



HOW WILL YOU WORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

A LITMUS TEST FOR EU LEADERS

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European NGO confederation for relief and development

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) has been a legal obligation of the EU and its Member States. Since then, CONCORD produced bi-annual '*Spotlight on EU Policy Coherence for Development*' reports to raise the awareness of EU leaders and citizens on the need to change certain European domestic and external policies in order to make them coherent with the EU's development objectives. With the 2015 adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, EU leaders committed to ensure policies are coherent with sustainable development. In a year of European Parliament elections and EU institutional renewal, CONCORD calls on all EU leaders to work towards a sustainable Europe by 2030. This CONCORD paper highlights how EU leaders should ensure they positively contribute to the sustainable development of partner countries, through a more integrated and long-term approach.

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INTRODUCTION

2019 is a year of political and institutional change in Europe. The 2019 elections for the European Parliament are the single most important instrument to keep the European institutions in tune with the citizens' wishes and interests. Throughout Europe, the voice of large groups of citizens calling for a sustainable European Union has become increasingly loud in the past year. Climate change and increasing inequalities are rising more and more rapidly up the political agenda and the EU needs to take leadership. The change in the composition of the European Parliament and the European Commission is a litmus test: will the new politicians respond to this call for a sustainable and fair Europe?

CONCORD sees 2019 as the year to regain momentum: it is an opportunity not to be missed for Sustainable Development. We are only 11 years away from 2030, the horizon for Sustainable Development set by the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new Commission President will present the new political priorities when entering into office, and a new EU budget for 2021-2027 will be agreed upon shortly thereafter.

2019, should be used for stocktaking, for taking a deep breath, and then moving forward with vision and commitment.

We formulate three guiding questions for this political 'momentum exercise':

1. *HERE AND NOW: In concrete terms, do the new Commission's priorities balance the four dimensions of sustainable development (social, environmental, economic and governance)? In other words: what are their effects on wellbeing within the EU as a whole and among its Member States?*
2. *ELSEWHERE: whether the new Commission's priorities have a positive or negative impact on the ability of other countries to achieve sustainable development? In other words: what are the transboundary effects?*
3. *LATER: whether the new Commission's priorities have consequences for future generations' potential to live sustainably? In other words: what are the intergenerational effects?*

In this paper CONCORD takes stock of what the Juncker Commission has achieved in different policy areas, and to what extent a new Commission can capitalise on those efforts, or should take a different route in order to operate a just transition towards Sustainable Development. The topics that will be addressed are: trade, migration, food and agriculture, environment and climate, finance, tax and corporate accountability and the political leadership and mechanisms needed. These policies were chosen for their more obvious transboundary impacts on developing countries, but many other EU policies could be looked at in the same way.

The concept of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) underpins the 2030 Agenda and will be used as a lens through which we analyse policies and come up with recommendations. As a confederation of NGOs working mainly in the area of international cooperation, we will focus particularly on the aspect of 'elsewhere': what are the impacts of EU policy choices on developing countries?

OVERARCHING SUSTAINABLE EUROPE 2030 STRATEGY

Given the broad range of EU policies which affect other countries, a strategic approach is needed to ensure policy coherence and the EU's global contribution to sustainable development. CONCORD has urged the EU to adopt an overarching sustainable development strategy ever since the 2030 Agenda was adopted, to make sure that the principle of sustainable development encompasses all policy sectors and that from a global perspective the EU's contribution is not limited to development cooperation. Since then, all the main institutions of the EU have also considered the benefits of such a strategy.

The European Commission, in its Reflection Paper Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030, noted that an overarching strategy would, above all, create a strong common positive vision for the sustainable future of Europe, strengthen political ownership and enhance coordination.¹ The European Parliament (EP) supported this overarching strategy scenario of the Commission and emphasised the need to address the interlinkages between the SDGs, i.e. to strengthen policy coherence.² Similarly, the Council has repeatedly called on the Commission to prepare a strategy or a strategic implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda.^{3,4} Like the EP, EU Member States also note the value of a strategy for improving policy coherence.

Moreover, these thoughts resonate widely among European stakeholders. The High-Level EU SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP), in which many civil society platforms are represented, also made a strong point on this issue.⁵ The Platform stated in its Contribution to the Reflection Paper that the current Europe 2020 strategy should be succeeded by a Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy. According to the MSP, the strategy must be a driver for policy coherence for sustainable development so that the EU can deliver the economic, social and environmental transformations needed to achieve the SDGs.

