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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	29 June 2021
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EU Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (6 to 15 July 2021)

Delegations will find in the annex the EU Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development taking place from 6th to 15th July 2021, as agreed by the Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 29 June 2021.

**Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
6 to 15 July 2021**

General and cross-cutting issues

Response and recovery from COVID-19 as an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The COVID-19 pandemic, its economic and social fallout, as well as climate change, environmental degradation, continuing biodiversity loss and growing inequalities, reminds us that the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is crucial to build back better and greener after the crisis. Providing a comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on States' human rights commitments, **remains our top priority**, including strengthening preparedness and resilience to better prepare for future shocks. Never before has the importance of the responsibility of governments to reinforce resilience and protect people, by guaranteeing their economic, human and social rights, been so clearly demonstrated. The pandemic has put us further behind on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide the universal blueprint for a sustainable and inclusive recovery. We are ready to step up our efforts to implement the SDGs during this crucial Decade of Action.
2. The EU and its Member States are fully **committed to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda** and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to ensure effective delivery and achievement of the SDGs by 2030 as well as a transformative shift that leaves no one behind. Currently, more than ever, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires effective **multilateralism, with a reformed UN at its core**, and increased support for the rules-based international order, which defends universal values, promotes shared public goods and delivers benefits for all. The collective responses of the international community in the short and long term must comply with all human rights, including the right to development, and the achievement of equality for all, including gender equality as a cross cutting priority. The challenges of the current COVID-19 pandemic make achieving the 2030 Agenda no longer a choice, but a necessity.

3. As the world emerges from multiple crises, the EU and its Member States will continue to lead on key **multilateral initiatives** like the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the trade and climate initiative at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The SDGs are at the heart of our policymaking on internal and external action across all sectors and serve as our joint roadmap going forward. The EU is undertaking key new policy initiatives and strategies that will directly contribute to accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, including in the framework of the European Green Deal and its accompanying Biodiversity and Farm-to-Fork strategies, the new European Consensus on Development of 2017, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. It further takes note, in this regard, of the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative on the third Gender Action Plan (GAP).
4. The global **recovery** must be **sustainable, green, digital, circular, inclusive and just**. Tackling global poverty, inequalities, climate change, biodiversity-loss and environmental degradation as well as bridging the digital divide are an integral part of recovery and avoiding future shocks as well as ensuring better preparedness. This year the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and the UN Food Systems Summit provide unique opportunities to accelerate the collective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner and address root causes of zoonotic diseases.

5. Beyond short-term response to COVID-19, the EU has put forward measures to support the recovery, to stimulate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and high-quality jobs, supporting green and digital transitions. This includes the new temporary recovery instrument, **Next Generation EU (NGEU) of EUR 750 billion**, which forms the largest stimulus package ever financed through the EU budget. Global solidarity also entails **addressing the severe socio-economic crisis** the pandemic has triggered. Addressing debt vulnerabilities and economic adaptability are two key building blocks for ensuring an inclusive, resilient and forward-looking recovery. That is why the EU has proposed a **Global Recovery Initiative** linking investment and debt relief to the SDGs to secure green and inclusive recovery and a truly transformative, post-COVID-19 path, which needs to be in line with the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). Open and rules-based trade for an inclusive and sustainable recovery post-COVID-19 and for implementing the SDGs also plays a central role. Strengthening domestic revenue mobilisation, public finance management reforms and the mobilisation of private finance must also remain key priorities.
6. Education and training systems suffered a lot under the COVID-19 pandemic. Education, science, and innovation are key levers to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Only a truly transformative research and innovation policy will allow to deliver on the twin ecological and digital transition and ensure a sustainable, green, resilient and just recovery, as reflected in **Horizon Europe**, the EU's funding program for research and innovation, the European Social Fund Plus, the EU's funding instrument for education and training, and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. For Europe to emerge stronger after the crisis, we are committed to directing our investments towards game-changing innovations that create a sustainable and human centric digital future and to creating an innovation-friendly regulatory environment which fully considers the SDGs. We acknowledge the interconnection between citizenship education in a global context and the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as embedded in the Berlin World Declaration on ESD of 19 May 2021 and in the new UNESCO-roadmap "ESD for 2030". The momentum must be used to accelerate the essential transformation towards more resilient education systems to get back on track, enable children to be aware of environmental and climate issues at stake, and prepare them to become active actors of sustainable development.

