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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:	Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Delegations will find enclosed the EU Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (7-16 July 2020) as agreed by the Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 29 June 2020.

This text will also be shared with the EU Delegation in New York for information and reference.

Key elements for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

7 - 16 July 2020, UN Headquarters New York

Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

1. The EU and its Member States are fully committed to accelerating the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to ensure its **timely delivery** and achieve a transformative shift by 2030 that leaves no one behind. Today more than ever, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda 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. This year we celebrate **the 75th anniversary of the UN**, which offers us an invaluable opportunity to **raise the level of our ambition** to meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda. The **challenges of the current COVID-19 pandemic** make it no longer a choice, but a necessity.
2. The EU and its Member States continue to lead on the key **multilateral initiatives** like the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. The SDGs **underpin our EU values and the international community's future**. They are **at the heart of our policymaking on internal and external action** across all sectors. The EU is setting up key **new policy initiatives and strategies** that will directly contribute to accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, such as the proposed **European Green Deal**.
3. **The European Green Deal** is the **EU's new growth strategy**, proposed by the European Commission, with people and the planet at its core. It provides a roadmap to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use, while embracing the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Therefore, it is an essential part of the EU's strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at home and abroad. Through our external action policies and cooperation programmes, we **support partner countries** in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement across the board.
4. We need to **capitalise on the 2019 SDG Summit's Political Declaration and the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)** to advance further on eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, promoting the respect for human rights, gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment, children's rights, democracy and the rule of law along with an increased focus on climate and environment. We firmly support the UN Secretary-General's call to build a **fair globalisation** and are ready to play our part.
5. The COVID-19 crisis is reversing progress towards the SDGs, we should therefore use the **Decade of Action** to reinvigorate the momentum for action to deliver the SDGs by 2030 leaving no one behind and ensuring a green, sustainable, digital and inclusive post COVID-19 recovery, including through international cooperation and multilateralism. In this vein, we very much welcome the theme for this year's High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of **'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development'**. We stress the importance of maintaining the focus on SDGs, which is the most effective and fair roadmap to address COVID-19 and build back better after the crisis.

6. The EU and its MS stress the importance of putting in place this year a clear process to address the essential issue of **SDG targets with a deadline in 2020 and 2025**, to ensure the continued ambition of the 2030 Agenda and to safeguard its integrated and universal nature. The EU and its MS will redouble their efforts to achieve these targets in an accelerated timeframe. We request the relevant intergovernmental fora and bodies to review, and as needed, adjust their frameworks (including at the 2021 Conference on Biological Diversity) so as to allow to update targets to reflect a suitable level of ambition for 2030. To this end, we invite the 75th session of the UN General Assembly to set out as soon as possible a process to ensure that the targets of the SDGs with a 2020 timeline are reviewed and updated. The HLPF should review progress in this regard during its meeting in 2021.
7. The EU and its Member States will continue to actively engage in the **ongoing review of the HLPF**, with a view to ensuring its timely completion, and will seek to enhance its effectiveness and participatory character, making it more ‘fit for purpose’ and allowing for meaningful tracking of progress of SDG implementation. The **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** have played a significant role in the success of the HLPF providing a unique platform for peer-learning, exchange of best practices and lessons learned during its first cycle. By this year’s HLPF, all EU Member States will have presented at least one VNR.
8. In this endeavour, we have to **partner with all relevant stakeholders**, public and private sectors, local authorities, civil society, academia, youth and other actors. Their meaningful participation at the HLPF should be further strengthened, also with the aim of broadening inclusiveness and ownership of SDG implementation, contributing to policy making and raising awareness among public as well as supporting transformative action on the ground.

Response to COVID-19 and its socio-economic consequences

9. The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge with severe socio-economic consequences that need a **strong coordinated multilateral response**. The EU and its Member States are committed to meeting this challenge in a spirit of **solidarity and partnership**. We support the UN system in mobilising and coordinating the global response to the pandemic. In line with the UN Secretary-General’s call and under his leadership, we will work together to “build back better” and set the **stage for a recovery that builds more sustainable, greener, inclusive and equitable societies** guided by our **global roadmap- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. We must collectively learn the lessons from the crisis in order to boost preparedness for health emergencies and pandemics in the future.
10. **Building on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus** and the human rights agenda as well as increasing the cross-pillar coherence of the UN’s work is essential to ensure the holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, we reiterate our continued support for the UN Development System reform. A more integrated, coherent, efficient and results-driven UN presence on the ground will play an important part in ensuring that countries recover better from the current crisis.
11. In line with multilateral efforts, the EU and its Member States have adopted their global response to the COVID-19 crisis based on a **Team Europe approach** to support partner countries, with a focus on those in vulnerable, fragile and conflict-affected situations, and special attention for Least Developed Countries, mostly in Africa. We will continue to promote global health as a public good for all in full support for the WHO’s efforts,

including through the EU-sponsored Coronavirus Global Response **pledging initiative** to support the development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics, treatments and vaccine research. **The World Health Assembly's resolution** initiated by the EU and its Member States has gained the international community's support on global solidarity, safe and affordable medicines and vaccines, and better preparedness for future pandemics. In this context, we stress the importance of the interlinkages between human, animal and ecosystems' health, and support the One Health approach.

