

CSO-LA hybrid meeting on the EU Voluntary Review:

Partnering with CSOs and ALAs to keep the Sustainable Development Goals on track

**Tuesday, 23 May 2023
9:00h - 10:00h CET**

Following the recent publication of the EU Voluntary Review on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (EUVR), Commissioner Urpilainen hosted a meeting with members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) and additional CSOs active in SDG implementation. The objectives of the meeting, held in hybrid format, were to facilitate an exchange on the EUVR, to identify shared strategic objectives in the global context and discuss collective efforts looking forward, and to exchange on the contribution of the Global Gateway to the SDGs.

Commissioner Urpilainen highlighted the need to put the SDGs on track despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Giving up on the future is not an option. The EUVR aims to build global momentum around the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July and the UN Summit in September, contribute to the necessary collective recommitment of political leaders and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. In addition to addressing the state of play, one priority was to see how to work together with stakeholders ahead of these events to bring a strong and collective European voice. The Commissioner announced the plan to host a side event involving CSOs and ALAs as a complement to the formal presentation of the EUVR at the HLPF in New York in July 2023. One key feature of the EUVR is that it covers internal action, external actions, and seeks to enhance policy coherence between both – a key request from stakeholders during the preparation stage, as reflected in the synopsis report on consultation activities.

The Commissioner expressed her conviction that more can be done and highlighted the role of Global Gateway to support the SDGs across its priorities, and to mobilise more private investment in support of the SDGs agenda and accelerate the results. The EUVR shows that this is already happening through several flagship interventions contributing to the SDGs in concrete ways – such as on digitalisation, sustainable energy and vaccine manufacturing. Finally, the Commissioner pointed out the key role of CSOs and ALAs in the design and delivery of EU programmes, and the need to give them a stronger voice. To this aim, she announced the forthcoming establishment of a Dialogue Platform on the Global Gateway, a working space hosted by the PFD.

Erica Gerretsen, Director of Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace (INTPA.G), moderated the discussion with participants. Key points made in the intervention by stakeholders can be summarized as follows:

Importance of ensuring leadership and enhanced EU commitment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

- Welcome the EUVR, building a solid basis for discussion on next steps of the SDG implementation.
- Difficult geopolitical situation is not only having an impact on policy work but also on the concrete work on the ground of CSOs in leaving no one behind.
- Need for a solution-oriented approach to address challenges faced in implementing the SDGs, with a continued call from some stakeholders for an EU comprehensive overarching strategy.
- Some interventions stressed the importance of specific SDGs. Some highlighted SDG 17 (Partnerships to achieve the goals) as the enabler of progress of other SDGs, and the importance of focusing on its operationalisation which needed acceleration. Several references were made to SDG 8 on sustainable growth and employment, to water and sanitation (SDG 6), access to affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). Gender equality (SDG 5) was mentioned as key in all areas of

internal and external actions, including on adaptation and mitigation initiatives, and on the promotion of renewable sources of energy.

Policy Coherence for Development

- Welcome the attention in the EUVR to the internal and external coherence of EU policies, and the measures taken to mitigate the negative spill over effects, but more needs to be done to ensure that the current EU toolbox (better regulation, impact assessments) is actually used when designing EU initiatives.
- Strengthen coordination and coherence, also with EU Delegations and Member States.

Improve dialogue and participation towards the 2030 Agenda

- The EUVR does not go far enough on the next steps to achieve the 2030 Agenda and efforts should be made to reinforce further stakeholder consultation mechanisms/platforms.
- All stakeholders, private sector, local civil society and communities should have a place to raise their voices, including stakeholders from third countries, as partnership is a key tool to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.
- Promote and strengthen social dialogue for the implementation of SDGs to ensure decent jobs, living wages, labour rights and social protection, in all EU external action and, particularly, in the just transitions and Global Gateway initiatives.

Role of local governments and local civil society and communities

- Local and regional governments are fully committed with the 2030 Agenda. Localization of SDGs is crucial for advancing implementation, notably as gaps amongst regions are widening and hindering progress in the achievement of the SDGs in rich and poor countries alike.
- Need to address challenges faced by CSOs in implementing the SDGs locally, notably shrinking space for CSO and LAs.
- Concrete operationalisation of commitments on partnerships with local civil society and communities, including with grassroots women's organisations, require capacity building and support.
- Strong territorial approach needed, tailored to the challenges on the ground; capitalise on the commitment of local leaders to the 2030 Agenda.
- Explore and support the role of philanthropy in locally-led development and promotion of an enabling environment.

Looking ahead, including the forthcoming SDG Summit and beyond 2030

- Importance of mobilising more resources. The SDGs stimulus package proposed by UN Secretary-General brings some useful elements.
- Need to clarify the role of Global Gateway in relation to the stronger financing it brings to SDGs.
- Would welcome more clarity on the expected objectives and deliverables of the Summit and on what will happen afterwards through various foreseen UN-led processes.
- Need to follow closely and engage in any reflexions on preparing for post-2030.

Take-aways from the Commissioner

The Commissioner agreed on several points raised in the discussion, such as the importance of SDG localisation, and expressed her readiness to explore what can be done together with local authorities, city councils and local politicians. She supported the importance of systematic involvement of stakeholders, including from partner countries, notably through EU delegations, starting with the announced HLPF side event in New York in July. More broadly, she agreed on the need to reflect further on how best to interact with stakeholders on SDGs, including places to listen and interact, notably through the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (a point

supported in intervention by the Secretary General's representative, who mentioned the need to ensure the best possible use of such existing consultative structures before envisaging more).

She stressed the importance of human development, as the SDGs are ultimately about building inclusive and sustainable societies and fighting inequalities, which is her priority, and wants the support of Global Gateway to integrate this perspective.

She expressed her commitment to go to the UN to discuss proposals to accelerate SDG implementation ahead of the HLPF and the SDG Summit, and the post-2030 plans. The Commission is ready to discuss elements reflected in the proposed SDG Stimulus, such as on Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) reform.

She thanked stakeholders for their commitment and will take into account the feedback in her upcoming dialogue with the UN.