7. Culture is an essential pillar in the identity of each individual, community, democracy and nation. It is also an integral part of efforts in promoting intercultural dialogue, innovation and sustainable development. The EU and its Member States stress that strengthening the role of Culture to achieve the SDGs is essential for enhancing values such as cultural diversity, collective critical thinking, effective collaboration and cooperation, transparency, and “togetherness” thus contributing to leaving no one behind.
8. Women and girls have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. They have experienced disruptions in their access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. Women represent the majority of healthcare workers and often balance unpaid care work with their employment responsibilities. Women should be fully included in all the decision-making processes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gender equality, as enshrined in SDG 5, cuts across all SDGs and should be considered and promoted throughout all recovery measures.
9. Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering on the 2030 Agenda requires scale and ambition. Mobilising the private sector is a key policy route to achieving the 2030 goal and development actors need to work harder to achieve this. Donors, in their own right and as owners of Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), need to ensure that the right incentives are in place for them to operate optimally. Development finance actors can mobilise the private sector investments through innovative instruments such as SDG and/or green bonds, guarantees and blended finance. Scale is critical and though blended finance has become an important contributor to enlarging the finance available for development, it should increase.

Safe, fair and equitable access to vaccines

10. Global cooperation and solidarity are paramount to fight the pandemic. **Safe and effective vaccines**, as well as diagnostics and treatment, should be made easily accessible to all across the globe, in a fast and sustainable way and without any form of discrimination. **No one is safe until everyone is safe.**

11. The EU has played a central role in the multilateral response to ensure equitable access to safe and effective vaccines for all, as well as supporting the rapid development and production of vaccines. In May 2020, the **Coronavirus Global Response**, launched by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, raised pledges of nearly EUR 16 billion for universal access to affordable vaccination, treatment and testing. The EU and its Member States, as Team Europe, have announced contributions of over EUR 3 billion to the **COVAX Facility** making the EU and its Member States one of the leading contributors to global vaccine access. In addition, the EU has committed EUR 100 million to support preparedness for vaccination campaigns in Africa as spearheaded by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and delivered vaccines for the Western Balkans.
12. Acting as **Team Europe**, the EU, its Member States - including their finance institutions and implementing agencies - as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), have mobilised a global recovery package of over EUR 40 billion to help our partners across the world address the immediate health emergency and humanitarian needs, strengthen health systems and support the economic recovery and social protection. Science and innovation have been a critical element in the coordinated EU response to the threat to public health from COVID-19. Public investments in support of vaccines, treatments and diagnostics and the translation of research findings into public health policy have been an essential part of that response. The 2021-2027 EU's budget offers opportunities to support building resilient health systems and reinforcing preparedness and response capacities.
13. The EU and its Member States are committed to **advancing global health** and strengthening international preparedness and response, also in the area of occupational safety and health, through strengthening health systems and advancing universal health coverage strengthening the World Health Organization, exploring the idea, through its active role, of an international treaty on pandemics within the framework of the WHO and by taking forward the trade and health initiative at the WTO.

Policy coherence and SDGs Interlinkages

14. The EU and its Member States will implement the 2030 Agenda across all internal and external policies in an integrated, comprehensive, ambitious and strategic approach, integrating in a balanced and coherent manner the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. This includes addressing **the interlinkages between the different SDGs** (synergies and trade-offs) and the cross-cutting nature of SDG5 as well as the broader impacts of their domestic actions at global level and in partner countries, i.e. spill-over effects.
15. Signalling the importance attached to the 2030 Agenda and reflecting the European Green Deal as Europe's sustainable growth strategy for the EU proposed by the Commission, the Commission is committed to integrate relevant SDGs into the European Semester, the framework for economic, employment and fiscal policies across the EU. The aim is to contribute to the overall SDG implementation. In line with the objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Member States' national reform and investment measures will also help achieve the implementation of the SDGs.
16. To address poverty and disadvantage through generations, the EU Strategy on the rights of the child recognises as essential the socio-economic inclusion of children and the social protection of and support to families. The recommendation adopted by the Council on 14 June establishing the European Child Guarantee, which complements this Strategy, calls for specific measures for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It recommends to Member States that they guarantee access to quality key services for children in need: early childhood education and care, education (including school-based activities), healthcare, nutrition, and housing. In addition, the Strategy invites children to become active participants of the European Climate Pact through pledges or by becoming Pact Ambassadors. By involving schools in sustainable climate, energy and environment education, the Education for Climate Coalition will help children to become agents of change in the implementation of the Climate Pact and the European Green Deal.

