Implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The Committee on Development and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the joint report by Udo BULLMANN (S&D, DE) and Petros KOKKALIS (GUE/NGL, EL) on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

With only 6.5 years left until the deadline for the realisation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is of utmost importance for the EU to show leadership, globally and regionally, in their implementation.

Confronted with the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the climate and biodiversity emergencies, the international community observes a **global negative impact** on the achievement of the SDGs. Despite some progress of certain SDGs prior to the crises, trends are now reversed for several years in a row, leading to increased poverty and inequality, food price crisis, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

2023 is a pivotal year for the review of the SDGs and a push for their realisation by 2030, especially with the EU presenting its first Voluntary Review report at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023 and the global SDGs Summit on 19-20 September 2023 marking the mid-point of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and bringing together political and thought leaders from governments, international organisations, the private sector, civil society, women and youth and other stakeholders.

Status update at the halfway mark

Members stated the fact that, at the halfway point in the Agenda 2030 timeline, EU leadership in the global implementation of the SDGs remains crucial and must be further credibly demonstrated, for instance by taking the lead to mobilise **adequate financial resources** to support SDG-relevant transformations.

The implementation process for almost all the SDGs is **behind schedule** and that two consecutive years of regression have been recorded for many indicators. Members reaffirmed the importance of each SDG and highlighted the key challenges that persist for sustainable development, particularly in relation to poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, safe water and adequate sanitation for all, clean and affordable energy, climate change, life below water including oceans and biodiversity.

Members stressed the urgency for the EU and its Member States to make concerted efforts to progress towards clean and efficient energy to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Governance, multilateralism and partnerships

The report regretted that the Commission has still not presented an overarching strategy on full implementation of the SDGs, as called for by the European Parliament in its resolution of 23 June 2022 and in Council conclusions. There is a broader need for a **wider coordination** within the EU institutions, a better involvement of the European Parliament and tangible tools to consult the civil society. The first EU Voluntary Review in 2023 is a very much-welcomed step that the Parliament supports despite strong regrets over the lack of involvement of the Parliament in its preparations.

Moreover, the report places an important emphasis on the need for improved cooperation with global partner countries. In this context, the EU and its Member States must avoid negative spill-over effects at the expense of the Global South and ensure that all EU policies should be subject to a mandatory SDG check to better understand and address any negative effects.

Data and monitoring

According to the report, there is an important **lack of data** for global, regional and national development policy in the Global South, particularly for the poorest and most marginalised which makes the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs difficult. In order to assess Member States' progress on the SDGs, the Eurostat sustainable development indicators must be improved by filling existing gaps for some SDGs and addressing weaknesses in information systems. Members stressed that it is crucial to monitor progress on all 169 sub-goal targets. Member States should also enhance their data collection as well as to adopt SDG indicators and monitor their implementation in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

Financial framework

Members recalled the broad recognition, when the SDGs were adopted, of the need to 'go from billions to trillions' in financing for development. They are alarmed by the fact that the SDG financing gap has instead grown from USD 2.5 trillion to USD 4 trillion per year. They stressed the need for a **reformed global plan to finance the SDGs** and underlined the important role of Official Development Assistance as a catalyst for change and leverage for the mobilisation of other resources. Furthermore, the report highlighted the need to fight against illicit financial outflows and tax havens.

Regarding the least developed countries, Members are alarmed by the fact these were already unable to finance the implementation of the SDGs before the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine and are now even more in need of financial support. In this regard, the Commission is called on to draw up a genuine strategy to save developing countries from excessive indebtedness.

Outlook

Recalling the SDGs are the only globally agreed and comprehensive set of goals on the major challenges ahead for both developed and developing countries and Agenda 2030, they provide the opportunity to establish a true well-being economy centred on people and the planet and to work towards a sustainable world beyond 2030.

The UN should push all Member States to support the introduction of concrete timelines and implementation plans that are binding for the signatory states towards 2030 and beyond. It is also called on to prepare a post-Agenda 2030 strategy well ahead of time.