One further argument for why a Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy could help in improving policy coherence relates to the issue of competence. The 2030 Agenda states that the main responsibility for achieving the SDGs lies with UN Member States, and all countries should adopt their national implementation plans. So one could ask why one would also need a plan at the EU level? Due to the exclusive and shared competences of the EU, action only at national level in Europe is simply not enough as some key policy areas would be left out. Trade and agriculture are good examples of this. In some policy areas only the EU can take decisions with a majority of Member States on board. With an overarching strategy, policy areas with different competences can be brought under one umbrella to promote policy coherence and to ensure that there will be no gaps in implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The following pages elaborate on how the Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy could strengthen policy coherence for sustainable development in trade, migration, food, environment and climate, finance and taxation policies and what the next Commissioners responsible for these respective policy areas thus might have to prioritise.

TRADE

TAKING STOCK

Since the EU's 'Global Europe' Trade Strategy of 2006, the European Commission has started a vast programme of bilateral trade negotiations that has delivered the largest network of bilateral trade agreements, which have continuously become more comprehensive and penetrate more deeply into the domestic decision-making sphere.⁶ In targeting "non-tariff measures" every possible domestic policy may fall within the remit of trade policy which aims at making domestic regulations "the least trade distorting" or "the least burdensome for business". Meanwhile, the Lisbon Treaty has added competences on investment protection to the EU's trade remit. After introducing reforms to the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism (ISDS), the EU embarked on the expansion of ISDS via bilateral agreements and its efforts to establish a Multilateral Investment Court.

At the same time, the EU and its Member States have been quite reluctant to work towards binding rules for business and human rights or to make the sustainable development chapter of its trade agreements equally enforceable as the rest of the agreements. This calls into question the hierarchy of norms and goals: do competitiveness, trade liberalisation and investment protection come before social, environmental and human rights concerns? In spite of the fine sustainable development language of the 2015 "Trade for all strategy" the EU's offensive trade interests and competitive growth strategy still seem to prevail.⁷

With the broadening and deepening of the scope of the EU's trade policy, one would have expected the EU to work towards an inclusive and democratic decision-making process that involves civil society actors in negotiation processes (as they do with companies) and that also increases cooperation and coordination with other policy domains to ensure coherence with the dimensions of sustainable development, e.g. social, environmental, economic and governance. Actually, this is hardly the case: the logic of trade and investment is to penetrate even more successfully into other policy areas, rather than the other way around. Economic growth is the overriding purpose, the environmental and social dimensions remain behind. Meanwhile, global social, environmental and economic inequalities are growing, gender inequality and discrimination persist and current production and consumption patterns are increasingly harming people and the planet.⁸

Three months after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the WTO's Doha Development Agenda seems to have been dropped in spite of the call in SDG target 17.10 for its successful conclusion and for doubling the share of least developed countries' export in global trade by 2020. Instead, together with the major countries in WTO the EU has opted for a multiple track plurilateral course to move new issues like e-commerce forward, leaving long-standing developing country concerns like food security and agricultural subsidies unsettled; and leaving many developing countries behind.

AIMS FOR 2030

A Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy should aim to replace free trade agreements by sustainable trade agreements, i.e. a new model in which trade liberalisation and economic growth are no longer the primary goal, but where trade policy is supporting nationally owned strategies to restructure economies in line with sustainable development strategies, thereby contributing equally to the social, environmental and governance dimension of sustainable development. Human rights, labour rights, land rights, and the protection of our environment would take priority over corporate and private interests and trade agreements would no longer increase but help reduce inequalities of any kind, including gender inequalities. This would require a transformation of EU trade policy, restructuring not only the Sustainable Development Chapters in EU trade agreements, but re-developing the trade measures with a new perspective and approach.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION

-  To realize such a sustainable trade policy by 2030, the next Commission should start by reforming the trade policy decision-making process through providing more openness, transparency and inclusiveness at all stages of the EU's trade negotiations, in particular by enabling/allowing more involvement of other stakeholders, including CSOs, than the traders and the businesses, also in partner countries into negotiation spaces.
-  Sustainable impact assessments must better assess possible negative impacts on human rights, social development and the environment, but also examine what provisions need to be changed in EU trade and investment agreements to build societies that protect human rights, contribute to achieving gender equality, and provide sustainable development, livelihoods and the environment.
-  The sustainable development chapter of the EU's trade agreements must be made equally enforceable as the rest of the agreement; and any dispute in the trade agreement should be resolved in regular law (and not in specialised trade panels) and must include access to formal complaint procedures for negatively affected communities.
-  Governments from the Global South are trying to establish binding and enforceable rules for corporations when it comes to human rights. Instead of strengthening investor privileges, the European Union should support this attempt to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations.
-  Instead of pursuing ambitious free trade agreements exemplified by the Economic Partnership Agreements with the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, the EU should address long-standing concerns of countries in the Global South that are included in the Doha Development Agenda.

