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Subject:	Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Implications for the EU environmental policy - Exchange of views = Contributions from delegations

Delegations will find in the Annex the contributions received from BE/HU/PT/SK and SE to the above-mentioned exchange of views that will take place at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 28 February 2017.

BELGIUM

1. *The 2030 Agenda requires that all SDGs are implemented in a balanced manner and that action in one area does not undermine efforts in other policy areas. How can we effectively achieve this horizontal coherence in practice, while ensuring the necessary progress in the implementation of sectoral policy areas?*

An efficient and effective contribution to the SDGs indeed requires a coherent approach ensuring integration, linkages and synergies between and within sectors and policies. This is a priority at the national level as well as at the EU level as there indeed exists a risk of ad hoc approaches, duplications, fragmentation among the multiple initiatives that are being implemented or currently under development.

Achieving this in practice requires work at various levels. It is about ensuring that the 2030 ASD implementation is put at the center of the political debate; about recognizing the 2030 ASD and the SDGs as the overarching framework in the reflections on the EU current and future actions and policy tools; about ensuring involvement of all relevant Council formations; and about regularly and comprehensively taking stock of progress made in the implementation.

2. *What should be the next steps to be taken and the priority areas to be addressed in the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU environmental policy?*

The Environment Council should do its part in stepping up efforts ahead of 2020: identifying the shortcomings and gaps in environmentally-related policies that need to be addressed through additional action as well as by identifying the needed actions at one of its forthcoming sessions. Therefore we need to assess the extent to which current policies and instruments such as those of the 7th EAP, the Circular Economy Package, the European Semester sufficiently contribute to achieving the SDGs, to identify gaps, to integrate the 2030 ASD challenges in those instruments and/or to set new priorities and/or policies based on those gaps. This work is complementary to the EIR process and the planned evaluation of the 7th EAP, both of which will equally play a key role in identifying environmental priority areas.

The EAP remains a crucial vehicle for contributing to the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 ASD. We need to build on its experience, on its results, its gaps and ensure that its successor is even more “SDG proof”. We cannot underline enough therefore the importance of starting in due time with the evaluation of the 7th EAP. This evaluation will play a key role in identifying the gaps on which the EU should focus on when developing its long term approach i.a. the next 8th EAP .

We also underline the importance for the Commission to elaborate a non-toxic Environment Strategy by 2018, which should lead to innovations and to the development of sustainable substitution of products including on non-chemicals alternatives.

3. *How can we attract and effectively engage and involve citizens and the private sector into the 2030 Agenda implementation process, thus contributing to the general objective of bringing the EU back to its citizens? What role could the Multi-Stakeholders Platform that is referred to in the Commission Communication play in this regard?*

Effectively engaging and involving citizens and private sector into a participatory and transparent 2030 Agenda implementation process is crucial. The 2030 ASD and the SDGs have been developed through an all-inclusive process that was unprecedented. This should be reflected during the implementation as well. The EU can build on a long tradition of multi-stakeholder dialogues and involvement in decision-making on issues related to sustainable development and environment, and this will need to be further strengthened. We find the idea contained in the Commission Communication on launching a multi-stakeholder platform with a role in the follow-up and exchange of best-practices on the SDGs particularly interesting, and would welcome further details on this and especially the way this would function with those other stakeholder fora already existing.

HUNGARY

Hungary welcomes that cornerstones of the EU related implementation of the 2030 ASD and SDGs will be agreed in the form of Council Conclusions as response from Member States to the Commission Communication. We support that based on the „state of the play” included in the Communication, further steps are taken as soon as possible including gap analysis of sectoral policies vis-à-vis the SDGs. Particular attention should be paid to the period beyond 2020 in the form of an overarching roadmap of further actions, due to the different time horizons of existing EU policies and tools. It certainly applies to the environmental sector as well. Steps and actions are needed to be defined in all different existing fora i.e. from working party level to the various Council levels, also including the informal meeting of Directors General for the Environment. Furthermore, actions both at EU and Member states level need to be carefully considered.

For this reason we welcome for instance the EU Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) process and are looking forward to have further discussions on it with due attention also to the SDGs. Similarly important is the harmonization with other processes like Horizon 2020 and the European Semester.