SDG targets with deadline in 2020

17. The EU and its Member States stress the importance of **addressing the issue of SDG targets with a 2020 timeline**, to ensure the continued ambition of the 2030 Agenda and to safeguard its integrity. The EU and its Member States will **continue** their redouble efforts to achieve them in an accelerated timeframe, supported by adequate monitoring.
18. The EU and its Member States urge the relevant intergovernmental fora and bodies to review, and as needed, adjust their frameworks to allow updated targets and measures to reflect a suitable level of ambition for 2030.

Stakeholders' involvement and role of local government

19. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a shared responsibility that requires a **whole of society approach**, through continuous and strong involvement of all branches and levels of government and of stakeholders, including all national, sub-national, regional and local authorities and cities, national parliaments, the private sector, social partners, academia and civil society, including human-rights defenders. Particularly underprivileged and marginalised groups need to be empowered in order to help implement the necessary reforms.
20. Local and subnational authorities are essential actors to ensure **ownership of SDGs by citizens** to adopt locally applicable, contextualised implementation measures and thus to translate national development priorities into local realities, also in the context of the current pandemic. Strengthening local democracy and participatory processes is a powerful tool to foster local engagement from citizens, civil society organisations, enterprises and other stakeholders. The EU and its MS welcome the increased efforts by the local level to make voluntary local reviews (VLRs) in conjunction with the HLPF and stress that VLRs must be promoted as a fundamental instrument to monitor progresses and sustain the transformative and inclusive action of local actors towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Thematic Review

The EU and its Member States underscore the importance of accelerating the implementation of all the SDGs. This section focuses specifically on this year's SDG review: SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17. At the same time, the consequences of the pandemic are significant and widespread and will require coordinated action across the whole scope of the 2030 Agenda given interlinkages between the challenges and their solutions.

SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8: The pandemic is triggering an economic crisis of large proportions very likely causing a significant increase in global poverty as well as aggravating existing inequalities. The social and economic consequences are significant and widespread, affecting all areas of society and the economy, including capital flows, business operations, employment and jobs, as well as health, education, access to public services, equality for all including gender equality, and food security and nutrition.

SDG1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere

21. An integrated approach is essential to target the root causes of **poverty and social exclusion** and to leave no one behind. Breaking the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage starts with investing in children and young persons, in vulnerable or marginalised groups and in gender-responsive development measures to reduce gaps when it comes to access to key services. With unemployment and inequalities increasing as a fallout of the pandemic, focusing policy efforts on quality job creation, particularly in green sectors, including the social economy, reskilling and reducing poverty and exclusion is essential to channel resources where they are most needed, including to the strengthening of social protection and social inclusion systems and measures. Quality jobs also means addressing in-work poverty, in combination with accessible and adequate protection, which are vital in guaranteeing that no one is left behind. The EU will also continue to promote decent work and social inclusion worldwide, including cooperation with partner countries, in particular within the International Labour Organization (ILO) and through its trade and development policies.

22. Effective and affordable access to essential quality services, such as water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications, as well as services of general interest such as health services, sexual and reproductive health-care services, universal social protection, education and culture, is key to guaranteeing social and economic inclusion to all. Access to housing that is affordable is an increasing concern and homelessness is on the rise in most Member States, thus requiring investments in services and infrastructures. The impact of climate change and environmental degradation on the opportunity for a decent life must be further recognised.
23. Complying with the leave no one behind principle at global, regional and national level in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda requires placing social inclusion and poverty eradication at the core of the Recovery Agenda and ensuring intra- and intergenerational fairness. The principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** constitute guidance for Member States' actions in addressing poverty and social exclusion. They are monitored by means of the Social Scoreboard in the context of the European Semester. The recent European Pillar of Social Rights **Action Plan** sets out a list of initiatives that will support EU Member States in achieving the ambitious but realistic EU target of further reducing the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, of which at least 5 million children. The announced initiatives will particularly address minimum income protection, homelessness, and access to essential services, among others. The Pillar also guides EU's international action on addressing poverty and social exclusion, including with the neighbourhood and enlargement partners.