MIGRATION

TAKING STOCK

Since 2015, the high influx of migrants and refugees demanded a common policy response. Unable to reach agreement on the reform of its internal systems and policies, the EU shifted its focus to its neighbouring countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa.⁹ With growing populist anti-migration rhetoric dominating domestic politics in many European countries, the aim of stemming migration towards the EU has superseded other priorities in foreign relations, including funding for international development cooperation, ensuring conflict prevention, poverty reduction, fighting inequality and promoting human rights.¹⁰

Internationally, the newly adopted Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration offer new guidelines for EU policy-makers. These frameworks need to be fully implemented. The EU and its Member States should stop stemming irregular migration and mobility towards Europe by using development aid, trade and visa policies as leverage to facilitate effective returns, support national security forces and strengthen border controls in partner countries rather than to support partner countries in achieving their own development priorities and reducing poverty to leave no one behind according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.^{11,12,13}

SDG 16 highlights the need for governance and human security as basic elements for promoting sustainable development. But when this leads to supporting national security forces for stemming irregular migration, this could very well destabilise countries in fragile and post-conflict situations, unless this support is conflict sensitive and accompanied by greater measures for accountability, protection of human rights, and improvement in the sense of security as perceived by all members of local communities (“human security”). Policy coherence for sustainable development requires a better articulation of the nexus between migration, development and security according to a human rights-based approach.

AIMS FOR 2030

Human mobility is one of the defining features of the 21st century, with both positive and negative implications on poverty, inequality and sustainable development. Responses to forced migration and displacement situations remain key in mitigating the negative impacts of war, conflict, persecution, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change, and allow displaced people to recover from traumatic events. Specifically, the European strategy should focus on ensuring that displaced people are able to access basic services and rights, become self-sufficient and resilient to further shocks as early as possible in the displacement cycle. This requires committing to short and long-term finance responses, participate in responsibility-sharing schemes, and encourage global coordination, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

The 2030 Agenda includes a number of targets which recognise the economic value of migrants including SDGs 4, 5, 8, 10, 16 and 17. In particular, target 10.7 – the cornerstone of migration in the 2030 Agenda – calls for the facilitation of ‘safe, regular and responsible migration’ and the implementation of ‘well-managed migration policies’.¹⁴ But well-managed migration has a wide impact on all aspects of sustainable development. The European Commission itself notes: “Migrants generally contribute more to societies than they take away. When managed properly migration brings many benefits, it fuels economic growth in countries of origin and arrival, it enriches our societies and cultural exchange can foster peace – the European Union is a case in point.”¹⁵ In this sense, the EU and the majority of Member States have committed to implement the Global Compact on Migration which offers a comprehensive set of objectives and actions in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, promoting human mobility for sustainable development.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION

-  Ensure that spending allocated to migration in the next Multiannual Financial Framework contributes to the good governance of migration in and between third countries: promoting human mobility for sustainable development and reducing poverty and inequalities, in full respect of human rights and international law. Do not divert EU Official Development Assistance funds to migration control or to cover the costs of receiving refugees within Europe.
-  Promote initiatives expanding safe and regular pathways (such as human corridors, resettlement programs, more labour mobility options, ...), and implement the Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact for Migration across the different themes, while respecting the different competences of the EU and its Member States.
-  Reduce vulnerabilities and address the needs of displaced people, internally and across the borders, while respecting their human rights, strengthening humanitarian and development programs and the Protection Agenda sustained by the Platform on Disaster Displacement
-  Ensure that the particular needs and situations of Internally Displaced People (IDPs), refugees, children and migrant women are taken into account in all relevant EU policies through the implementation of impact assessments.
-  Promote greater coherence between external and internal dimensions of migration policies: reforming the Dublin regulation to increase solidarity and responsibility among Member States in securing rights for asylum-seekers will be a must for the incoming EU officials, to reduce externalisation of border controls.



