EU action for sustainability

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The European Parliament adopted by 446 to 57, with 84 abstentions, a resolution on EU action for sustainability.

Parliament recalled that climate change is not an isolated environmental issue but presents one of the greatest challenges of our time. It also indicated that the European Union and its Member States are all signatories to the Paris Agreement are committed to keeping global warming clearly below 2° C.

Taking note of the Commission's communication on EU action for sustainability, Parliament recalled that the aim of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 is to increase the **well-being for all** and that the three pillars of sustainable development, namely social, environmental and economic development are essential for achieving the SDGs. In this regard, Members called on the Commission to check the **compatibility of all new policies and legislation** with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To achieve this, a series of measures are proposed in a range of areas.

European political vision: Parliament considered that any future vision of Europe must integrate the SDGs as a fundamental principle and that Member States must adopt **sustainable economic models** for this purpose. The role of the Union in achieving sustainable development should therefore be at the heart of the discussions launched by the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe (COM (2017)2025). According to Members, the achievement of SDGs is fundamental to the **legacy left by Europe to future generations**.

Governance: the Commission is called upon to ensure that the multi-stakeholder platform announced in its Communication will become a model of best practice for the planning, implementation, monitoring and revision of the programme by 2030.

Agriculture and food: Parliament is aware that the **current industrial agriculture model** in the Union will **make it impossible to meet SDGs on sustainable agriculture** at EU level, reduce pollution and improving soil quality and maintain biodiversity.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, it will no longer be possible to consider food, livelihoods and the management of natural resources separately from each other. Special attention will therefore need to be paid to investments in agriculture (plants, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) as tools to **combat poverty and hunger in the world**.

In the agri-environmental field, Parliament further called for:

- the end of 2020 incentives for the use of rapeseed, palm oil or **soybean biofuels**;
- putting in place measures to make **food supply resilient** to climate shocks and reducing the impact of the agricultural sector on land, water and climate;
- measures to promote **agro-ecological transition**, minimising the use of hazardous pesticides that are detrimental to health and the environment and developing measures to protect and support organic and biodynamic agriculture within the scope of the CAP.

Parliament also called on the Commission to examine how the CAP and sustainable farming systems can best contribute to the SDGs in order to guarantee **stable, safe and nutritious food** as well as protecting and enhancing natural resources while tackling climate change.

Innovation: Parliament stated that the **EU should be the global forerunner of the transition to a low-carbon economy** and a sustainable production-consumption system. For this reason, it invited the Commission to orient its science, technology and innovation policies towards the SDGs and to present a Communication on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development (STI4SD).

It stressed the need to encourage technology transfer in energy efficiency and clean energy, knowing that **1.2 billion people in the world do not have access to electricity**, and more than 2.7 billion people do not have access to clean cooking facilities (especially in sub-Saharan Africa).

Energy: Parliament recalled that the Commission proposal for the 2030 climate and energy framework sets three key targets for 2030: a reduction in GHG emissions of at least 40 %, at least 27 % of EU energy demand to be met with renewables and an improvement in energy efficiency of at least 30 %. It recalled the positions taken by Parliament on these targets and underlined the need to keep these targets under review and to prepare a mid-century zero emissions strategy for the EU, providing a cost-efficient pathway, by taking into account the regional and national specificities within the EU, towards reaching the **net zero emissions goals** of the Paris Agreement.

Circular economy and waste reduction: Members called on the Commission to ensure that the circular economy delivers a significant drop in the use of virgin materials, a reduction in materials waste, longer lasting products, and the use of manufacturing by-products and excess materials previously considered waste streams.

Biodiversity: Parliament recalled that about 60% of animal species and 77% of protected habitats are in less than optimal condition. The Commission and the Member States are therefore invited to intensify their efforts to fully implement the nature directives and recognising the added value of the ecosystems and biodiversity of the European environment by allocating sufficient resources.

In this regard, Parliament urged the Commission and the Member States to **bolster the Natura 2000 ecological network**, while stepping up efforts to ensure that a sufficient number of special areas of conservation (SACs) are designated as such in accordance with the Habitats Directive. It called on the EU to promote methods that build soil quality, such as **rotations including legumes and livestock.**

Decontamination: Parliament urged the Commission to address the issue of environmental decontamination as a matter of priority by proposing harmonised standards against the use and degradation of soil and by presenting the action plan against deforestation as soon as possible. It also called on the Commission to step up efforts as a global player in protecting the important ecology and environment of the Arctic and urged the Commission **not to allow any policies which incentivise the exploitation of the Arctic for fossil fuels**.

Budgetary resources to meet the challenge of decarbonisation of the economy: Parliament recommended a full integration of climate action across the EU budget to ensure that measures to reduce gas emissions are included in all investment decisions in Europe.

It stressed that efforts to limit global warming are not an obstacle to economic growth and employment, but that decarbonisation of the economy should be seen as a **key source of employment for new and sustainable economic growth and employment**.

In particular, it called for the post-2020 multi-annual financial framework to shift the EU budget towards the implementation of 2030 agenda for sustainable development, guaranteeing adequate funding for the practical implementation of the SDGs. It also called for enhanced **mainstreaming of sustainable development in all funding mechanisms and budget lines**.

Parliament also called for the drafting of a report every five years on the **EU's climate legislation**.

Migration: Plenary called on the Commission and the Member States to readjust their approach to migration with a view to adopting a migration policy in line with SDG 10 and against discrimination. It reiterated its fears that new policies and financial instruments to **address the underlying causes of irregular migration** may be implemented to the detriment of development objectives. It called for a greater role for the European Parliament in this regard.

Education and awareness-raising: Parliament stressed that properly resourced public education and training systems, accessible to all, are essential for equality and social inclusion and for meeting the targets set by SDG 4. Parliament noted that **persons with disabilities** are at very high risk of living in poverty, with inadequate access to basic rights such as education, health and employment.

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to develop **programmes to increase public awareness** of the consequences of consumption levels for human health, the environment, food safety and climate change.

Health: Parliament urged the Commission to continue stepping up action on effective measures to tackle poor **air quality**, which is responsible for over 430 000 premature deaths in the EU every year and to ensure that new and existing legislation is enforced.

Culture: lastly, Parliament stressed the **importance of culture and cultural participation to delivering on the SDG agenda**, as well as the role played by culture in external relations and development policy.