed language of §19 which emphasised States' responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights (instead of now only promoting them) and which included an explicit mentioning of discrimination based on a large number of grounds as opposed to "distinction". Indeed, one could argue that the list of grounds for 'distinction' is incomplete, although the reference to "other status" is a welcome addition at the end of the paragraph, in line with both Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. That indicates that the list is not exhaustive and other grounds may be incorporated in this category.

We welcome the inclusion of §20 as a stand-alone paragraph expanding upon gender equality, women's rights and the elimination of violence against women and girls, as well as the stand-alone Goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

In terms of reducing inequality within and between countries, the targets in Goal 10 will be an important step forward but not the only steps that need to be taken. A bolder approach is still required to tackle systemic issues and international governance which impact hugely on the levels of inequality in the world and on the ability of many countries to reduce inequality in their contexts.

We urge the EU and its Member States to measure progress both qualitatively and quantitatively, and to focus specifically on prioritising those people and countries which have until now been left furthest behind. This implies that in designing future policy and action, the EU must prioritise progress for the most marginalised groups in its own domestic implementation of the Agenda – in order to close the gaps between the 'have's and have not's' in Europe – and on the furthest behind countries in its international cooperation. Eliminating all discrimination against women and girls by 2030, in line with the *Agenda 2030* vision, should be a key priority for the leaders of the EU. The EU must also ensure that its policies and its role in international fora do not impact negatively on the ability of partner countries to address inequality in their contexts.

Empower People through Participation

The three-year process of developing the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* has, for the most part, been very open and participatory. The example should be continued over the next 15 years, not least in reaching out to populations to communicate the Agenda and national level actions, encouraging and enabling participation in the design of implementation strategies as well as in monitoring, follow-up, review and accountability.

Disappointingly, the *2030 Agenda* is weak in ensuring participatory governance is able to happen, despite the assertion in §52 that it is an *"Agenda of the people, by the people and for the people"* and the statement in the Preamble that implementation will involve all countries, all stakeholders and all people. There are mentions of full and effective participation of women in political, economic and public life, of the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management and of ensuring responsive, inclusive participatory and representative decision-making, but without any reference to the conditions that need to be put in place – such as freedom of speech and of assembly – in order to participate. Furthermore, we greatly regret that in the section on follow-up and review, despite stressing the inclusive and participatory nature of these voluntary mechanisms, in the principles to guide review at national and sub-national levels the involvement of civil society, indigenous peoples and other

stakeholders is dependent upon national circumstances and policies. (§79).

It will therefore be critical that the development of indicators captures those missing elements to enable participatory process to occur and that they do indeed measure participation, openness and inclusiveness at all stages of implementation, follow up and review.

We encourage the EU and its Member States to guarantee the involvement of civil society and other stakeholders as soon as implementation and accountability discussions begin. A fully participatory process has to go well beyond the occasional contribution to reviews and rather be institutionalised at every stage.

Introduce Alternative Measures of Progress

We welcome the commitment to develop broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP) in §48 and target 17.19. However, this commitment is given far less prominence than the call for every country to enjoy sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (§9 and §27 and Goal 8). It should be recognised that “sustained economic growth” should not be an objective for more highly developed countries and that, on the contrary, the focus should rather be on the need to change our lifestyles and our consumption and production models in order to allow other countries to grow given that it is simply impossible to sustain high levels of global growth within planetary boundaries. Indeed, growth does not per se lead to reduced poverty or inequality, or improved well-being for the majority of people. GDP, as a measure of growth, should therefore be replaced with measures based on human well-being. This concept of well-being is recognised in §7 of *Our Vision*. Such initiatives will not only reflect but also help to communicate the ambition of human well-being that lies at the heart of this transformative new Agenda.

We therefore urge the EU and its Member States, which have been investing time and resources in investigating alternative measures of progress for over ten years, to pilot such measures urgently as a contribution to the global process.

Implement Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

We are pleased to see the recognition of the importance of policy coherence for sustainable

development (PCSD) in the agreed text, as it is a critical enabling condition for the achievement of sustainable development.

The text in *Agenda 2030* could have been far stronger, calling on States to implement and ensure, rather than ‘enhance’, PCSD (target 17.14). However, complementing and supporting the *Agenda 2030* text, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda gives policy coherence for sustainable development a higher prominence – including proactively calling upon countries to assess the impact of their policies on sustainable development (§103).