12. The EU will secure **financial support** to partner countries for a total of more than EUR 36 billion. Our response addresses short-term emergency needs as well as the longer-term structural impacts on societies and economies, thus reducing the risk of destabilisation. It focuses on addressing the immediate health and food security and nutrition crisis and resulting humanitarian needs, strengthening partner countries' health, water and sanitation systems, promoting food security as well as their research and preparedness capacities to deal with the pandemic, and mitigate the socioeconomic impact with a strong focus on promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and good governance.
13. To ensure the recovery is sustainable, even, inclusive and fair, the Commission has proposed to create a new recovery instrument, **Next Generation EU**. The recovery plan turns the immense challenge we face into an opportunity, not only by supporting the recovery but also by investing in our future: the European Green Deal and digitalisation are expected to boost jobs and growth, the resilience of our societies and the health of our environment.
14. The **full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is crucial** to help better equip the world for future systemic shocks and strengthen resilience. Beyond the short-term response to the pandemic, the mid- and long-term policy response needs to encompass the features that lay at the foundation of the 2030 Agenda, integrating its economic, social and environmental dimensions and fully considering the interrelated nature of the present and future global challenges. The recovery should go hand in hand with the promotion of human rights, gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and their full enjoyment of all human rights, good governance, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. The crisis provides a crucial moment to introduce innovations, invest in critical public services and the effective delivery of global public goods in an inclusive manner, while focusing particularly on the most vulnerable groups of society to ensure that no one is left behind.

Protecting and advancing human well-being and ending poverty

15. **People's wellbeing is at the centre of the EU's political agenda.** Poverty is multidimensional and a holistic approach is necessary to end it in all its dimensions. Achieving **prosperity and social fairness** is a fundamental promise on which the European Union wants to deliver. We are working together to improve other interconnected aspects of life such as health, including mental health, access to inclusive and equitable quality **education and vocational training, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, access to clean, affordable and secure energy, a clean and safe environment, food security and nutrition, affordable and adequate housing** and **resilience** to shocks and any future crises.
16. As outlined in the proposed **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024**, the EU and its Member States stand for human rights, democracy and the rule of law with the aim of bringing tangible benefits to people around the world. The EU and its Member States will continue to **promote human rights, democratic governance and the**

rule of law, including access to independent and effective judicial systems as well as protecting and empowering all people. Effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, as well as strengthening anti-corruption measures are key to achieving the SDGs.

17. **Gender equality** is a fundamental right and a core value of the EU and a key principle of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. The European Commission will put forward an action plan after a broad consultation with EU Member States, regional and local authorities, social partners and other parts of civil society to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. It aims at improving **equal opportunities and jobs for all** and at further advancing **women's and girls' social and economic empowerment**, balanced **caring responsibilities**, fair working conditions with adequate **minimum wages** and **social protection** and inclusion.
18. **Skills and education** for all drive Europe's **competitiveness, employment and innovation**. We need to make the **European Education Area** a reality by **2025** to bring down barriers to learning and improve access to quality education and training. Europe is speeding up on **digital skills** for both young people and adults. Education and research play a significant role in providing people with skills needed to contribute to sustainable development all over the world.
19. The EU will continue to foster **social fairness** in the rest of the world, including through international cooperation and development action. The European Consensus on Development seeks to support partner countries in the achievement of all 17 SDGs in an integrated manner with the primary objective of **eradicating poverty**. Based on the Consensus, the EU and its Member States promote **gender equality and a human rights-based approach to development**, targeting assistance first to the least-developed and conflict-affected countries, also engaging in development cooperation, policy dialogue and partnerships with Middle Income Countries. We support a comprehensive, inter-sectoral approach to health in partner countries, with a focus on **strengthening health systems** to achieve **universal health coverage**.
20. The EU remains committed to the **promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights** and 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) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, 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**.
21. **Universal social protection** is also high at the Union's priorities. The EU is **assisting partner countries** in adapting, expanding and improving their social protection systems in a sustainable way. Universal social protection, with a particular focus on the protection of persons in vulnerable situations and without discrimination on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity, plays a key role in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, as it saves lives and alleviates human suffering, while supporting people's resilience and contributing to the social and economic recovery.