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

TAKING STOCK

EU food and farming systems affect all the dimensions of sustainable development. The current approach to food and farming in the EU is having detrimental impacts on the climate and the environment, such as degradation of ecosystems, soil depletion, greenhouse gas emissions, and loss of biodiversity and insect species. The EU is increasingly outsourcing its global footprint by importing for example up to 22 million tons of soya-based animal feed every year, with disastrous impacts on deforestation and local communities' rights to land and natural resources.¹⁶ Despite EU surplus production, hunger persists and is even growing, which is a major global injustice. Unhealthy and unsustainably produced food poses a global risk to people and the planet. Our intensive agricultural production model incentivises increasing concentration of power in the food chain and favours dominant players, leaving smaller farmers with no bargaining power to secure their rights to decent work and livelihoods, including in the Global South.¹⁷

The EU trade policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) promote an export-oriented agricultural model that generates hidden costs (externalities such as land grabs, soil depletion, water pollution).¹⁸ Those costs are not included in any retail prices. Worse, they impede the achievement of the SDGs: costs incurred are passed on to people around the world and to future generations. The growing power of speculative financial interests (hedge funds, asset managers, etc.) as compared to enterprises actually engaged in agri-food supply systems has further complicated issues of governance and regulation. New regulatory initiatives against unfair trading practices and specific certification schemes to ensure sustainable food chains are welcome, but so far seem largely insufficient in view of the challenge of moving towards sustainable food systems. We need to reverse the logic and put public policies and investments in place to support climate-resilient agriculture with the small-scale family farmers who produce 70 percent of our food through locally embedded food systems.¹⁹ Improving their productivity and resilience is the way forward to achieve SDG 2.

AIMS FOR 2030

We need to move towards sustainable EU food and farming systems by 2030 that respect planetary boundaries, the right to food of **all** people, and the rights of rural communities to natural resources, land and water. A shift in policy, liability and support measures is urgently needed to enhance an agro-ecological transition. Small-scale farmers and territorial (local, regional) development should be put at the centre with particular attention paid to women farmers' rights and needs, in Europe and in developing countries.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION

-  Policies and measures must drive a transformation towards more sustainable food systems that are more resilient to climate change and reduce the harmful impact of Western diets on the climate and environment. This can be done through a shift towards agro-ecological methods of crop and livestock production, and a reduction of meat consumption (particularly of meat produced through intensive farming) in Europe. Small-scale, organic farms supplying local markets across Europe are already leading the way and strengthening food sovereignty, and policies must support and build on these efforts.
-  Adopt a Due Diligence law at European level to make operators importing food in the EU accountable for ensuring their supply chains are free from deforestation, land-grabs and human rights violations and respect measures to which the EU has adhered such as the Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Land, Forestry and Fisheries.
-  Investor protection rights must never prevail over the rights of local communities, such as their right to land, water and natural resources on which they depend for their livelihood.
-  Include mandatory environmental and social criteria in regulation of EU mergers to redress power imbalances in the food chain; revise Article 102 of TFEU to address vertical abuses of power.
-  Ensure third party access to complaints mechanisms for farmers and civil society in case of adverse impacts of EU domestic policies on the right to food, notably as a result of the Common Agricultural Policy.
-  Phase out all CAP payments that cause harm to small-scale farmers in developing countries and their aspirations to increase local food production in line with SDG 2. Eliminate all forms of public support leading to dumping of food in the developing world. Promote and increase protein feed production in Europe. Ensure that robust gender-sensitive human rights impact assessments are included in all EU financial instruments involving the agribusiness and corporate private sector. Private investment in agriculture in developing countries should avoid any large-scale transfer of land away from farmers or local communities. For all land-related investments, the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) should apply for local communities.
-  Fully acknowledge, support and take account of the role and recommendations of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the primary forum for ensuring policy coherence in the governance of the global food system from a human rights perspective, including in the implementation of relevant aspects of the 2030 Agenda.



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

TAKING STOCK

The report on 1.5° C published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2018 makes clear that we urgently need to keep the global temperature rise below that level, and that urgent action is required to stop and then reverse deforestation and forest degradation. Avoiding further loss and degradation of primary forests must be the first priority in combating the climate and biodiversity crises.²⁰ Eighty percent of global deforestation is caused by food and feed production, including globally traded commodities such as beef, soy, palm oil, cocoa and coffee. The EU is a major importer and consumer of these goods accounting for as much as 36% of all global imports of crop and livestock products associated with deforestation. According to the European Commission's own study, an area of forest the size of Portugal was lost globally between 1990 and 2008 because of EU consumption of commodities grown on deforested land.²¹ There is also evidence of serious social and human rights impacts of land grabbing and deforestation driven by European trade and imports from tropical forest countries. Therefore, the EU has a large responsibility for the loss of forests and other natural ecosystems such as grasslands which are not only important carbon sinks and home to a large proportion of the world's terrestrial biodiversity but also critical for the livelihoods of some 1.6 billion people.

