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WORKING PAPER

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Subject:	EU Key Messages for the High-Level Political Forum 2019

Please find enclosed the EU Key Messages for the High-Level Political Forum 2019, agreed at Working Party level and forwarded to New York on 21 June 2019.

EU Key Messages for the High-Level Political Forum 2019

Strategic and cross-cutting issues

1. The EU and its Member States are fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to enhancing efforts to achieve its proposed transformative shift by 2030 while leaving no one behind.
2. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs requires effective multilateralism with the 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.
3. The EU and its Member States recognise the UN's crucial role in supporting countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, through the achievement of the 17 SDGs implementing the Agenda's 17 goals and its 169 targets, and express full support for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) that provides an annual opportunity to focus the international community's attention on the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
4. The EU and its Member States look forward to the process of review of the HLPF starting this year, which aims at further enhancing the Forum's relevance while taking related ongoing UN reform processes fully into account.
5. The EU and its Member States welcome that the 2019 HLPF focuses on "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" through SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 and highlights that investment in achieving these SDGs will yield significant benefits for the implementation of the whole agenda. It is essential to consider the implementation of all SDGs in an integrated manner, given their indivisible and interlinked nature, and to ensure balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions, underpinned by scientific evidence. For these reasons, it is important to consider cross-cutting issues, including human rights and gender equality. The indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda and its people-centred approach should be respected to both accelerate action and prevent backsliding.
6. The EU and its Member States stress the importance of the HLPF at Heads of State or Government level, to be held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in September 2019 (the SDG Summit), and look forward to a concise, comprehensive and compelling political declaration that renews and strengthens the commitment of all countries to accelerate their efforts for implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving its 17 SDGs and sets the scene for the next four-year cycle, which will be crucial for achieving the SDGs by 2030.
7. As inter-connectedness is a critical feature of the 2030 Agenda, particular attention should be placed on the interlinkages between SDGs and the integrated cross-sectoral action that can create co-benefits and contribute to meeting multiple objectives in innovative ways. The EU and its Member States recall the imperative need to link and develop coherence and synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as related multilateral agreements and conventions such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its

Aichi Targets and UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, highlighting the importance of related agendas and plans, such as the New Urban Agenda, the Strategic Plan for Forests and its four Global Forest Goals. Such linkages and synergies are reflected in the Global Strategy for the EU Foreign and Security Policy and the European Consensus on Development.

8. For the EU, the values of sustainable development are enshrined in its Treaties and are part of its identity and its future. In this context, in 2019, the EU and its Member States call for a decisive transition towards a circular economy, including non-toxic material cycles; striving for climate neutrality, in line with the Paris Agreement; protecting biodiversity and ecosystem, tackling climate change, the sustainability of agriculture and food systems, as well as safe and sustainable low carbon energy, buildings and mobility sectors. The EU also calls for a strengthened social dimension to promote inclusion, equality, including gender equality, and a socially fair transition, while ensuring that democracy, the rule of law and fundamental values and rights are safeguarded.
9. The EU has enhanced its commitments to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through systematic mainstreaming of the SDGs in all its internal and external policies.
10. Mobilising sufficient financing remains a major challenge in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Interest in sustainable financing is growing, but the transition to sustainability needs further efforts. The EU strives to mobilise resources and actors to align financial systems with sustainable development objectives.
11. The HLPF provides an annual opportunity to focus the attention of the international community on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, it has proven successful for reflecting on progress at the local, sub-national, national, regional and global levels and has provided an indispensable forum for the international community to share their experiences and good practices for implementing the 2030 Agenda as well as to identify the challenges ahead.
12. With this first cycle of the HLPF coming to its end, the HLPF should now build on the experience and good practices established during the existence of the Forum to further enhance its effectiveness, accountability, participatory character and appeal and build on the fruitful reflection on progress at all levels to accelerate action to meet the SDGs by 2030. The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) have played a significant role in the success of the HLPF during its first cycle. In the context of the HLPF review, the EU will strive to reinforce the peer learning character of the VNRs.
13. The EU values the role and contribution of stakeholders and the substantial dialogue with them on the challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Stakeholders have contributed to the success of the HLPF as well as to its central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Their participation should be further strengthened, also with the aim to broaden the ownership of the process and consequently raise awareness among the general public.