SDG 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

24. Achieving safe, sufficient and nutritious food, healthy diets and ensuring that food systems remain resilient and sustainable are key challenges in the EU and beyond.
25. The EU has made progress in making agricultural production more sustainable and in reducing external effects – e.g. of subsidies – on global agricultural markets, but there is room for improvement in terms of the environmental impacts of farming and agri-food trade, where the picture is mixed. The **EU's Common Agricultural Policy** is currently undergoing reform, with a future proposal intended to ensure that support for farmers and rural areas is aimed at nine objectives related to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

26. The Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the [European Green Deal](#), aiming to make food systems sustainable and environmentally-friendly. Adopted in 2020, it aims to reduce the environmental impact of food systems, notably by significantly reducing the use and risk of chemical pesticides, antimicrobials and fertilisers, as well as of food loss and waste, contributing to a circular economy. The strategy also aims at promoting affordable safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all and stimulate sustainable food consumption in the EU, including through the development of agro-ecological practices and organic farming and aquaculture. To step up common European responses to crisis, the Commission will develop a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and security.
27. The strategy is also reflected in **EU's international partnerships**, including support to small-scale and family farmers in improving their livelihoods sustainably and in accessing local, regional and global markets. An integrated food systems approach is being developed in the multi-annual programmes that frame cooperation with EU partner countries. It will include due attention to addressing food crises through anticipatory action, using the Global Network against Food Crises. It will also support innovations for sustainable agriculture, including through agro-ecological approaches, and improve nutrition, putting young persons, children and mothers at the core. The EU is further committed to continue the work against hunger, including in close collaboration with other Rome based UN Agencies.
28. The EU and its Member States support an ambitious outcome of the **Food Systems Summit**, which should launch bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on safer, more sustainable and equitable food systems.

SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

29. The EU supports universal health coverage as an objective and one of the rights recognised by the European Pillar of Social Rights. The **availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of health services** to patients remain, together with effectiveness and budgetary sustainability, the main policy objectives for health system reforms discussed in the EU context.
30. The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), to the outcomes of their review conferences, as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. The EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.
31. In the EU, the European Commission is coordinating a common European response taking resolute action to reinforce public health sectors and mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic at EU and global level. This includes keeping essential health services available and accessible in times of global health crises. The EU has based its pandemic response on the principles of international solidarity and that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

32. At global level the EU is committed to supporting efforts to strengthen global pandemic preparedness and prevention, including through the One Health approach in close collaboration with the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and in **key fora** such as G7 and G20, including the Rome Global Health Summit. The EU will continue to play its part in the multilateral response to ensure the rapid development, scale-up and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics from the outset. In this regard, the EU encourages the G7 and the G20 to enhance global cooperation and solidarity, including in terms of global governance and financial contribution. The EU and its Member States will continue to work toward strengthening the WHO. The EU welcomes the establishment the One Health High-Level Expert Panel, supported by WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP, that will play a key role by assisting public officials make appropriate decisions to address and prevent future health crises of animal origin, and the PREZODE initiative for the prevention of emerging zoonotic diseases. In this context, we stress the importance of the interlinkages between human, animal, plant and ecosystems' health, and support the One Health approach, while aiming to strengthen and further develop it.
33. In its current engagement with partner countries to determine programming priorities, health systems strengthening can address, among others, protection of health and care workers, as well as workers in the logistics supply chains, health security preparedness and response, reinforcing public health capacity, and support to strengthen pharmaceuticals systems and the enabling environment for health products' manufacturing capacity in an efficient and sustainable way, with a people-centred approach . The effect on human health from toxic substances in products and pollution is still high and requires further work and strengthened frameworks. Other health issues highly affecting population in the EU like obesity and pre obesity are also to consider within the common goal of ensuring and promoting healthy habits and well-being for all.

SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

34. In Europe, like in other regions of the world, the economic and **social impact** of this health crisis is immense. In particular with Next Generation EU, exceptional measures have been undertaken to firmly put the Union on the path to a sustainable and resilient recovery, creating jobs and repairing the immediate damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic whilst supporting the Union's green and digital priorities. Many workers lost their jobs or applied to short-time schemes and fear for their job. Some groups have been particularly affected—such as youth and women as well as self-employed, low-skilled and migrant workers. In addition, limited access to online services has increased difficulties for participating in education and employment. To help workers, including young persons, in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, the EU has established the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE), which provides assistance of up to EUR 100 billion to Member States for the financing of national short-time work schemes and similar measures as well as for the financing of some health-related measures.
35. The EU assigns a high priority to the social dimension of the recovery, which must be a fair and just transition where every stakeholder can be heard and included in the political process. Many specific initiatives contribute to achieving the 2030 headline targets in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, including the European Skills Agenda, which sets out five specific actions to analyse, delineate and raise awareness of green skills, the Youth Employment Support package, the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, the Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment following the COVID-19 crisis, the European Education Area, and the updated reinforced Youth Guarantee. Upcoming EU initiatives will include, among others, a new EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work, and an initiative to improve the working conditions for people working through digital platforms. The upcoming Action Plan for the Social Economy is expected to include actions aimed at promoting globally social economy and its contribution to the SDGs, through international fora and networks. The EU recognises the opportunity to create high quality jobs for building nature-based solutions and biodiversity recovery as well as the key role of social partners. The EU will continue to support social dialogue at European and national level as well as internationally, with the Pact for Skills also contributing to this end.