Through laws on illegal timber (EU Timber Regulation) trade, international development cooperation programmes such as Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and through support to biodiverse forest areas throughout the world, the EU is doing much to support global forest conservation and mitigate carbon emissions from forest loss. However, these actions are undermined by a lack of attention to the drivers of deforestation and to the EU's own role through its demand and consumption of agricultural commodities.

AIMS FOR 2030

The EUROSTAT report on progress on sustainable development makes a positive evaluation of the EU's actions in responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) but this assessment fails to take into account the reliance of the EU on natural resources from other parts of the world and the impact of our consumption on sustainable development in other countries. The current circular economy package is a start but does not cover many of the issues of concern, especially not in the food sector.

Voluntary initiatives which have been developed are a step in the right direction but do not go far enough. The EU needs to develop robust legislative measures to effectively tackle the EU global footprint on forests and people worldwide.

A Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy should put in place the necessary measures which will contribute to many of the Sustainable Development Goals, including responsible production and consumption, life on land, zero hunger, climate action and good governance. Such measures would also address the current incoherencies which are apparent between the EU's ambition towards climate mitigation and adaptation, forest and biodiversity protection and its resource consumption.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION

-  An EU Action Plan is needed to eliminate the EU's impact on forests and other natural ecosystems and to support global efforts to protect and restore them. The action plan should provide support for better governance, respecting the rights of indigenous peoples, smallholders and local communities. New legislation such as a due diligence regulation should ensure forest/ecosystem risk commodities are sustainably produced and not linked to deforestation, ecosystem conversion or violation of human rights. This will require coordination through Commissioners responsible for international development, environment, trade, agriculture and finance.
-  The EU as a bloc, and individual EU Member States, must acknowledge the scale and urgency of climate action required. They must initiate bold, transformative programmes in sectors including the food system and energy, under the framework of an economic vision that protects and nurtures environment and society in the context of climate change, and reverses rising inequality. The EU's goals for decarbonisation and long-term low-greenhouse gas development plans, must include drastic reductions in agricultural emissions, and greenhouse gas reductions in all other sectors of at least 80% by 2030, and 100% by 2040.
-  The EU must urgently scale up its provision of grant-based public climate finance to developing countries so that they can adapt to climate change impacts and transition to greener pathways. The EU and the Member States must seek to reduce overall energy consumption and rapidly move away from fossil fuels and unsustainable energy sources such as bioenergy. The EU should transition towards 100% clean, sustainable, renewable energy.



FINANCE, TAX AND CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

TAKING STOCK

In its Reflection Paper ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030’, the European Commission recognises that responsible business conduct is a precondition for sustainable development.²² However, the EU’s current policies and actions in this area rely on voluntary initiatives and incentives which have proven ineffective in preventing European businesses from causing human rights or environmental harm in their overseas operations.²³ Business practices and production patterns by EU multinational companies in global supply chains currently concentrate workers in developing countries, especially women, in jobs with low wages and poor working conditions that fall far short of decent work, such as in export manufacturing or agricultural processing.

Yet there is a lack of cross-sectoral regulation of European companies with respect to the impact that their activities, operations and supply chains can have on people and the planet. A lack of mandatory transparency by European companies with regards to their tax practices in developing countries also has negative implications for developing countries. Due to companies’ tax avoidance, they lose out on significant resources, which are much needed to fund public services. In addition, there is no proper regulation of the financial sector in Europe, with no penalties to investors when savers’ money is invested in land grabbing, environmental degradation or companies who dodge taxes, leaving people in developing countries to pay the price. This lack of comprehensive regulation of European companies and investors is a major hindrance to sustainable development, particularly in the Global South.

AIMS FOR 2030

Better regulation and transparency of European companies and the financial sector with regard to their potential impact on people and the planet: All European corporations and EU-based investors must be required to identify, prevent, and communicate about the potential negative impacts on human rights that can be brought upon by their operations, supply chains, investments and business relationships.