Thematic issues

SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

14. The EU and its Member States are fully committed to achieving inclusive, equitable, and quality education at all levels, including lifelong learning for all and at all stages in life, both within the EU and globally. Universal access to inclusive quality education and training for every child and youth, regardless of gender or disabilities is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for breaking cycles of inter-generational poverty, while instrumental in fostering active citizenship, promoting empowerment, and enabling knowledge-based, inclusive and innovative societies.
15. The EU and its Member States support inclusive lifelong learning and will intensify their efforts to ensure that everyone has the knowledge, skills, capabilities and rights they need to enjoy a life and work in dignity, to be fully engaged in society as responsible and productive citizens, to participate actively in democratic processes, promote accountability and to contribute to the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities. In this respect, any quality education framework should encompass digital skills.
16. The EU has operationalised the SDGs on education by incorporating some of those targets into the EU framework for education and training ("ET2020"), which sets a high level of ambition on the different dimensions of education and training. In order to reach the participation target, adult learning is increasingly important. The EU youth guarantee ensures that all young people under the age of 25 years get a good quality offer for employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or education. The Skills Agenda for Europe offers a framework to make a transition to an economy where the most basic tasks will increasingly require a broader set of digital, service and people-oriented skills. The Erasmus+ programme supports mobility for students from the developing world in the disciplines directly linked to SDGs, and the upcoming Erasmus programme will feature an even stronger alignment with the SDGs.
17. The EU recognises that its competitive edge depends on raising awareness through education for sustainable development as a key enabler of all other SDGs and as driver for innovation, resilience, and transformative action.

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

18. The EU and its Member States promote an economic transformation that creates decent jobs, increases productive capacity, generates enough revenues for public services and social protection, fosters sustainable value chains and diversification, including sustainable industrialisation and digitalisation. This includes promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns in the context of a circular economy, including the promotion of non-toxic material cycles, resource efficiency, and the transformation to low-emission and climate-resilient pathways as stated in the European Consensus on Development. Special attention should be paid to persons with disabilities, to ensure that they enjoy their right to work as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

19. In the EU, the European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed in 2017, is the instrument to advance that objective, supporting fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems, and promoting decent work, equal opportunities, inclusion, and fair working conditions.
20. The EU strongly supports the promotion of international labour standards, promoting social dialogue to ensure decent working conditions, and the need to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery, stop human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of child labour, including in global supply chains. All EU Member States have ratified all eight fundamental labour conventions. 126 ratifications covering 45 countries are still required before the universal ratification of all fundamental Labour Conventions is achieved; therefore, the EU and its Member States call on those countries who have not yet done so to accelerate their ratification processes to that end.
21. The EU reiterates the essential role of open and rules based trade in promoting economic growth. The rule of law, good governance and social partnership and participation constitute the necessary enabling environment for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Environmental and social aspects must be an integral part of policies promoting economic prosperity.
22. Businesses have a vital role to play in the sustainability transition. More and more companies see the SDGs as an integral part of their competitiveness and growth strategy. The EU has already taken various measures to strengthen responsible business conduct practices in the EU and globally. The EU reflects on additional incentives for businesses to integrate the SDGs in their operations and continues to promote the implementation of internationally agreed guidelines and principles such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD-guidelines for multinational enterprises.

SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries

23. Reducing inequality is central to achieving a sustainable future and an essential priority of EU action. High levels of inequality (whether of opportunities or outcomes, economic or social) are a significant brake on sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and poverty reduction, as well as for fostering social cohesion and resilience, respect for the rule of law, conflict prevention, and environmental protection. Failure to tackle these challenges creates a vicious circle which, in turn, exacerbates inequalities, since they have a disproportionate impact particularly on the most vulnerable.
24. The European Pillar of Social Rights is also key for this objective. Moreover, the EU, through its Cohesion Policy, fosters inclusive growth and reduces inequalities between and within Member States through education and lifelong learning and equitable access to labour market opportunities, as well as through promotion of innovation and investment.
25. Eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, tackling discrimination and leaving no one behind are at the heart of EU development cooperation policy. The EU and its Member States will work with partner countries to promote public policies that pay due attention to better sharing the benefits of growth, the creation of wealth and decent jobs, and to improved access to factors of production, such as land, finance and human capital.

26. The EU and its Member States will also support universal access to efficient, sustainable, and equitable social protection systems to guarantee disability inclusion, basic income, prevent relapses into extreme poverty, and build resilience.

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

27. The EU will continue to lead the fight against climate change, both domestically and abroad. The EU has already put in place an economy-wide framework for ambitious climate and energy policies to ensure that it delivers on its Paris commitment for 2030 to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% from 1990 levels. Coherent and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement will strengthen national efforts and maximise co-benefits. The necessary adaptation measures are often cross-border and cross sectoral and include all levels of decision-making. It is also essential to ensure that women and indigenous peoples participate in decision-making. Ensuring resilient ecosystem services and sustainable water use is necessary to succeed in mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
28. The EU has established a legally binding framework to deliver on energy and climate targets by 2030 by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting the use of renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency.
29. The EU is at an advanced stage in preparing its long-term climate strategy under the Paris Agreement. The transition to a resource-efficient, low-emission and circular economy is part of this approach. Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development is necessary in order to achieve the temperature and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement.
30. The prevention of biodiversity loss and improved management of ecosystems and services are of particular importance to support climate objectives. Nature-based solutions, the green economy and the sustainable management of forests, water and land will be central to jointly address global threats to the planet and ensure long-term climate sustainability.
31. The EU will continue to support climate action through a wide range of cooperation instruments, including financial ones. Adaptation and resilience to climate change are key challenges for many of our partner countries, given their high vulnerability to the impact of climate change despite their comparatively low contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions.
32. The EU welcomes leadership by the UN and sees the upcoming climate summit organised by the UN Secretary-General as an opportunity to push for ambitious climate action. At the Summit, Governments should send an important signal to stakeholders and citizens around the world that the international community is serious about addressing climate change and moving towards a climate neutral economy.
33. The EU and its Member States support the multilateral drive towards better factoring climate risks in security fora and processes, notably through resolutions, statements, and initiatives on climate and security at the UN Security Council, and in strengthening the UN's capacity to address climate security risks through the recently created "Climate Security Mechanism." The EU will also continue to address and strengthen its capacity to address climate security risks.