All countries now need to plan not only how they will implement the goals and targets domestically, but how they will ensure that their own policies and actions do not undermine the attempts of *other countries* to meet the goals and targets, or the prospects of people anywhere to realise their human rights and a sustainable future.

The EU and its Member States should ensure that they take a ‘whole of government’ approach to their implementation of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and should set the example, given its considerable experience in this domain, to strengthen its institutional mechanisms – including for providing redress to people who are victims of ‘incoherent’ policies – and to demonstrate the value of policy coherence for sustainable development.

Provide Requisite Means of Implementation

The *Agenda 2030*, unlike the MDGs, defines a number of financial and non-financial means of implementation (Moi) for each of the Goals, and includes a specific Goal going over and above what is included in each Goal area. These Moi range from international public finance to policy coherence for sustainable development, cohesive nationally owned sustainable development strategies and the launching of a Technology Facilitation Mechanism (§70). While this is an important advance, the proposed measures are too vague to provide a clear roadmap for action. We expect that the mechanism to follow-up and review the Means of Implementation as part of the Financing for Development Follow-up Forum will rectify this. Whether on global tax governance reform, ODA commitments, debt or systemic issues, solely relying on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as such, without any effort to advance the broader Financing for

Development consensus will not be enough to fulfil the vision of sustainable development that *Agenda 2030* puts forward.

We urge the EU and its Member States to identify far more clearly than they have to date in its preparations for the Addis Ababa Conference, how it will undertake its share of responsibility on financial and non-financial means of implementation, particularly regarding those which require actions and transfers to partner countries, and to set out a timeline for delivery which would enable transparency, accountability and ensure that those countries will be able to take them into account in their planning to achieve the Goals and targets included in the Agenda.

Clarify “The Global Partnership”

Agenda 2030 promotes a revitalised global partnership bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society and other actors to mobilise available resources and expertise for sustainable development. Unfortunately, the global Declaration remains vague in terms of the exact form and function of the global partnership (preamble and §39) which could in turn lead to weak outcomes and a lack of transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that the State is and must remain the primary duty-bearer in its country in terms of realising people’s human rights and sustainable development. We would therefore like to reiterate that the responsibility and role allocated to non-state actors such as civil society or the private sector must be carefully thought through so as to avoid an abdication of responsibility by States. All actors who take on responsibilities in implementing the framework or parts of the framework should be held accountable against, at the very minimum, international standards and guidelines on human rights, decent work and environmental sustainability.

We ask the EU and its Member States to put in place mechanisms to clarify roles and responsibilities of both state and non-state actors and ensure effective accountability as part of its implementation plans.

Measuring Up To Commitments: Accountability

We broadly welcome the principles for follow-up and review in §74 of *Agenda 2030* including the emphasis on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable

development and on openness, transparency and participation, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and furthest behind people. We are also pleased to note that the important role of national parliaments is recognised in §45.

Nonetheless, we regret the tension created by proposing a voluntary follow-up and review framework based, as is suggested, on the identification of successes, challenges and gaps, which is supposed to promote accountability to all people. *Agenda 2030* is disappointingly weak on taking forward the guiding principles through the creation of robust mechanisms which allow civil society and individuals to hold their governments to account for implementation. There is an over-emphasis on voluntary actions and use of existing mechanisms, without recognising that these may need to be strengthened, especially at the national level. Furthermore, §78 and §79 ignore the requirement to create an enabling environment and realise civil and political rights in order to facilitate effective participation and accountability. It is at the national level and even more so, at the local level, where the results of these international decisions will be felt and will impact on people’s lives and their environment. There is therefore a critical need to put in place mechanisms which do deliver on the accountability to citizens promised in §47 and §73 of *Agenda 2030*.

It is worthwhile highlighting that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which complements and supports *Agenda 2030*, calls for improved accountability in a number of areas, not least in the context of the role and responsibilities of the private sector, public-private partnerships, financial institutions, philanthropic organisations and through the transparent provision of information and data.

The EU and Member States have been particularly strong in calling for rigorous accountability mechanisms throughout the intergovernmental negotiations.

We therefore expect the EU and its Member States to establish participatory processes involving all stakeholders at national and regional (EU-wide) levels to develop implementation plans and to engage in a systematic way in monitoring, accountability and review.



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