36. Externally, the EU will increase support to investments with the **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)**, supported by a new External Action Guarantee for a value of up to EUR 53.45 billion, in sectors that support structural transformation and create decent jobs, which will help to de-risk investing in developing countries. Improving equal access to decent jobs and livelihoods, making global value chains more sustainable, smart and resilient and promoting the respect of human and labour rights are essential to achieve the SDGs. As announced by Commission- President von der Leyen at the Summit on Financing African Economies of 18 May 2021, the Team Europe Initiative “Investing in Young Businesses in Africa” should boost private sector development in Africa and job creation, focusing on young and small businesses, including through increased access to finance and advice. Thematically, the EU launched the Sustainable Cocoa Initiative aiming to empower local producers, prevent child labour, ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability in several African partners.
37. The EU will continue to promote the **Decent Work Agenda** in its international relations and in particular the ratification and effective implementation of the fundamental ILO Conventions as well as health and safety at work. Member States will jointly engage with the ILO in the implementation and follow-up of the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, including support for integration of the right to safe and healthy working conditions into the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The EU will further urge the international community partner country governments, social partners, civil society and the private sector to join efforts to eradicate forced labour and child labour as well as promote decent work worldwide. At the same time, it continues to work on building a monitoring framework of both positive and negative ‘spill-over effects’ in regions linked by supply chains, such as income and work-related accidents. The EU is committed to include social and labour rights in human rights dialogues with partners, in line with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.

38. To tackle child labour, the Commission's political guidelines announced a zero-tolerance approach, contributing to the global efforts in the framework of the UN 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. EU trade and investment agreements, as well as the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) have played an important role in promoting respect for core human and labour rights, as reflected in the UN fundamental conventions of the ILO. The EU will also step up efforts to ensure the supply chains of EU companies are free from child labour, notably by promoting sustainable corporate governance.

SDGs 12 and 13: The environmental crisis, consisting of interconnected phenomena of climate change, biodiversity nature loss, land degradation and pollution needs to be tackled - in an integrated manner. There is urgent need to reverse the current environmental decline and we need to act now. The deteriorating state of the planet undermines efforts to fight poverty and inequality as well as achievement of healthy lives and well-being for all. A sustainable recovery needs to be at the core of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic along a green, circular resilient and just pathway.

39. The 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP) plays an important role, supporting the environment and climate action objectives of the European Green Deal in line with the long-term objective to "live well, within the planetary boundaries". The program will accelerate the green transition towards a climate neutral, resource efficient, clean and circular economy, in a just and inclusive way, protecting, preserving, sustainably using and restoring biodiversity and land and enhancing the Union's natural capital as well as protecting the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. By doing so, the 8th EAP should contribute to an economy of well-being and a regenerative economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes.

40. UNEP plays a leading role in setting the global environmental agenda and the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) is instrumental in providing guidance to promote the integration of the environmental dimension of the SDGs and interconnections with the other SDGs in recovery efforts, taking into account the integrated nature of the 2030 Development Agenda. We welcome the outcomes of the online segment of the Fifth session of the UNEA Program (UNEA 5.1) as well as the adoption of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy, which provides important tools to address global environmental crisis through a coordinated, integrated and equitable global response and the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

