Annual strategic report on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2018/2279(INI) - 04/03/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Development and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Eleni THEOCHAROUS (ECR, CY) and Francesc GAMBUS (EPP, ES) on the annual strategic report on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using the Joint committee procedure under Rule 55 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Members recalled that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. The Agenda represents an ambitious vision for a more prosperous, inclusive and resilient world based on the Union's core values of democracy, participation, good governance, social justice, solidarity, sustainability and respect for the rule of law and human rights. However, the achievement of the SDGs represent a challenge, and the 17 goals and 169 targets require coordination between the EU and its Member States, the European Parliament, national parliaments and regional and local authorities, as well as a multi-level governance approach, based on active and broad-based public, civil society and private sector engagement.

European leadership for universal values within a multilateral framework

Members welcomed the Commission Reflection Paper entitled 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', which sets out three scenarios for how the EU might take forward the SDGs. They ***favoured the first scenario, which proposes an overarching strategy*** for the implementation of the SDGs by the EU and the Member States. The committee emphasised that the implementation of the SDGs should lead to a paradigm shift and become the EU's overarching long-term economic model to succeed the current Europe 2020 strategy. The Union should renew its commitment to being a global frontrunner in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and thus political engagement should be reflected in the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027.

Enhancing strategic EU action towards achieving the global goals

The report called on the Commission to establish an in-depth gap analysis of existing policies and their implementation in order to identify critical areas of synergies and incoherencies. It invited the Commission to clearly identify the steps to be taken by 2030 in terms of policies and legislation, statistics and disaggregated data collection, and governance and implementation, in order to establish, by the end of 2019, a comprehensive strategy for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. It underlined the need to clearly set out common indicators, benchmarks and targets, and an analysis of the distance to targets and goals, the actions required to reach them and the means by which they will be implemented. Members stressed that ensuring tax justice and transparency, fighting tax avoidance and evasion, eradicating illicit financial flows and tax havens and increasing domestic resource mobilisation is crucial to the financing of the 2030 Agenda.

Policy coherence, coordination and mainstreaming of SDGs

The committee stressed the importance of better coordination and cooperation between and within decision-making bodies, different organisations and relevant stakeholders, and welcomed the adoption of the 2019 Commission report on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and the attempt to better

integrate PCD into the EU approach to implementing SDGs. The Commission was urged to adopt a follow-up action plan in line with the recommendations of the external evaluation of PCD calling for the adoption of a clear set of rules for the implementation of the concept. Furthermore, Members wanted the PCD to be discussed at European Council level in order to give impetus to the implementation of its mechanisms in pursuit of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the EU institutions to show leadership and adapt their own governance to allow for the mainstreaming of the SDGs within their work.

They recalled that the UN estimates that investments of USD 5 to 7 trillion are needed annually to achieve the SDGs, and insisted, therefore, on the need to mobilise investments, welcoming the potential of the EU External Investment Plan in this regard.

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and EU reporting for the UN General Assembly HLPF 2019

Members asked the Commission to conduct regular analysis of the VNRs of Member States in order to assess progress and good practices. They further called for analysis of the VNRs of Least Developed Countries in order to identify needs, close gaps and enhance support and cooperation, and to cooperate closely within the OECD in developing peer review mechanisms for successful SDG implementation strategies.

The report went on to recall that the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will meet in September 2019 at summit level to take stock of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, and at ministerial level in July 2019, to review progress on 6 of the SDGs, and annually thereafter in order to conduct progress reviews of the goals not reviewed under the 2019 thematic review.

Members strongly supported the Union's commitment to complete a voluntary review at the HLPF, and expected the Union to play a leading role in the summit. They noted that progress made by Member States varies depending, among other factors, on the SDG in question, national priority objectives and targets. The SDGs are highly interlinked and that an integrated and comprehensive systemic approach to their implementation should be pursued.

Focus on the SDGs under the upcoming in-depth review at the HLPF 2019

Members welcomed the upcoming in-depth review of SDGs 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships for the goals) and expected the Union to contribute comprehensively to the review in full.

They made observations on the attainment of these SDGs, stressing the need for greater investment to improve the quality of education and accelerated progress towards reducing growing disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all.