

Briefing on EC involvement in the UN processes on the Sustainable Development Goals

8 June 2022

13:00h - 15:00h CET

Representatives in the Directorate General for International Partnerships of the EC convened an informational meeting to: update PFD members on the current situation of EU work toward the SDGs, both at central level and in relation to international partnerships; share EU priorities for the 2022 High Level Political Forum; and communicate an overview of the planning around the start of preparatory work for the EU Voluntary Review (EUVR) on SDG implementation to be adopted in 2023. At the start of the meeting, the new co-chair of the PFD for Local Authorities, **Fabrizio Rossi**, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions CCRE-CEMR, was welcomed. He expressed his thanks to the group and his hope that the PFD would continue to be an inclusive process that incorporates local governments.

Carlos BERROZPE GARCÍA (Senior Expert, Head of Sector on SDG Implementation, in unit D2 - Sustainable Development Policy and Global Partnerships with UN and IFIs) then presented update the group on the state of play of SDGs. He explained how the von der Leyen Commission has increased SDG integration and that SDGs figure into all areas of EC work, including in political guidelines, mission letters, Commission work programmes and key initiatives such as the Green Deal. He showed how the SDGs are part of the Better Regulation Communication and are integrated into programming and annual reporting. (see powerpoint at [cap4dev](#) page)

Nicolas Stötzel (Deputy Head of Unit, INTPA D1 – Effective Development Policy and Team Europe) then presented the Global Gateway strategy, which is embedded in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In today's complex global landscape, there is a strong need for a more comprehensive approach which gave birth to the team Europe approach and showed the need to improve global connectivity. The EC response is a "Values based alternative that creates links and not dependencies." It is based on the guiding principles of: democratic values and high standards; good governance and transparency; equal partnerships; green and clean; security focused; catalyzing private sector investment and its investment priorities include digital; climate and energy; transport; health; education and research. The Global Gateway intends to mobilize investments of roughly 300 billion euros until 2027 and will be delivered mainly via Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs). (see powerpoint at [cap4dev](#) page)

Carlos then complemented these two presentations by giving an update on the EU's input into the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July (with the theme of building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the 2030 Agenda), sharing that there will be a ministerial declaration and that the EU's key messages are under negotiation in the Council Working Party on the 2030 Agenda. At next year's HLPF, the EU plans to present the first EU Voluntary Review (EUVR) on SDG implementation, a document of political significance and a collective effort with Member States. This EUVR will address governance issues, monitoring and reporting and include consultation with stakeholders. It will focus on internal action, external action and policy coherence between the two. The external aspect of the EUVR will integrate planned multi-year reporting commitments, namely the Joint Synthesis Report on the implementation of the Consensus and reporting on Policy Coherence for Development. A questionnaire has already been sent to Member States and the process for stakeholder engagement is being developed, with plans to use multiple venues to raise initial awareness of the process. The modalities for stakeholder involvement will be considered in detail as part of the internal process of validation of the EUVR.

The floor was then opened for questions and comments, the key points of which are summarized here:

It has been proposed that the EUVR will be in the Commission work programme of 2023 and one of the top initiatives of whole EC next year. The Secretary General coordinates the exercise, under the authority of the Cabinet of President von der Leyen. The interservice group on SDGs has already been activated for this exercise. The EUVR is a political document first, to be complimented by annexes of each SDG. It is an opportunity to do things that the European Parliament and stakeholders want to do to promote SDG implementation, beyond just reporting. At the UN, this should be seen as coming from Europe, as there is no differentiation being made between the EU, EC, etc, and therefore it is an occasion to promote the Team Europe approach.

The mechanism for consultation and engagement from stakeholders (such as the PFD) is still being discussed. The process is complex due to the multiplicity of organisations involved, given the overarching scope of SDGs. A strong willingness to engage with the EUVR process was expressed from participants (including cooperatives, trade unions, employers, LAs and NGOs) and it was noted that the PFD would be happy to host future discussions. The decision to prepare a EUVR includes the intention to improve consultation on SDGs as part of the process. Participants stressed the need for a recognized and active role of CSOs and clear space for communities to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring systems.

On the process, specific recommendations were made:

- Ensure that the EU connects and complements existing CSO processes around the UN HLPF, including the preparatory regional continental fora (e.g. Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development every March) towards the annual July HLPF.
- Strongly engage EU Delegations because it is at local and national levels that more local/national CSOs and LAs could participate in the consultation process. Note that many local governments are producing their own Local Voluntary Reviews, that should feed into VNRs.
- Potentially reach out to BusinessEurope and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) on the external action part as leaders of the Business and Industry Group at the HLPF. They have started processes for LDCs and developing countries to interact with UN Resident Coordinators for better national coordination on the VNRs for employers' organisations and SMEs, and private sector as a whole.

On the content of the EUVR, one suggestion was made to focus specifically on SDG 17. Social dialogue in EU could be one clear example. As social dialogue is not strong in all countries, it is important to see to what extent the EU is including employers, trade unions, etc. in the implementation of the SDGs. ITUC offered to share their data and analysis on this regard. The importance of trade unions was recognized, and it was noted that tackling inequalities will likely be a visible part of the EUVR.

Private sector accountability

The point was made that private sector investments tend to go to middle income countries and it remains difficult to get investment to the poorest countries. Nicolas clarified that the Global Gateway does not intend to shift funds from LDCs to MICs but to encourage the private sector to invest in areas that are not sufficiently attractive. There is a recognition of the need for private sector support as financial envelopes are limited. He noted the concern raised about creating more unsustainable debt and that standards exist in the EFSD+ to avoid creating further dependencies.

Tax evasion/avoidance is an impediment to development financing. Nicolas noted that the EC has strict provisions on this in its Financial Regulation and agreements with DFIs to avoid this situation. The ball is in the court of Member States to apply the same standards.

Participants raised the need for an accountability mechanism within the Global Gateway in order to govern the relationship with the private sector and regulate investments. No new mechanism is included in the Global

Gateway communication; however, EC respondents noted that safeguards are in place and standards exist for private sector receiving funds. Legislation exists on sustainable finance, due diligence, social dimensions, trade agreements, etc.

Role of local governments

Local and regional government representatives asked where they fit and encouraged the explicit mention of local government and placing institutions at the forefront of the Global Gateway. The six windows for EFSD+ include: Connectivity; MSMEs; agriculture, biodiversity, forests and water; sustainable cities; sustainable finance and human development. Local authorities could be a part of regional seminars to be organized on the Global Gateway.

Further consultations with PFD on SDGs and Global Gateway

The Commission expressed its readiness to continue to consult and interact with stakeholders, including with the PFD in modalities to be determined, in relation to SDG implementation and in particular the preparation of the EUVR and on the deployment of Global Gateway strategy, highlighting the interconnection between these efforts.