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

34. The EU strives for more inclusive societies built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
35. The EU recognises the relevance of deepening relations with civil society and creating an enabling environment for Civil Society Organisations, in order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and participatory policy decision making processes.
36. The European Consensus on Development is underpinned by a rights-based approach to development, encompassing all human rights, and addressing the multiple dimensions of discrimination.
37. Peace, justice and strong institutions have a crosscutting importance for achieving all SDGs. They require sound governance and inclusive decision-making.
38. To deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind, it is essential to ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels. There is no sustainability without participation.
39. Effective justice systems play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs. They ensure that people can fully enjoy their rights and that businesses benefit from legal certainty and an investment friendly environment.
40. Combatting corruption is essential to the achievement of the SDGs, as it is impacting upon the efficiency and legitimacy of programmes, poverty eradication and wider development outcomes. Corruption predominantly affects those furthest behind, as well as women, youth and persons with disabilities.
41. No sustainable development is possible without peace. Inclusive institutions, justice and peace are at the core of stable societies. We simply cannot understate the value of sustainable peace, built through partnerships, dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding. At the same time, peace will be always at risk without sustainable development.
42. Gender equality and the inclusion of children and young persons are key to prevent and end violent conflict.

SDG17- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

43. The EU and its Member States recall that implementing the 2030 Agenda represents a shared responsibility and requires the continuous and strong involvement of all stakeholders in a well-organised and transparent participatory process to enhance collaboration and facilitate partnership among authorities at all levels, UN entities, civil society, the private sector, academia, NGOs, social partners, citizens and other stakeholders, including through targeted communication and by using digital collaboration tools.
44. An innovative approach in the EU is the Multi-stakeholder Platform, which plays a key role in ensuring stakeholder involvement in the EU's implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

45. The EU and its Member States acknowledge the importance of robust monitoring systems and indicators to measure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that evidence-based data drive the transition towards a sustainable future. Eurostat regularly monitors the progress towards the SDGs in an EU context. The Copernicus European Space programme will be continued and enhanced to ensure a continuous monitoring of environmental changes.
46. The EU and its Member States also welcome the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force and the reference to Integrated National Financing Frameworks in support of nationally-owned sustainable development strategies in the FfD Forum's outcome document. All means of implementation need to be put in use to achieve the SDGs as spelled out in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development. The EU and its Member States will continue to develop innovative ways to promote the mobilisation and effective use of resources from all sources, including domestic and private.
47. The EU and its Member States welcome the report to the STI Forum 2019 and are committed to continue investing in knowledge, new technologies and innovation as drivers for sustainable development. The EU-developed Smart Specialisation approach has potential to be used as enabling methodology for Science, Technology and Innovation roadmaps for the achievement of SDGs.
48. Private business activity is a major driver of productivity and innovation. The massive investment needed to implement the 2030 Agenda can be met only with the involvement of private sources of investment.
49. International trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and contributes to achieving of the SDGs. We will continue to promote a rules-based, open, transparent, inclusive and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core.
50. The EU and its Member States also continue to be the largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and reiterate all their ODA commitments, including to Least Developed Countries. All UN Member States should strive to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation in all its forms to increase its impact.
51. The Joint Synthesis Report on the implementation of the European Consensus on Development shows that the 2030 Agenda has had a significant impact on the development policies of the EU and its Member States, in terms of approaches, scope and procedures. The overarching framework of the 2030 Agenda has led to approaches that are better suited to the needs of partners beyond foreign aid as well as to strengthened partnerships with developing countries, stakeholders and other partners. The EU and its Member States will continue to engage with partner countries and stakeholders through policy dialogues based on the 17 SDGs.
52. The interlinkages between the SDGs and their universality underscore the importance of policy coherence and mutually supportive policies working in synergy. The EU is committed to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), which seeks to enhance the positive impact of its policies in developing countries, by promoting synergies and reducing trade-offs between policies. This represents a substantial contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), which is essential for implementing all the SDGs. It is important, also, that the transboundary impacts of policies on developing countries are duly taken into consideration.