Regarding the first question we have to stress that policy coherence for sustainable development is of fundamental importance for the implementation of the 2030 ASD. In this regard we propose to keep those coordination mechanisms within the Commission which have been established at different levels during the preparatory process of the Communication. Good practices of other cooperation modalities when two or more sectors harmonize activities and policies are also to be followed and further developed.

Intersectoral cooperation in suitable forms needs to be continued and even expanded in order to facilitate mutual learning, understanding and exploring further opportunities for cooperation. Just to mention one good example: there is already a dialogue between the agricultural and water sectors which is an ongoing process at EU and also at regional level on Danube River Basin.

Additionally, other ways and means of representing the interest of the environmental sector have to be explored with particular attention to the mobilisation of adequate financial resources. Common point of interest of environmental and economic sectors need to be identified in order to achieve sustainable development. In Hungary, we are similarly striving to harmonise sectoral policies, just to mention a recent example, we addressed our partner ministries requesting attention to the implementation of our biodiversity strategy.

As far as setting the priorities for action is concerned, several aspects can be considered. As a starting point, requirements and deadlines deriving from EU legal and policy instruments, as well as our obligations deriving from international conventions provide guidance. Work on the revision of the 7th Environment Action Programme should start early enough.

Another guiding factor can be for us that in 2018 the HLPF will focus on the progress in the implementation of several environment related SDGs like water, biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production.

Since progress in implementation is measured by the sustainability indicators, appropriate attention should be paid to the preparation for monitoring and data provision in order to make quality and comparable data available. At the same time we should avoid duplication of efforts in data collection and reporting by using- to the extent possible- available monitoring and assessment frameworks. Necessity of harmonization of EU and national measures should also be emphasized in this regard.

Another guiding element in setting our priorities is the themes of discussion in UNEA meetings. This year, the theme “pollution in wider sense” is brought in the focus of the discussions. Given that the EU is a strong supporter of a solid global environmental governance we shall be well prepared for being an active contributor to the UNEA-3 debate, keeping at the same time our frontrunner role that the EU played in the development of the 2030 ASD.

With respect to the effective involvement of society, this is just as an important as a challenging task to perform. It is obvious that proper implementation of the 2030 ASD requires contribution from all. We believe that contribution from stakeholders and civil society shall be part of the Governments’ progress reports.

Society should be addressed via various awareness raising measures. Benefiting also from opportunities that the media as a tool provides, communication shall point out the relationship between environmental challenges and the solutions to other problems, which are not directly environment related. As an example, the nexus between human health and the air pollution or human health and waste problems can be mentioned. Beyond spotting the problems we should also present solutions. Civil society organisation, consumption groups and municipalities has a particularly important role to play in knowledge-sharing and disseminating best practices. Special attention should be given to the involvement of private sector and diverting the attention of young people towards sustainability.

The multi-stakeholder platform launched by the Commission has great potential in this field (exchange of information, sharing good practices, awareness raising). Besides, it has the potential to become a forum for wide range of stakeholders for sending clear messages to the governments and also an opportunity to develop partnerships. The best use of the platform should be designed in close cooperation with the interested partners.

The European Green Week and Sustainability Week are also suitable occasions for raising awareness around the 2030 Agenda. Notably, by focusing on the environmental dimension the public shall be shown their collective responsibility and also possibilities of individuals in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The role of the European Parliament is also important in this regard. Further cooperation possibilities can be explored between the stakeholders and the EP on awareness raising activities also by making connection between national and EU level implementation.

National level implementation of the Agenda is key for a successful EU level implementation. Involvement of the society is crucial at national level. In Hungary, we are updating our existing Sustainable Development Strategy in 2017 with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Via the National Sustainable Development Council, we are also cooperating with a wide range of stakeholders for receiving inputs helping this exercise.

PORTUGAL

Portugal is fully committed with the implementation of 2030 Agenda, at national, regional and international levels. This new agenda is a milestone in leading us through a new universal transforming vision, which gives answer to the most demanding challenges affecting people and planet.