SDG 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

41. In order to leave this crisis behind and build a more resilient future, we need to change how we produce and consume, we need to prevent or turn waste into value by keeping resources in the cycle and we need to produce products that are toxic free and that are possible to repair and upgrade. The EU supports achieving greater sustainable consumption and production inside the EU and globally. Stepping up circular economy action and resource efficiency and promoting responsible business conduct are key for tackling unsustainable consumption and production and for a sustainable recovery. Continuing developing consumption and production that goes hand in hand with the recovery of biodiversity and ecosystem services is key. Research and innovation as central drivers of change also play essential roles regarding stepping up circular economy action and resource efficiency. The new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU is a good illustration of this comprehensive and cross-SDGs approach.
42. The **European Green Deal**, the new growth strategy for the EU proposed by the Commission, promotes a change of direction towards sustainable consumption and production. The **new Circular Economy Action Plan** includes initiatives along the entire life cycle of products, such as batteries and plastics, targeting for example their design, promoting circular economy processes, fostering sustainable consumption, and aiming to ensure that the resources used are kept in the economy for as long as possible. As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy of the Green Deal, the EU will step up its action to reduce and prevent food losses and food waste as part of an integrated food systems approach. The European Commission will propose legally binding targets for food waste reduction across the EU by 2023. The forthcoming EU Forest Strategy is expected to promote forest sector's contribution to sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy aims to enable the EU's transport system green transition, by boosting the uptake of zero-emission vehicles, renewable and low-carbon fuels and related infrastructure.

43. The EU will continue to lead the way towards a circular economy at the global level namely through multilateral initiatives related with waste management, plastics and chemicals such as the Basel Convention. During UNEA's fifth session in February the EU, together with UNEP and UNIDO, launched the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE). To date, 12 countries have joined this Alliance which brings together governments to advance the circular economy and resource efficiency globally. In line with ambitions formulated in the European Green Deal and the EU Circular Economy Action Plan, the EU is scaling up its international cooperation to promote the adoption of SCP practices globally, including through support to partner countries, supporting the development of enabling policy and regulatory frameworks, and providing financing for concrete circular economy investments, especially through Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The European Commission is also putting forward a proposal on Sustainable Corporate Governance to encourage businesses to consider environmental, social, human and economic impact in their business decisions, and to focus on long-term sustainable value creation.
44. The EU acknowledges progress achieved under the UN 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns, which has strengthened multilateral cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships on sustainable consumption and production at all levels, and encourages measures that ensure broad and inclusive cooperation on SCP also beyond 2022.
45. The EU will promote responsible business conduct (RBC), in line with to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, as part of a wider approach in making international value chains more sustainable. A legislative initiative on Human Rights and Due Diligence aims at ensuring that companies and their suppliers respect human rights and do not harm the environment. RBC is the starting point for companies to make an effective, efficient and coherent contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. RBC contributes directly to responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and helps achieve other SDGs either directly or indirectly.

SDG 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

46. Since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions in the EU have been declining. The EU greenhouse gas emissions fell to 24 % below 1990 levels in 2019, while over the same period (1990-2019) the economy has grown by around 60%. In April 2020, all EU Member States had updated their adaptation policy through a strategy or a plan. Climate adaptation is mainstreamed into a broad range of EU policies and sectors, including water, urban, transport and mobilisation of people for active inclusive low carbon mobility and agriculture, as well as disaster risk reduction/management, environmental impact assessment and insurance. Within its Adaptation Strategy, the EU also emphasised the significance of supporting the resilience of our partner countries.
47. The overarching goals of the European Green Deal are translated into a series of **policy packages**, including the Climate Law and the Climate Pact, the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, the Industrial Emissions Strategy and, and in July, the EU Forest Strategy as well as the “Fit for 55” Package, covering wide-ranging policy areas, from renewables to energy efficiency first, energy performance of buildings, as well as land use, energy taxation, effort sharing and emissions trading. The European Green Deal has also become the EU’s template for a post-COVID green recovery Package.
48. The December 2019 European Council approved the goal of reaching an EU economy with a climate-neutral impact by 2050, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The EU is **also** committed to a binding target of a net **domestic reduction of at least 55% in greenhouse gas** emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. Climate action will be mainstreamed in all policies and programmes financed under the 2021-2027 EU budget and the new NGEU instrument. An overall **climate spending target of 30%** will apply. All EU expenditure should be consistent with Paris Agreement’s objectives.
49. The Climate Law turns the political commitment of the EU’s climate neutrality by 2050 into a legal obligation and will be accompanied by actions for a just transition. These ambitious goals and upcoming instruments should position the EU as a global leader who, by using diplomacy, trade and development cooperation, intends to advance climate action globally.

