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WORKING PAPER

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From:	[REDACTED]
To:	Working Party on Development Cooperation
Subject:	A sustainable European Future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - Revised draft Council conclusions - Comments from the [REDACTED]

Please find enclosed, for information, comments from the [REDACTED] on the second revised draft of the above Council conclusions.

**A sustainable European future:
The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

- Draft Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION


1. UNDERLINES that sustainable development lies at the core of European values and constitutes an overarching objective of the European Union as set out in the Treaties;¹
2. RECOGNISES the responsibility of the EU and its Member States, within their respective competences, to promote sustainable development domestically and globally in a coherent way as well as addressing the domestic and global impact of their actions on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;
3. RECALLS the leading role of the EU and its Member States in the process that led to the adoption of "Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"² (2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015;


The EU response to the 2030 Agenda

4. REITERATES the EU and its Member States' full commitment to this transformative and ambitious 2030 Agenda, and the importance that the EU and its Member States attach to driving forward its implementation as a plan of action for People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership;
5. STRESSES that the sustainability challenges are interdependent and can only be tackled effectively by addressing the interlinkages of the SDGs in a holistic and coherent approach factoring in the three dimensions of sustainable development at all levels;

¹ Articles 3(3) TEU and 21(2) TFEU.

² [A/RES/70/1](#)

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6. STRESSES the commitment of the EU and its Member States to achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030, ensuring that no one is left behind and seeking to reach the furthest behind first; RECOGNISES that greater effort is needed by all actors to promote social inclusion especially of youth, women and girls; UNDERLINES that comprehensive and sustained measures are needed to address the multidimensional nature of poverty and growing inequalities between and within countries and to provide opportunities for all to fulfil their potential, now and in future generations, while protecting our planet, its biodiversity and its natural resources;
 7. UNDERLINES that good governance, the rule of law, democracy, and effective and accountable institutions are prerequisites for peaceful and inclusive societies; REAFFIRMS that the EU and its Member States will implement a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, while promoting inclusion and participation, non-discrimination, equality, equity, transparency and accountability;
 8. UNDERLINES that gender equality is at the core of EU values and is enshrined in its legal and political framework. The empowerment of women and girls and the full realisation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms are vital for achieving all the SDGs and cut across the whole 2030 Agenda. STRESSES that gender equality is essential for achieving peace and security, equitable economic progress and sustainable development. REITERATES that the EU and its Member States should ensure development and implementation of gender responsive and transformative policies as a key contribution to the successful achievement of the SDGs;

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9. RECALLS that the 2030 Agenda is global in nature, universally applicable and based on global partnership, national ownership and shared responsibility; it is supported by a comprehensive approach to the mobilisation of all means of implementation as spelled out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda ³ on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. STRESSES that all UN Member States will need to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to realise its transformative potential, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities and respecting national policies and priorities;
10. CALLS for an integrated, comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda that builds synergies with the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda⁴ and other international commitments. These multilateral commitments demonstrated the necessity and the capacity of all UN Member States to work in partnership on global issues; UNDERLINES the crucial importance of a rules-based global order, with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core for a peaceful and sustainable world;
11. RECOGNISES that the ambitious implementation of the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity and positive prospect for the European Union. UNDERLINES the need for ambitious EU policies that contain responses to the challenges, which the EU and the world face today and the opportunity the SDGs present in achieving a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable society by 2030. EMPHASISES the need for the EU to complement the implementation efforts by the Member States and to focus on policies where it has added value;
12. WELCOMES the Commission Communication on "Next steps for a sustainable European future" of 22 November 2016 ⁵ as a first step in mainstreaming the SDGs and applying sustainable development as an essential guiding principle for all EU policies, including through its financing instruments, procurement, partnerships with business, cohesion, and the use of better regulation tools;

³ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/press-release/countries-reach-historic-agreement.html>.

⁴ A/RES/71/256

⁵ 14774/16 - COM(2016) 739 final + ADD 1.

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13. WELCOMES the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union which sets out the strategic vision for the EU's external action and identifies clear links with the 2030 Agenda. RECOGNISES that a prosperous Union also hinges on an open and fair international economic, financial and trade system and sustainable and equitable access to the global public goods. STRESSES that the SDGs are a cross-cutting dimension of the Global Strategy;
 14. [WELCOMES the Joint Statement on a new European Consensus on Development – Our World, our Dignity, our Future and UNDERLINES that the new Consensus reflects the new development paradigm and a transformative shift in development cooperation;]

Next steps towards achieving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at EU level

15. CONFIRMS that the EU and the Member States are strongly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda in a full, coherent, comprehensive, integrated and effective manner and in close cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, including sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, social partners and academia;
16. REQUESTS the Commission while respecting the principle of subsidiarity to continue steering the EU policy framework to ensure that existing and new EU policies are in line with the SDGs and their targets; and by that contributing to equality for all, human dignity, healthy and resilient planet, fair, inclusive peace and resilient societies and sustainable economies;