The EU, in giving follow-up to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, must lead by example in the fight against tax evasion and avoidance: European companies must be transparent about their tax practices and stop using tax havens or tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes where they make profit. In tax policy design, the EU and its Member States should actively take into account any potential negative spillover effects on developing countries.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION

-  Introduce legal obligations for European businesses in all sectors to respect human rights and contribute to achieve gender equality in their overseas operations and supply chains through mandatory human rights due diligence, with effective mechanisms for access to justice and remedy for victims. This should be accompanied by the adoption of a coherent and comprehensive approach to EU policies on responsible business conduct, through an EU Action Plan.²⁴
-  Support the UN Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises, to ensure a global approach to tackle corporate-related human rights abuse, negotiating for it to include a strong gender lens.²⁵
-  Introduce a full, overarching mandatory due diligence framework for all financial market participants, requiring investors to prevent the negative harms of their investments on people and the environment, and introduce strong human rights safeguards in the new EU 'Framework to facilitate sustainable investment'.^{26,27}
-  Adopt the EU proposal on 'Disclosure of income tax information by certain undertakings and branches' (also called public country-by-country reporting), requiring large companies to publish key information on the profits they make, and the taxes they pay, in each country where they operate - including developing countries.²⁸
-  Undertake analysis of the spillover effects of European and EU taxation policies on developing countries, looking particularly at the impacts on women and other marginalised groups and take measures accordingly, in order to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development.
-  Support the creation of a global tax body under the auspices of the UN with the mandate and resources to effectively develop and enforce global tax rules aimed at tackling, among others, the issues of tax transparency, tax competition, tax avoidance and other Illicit Financial Flows. Only a UN body can ensure that developing countries are on equal footing.²⁹



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

To ensure a truly integrated approach, all EU Commissioners should be made responsible not only for their specific policy area but also for the impact of their policies on other policies or sectors, on sustainable development of future generations and of other countries, in particular of developing countries. This latter cannot be left only to a Commissioner responsible for International Cooperation and Development but should be a collective responsibility.

All these Commissioners should meet under the political leadership of the new European Commission President in a dedicated sustainable development project team, which should look regularly into these three layers to ensure coherence of their policies with sustainable development and wellbeing for people living here and now, living elsewhere and living later.

Incoming Commissioners should therefore not only fully subscribe to the Sustainable Development Goals and principles, they should also have a solid understanding of the interlinkages between policies, take responsibility for building synergies and provide strong guidance to their respective Directorate-Generals. This will enable the new Commission to overcome siloed approaches, overcome the increasingly artificial internal-external divide and overcome the short-termism trap. And these Commissioners should ensure the necessary expertise and skills amongst the staff in their respective Directorates-General to be able to take these ambitious integrated plans forward.

MECHANISMS

Better regulation or better law and policy-making does not mean ‘less regulation’ but instead ‘more integrated, balanced, inclusive, participatory, informed and long-term law-and policy-making’. The EU’s guidelines should be further improved accordingly.

To this end, when EU policies are designed or evaluated, guidelines should be strengthened to help ensure policy-makers build synergies and avoid (and if needed mitigate) negative impacts on other sectors, on other countries and on future generations. For EU policies to actually leave no one behind, and reach those furthest behind first in order to reduce inequalities, policy-makers should better assess the impact of their proposed policies on those most vulnerable and marginalised, within the EU and other parts of the world.³⁰ EU delegations, as the EU’s antennas around the world, should play a more proactive role in monitoring these impacts consulting in particular local CSOs and affected communities, and flagging incoherencies early on when they arise.

Citizens, parliamentarians and civil society should be able to hold EU Commissioners to account for their efforts towards making their policies balance the different dimensions of sustainable development, impact positively on sustainable development of developing countries and of future generations. This could be facilitated with the help of an annual monitoring report, that can accompany other progress reports, on the basis of which there should be an annual public debate. Such a report could also include mandatory reporting by Member States in the same way. This would require an increase in the capacity of Member States to monitor policy coherence for sustainable development on the basis of standard indicators and a consistent monitoring methodology.

Finally, EU decision-makers at all levels should further improve how they engage and support citizens and civil society organisations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws and policies. PCSD mechanisms must be transparent and enable meaningful engagement of civil society in its own right at all levels of society, across Europe and globally. Strengthened civil dialogue leads to better EU policies and laws in the general interest and can help restore trust in the EU institutions. Building on article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty, EU leaders should ensure participatory democratic EU institutions *of the people, by the people and for the people*, to live well and sustainably, here and now, elsewhere and in the future.³¹

END NOTES

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