

CONCORD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE COMMUNICATION 'NEXT STEPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN FUTURE'

February 2017

CONCORD, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, regrets the lack of leadership and ambition and the total absence of any sense of urgency that the EU has displayed thus far in the 18 months since the adoption of the *universal* 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as regards its implementation.

The upcoming Council Conclusions offer a timely opportunity to rectify this by committing to a series of concrete actions and by calling on the European Commission to play their part. The time has passed for empty promises and endless re-commitments to the concept of sustainable development. Now is the time to act. The European Union, given its privileged context and its historical responsibility for many of the challenges the world now faces, should not fail to lead by example.

Member States should therefore, in the June GAC Council Conclusions, call for and commit to the following clearly defined, specific actions:

1. **Request the European Commission to lead in drawing up an overarching strategy** to guide the EU and its Member States' implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all areas of internal and external policy and action, respecting subsidiarity concerns.

It is a waste of valuable time to wait for the expiry of Europe 2020 to begin this process, not least because Europe 2020 as it stands today is hugely inadequate for the task of ensuring that the EU and its Member States live up to the commitments enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.

2. **Request the European Commission** to expand and deepen the current mapping of EU policies, in order **to establish a real gap analysis** through a transparent and inclusive process, which would inform the overarching strategy. The gap analysis should identify critical areas of synergies and incoherences between EU policies.

It is only in this way that the EU and its Member States will have a clear vision of the work to be accomplished to ensure that EU policies will contribute to achieving – and not undermining – the Goals and targets of the Agenda 2030, while respecting the principles that underpin them, such as leaving no one behind and respecting planetary boundaries.

3. **Call on the Commission to ensure that the next MFF mainstreams sustainable development priorities throughout the EU budget**, with all financial instruments allocating sufficient funds for the EU to be able to meet its 2030 commitments. The EU and its Member States must ensure that all means to raise funds to implement the 2030 Agenda must adhere to strict criteria regarding transparency and accountability.

In order to ensure that adequate financial resources are available to countries to implement the 2030 Agenda, it will also be important to **close tax loopholes and eradicate illicit financial flows and tax havens**.

4. **Commit to strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)** at all levels and in all policy areas and request the Commission to propose new mechanisms to ensure adequate and regular impact assessments. The results of such impact assessments should genuinely be used to mitigate for potential adverse effects or for changing the proposed course of action. Key areas to prioritise include trade and investment policy, agriculture, energy,

finance, security and migration. Both the impact assessments and the decisions taken based on them must be made public.

The principle of PCSD is mentioned in the 'Next Steps' Communication, as well as in the draft new Consensus on Development, but nowhere are concrete measures proposed for how to ensure that PCSD becomes the norm. The EU and its Member States must ensure that no European policy undermines other countries' ability to achieve sustainable development or to realise their people's human rights.

5. **Commit to leaving no one behind by addressing social inclusion through a prioritisation of the most marginalised.** The EU and its Member States should recognise that the growing inequality both between countries and in any one country is holding back progress on sustainable development, causing social unrest, populism and even extremism and magnifying the impacts of other global challenges such as climate change.

6. **Acknowledge that the four dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, environmental and their governance-related factors – must all be addressed in a comprehensive manner** and that no one dimension should outweigh another in importance.

To date, the EU and its Member States generally prioritise the economic dimension over the others, pursuing narrow economic interests that actually undermine the social and environmental dimensions. This practice needs to change so that the economy serves people and planet, not the other way around.

7. **Agree and adopt a common set of European progress indicators which cover social, economic, environmental and governance factors**, based on those currently in use in a considerable number of EU Member States and which focus on delivering well-being for all within planetary boundaries. **Such a set of well-being indicators must be used to guide all decision-making.**

Given the recognition that our current economic and governance models have caused rapidly growing inequality and massive environmental degradation, the EU and its Member States must agree to re-think the indicators used to measure and evaluate progress and move away from an exclusive and misguided reliance on GDP.

8. **Set up a robust monitoring, accountability and review framework**, based on the collection of quality, accessible, timely and reliable **disaggregated data and using both quantitative and qualitative indicators.**

The EU and its Member States should establish regular stocktaking moments and a transparent and an inclusive process by which to consult with civil society and other stakeholders on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. All partnerships undertaken in the context of the Agenda should be subject to strict criteria as well as to mandatory accountability processes.

9. **Call for the establishment of a High Level Working Group on Sustainable Development** whose mandate is to oversee and follow up on the implementation by the EU of its commitments as set out in the 2030 Agenda. This format would also allow for peer learning and enhanced coordination between the EU institutions and services.

10. **Agree and announce when the EU will report to the HLPF when the theme will be 'empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'.** This will demonstrate that the EU is serious both about implementing the 2030 Agenda, but also about its recent statements highlighting the need to improve the participation of people in decision-making and governance structures.