50. The EU has set its own ambitious target and, it will continue to lead the implementation of the Paris Agreement, actively participate in international negotiations, and work to increase the ambition of major emitters through enhanced NDCs and long-term strategies ahead of the **2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)**. The EU will keep promoting and implementing ambitious climate policy across the world, via a strong Green Deal and climate diplomacy, and engaging intensely with all partners to increase the collective effort. The EU also encourages export financing systems of partners to establish and follow rules that contribute towards climate neutrality. Common goals and rules result in predictable and equitable conditions for export companies in all participating countries.
51. Strong external action is required to achieve the transformative goals of the European Green Deal. A broad range of EU foreign, trade and international development policies and actions will encourage and assist partner countries to raise their ambitions to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. The EU and its Member States remain the largest contributor of public climate finance to developing countries.
- The contributions of the EU and its Member States have more than doubled since 2013 and totalled EUR 23.2 billion in 2019. In terms of support provided through multilateral climate funds, the EU Member States are the largest contributor to the first replenishment of the Green Climate Fund as well as to the Adaptation Fund. The EU and its Member States are committed to continue to scale up the mobilisation of climate finance beyond 2020 in line with the collective climate finance commitments. The envisaged contribution to climate action of 30% of the budget of the EU new financial instrument for external action (NDICI – Global Europe) amounts to EUR 23.84 billion for the period 2021-27. Since climate action, especially adaptation, cannot be separated from disaster risk reduction efforts, efforts to mitigate climate-induced displacement and development cooperation the EU pursues coherent design and implementation of adaptation and risk reduction measures including preparedness -both among its Member States as well as in its development cooperation- to achieve SDG 13 as well as related SDGs and the targets of the Sendai Framework.

SDGs 10 and 16: The COVID-19 crisis has brought unprecedented challenges for building more equal, just and inclusive societies.

SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries

52. The COVID-19 pandemic has profound economic, employment and social impacts, affecting societies most vulnerable disproportionately hard and putting at risk much of the progress that the EU had achieved recently in terms of social outcomes. It has compounded existing inequalities, including gender inequalities, impacted social, economic and cultural rights and revealed a range of gaps on social protection. Social protection systems and the unprecedented policy responses put in place in the EU have played a major role in saving lives and livelihoods and in stabilising households' incomes. Some of these measures and lessons learnt should be retained permanently to make the recovery more inclusive and fairer, and the safety nets more resilient in case of future potential shocks to prevent exacerbating inequalities. The recovery should go hand in hand with the respect, promotion and protection of human and labour rights, women's and girls' empowerment and their full enjoyment of all human rights, equality for all, including gender equality, and combating discrimination. Equal opportunities for all, including but not limited to, persons with disabilities, persons with a migrant background and marginalised communities, should be ensured.
53. The **European Pillar of Social Rights** provides guidance for actions to address inequality of incomes and of opportunities and sets key principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems. Promoting fairness and fighting exclusion requires – inter alia – a labour market with quality jobs and fair wages, active labour market policies, investments in education and skills, adequate and sustainable social protection systems and active promotion of equality for all, including gender equality. The recent Action Plan sets out a list of initiatives that have the potential to contribute significantly to reducing inequalities, including by providing further guidance to Member States on the use of distributional impact assessment in the planning and budgeting of reforms.

54. The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** will provide the EU Member States with funding for supporting children and young persons as well as for promoting social inclusion and tackling material deprivation. The funds under the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** will also enhance social cohesion and resilience through reforms and investments. The European Semester, which is a key delivery tool of the Pillar, has integrated the relevant SDGs and recognises sustainability and the well-being of citizens as an important part of economic policy. Monitoring impacts of public policies on poverty and inequality is key to leaving no one behind. Therefore, greater use should be made of distributional impact assessment to ensure more transparency on the redistributive impact of policies.
55. The Pillar also calls for taking forward the social dimension in **international action** for promoting a sustainable and inclusive economic recovery worldwide. The EU has also been advocating universal social protection, including through ILO and other multinational fora. The EU has recently taken steps to promote social protection and to enhance the integration of fighting inequalities in its international partnerships and development cooperation. For the years ahead, its development efforts are driven by the objective of reducing inequalities by building inclusive and sustainable societies.
56. Pursuant to the SDGs and reflecting the importance of stepping up cooperation on migration with partner countries, a comprehensive approach is needed, including tackling root causes, supporting refugees and displaced persons in the region, building capacity for migration management, eradicating smuggling and trafficking, reinforcing border control, cooperating on search and rescue, addressing legal migration while respecting national competences, as well as ensuring return, readmission and sustainable reintegration. To this end, the new EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe) will make the best possible use of at least 10% of the NDICI financial envelope, as well as funding under other relevant instruments, for actions related to forced displacement and migration. An increased coherence between migration and development cooperation policies is important to effectively support partner countries and to create life prospects for people on the ground. The EU upholds human rights principles in relation to refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, paying particular attention to children and young persons, women and to other persons in vulnerable situations, and cooperates with its partners on the basis of mutual accountability and full respect of humanitarian and human rights obligations.

