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## OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 17 December 2024

To: Delegations

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Subject: The EU beyond the half-way point in implementing the 2030 Agenda:  
Policy coherence for sustainable development to accelerate progress on  
the SDGs  
– Council conclusions (17 December 2024)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the EU beyond the half-way point in implementing the 2030 Agenda: Policy coherence for sustainable development to accelerate progress on the SDGs, as approved by the Council at its 4072nd meeting held on 17 December 2024.

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**The EU beyond the half-way point in implementing the 2030 Agenda:**

**POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO  
ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON THE SDGS**

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**

**THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

1. *REAFFIRMS* that the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS) remain firmly committed to the comprehensive and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in both its internal and external action, as well as in other major multilateral agreements and instruments, in an inclusive, evidence-based, action-oriented and forward-looking manner, and *REITERATES* the EU's and its Member States' commitment to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).
2. *REITERATES* that the EU and its MS shall steadfastly uphold the United Nations and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and will strengthen efforts to promote the rule-based international order and rule of law, multilateralism, global peace, justice and stability, as well as democracy, universal human rights, gender equality and the achievement of the SDGs, upholding the principle of leaving no one behind in all international fora, as reaffirmed in the EU's Strategic Agenda 2024-2029. In this regard, *REAFFIRMS* the commitments and calls in previous Council conclusions<sup>1</sup> dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> 'A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (ST 10370/17), 'Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030' (ST 8286/19), 'Building a sustainable Europe by 2030 – Progress thus far and next steps' (ST 14835/19), 'A comprehensive approach to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development – Building back better from the COVID-19 crisis' (ST 9850/21), 'The EU at the half-time of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Steering transformative change and expediting progress at all levels' (ST 11084/23) and Developing the 2030 Agenda to reach the goals: Accelerating the localization of the SDGs (ST 15939/23)

3. *STRESSES* that beyond the half-way point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, we are still far from achieving the SDGs as the recent Sustainable Development Goals Report<sup>2</sup> has shown; further *UNDERLINES* its concern that at EU level targets are not progressing at the right pace and that there has even been regression in recent years, as documented in the 2024 Eurostat monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs<sup>3</sup>, thus *ENCOURAGES* the Commission to take proper account of these regressions when adopting its next work programme in order to progress towards achieving the SDGs both internally and externally.
4. Also *UNDERSCORES* its concern about the cumulative negative effects of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, the slowing pace of climate action, growing health, environmental and social security risks from pollution, the disrupted global water cycle, deforestation, desertification and land degradation, the global food and nutrition security crisis, commodity price shocks, and the increasing risk of poverty and inequalities across the world, which affect women and girls and the most vulnerable in particular, especially in countries with fragile social protection systems, as well as those affected by emergent and recurrent conflicts or rising threats.
5. *HIGHLIGHTS* that peace is a fundamental condition for sustainable development: the EU and its MS condemn all forms of aggression and remain deeply concerned about the ongoing conflicts worldwide, and *REITERATES* that the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights are crucial for achieving sustainable development in the social, economic, and environmental dimensions, thus *ACKNOWLEDGES* the strong interdependence and interconnectedness between the SDGs and international human rights law, as noted in numerous UN Human Rights Council Resolutions and reports from<sup>4</sup> the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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<sup>2</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/>

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable development in the European Union: monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context – 2024 edition. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-flagship-publications/w/ks-05-24-071>

<sup>4</sup> Including: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/338/40/pdf/g1933840.pdf>

## TO STRENGTHEN POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

6. *WELCOMES* the Ministerial Declaration of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2024 (HLPF) with special regard to the commitment by ministers and high representatives to act urgently to realise the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda as a plan of action for people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, and to the encouragement to all relevant actors to better address interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs and spillover effects<sup>5</sup>, especially on developing countries, thereby enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development.<sup>6</sup>
7. Also *WELCOMES* the outcomes of the Summit of the Future, i.e. the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration for the Future Generations as pivotal steps to further strengthen multilateral cooperation to address the needs and protect the interests of present and future generations, and *WELCOMES* the recognition by Heads of State and Government that sustainable development in its three dimensions is, and will always be, a central objective of multilateralism.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Spillover effects are cross-border effects of national consumption, production and trade patterns as well as financial markets on the sustainable development of other countries. They are categorised as environmental, socio-economic, security, and spillover effects related to governance/finance. Negative spillover effects include, for example, greenhouse gas emissions, the unsustainable use of water and land resources, or poor working conditions along global supply and value chains.

