

**Conference: “Jump-starting the SDGs in Germany: natural resources and sustainable consumption and production” 2-4 May, 2016 Berlin**

**Statement by the Conference Chair**

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- 1 The time to act is now: Implementing the 2030 Agenda has to start without further delay at national level and first steps have to be presented and discussed at the HLPF in July 2016. We have to use the momentum created by the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Both agreements offer great opportunities to transform societies towards a sustainable future.** The adoption of the ambitious 2030 Agenda is a success of the international community and its implementation needs to start now at all levels. The agenda offers a unique opportunity to transform development into sustainable development for all countries and all people. But it represents a challenging task as the transformation of societies is complex, has to take into account the different stages of development and has to work in an interconnected way. Achieving progress on all goals will only be possible through an integrated approach. And we have to take the close linkages between SDGs 7 on energy and 13 on climate change very seriously. There is an urgent need to take action on limiting global warming as agreed at COP 21 because success in tackling climate change is of highest importance for the SDGs. At the same time, the SDGs will need to be implemented in an often adverse environment. Just to give some examples: We are experiencing new and extended conflicts, political tension, increasing inequalities – especially within countries –, shrinking spaces for the operation of civil society and the continuing degradation of natural resources. Trade and globalization link countries and regions and are important drivers of development and change. They must also be assessed within a broader 2030 Agenda and framed to support sustainable development. The SDGs will have to contribute to solutions for these new challenges. Against the backdrop of leaving no one behind and the prevalence of human rights violations in rural areas, human rights must be the guiding principle for implementing the SDGs.

**2 Concrete thematic areas help to accomplish an integrated approach: tackling the sustainable management of natural resources and changing consumption and production patterns allows highlighting synergies and trade-offs.** The 2030 Agenda strongly emphasizes that natural resources such as fertile soils, safe drinking water and healthy ecosystems are indispensable for sustainable development. At the same time, the SDGs and their related targets place additional demands on our environment. These demands need to be balanced, if the goals are to be achieved. Trying to implement the SDGs and continuing to use and manage natural resources following a business as usual approach, will lead to failure and increase inequality and instability in many regions of the world. Focusing on natural resources and sustainable consumption and production allows addressing the inter-linkages between the different SDGs and the related targets.

The agricultural sector can make a great contribution to this transformation. This not only refers to the way food and bioenergy are produced but also the way natural resources are managed and the way access to resources is organized in rural and urban areas. By focusing for instance solely on carbon sequestration and climate mitigation when managing our soil resources, we will hinder progress towards other SDGs. Increasing soil carbon may require 20 – 40 years until a new equilibrium is reached, but higher carbon storage needs to be maintained forever. What kind of policies will be required to bridge these different timeframes? At the same time, it is important that countries in ‘the North’ will not take advantage of ‘cheap-carbon-sinks’ in productive ecosystems in countries of the South to substitute for own mitigation measures. We must reduce the demand for and the overuse of healthy soils and productive land. A productivistic approach to achieve food security is not sufficiently comprehensive to address the complexity of the Agenda 2030 - we have to use alternative framings and concepts, for example, by focusing on food sustainability and placing a stronger emphasis on the nutrition dimension of food security, including malnutrition in developed countries. Urban areas demand a different approach to food and nutrition security that include questions of access and systemic issues. We learned that addressing food waste is just treating a symptom and that the real transformation has to take place by entering a debate on our global food system. Today, market food prices do not reflect the sustainability of their production. How can we integrate sustainability in the price of our food? Footprints are a great challenge not only within a country; we learned for instance that the great majority of Swiss water consumption embedded in products is generated from imports of water. The SDGs must be achieved by each country without externalizing sustainability challenges causing negative spill-overs to other countries. The transformation of consumption and production patterns is a prime example of innovations to be led by countries of higher economic development.

**3 Participation is key: The process of implementation of the SDGs must create opportunities for participation and a more level playing field. New and revived partnerships are crucial for the establishment of an inclusive process to achieve the SDGs.** It requires a range of actors working in partnership to implement the complex 2030 Agenda. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda explicitly acknowledges the possible contributions of this wide range of actors: *“All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan”*. Further, SDG 17 explicitly calls for a global partnership for sustainable development, which supports collaboration between governments and through multi-stakeholder processes. New and revived partnerships are pivotal to make this happen. There is a need for parallel, informal and nonpartisan arenas for dialogue, learning and knowledge exchange (such as this conference).

The effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global and especially at national level requires the systematic strengthening of the maneuvering space for civil society. Not least to contribute to the ability of citizens to hold their Governments accountable. Proceeding like this also requires paying urgent attention to existing human rights violations in a number of countries and increasing restrictions of the political space for civil society.