17. URGES the Commission to elaborate, by mid-2018, a strategic framework outlining timelines and concrete measures to reflect the SDGs in all relevant policies. This framework should be based on a clear vision of how all relevant EU policies will contribute to the realisation of the SDGs. To this end, the Council invites the Commission to identify gaps in relevant policy areas, and assess what needs to be done define policy objectives for all SDGs reflecting the internal and external dimension and global impacts of the EU's domestic actions in terms of EU policy, legislation and means of implementation until 2030 and set a governance structure which defines the tasks of the Commission project team, designates a committee for sustainable development by directorate generals as well as sustainability coordinators in each directorate general; INVITES the Commission to conduct impact assessments as regards the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs as guiding principle in upcoming reviews of major and horizontal policy instruments and strategies, including the European Semester, and define a clear process for consideration of the SDGs in post 2020 policies. ENCOURAGES the Commission to integrate the 2030 Agenda in the discussion on the future of Europe and

17.18. _____

~~18.~~19. UNDERLINES the importance of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as a fundamental part in achieving the SDGs and an important contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The 2030 Agenda provides new impetus for the EU and its Member States to formulate and implement mutually reinforcing policies; REAFFIRMS the EU and Member States' commitment to ensure inter-linkages, coherence and consistency between the different policy sectors by making use of existing mechanisms and adjusting them where required to address the challenges of sustainability and transformation; The PCSD in its broader sense requires not only institutional and cross-sectoral coordination but also analytical and monitoring capacity to identify incoherent policies and measure their impact. The strengthened Regulatory Scrutiny Board can be used in assessing Commission proposals' sustainability and impact on Agenda 2030 implementation."

Partnerships and stakeholder involvement for the 2030 Agenda implementation

~~19.~~20. REAFFIRMS the EU's support to effective multilateralism particularly in the framework of the United Nations (UN). The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda requires that its implementation, follow up and review are supported by a UN System that works in a

more integrated fashion and is fit to deliver flexible and efficient solutions to the global challenges of our time. WELCOMES the reform steps already taken in the UN in this direction and STRESSES the EU and its Member States' support; LOOKS FORWARD to effective implementation of further and comprehensive UN reforms, including, but not confined to, those outlined in the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, working across agencies and ensuring complementarity of effort in the UN system;

~~20-21.~~ WELCOMES the G20 commitment to take forward the implementation of the Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda and make its concrete actions more visible;


~~21-22.~~ RECALLS the shared responsibility and interest of all stakeholders in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including that of public administrations, the private sector and investors, social partners, scientific community and civil society organisations (CSOs); RECALLS its Conclusions on Responsible Global Value Chains⁶ and on Business and Human Rights⁷; RECOGNIZES the key role of sub-national governments in implementing the 2030 Agenda; WELCOMES the engagement of European businesses and academia including the scientific community, UNDERLINES their key role in providing solutions for sustainable development in promoting science-policy interface in implementation, follow-up and review; HIGHLIGHTS the need for global business to adopt sustainable approaches and commit to responsible business conduct (RBC) in line with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, ;

~~22-23.~~ UNDERLINES the need to raise awareness of EU citizens, especially its youth, and the private sector on the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda and to raise levels of public engagement and responsibility and political leadership in addressing the SDGs at all levels, local, national, EU and global thus contributing to global citizenship;

~~23-24.~~ WELCOMES the Commission's intention to establish a multi-stakeholder platform which should be inclusive and underpinned by a balanced composition; STRESSES that the platform should enable all stakeholders to contribute with their best practices, policy recommendations, ideas and innovative potential to the EU's SDG implementation approach. In doing so, the platform should build on the expertise of existing sustainable development

⁶ 8833/16

⁷ 10253/16



networks and peer learning mechanisms, such as the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), to foster and disseminate the exchange of views and best practices and to contribute to the vertical coherence of implementation efforts at EU and MS level;

Means of implementation

~~24-25.~~ UNDERLINES that the full range of resources, both domestic and international, public and private, will be needed for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all relevant policy areas. CALLS ON the Commission to assess how the programmes and instruments within the next Multiannual-Financial Framework (MFF) can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

~~25-26.~~ RECALLS that several EU policies and financial instruments contribute in a horizontal way to SDGs implementation, including the cohesion policy which aims at reducing disparities between the various regions in the EU;

~~26-27.~~ WELCOMES the proposed extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI 2.0), which lies at the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe with a target to mobilise at least half a trillion euro of investments by 2020; NOTES that the Commission proposal for extending EFSI 2.0 includes the aim to make at least 40% of EFSI financing under the infrastructure and innovation window contribute to climate action;

~~27-28.~~ WELCOMES the proposed initiative for the External Investment Plan (EIP), including the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) that will encourage the mobilization of investments, particularly from the private sector, for sustainable development and for addressing the root causes of irregular migration. The EIP should also step up technical assistance and support reforms to scale up substantially investments in developing countries. STRESSES that supported sustainable investments must be in line with the desired transition towards a sustainable, environmentally sound and inclusive economy, and not come at the expense of our climate, the environment or human rights; RECALLS its ambition to make the EIP operational during 2017;