<https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/spillovers>

<sup>6</sup> Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2024 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council on ‘Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions’ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/227/44/pdf/n2422744.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Pact for the Future [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_adopted.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf)

8. *STRESSES* the critical importance of strengthening PCSD across all internal and external policies to effectively address the complex challenges facing the EU's competitiveness as outlined in recent reports commissioned by the European Commission: the Draghi Report<sup>8</sup>, the Letta Report<sup>9</sup> and the Niinistö Report<sup>10</sup>. In essence, PCSD enhances the effectiveness, efficiency, and inclusivity of sustainable development initiatives, and supports system-based approaches, leading to better outcomes for people, the planet and prosperity. By harmonising efforts and focusing on the interlinkages between different SDGs, PCSD aims to minimise negative spillover effects and trade-offs and to maximise positive synergies, while contributing to the SDGs' localisation in the context of a multi-level governance, as noted in the Council conclusions of 27 November 2023 (ST 15939/23)<sup>11</sup>. Comprehensively addressing the root causes of sustainable development challenges, enhancing accountability, monitoring progress towards the SDGs and promoting inclusive and participatory governance processes would foster policy coherence. Policy coherence for development (PCD) also plays an essential part in PCSD by addressing the impacts of our policies on the development of others. Also *STRESSES* that moving from a linear to a circular economy—an integrated economic model at its core—can provide economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially just solutions, thereby enhancing resilience and promoting inclusivity, and to this end *WELCOMES* the Budapest Declaration on the New European Competitiveness Deal that invites the Commission to present its Circular Economy Act.

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<sup>8</sup> The future of European competitiveness – A competitiveness strategy for Europe  
[https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en)

<sup>9</sup> Enrico Letta – Much more than a market -  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Strengthening Europe's civil and military preparedness and readiness: Report by Special Adviser Niinistö - [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en)

<sup>11</sup> Developing the 2030 Agenda to reach the goals: Accelerating the localization of the SDGs (ST 15939/23) <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15939-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

9. *HIGHLIGHTS* the need to address PCSD with a view to promoting a dialogue with other Council formations, while avoiding duplication, and to coordinating with European institutions and bodies such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions with the aim of providing action-oriented inputs to accelerate progress both internally and at international level. *WELCOMES* the role played by the Commission's TSI Programme in supporting PCSD through governance reforms and public officials training programmes at MS level and *CONSIDERS* MS action in this field to be valuable for moving forward.
10. *RECALLS* that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a shared responsibility, which requires strong national ownership and the continuous and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders and actors, particularly regional and local actors and governments, social partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, women and youth. *ACKNOWLEDGES* that sustainable development can only be achieved through an integrated, systematic, holistic, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that can raise public awareness and promote collective and coherent action at all levels, and through taking into consideration international guidance and recommendations, such as the UNEP framework on measuring SDG 17.14.1, the 2019 OECD Recommendation on PCSD, the UN systems' 'Local2030 Coalition' initiative as well as other national experiences in this area.
11. *HIGHLIGHTS* the importance of the efficient use of financial resources, which need to be mobilised from all sources, in particular private investments, to support sustainable development and climate action. In this regard, *WELCOMES* efforts to reform the international financial architecture to strengthen financing for sustainable development in accordance with the outcomes of the Summit of the Future and other initiatives to that end, such as the Paris Pact for People and Planet, *REITERATES* the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to contribute significantly to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), which is scheduled to take place in Spain in 2025, and is a critical opportunity to identify priority actions to help close the resource gap needed to end poverty, hunger and inequalities, and to accelerate the implementation of all SDGs by 2030. In this regard also *UNDERLINES* the critical importance of fostering domestic resources for the mobilisation of development financing, as laid out by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and *REITERATES* the commitment of the EU Member States to a successful replenishment of IDA21 by the World Bank.

12. *RECOGNISES* the crucial role that financing plays in achieving the SDGs. It is essential to design finance mechanisms and strategies in a manner that promotes policy coherence across multiple sectors and levels by leveraging the synergistic potential of PCSD efforts. To support PCSD at EU level, the contribution to the SDGs and the implementation frameworks for European financial programming, including the European Cohesion Policies, should be modelled and measured. *HIGHLIGHTS* also the importance of initiatives under the EU Sustainable Finance framework to channel more private sector funding towards the SDGs.
13. *HIGHLIGHTS* the importance of evidence-based decision making and of collecting and providing access to data, without additional administrative burdens, in understanding the interlinkages between SDGs, supporting overall statistics and science-based decision-making, and in turn further integrating PCSD efforts. Therefore, *RECOGNISES* the fundamental role of official statistics in producing high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data as well as multidimensional statistical insights which are vital for holistic and integrated policy making in line with existing practices. In this regard, *ACKNOWLEDGES* Eurostat's assessment of the EU's consumption spillover effects in the world in its latest annual report and further *ENCOURAGES* Eurostat to thoroughly review the impact of domestic actions in partner countries, particularly highly vulnerable countries, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, as intended by SDG 17.14. Consequently *WELCOMES* the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development 2024-2033, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 77/326, and the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, which aims to summarise the key transformative shifts needed across six entry points (human well-being and capabilities, sustainable and just economies, food systems and healthy nutrition, energy decarbonisation with universal access, urban and peri-urban development and global environmental commons). Also *WELCOMES* the first Global Stocktake concluded at the UN Climate Change Conference COP28, which detailed the global state of play regarding climate action, and the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, summarising the state of knowledge on climate change, its widespread impacts and risks, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. And thus *URGES* all Parties to follow up and reflect global efforts agreed in the GST decision through swift, ambitious implementation and scaling up of NDCs to be submitted well ahead of COP30, in line with the Paris Agreement.

