Implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The European Parliament adopted by 322 votes to 68 against, with 43 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation and delivery of the sustainable development goals,

With less than seven years to go before the 2030 deadline, the new geopolitical landscape and the multiple crises in different areas have further slowed down the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is an urgent need for **collective action on a larger scale** to eradicate poverty. 2023 is a pivotal year for reviewing the SDGs and building momentum for their achievement by 2030, particularly in the context of the global SDG Summit on 19 and 20 September 2023, which marks the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Mid-term review

Parliament underlined its **commitment to the 2030 Agenda** and the 17 SDGs, with 169 targets. It warned of the growing imbalance in the distribution of wealth and income and stressed, in this context, the importance of adopting an **integrated approach** to the SDGs, the only evidence-based universal roadmap to protect the planet. It insisted on the need to achieve the SDGs in a socially just and climate-friendly way, while ensuring the fair distribution of scarce resources within the planetary boundaries.

Members stated 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 lagging behind, with two consecutive years of regression recorded for many indicators. Members warned against the consequences of inaction and another year of stagnation. They reaffirmed the importance of each of the SDGs and highlighted the key sustainable development challenges that remain, including poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, climate change, marine aquatic life and biodiversity.

Members reaffirmed that **access to water and sanitation** is a fundamental right and that it is essential to improve it. They stressed the urgent need for the EU and its Member States to make a concerted effort to achieve SDG 7, which aims to ensure access for all to **reliable, sustainable and modern energy services** at an affordable cost.

Governance, multilateralism and partnerships

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to take bold action and provide global leadership by setting an example in the implementation of the SDGs. It invited the Presidents of the Parliament, the Commission and the Council to propose a joint declaration renewing the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda. The EU is better placed than anyone else to speed up the establishment of partnerships.

Members regretted that the Commission has still not presented a **comprehensive strategy for achieving Agenda 2030**, despite calls from the European Parliament for such a strategy. Such a strategy should define, at a minimum:

- a new governance framework, led by a single high-level Commissioner;

- a revised set of concrete, measurable, EU-wide, time-bound targets and indicators and concrete measures for achieving them;

- an updated monitoring system and indicators, taking into account the EU's internal and external impact on global progress towards the SDGs;

- a single financial plan to achieve the EU's SDG objectives, linked to the above targets;

- a plan for the EU's SDG diplomacy and international cooperation, led by a Special Envoy for the SDGs, answerable to the Commissioner responsible.

The resolution stressed the importance of **enhanced cooperation with partners from the Global South**, in particular the African Union and representatives of local and regional governments and civil society, for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It recognised the leading role of the ACP-EU partnership, particularly in promoting sustainable development in ACP countries and strengthening alliances to meet global challenges.

Data and monitoring

According to the resolution, 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.

With regard to **sectoral policies** related to the SDGs, Parliament stressed the importance of: (i) ensuring access to affordable and clean heating and electricity; (ii) promoting sustainable urban development in the Union (70% of the Union's population now lives in cities); (iii) guaranteeing universal access to energy in the countries of the Global South; (iv) negotiate sustainable trade and cooperation agreements that recognise each party's right to make regulations and that create added value for both parties, while ensuring a high level of climate protection and human rights; (v) tackle the root causes of biodiversity loss and integrate obligations for conservation, restoration and sustainable use of resources into wider development policies.