Follow-up, monitoring and review

~~28-29.~~ 29. RECOGNISES the primary responsibility of Member States in the follow-up and review at national, regional and global levels of progress towards the SDGs and REITERATES Member States' commitment to conduct regular and inclusive progress reviews at the national and subnational levels, where relevant, in a participatory manner;

~~29-30.~~ 30. UNDERLINES that a robust, systematic, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up, accountability and review framework of the SDG implementation helps the EU, its member states and stakeholders to maximise implementation and track progress, assess achievements and ensure complementarity of policies and measures. Such review should complement and not duplicate existing review mechanisms;

~~30-31.~~ 31. UNDERLINES the central role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)– in the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level as an important forum for dialogue and mutual learning. UNDERLINES the need to ensure that EU and individual Member State progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is reported in the context of the HLPF at regular intervals, including through voluntary reviews. This will contribute to ensuring accountability to citizens; WELCOMES that many EU Member States have volunteered to give national presentations to the HLPF; INVITES the Commission to prepare for the first EU report at the High-Level Political Forum when it convenes under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in 2019.

~~31-32.~~ 32. RECALLS that the 2030 Agenda requires quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to measure equitable progress covering the three dimensions of sustainable development so as to ensure that no one is left behind; NOTES the work undertaken at UN level to complete the global indicator framework; CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to use data and information from existing reporting mechanisms where possible and to ensure alignment where appropriate with the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators and to actively support the measurability and further development of the SDGs indicators; UNDERLINES the need to avoid duplication of efforts while developing the respective monitoring frameworks;



~~32.~~33. CALLS UPON the Commission to carry out more detailed regular monitoring of the SDGs at EU level, including where relevant in the context of the European Semester, and to develop a reference indicator framework for this purpose and to improve people's well-being across the three dimensions of sustainable development drawing on existing indicators and data provided by the Member States, accompanied by a qualitative assessment of the progress made; CALLS on the Commission and Member states to use this indicator framework to assess progress and trends and to inform decision-making;

32. COMMITS to assess the impact, as soon as possible, of the 2030 Agenda in the respective policy areas and identify any implementation gaps and actions to be taken to ensure full, coherent and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all relevant EU policy sectors;
33. COMMITS to regularly take stock at Council of the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the EU level.
34. UNDERLINES the primary responsibility of Member States' governments in the follow-up and review at national, regional and global levels of the progress made in the implementation of the SDGs and REITERATES Member States' commitment to conduct regular and inclusive progress reviews at the national and subnational levels, where relevant, in a participatory manner.
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UNDERLINES the importance of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as a fundamental part in achieving the SDGs and an important contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The 2030 Agenda provides new impetus for the EU and its Member States to formulate and implement mutually reinforcing policies; REAFFIRMS the EU and Member States' commitment to ensure inter-linkages, coherence and consistency between the different policy sectors by making use of existing mechanisms and adjusting them where required to address the challenges of sustainability and transformation; *The PCSD in its broader sense requires not only institutional and cross-sectoral coordination but also analytical and monitoring capacity to identify incoherent policies and measure their impact. The strengthened Regulatory Scrutiny Board can be used in assessing Commission proposals' sustainability and impact on Agenda 2030 implementation..*"

Note:

The **Regulatory Scrutiny Board – RSB** is an independent body of the Commission that ensures a systematic central control of legal proposals' quality. At the same time, it examines Commission's impact assessments for new initiatives. In 2016 the RSB issued its view on 60 legislative proposals out of which 25 received a negative opinion (they were subsequently either withdrawn or re-assessed and allowed to proceed).¹ In 2017 the RSB is about to issue views on 70 legislative proposals (Energy Union, Circular Economy etc.).

We are convinced that RSB could be very easily adjusted to play an important role in assessing the sustainability of EC's proposals and their coherence with stated sustainable development policies of the EU and Agenda 2030. Similarly, several member states already have introduced regular sustainability impact assessment for their new national legislation.

This proposal builds on already existing structure and procedures. RSB was created to contribute to the implementation of the Better Regulation agenda and policy coherence is one of the key principles of better regulation.

The idea to use the RSB follows up on the recommendation by Mr. Karl Falkenberg, Senior Adviser for Sustainable Development to the President of the EC² that stated:

*„Even if the sustainability concept is more adequately built into the system from early stages the Commission might also want to strengthen the role of the **Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB)** in assessing the sustainability of Commission proposals against the economic, social and environmental impacts. The RSB assessment would be of advisory nature, but should be publicly available, as part of transparent governance. It would require the definition of clear and timely indicators.“*

¹ See Annual Report 2016: Regulatory Scrutiny Board (available from http://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2016-rsb-report_en.pdf).

² For more information see EPSC Strategic Note, Issue 18 from 20 July 2016, p. 11 (available from https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/strategic_note_issue_18.pdf)