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EU Development policy and the SDGs

This briefing is based on the WWF response to the European Commission's public consultation on revising the European Consensus on Development. It proposes elements which WWF believes crucially need to be reflected in the European Consensus and in the EU approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Overall, the revision of the European Consensus presents an important opportunity for the EU, as a major donor and global actor, to realign its policies with the principles and goals set out in the 2030 Agenda and to tackle environmental, social and economic challenges in an integrated way.

SET UP AN OVERARCHING STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda is a universal agenda. All the Sustainable Development Goals are relevant to Europe and should be addressed across a range of EU policies. Responsibility for the SDGs cannot be assigned to one part of a government or of the Commission but must be taken forward in an integrated and coherent manner, with different Ministries or DGs having ownership and responsibility for the implementation of 2030 Agenda. Indeed, development cooperation is only one of the policy areas that must be reviewed.

Incorporating the SDGs in EU external action must be part of a broader overarching EU strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The strategy should set out the role of the EU in relation to implementation of the SDGs by member states and cover both external and domestic policies.

ENSURE POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Policy coherence for sustainable development forms part of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and should be a cornerstone of EU external action. The EU has a long history of expertise on this issue and promoted it strongly during the international negotiations. Yet, unfortunately, there is still little knowledge of this concept outside the development community, which is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

The European Consensus should raise the ambition for strengthening coherence between development policy and other policy areas. It should ensure that policies in all areas – such as trade, fisheries, energy and agriculture – reinforce sustainable development globally. During policy dialogues with partner countries, the EU should invite opinions from partner countries governments, civil society and other stakeholders on the impacts of the EU's policies. For example, the dialogues on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) allow for discussions on the challenges to the implementation of proposed EU legislation on illegal timber among a range of stakeholders.

ADDRESS THE EU'S FOOTPRINT

If everyone on the planet lived the average lifestyle of a resident of the EU, humanity would need 2.6 Earths to sustain our demand on nature. EU countries rely heavily on the natural resources of other countries. The demand in the EU for agricultural goods, natural resources and seafood products may have environmental impacts in other countries, such as deforestation, overfishing and loss of biodiversity, as well as social impacts such as poor working conditions and loss of livelihoods. For example, the consumption of fish from illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing depletes fish stocks, damages marine ecosystems and jeopardises the livelihoods of coastal communities.

WWF calls for the sourcing of products outside the EU to be better addressed in EU policy-making. The EU should address the impacts of EU consumption by looking at challenges both at the *demand* level for the products in the EU and at the *supply* level in producer countries. EU programmes at the supply level which analyse market and policy challenges in sourcing countries and provide solutions for better, cleaner and sustainable production in developing countries should be scaled up.

MOBILIZE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

States have the primary responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Yet, it is clear there must be a broad mobilisation of stakeholders, including citizens, civil society actors and the private sector if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Participatory and transparent governance structures for the design, planning, implementation, monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional level are required as well as strong engagement from European and national parliaments and local authorities.

In Europe and abroad, the EU should engage citizens to ensure they are knowledgeable about the SDGs, strengthen its support for civil society actors and promote greater private sector accountability through ensuring adherence to internationally recognised guidelines and principles such as the OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the FAO guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests.

SUPPORT PARTNER COUNTRIES IN TRANSLATING THE SDGS INTO NATIONAL PLANS

Developing countries face many challenges in terms of poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and climate change and also hold huge potential for low-carbon infrastructure and to shape financial institutions which promote sustainable production and inclusive economic development.

The EU should support partner countries in translating the 2030 Agenda, and all other national commitments under multilateral agreements – such as the UNFCCC Paris agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity – into comprehensive and inclusive national plans and budgets. The EU should do so through sharing best practices and providing capacity building in specific areas depending on the needs, including targeted support to local authorities, business-to-business platforms for sharing expertise and encouraging investments, and encouraging multi-sectoral dialogues involving parliaments, local authorities and civil society.

INTEGRATE SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN EU DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Biological diversity and ecosystem health is essential for the provision of natural resources, food and services such as water purification, air and soil quality and climate regulation. The depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change can be a cause of forced displacement, loss of income, disease, water scarcity and food insecurity. Actions to tackle climate change and address natural resource loss are closely related to securing people's livelihoods and well-being.

EU development cooperation should strengthen its focus on improving environmental governance and natural resources management, with emphasis on inclusive decision-making, local institutional capacity and community-based environmental management and governance.

At an operational level, EU development projects should minimize negative impacts on climate and the environment and avoid support for infrastructure or energy projects which ignore climate and environmental goals. Through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, governments committed to a just transition to sustainable and low carbon development. The use of country environmental profiles, climate risk assessments at the programming phase, strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments help identify potential problems and solutions.

FULFIL FINANCING COMMITMENTS

A major donor with a global presence, the EU has been instrumental in taking the lead in many initiatives in international development. It has also taken on responsibilities and obligations in the areas of human rights, the environment and climate change, as well as commitments to financial targets.

For an effective implementation of the European Consensus, the EU and its member states should urgently deliver on the joint EU commitment to the 0.7% GNI for ODA target; the commitment to development effectiveness principles¹; the agreed goal of 100 billion USD per year for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries; and commitments on financial resources for international biodiversity².

With regards to the growing use of Public-Private Partnerships or other blended instruments in development cooperation, these should be more clearly and consistently defined. Such projects should be transparent, promote local ownership, deliver additional value and development effectiveness and social and environmental standards should apply to these initiatives.

Finally, while aid is important, other financial flows and investments are increasingly instrumental for supporting SMEs, sustainable infrastructure and services. European development and investment banks should lead the way in driving support and shifting investments towards sustainable development and climate resilience which aim to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C.

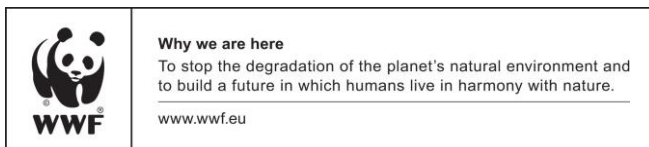
¹ EU funding programmes should build on existing financing principles and commitments including the Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Declaration, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Principles on aid effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the Bali Principles and the existing financing agreements under the Rio Conventions.

² During COP-12 in Republic of Korea in 2014, Parties agreed to double total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition by 2015, and at least maintain this level until 2020.

UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF THE 2030 AGENDA

The principles set out in the 2030 Agenda, such as leaving no one behind, respecting planetary boundaries and integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way are just as important as the goals themselves. The 2030 Agenda lays out a transformational approach to improve human well-being while respecting the limits of our planet. An over-emphasis on the economic dimension and economic growth at the expense of the environment and social justice has to be avoided. The current dominant measure of economic progress, GDP, hides inequalities and environmental degradation.

The principles set out in the 2030 Agenda should guide the EU's implementation of the 2030 Agenda and engagement in international organizations. The new European Consensus on Development should reflect these important principles. Among other things, the EU should work with other governments to agree alternative measures of progress which span the three dimensions of sustainable development as committed to in the 2030 Agenda.



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