SDG 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

57. Promoting and upholding the **rule of law is a major priority for the EU internally and externally**. Independent, high quality and efficient justice systems contribute positively to societal resilience, to economic performance and attracting investment. The COVID-19 pandemic has set back progress on governance, sometimes providing a pretext for authoritarian responses, corruption and illicit financial flows. This requires a firm and coordinated response, not just to protect governance gains already made but to move forward the SDGs, for which SDG16 provides a foundation. The crisis has tested the resilience of checks and balances and highlighted the importance of access to justice for all, including the need to accelerate the digitalisation of justice and of combating corruption, arms and illicit financial flows, including effectively implementing FATF standards.
58. Consistent with the range of internal measures put in place within the EU in the recent years, respect for rule of law and the EU's fundamental values will be a prerequisite to receive funding under the EU's RRF, which aims to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and supports Member States reforms' and investments efforts to strengthen the recovery and future resilience.
59. In its external action, the EU will continue to support progress on the rule of law, justice reform and more effective taxation through continued policy dialogue, technical expertise and financial assistance. Consistent with its initiatives within the EU, support to democratic governance is a priority for EU support, including targeted thematic funding supplementing regional and bilateral support. The EU will moreover continue to support the full, equal and meaningful engagement of women in all aspects of peace processes. It will support a gender responsive reform of justice and security institutions, the introduction and implementation of laws against sexual and gender-based violence, and the provision of public services that fully meet women's needs.

SDG17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

60. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact, the EU plays a leading role in linking the global effort to **‘build back better and greener’** to the implementation of the SDGs, in line with President von der Leyen’s Global Recovery Initiative, linking investment and debt relief to the SDGs as a way of setting a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the post-COVID-19 crisis. In this regard, the EU has been a strong promoter of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative as part of the G20 action plan to respond to the crisis and of the swift and transparent implementation of the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the DSSI. The EU continues to support domestic revenue mobilisation, as the most sustainable and reliable way of financing effective government responses and public services delivery, public finance management reform in the context of budget support operations and through policy dialogue and technical assistance. policy dialogue and technical assistance. Given the huge financing gap to reach the SDGs and a sustainable recovery, the EU also continues to support the scaling up of sustainable finance.
61. Acting together as **Team Europe**, the EU and their Member States aim to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of our development cooperation. This co-ordinated and joint approach is operationalised within the ongoing programming exercise 2021-2027, which includes Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs), flagship initiatives with a transformative potential focusing on strategic priority areas and aligning with partner country needs, contributing to SDG implementation.

62. In 2020, the EU and its Member States remained the **world's biggest provider of official development assistance** (ODA), having increased its collective ODA to EUR 66.8 billion (+15% compared to 2019 in nominal terms) and accounting for 46% of global ODA (0.50% of their gross national income (GNI)). The EU and its Member States' ODA to LDCs stood at 0.10% of GNI in 2019 (latest available data). We remain committed to meet our collective short-term and long-term targets. The EU and its Member States also remain a global leader on aid for trade (AfT) and are committed to progressively increase the proportion of aid directed towards LDCs to 25% of total EU AfT by 2030. The EU supports the development of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) to provide more transparency on resources for sustainable development. With most Member States contributing, this has led to the first TOSSD dataset, published in March 2021. For TOSSD to fulfil its potential, involving more emerging providers and anchoring TOSSD within the United Nations is key. The EU also supports Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs), to map the landscape for financing for sustainable development at country level and to develop country-led financing strategies to reach the SDGs, and welcomes that more than 70 countries have confirmed their willingness to engage.
63. The EU boosted its engagement in the **digital transformation of partner countries**. The EU and its Member States, together with other stakeholders, private sector in particular, launched recently the Digital4Development Hub, a strategic platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and EU Member States' coordination. New initiatives in the domain of STI include the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE) and the Innovation Fund for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The EU also expanded work on EU Copernicus globally, which can play a crucial role in pursuing the SDGs in partner countries. In relation to data, new initiatives include the EU-AU Data Flagship and the Global Development Data Tool, which aims to provide socio-economic indicators in different thematic areas relevant to the implementation of the SDGs.
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