Leaving no one behind is a core foundational principle of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, participation very often does not occur on a level playing field. Actors have different degrees of opportunity and capacity to get engaged in these processes and there are differences in terms of power. The different actors will assume different roles within these partnerships. Multi-stakeholder partnerships shall not result in civil society being blamed for lack of action by the State. These examples show that multi-stakeholder processes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda would benefit from guiding principles. Against this backdrop, the development of guidelines for governments and all actors engaging in SDG implementation for the design and implementation of multi-stakeholder processes seem to be a necessity. The same applies to adapted actions by the State to enable civil society to participate in these processes. The importance of sustainable business cannot be stressed enough; they have a role to play and have to be a part of this process.

**4 Leading by example: First mover countries assume a pivotal role and have a special responsibility in setting good precedents and practices - both in process and substance!** Despite of important progress in many regions and countries with regard to certain goals, there is no single country whose development pathways live up to the integrity, the ambitions and shared responsibilities set by the SDGs. All countries of this globe share the responsibility in implementing the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, countries do start from different levels regarding the transformation of their development pathways to more sustainable directions.

Given the non-legally binding nature of the 2030 Agenda, first mover countries and leading by example will be crucial for their success. First mover countries need to jumpstart actions for implementation domestically and at the same time support the regional and global implementation of the goals. The *Initiative of the Nine First Mover Countries* (Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Liberia, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Timor-Leste and Tunisia) embodies a high political commitment by the heads of these countries. The same applies to the 22 countries who have already volunteered to conduct national reviews of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the first round of reviews at the HLPF in 2016.

- 5 The SDGs need to be seen as a global learning process: Bridging the gap between businesses as usual and the SDGs will require organized learning processes. The HLPF will play an important role but learning processes also need to take place at the national level.** One particular issue to be addressed is the gap between the levels of ambition enshrined in the SDGs and business-as-usual development pathways. The lack of coherence between especially trade agreements entered by countries and the necessary ambition to achieve the SDGs should be avoided. Implementing the voluntary agreement on the SDGs necessitates appropriate learning processes to bridge this gap. These need to build on different forms of knowledge and blend them in a non-discriminatory way. Follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda needs to follow this learning principle and go beyond the framework of the HLPF so that it can also take place at the national level.
- 6 In, by and with is the motto: Conclusions regarding crucial next steps by Germany in implementing the 2030 Agenda.** The following text aims to draw some conclusions for the implementation of the SDGs. By taking on the German case, as host and focus of the conference, the conclusions address issues that pertain to Germany but that are at the same time linked to the global implementation of the agenda. Germany can be seen as a case study in this regard and the conclusions can be taken up to address the implementation in other countries.

During the last 15 years, Germany has made strides towards becoming a sustainable society. The positive attitude by the German public towards sustainability is an expression of this. Its governance mechanisms for sustainability are often cited as exemplary; however, more does need to be done.

Implementation needs to take place *in Germany*: This refers to activities directed at the development within Germany. It also relates to Germany's policies that affect other countries (e.g. Germany's footprint in terms of land and water because of imports of feedstock). Germany must look at the externalities of its wellbeing and wealth. *By Germany*: Implementing the SDGs by Germany pertains to German bi- and multilateral development cooperation and its role in the diverse set of partnerships for the 2030

Agenda. Implementation also needs to take place *with Germany*: Countries with higher levels of economic development need to spearhead the development of innovations for sustainable development and bear the high initial development costs. This applies to social as well as technological innovations but technologies need a global view. Solutions need to be reproducible not only in rich countries. The German Energy Transition is a prime example in this regard as it offers the opportunity to draw lessons that can be applied not only to other countries but also to other thematic areas.

Against the conclusions above, the following next considerations assume crucial importance:

- **National multi-stakeholder platforms are needed to include diverse actors in the design of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on national level.** How to implement the SDGs will be a continuously evolving question that should be addressed through multi-actor formats.
- **Need to devise follow-up and review frameworks that support learning and go beyond quantifying progress.** The monitoring of global indicators needs to be accompanied by monitoring and accountability initiatives that include a wide range of stakeholders. The empowering effects of multiple-stakeholder platforms will be particularly important when current mechanisms do not sufficiently address the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups. Linking the global monitoring of indicators with discussions between many actors would thus blend a top-down with a bottom-up approach.
- **Finding concrete examples to demonstrate integrated, thematic approaches to implement the 2030 Agenda are needed.** One main challenge ahead is managing to effectively take on an integrated approach for the implementation and review of the SDGs. Inter-linkages between SDG topics abound and a review of the inter-linkages between the SDGs needs to address not only the synergies between goals and targets but also potential negative impacts and trade-offs. In order to move beyond single views on goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda, there is a need for an integrated approach that looks in a cross-cutting way at the SDGs and ensures that advances in single goals do not hinder progress in others. Germany has spearheaded the development of the Nexus concept that provides a useful approach to address these questions. Germany should support the design and implementation of such Global Thematic Reviews within the High-level Political Forum.
- **German civil society needs to be empowered to support the implementation of the SDGs and to report on progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda.** It is commendable that a civil society representative will have the opportunity to report at the High-Level Political Forum together with the official National Report by the German Government. This type of involvement by civil society needs to be ensured in all aspects of its implementation and follow up and review.

Let us seize on this challenge. We are all global citizens and by definition, we are in this together!

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