14. Building on the existing commitments established in the Treaties and in the European Consensus on Development, as well as on the important contribution of the European Green Deal, *STRESSES* the urgent need to progress collectively in the following PCSD elements with a view to putting sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda at the core of EU governance:
- 14.1 Mainstreaming sustainable development: Integrating the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs into the implementation of ComPact by embedding all three dimensions of sustainability into policy planning, development, implementation, and evaluation, within the respective competences. This should encompass the provision of capacity-building and training initiatives, including workshops and knowledge-sharing platforms for policy makers, aimed at cultivating expertise and at fostering policy synergies and integrated approaches at both EU and national level. By ensuring that relevant policies are coherent and contribute meaningfully to the attainment of the SDGs, we can effectively incorporate sustainable development considerations across all pertinent policy areas at every level, within the respective competences.
- 14.2 Integrated planning, programming and coordination: Mapping, strengthening and devising mechanisms and tools for integrated planning, programming and coordination across the relevant policy fields. This involves breaking down silos and fostering collaboration among sectors, adopting a strategic foresight approach to ensure that policies and actions are coherent and aligned across SDGs with Sustainable Development Strategies, where these exist. It also entails tailoring the policy-cycle towards sustainable development.
- 14.3 Policy impact assessments: Conducting regular and systematic assessments of the impact of policies and programmes and their implementation on the SDGs is crucial. This involves evaluating, where relevant ex ante, in itinere and ex post, potential synergies, trade-offs, cumulative effects and unintended consequences, including negative spillover effects across different sectors and towards partner countries in order to enable informed decision-making and promote integrated planning and coherence. The Better Regulation framework provides solid guidelines and a toolbox for impact assessment at EU and national level.



- 14.4 Policy coherence monitoring and reporting: Fostering robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress towards effective PCSD based on the 17.14.1 indicator framework. This includes regularly assessing policy coherence indicators, identifying gaps and challenges, promoting the improvement of monitoring systems, and sharing findings with relevant stakeholders to foster informed decision-making and enhanced accountability, if and when not yet in place.
15. *RECALLS* that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic, environmental and social development and for achieving the SDG targets, drawing attention to the role of the principle of subsidiarity articulated in the Treaties. *UNDERLINES* that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires transparency and responsibility, and therefore *RECOGNISES* the need to strengthen cooperation between the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission and other stakeholders, particularly the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) as the voice of the regions and local governments on implementing the SDGs, in order to enhance unity and coherence in the joint work of the European Union and its Member States to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it is essential to tailor solutions to the local context and to ensure their support through effective vertical and horizontal coordination.
16. In this regard, *HIGHLIGHTS* the importance of the 2023 EU Voluntary Review on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (EUVR) as an honest, evidence-based, action-oriented and forward-looking review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including its reporting on policy coherence in internal and external action. *ENCOURAGES* the Commission to prioritise PCSD in its policy agenda and to ensure that the entire new College of Commissioners shares the responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda as requested in their mission letters, and to use a comprehensive implementation framework within the existing resources and mechanisms in order to:

- 16.1 integrate PCSD principles into the policy-cycle, including planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes by devising coherence tools, including through carrying out impact assessments of EU legislative proposals, endorsing the strategic foresight approach and addressing interlinkages (synergies, trade-offs and spillover effects) in relation to the 2030 Agenda;
  - 16.2 strengthen mechanisms to enhance integrated policy-making and programming as well as monitoring;
  - 16.3 engage with stakeholders, striving to involve them in the policy-cycle phases by re-establishing an inclusive multistakeholder platform in open dialogue with the EESC and the CoR;
  - 16.4 continue promoting SDG localisation, including through JRC research, with a view to implementing the Council conclusions ‘DEVELOPING THE 2030 AGENDA TO REACH THE GOALS: ACCELERATING THE LOCALIZATION OF THE SDGs’;
  - 16.5 Facilitate the conduct of regular impact assessments, including on human rights and gender equality in order to track progress and increase transparency and accountability both on PCSD progress according to SDG indicator 17.14.1, and on policies and programmes building on the Better Regulation Toolbox.
17. *CALLS ON* the Commission and the EEAS to foster a coherent approach to PCSD in the EU’s external actions, including potential synergies and trade-offs, and in transboundary effects with specific regard to impacts of policies on partner countries, to - without prejudice to the coming Multiannual Financial Framework - prioritise the use of sustainable financial instruments and to continue to use the European Semester in line with the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Furthermore, *EMPHASISES* that Global Gateway is an important strategy for investment-driven development cooperation and forms a part of a wider EU initiative to support partner countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, while focusing on the SDGs in an interconnected way.
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