In this spirit, Portugal will be actively involved in the 2017 UN High Level Political Forum, in July, presenting its voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To respond to this challenge we have established a national governance structure for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this structure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is assuming the political leadership of the process – both internal and external – in close articulation with the Ministry of Planning and Infrastructures. This ensures overall coordination but also political leadership, since the Minister of Foreign Affairs is also a Minister of State.

All other line Ministries are also involved in the internal exercise, with specific roles, by SDG, according to the specificities of their interventions and the respective nature of the goals and targets of the agenda. Due to the vast responsibilities of the Environment Ministry in the SDGs, we are coordinating the work of implementation of four SDGs, namely SDG 6, 11, 12 and 13.

At regional level, we would like to welcome the Communication presented by the Commission which we believe is a good starting point for our common reflection on the EU's role on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We consider as particular demanding challenges for the EU, the need to adapt our working methods with the spirit of the Agenda. One of its innovations is a no-silos way of thinking, with very cross-cutting and interlinked Goals and targets. Therefore, we believe that the EU must be able to implement this Agenda with such a transversal perspective.

Involvement of all stakeholders is also a tough challenge. Regular consultation and the organization of events, by SDG, must be organized.

The EU can be very valuable on the compilation of data to respond to this challenge. The communication presents a first overview of the EU programmes and initiatives that will contribute for the achievement of the goals, but we believe that a more in depth analysis is needed in order to assess the results achieved so far and how far we are from the desired goals.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

1. *The 2030 Agenda requires that all SDGs are implemented in a balanced manner and that action in one area does not undermine efforts in other policy areas. How can we effectively achieve this horizontal coherence in practice, while ensuring the necessary progress in the implementation of sectoral policy areas?*

First of all, we would like to thank the European Commission for the Communication on 2030 Agenda. We know that a more ambitious and targeted document was expected, but what we have is at least a detailed analysis of already existing EU policies, that are taking into account the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. We understand the Commission position that the Member States are indirectly asked for national analysis, which could form a pillar for the next EU policies update. We could use those pillars also for creating a new political framework beyond 2030.

2030 Agenda is a very cross cutting issue and in general is seen from the development and environmental side. This perception was prevailed when Millennium Development Goals were on the table and that is why they weren't fulfilled in more suitable way. We can clearly see the interconnection of 2030 Agenda, its goals and targets to all areas, the influence of environment on social status of people, and vice versa the impact of social politics on human activities as affecting the environment. For ensuring a horizontal covering and cohesion, we consider as important to cover the implementation of 2030 Agenda in the frame of larger formation as we are used, Friends of Presidency for example, and we consider very important that the 2030 Agenda is covered by as many Council formations as possible. At the same time, it will be necessary to ensure the interconnection and communication of those formations, so this would provide a clear overview of already existing tools, other than environmental, what tools we are planning, what is happening in relevant politics, and at the same time to avoid duplicity or neglecting of any goal or target implementation.

2. *What should be the next steps to be taken and the priority areas to be addressed in the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU environmental policy?*

For the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda it is necessary to involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders. The EU plays an important role in discussions regarding the implementation of development goals at the global level, that's why the EU should lead by example, especially fellow countries: from political leaders of developed countries through the private sector to the involvement of civil society, NGOs and individuals as well. Currently, many EU Member States are doing their internal analysis of goals, targets and indicators, on which they will focus in coming years; Slovakia is also no exception. We are trying to avoid the "cherry picking" of targets that are improving the country's profile, but do not contribute to effective implementation of 2030 Agenda. The establishment of a right balance between ambitions and real state of play in the context of the 2030 Agenda implementation is a priority.

Taking into account the Paris Agreement and its implementation tools, including the ETS revision, the next key area we should concentrate on, is pro-active climate policy, green economy and green investments seems to be effective tools. One of tools of high importance is sustainable consumption and production as a support for circular economy, as well as sustainable use of natural and water resources. Since in 2030 more than 60% of population will live in cities, we should get oriented on smart cities, but we shouldn't forget the agricultural sector, sustainable agriculture and the drought menace. All these steps are possible only with strong financial support of the implementation of Agenda 2030.

In this direction the EU environmental policy should be guided. The question is how we will deal with this task. To achieving all 2030 Agenda targets we have 13 years left. The challenge is whether we are getting by with an upgrade of already existing policies to 2030 Agenda demands, or we will come with a more visionary approach and a new strategy, that would go beyond 2030 trends.

3. *How can we attract and effectively engage and involve citizens and the private sector into the 2030 Agenda implementation process, thus contributing to the general objective of bringing the EU back to its citizens? What role could the Multi-Stakeholders Platform that is referred to in the Commission Communication play in this regard?*

First of all, we attract and effectively engage and involve citizens and the private sector in the 2030 Agenda implementation process by informing them. The implementation of sustainable development targets itself would demand better regulation on every level as well as major changes in society behaviour matrix. This is the only way that would lead to the implementation of the sustainable development targets in a balanced way, fulfilment of all three dimensions of sustainable development without prioritizing only one area, that wouldn't be the right approach. We are stressing the words as visibility and communication, for the Council formations, as well as for professionals and civil society, and we will fully support the spreading of public awareness in this field. In this regard the EU as a leader in addressing the issues of sustainable development plays a strong, constructive and crucial role, having the tools and channels through which it can bring 2030 Agenda to the wider public and can make it more attractive. First, it is civil society that needs to be informed of what exactly are the objectives of sustainable development. We must inform them about the tools and techniques and how to reach them, although from one point of view unpopular, because people do not know the benefits that result from active participation in implementing the sustainable development objectives. It is also a very good tool to promote the private sector providing environmental services and products. However, in spreading awareness and information we should maintain the utmost simplicity, so that they would be accessible to all levels of the population. It is in this context that it would be helpful to publish information on 2030 Agenda in a unified manner, so that they are available or easily traceable for the whole population.

As for the platform the European Commission's Communication is referring to, Slovakia is pleased that the European Commission intends to create such platform, and as the first initiates an inclusive approach to the objectives of sustainable development. We believe that this platform will be accessible to all relevant stakeholders according to the problematic. We see the main role that it will serve as a kind of mediator in fulfilling the objectives of the sustainable development, and based on monitoring it will be able to assess the extent to which Member States fulfil the objectives of sustainable development and that there is no duplication.

SWEDEN

Policy coherence is crucial to achieve the targets in the 2030 Agenda. Likewise it is essential to maintain an integrated approach in the implementation. It is no secret that the last years financial crisis has put pressure on all policy areas. The 2030 Agenda clearly frames that to reach a sustainable development – all three dimensions of sustainable development are equally important and need to be addressed. Yes, we do need analysis of financial implications. What we also need are environmental and social consequences to be taken into account.

The EU was a driving force in the negotiations of the SDGs. Likewise for the Resolution on the 2030 Agenda adopted at UNEA 2. The EU and its Member States, must be an example for its ambitious implementation. In this context it is important for the EU to start planning ahead for its post-2020 framework.

A full implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme and an ambitious implementation of the Paris agreement are crucial to achieve the SDGs. It is also important to begin looking forward towards a new strategy replacing the EU 2020 strategy, the eight environmental action program and ensuring their coherence with the 2030 Agenda. A holistic implementation of the environmental dimension also means phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies and the EU having a green trade policy. Since financing is crucial, adapting the multiannual financial framework (MFF) post-2020 to the SDGs will be a central.

Sweden welcomes the Commission proposal on the multi-stakeholder platform, and encourages the Commission to further develop how to involve stakeholders and exchange lessons learnt and best practices, both within and outside of the EU, in the implementing process.

Last but not least - Sweden will be co-hosting the UN Conference *The Oceans* on SDG 14 in New York in June 2017. SDG 14 is closely linked to several of the Goals in the 2030 Agenda and offers a great opportunity for sustainable and comprehensive management of the oceans and seas. Sweden hopes that the Conference in June can give a long-term support for the implementation of SDG 14, with strong commitments and partnerships. The Conference is intended to be a very practical step to help us onto a good and common track towards implementation of SDG 14. This Conference will also become a show-case and a template for how we can start the process of implementing other goals of the 2030 Agenda – and how we show the interlinkage between the Goals.