Ending hunger and achieving food security

22. We need to transform the current unsustainable global food system to end hunger, malnutrition and adverse environmental and health impacts. The global food system is presently responsible for more than a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, the majority of biodiversity loss, deforestation and significant negative impacts on water, oceans and seas, air and soil. It is also depleting natural resources and increasing disease transmission between animals and humans. By undermining natural capital, our present production and consumption patterns are reducing our future food production capacities. Furthermore, it is vital that our primary producers have sustainable livelihoods. A sustainable and resilient global food system is crucial to achieving the SDGs.
23. At the same time, a significant part of the **food produced is wasted or lost** with considerable negative impacts for the environment and the **low quality diets** contribute to various forms of malnutrition, poor health and increased risks in the form of obesity and diseases.
24. The **EU and its Member States are committed to work together with our partners** across the world to eliminate poverty and to reduce inequalities, to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, and contribute to sustainable development, through a **systemic transformation of the way we produce, process, market and consume food**. Empowering consumers to make more healthy and sustainable choices is an important part of this. It is a priority to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of our food systems to help galvanise the post-emergency recovery.
25. **In Africa** in particular, the EU aims to **address the challenges of nutrition and food security** by boosting safe, healthy, resilient and sustainable food systems supporting environment-friendly agricultural and fishing practices, aquaculture, promoting local production, ensuring livelihoods and integrating biodiversity concerns.
26. In order to address in particular the sustainability of food systems, the EU is formulating a **‘Farm to Fork’ strategy**, covering all stages of the food chain, aimed at tackling climate change, protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity and soil health, while ensuring a decent living for farmers, fishers and their families and a safe, healthy diet for our citizens. This strategy should lead to the **increased use of sustainable production practices, such as agro-ecological practices**.

Protecting the planet and building resilience

27. The future of life on our planet is in jeopardy, **as climate change** is having increasingly severe impacts on societies, economies, our planet’s ecosystems and biodiversity, in addition to our health and food systems, and requires an urgent response. **Ecosystems** play a **critical role** in providing food, clean water, energy, medicines and other resources and services fundamental for human well-being but **biodiversity** is declining faster than at any time in human history.
28. The COVID-19 crisis is closely linked to human pressure on ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and climate change. We need to maintain our ambition to protect our environment and fight against climate change, in order to boost our resilience and help prevent the emergence and spread of future outbreaks.
29. We are facing unprecedented environmental challenges and **the poor and the most vulnerable are the first to suffer the consequences**. The EU and its Member States are taking their responsibility as global leaders for sustainability and ambitious climate action,

currently providing 40% of the world's public climate finance. The EU will **continue to support climate action for sustainable development and to implement the Paris Agreement** in coherence with the 2030 Agenda. We **support our partner countries in their transition** to more sustainable, low emissions and climate resilient future; focusing in particular on countries particularly vulnerable, especially in the area of adaptation.

30. **Sustainability is a political priority** for European policymaking and the European Green Deal proposed by the European Commission will help drive this commitment. Through the **European Green Deal**, the EU will pursue further efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other global spill over effects of EU's consumption, supplying clean, affordable and secure energy both in the EU and in support of its external partners. We will mobilise industry for a low-carbon and circular economy, build and renovate in an energy and resource efficient way, accelerate the shift to sustainable and smart mobility, design a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity, address and prevent pollution and embed sustainability into the corporate governance framework. The post-COVID economic recovery offers the opportunity for a transition to a sustainable, socially just, resilient and climate neutral economy
31. The EU and its Member States have endorsed the objective of achieving a climate neutral EU by 2050. The proposed EU climate law aims to further anchor this objective. Strengthening the efforts on climate-proofing, resilience building, prevention and preparedness is also crucial.
32. The EU and its Member States remain committed to climate finance, as climate action and implementation of the Paris Agreement have to continue in the context of COVID-19
33. The EU is committed to lead by example and strongly contribute to the adoption of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its implementation. The EU has also drawn up a proposal for a **Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** including ambitious goals for a transformative change with priorities to protect and restore degraded ecosystems and to better integrate biodiversity challenges in other policy areas.
34. As the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss are global, those challenges cannot be tackled by Europe acting alone. The EU will use its partnerships, expertise and resources to **mobilise its neighbours and partners** to join it on a sustainable path and will lead international efforts and build alliances with the like-minded.
35. We will adopt a **new and ambitious adaptation strategy** that will contribute to increasing the adaptation and resilience of Europe and our partners to climate change impacts. The EU will foster green diplomacy working with all partners to **enhance climate and environmental action and increase resilience** to prevent these challenges from becoming sources of conflict, food insecurity, pollution, pandemics, forced displacement, and support a just transition globally.
36. The efforts by the EU and its Member States include providing and stimulating **public and private investments**, carbon pricing, support to sustainable accessible and resilient, quality infrastructure, access to data and **considering the effects of climate change** and natural capital **as part of their risk management practices**. The EU and its Member States are committed to facilitating a **just transition, making sure that no one is left behind**.
37. The EU encourages immediate and ambitious action to tackle the poor **status and biodiversity** loss of **oceans**. Ocean governance, including the development of sustainable fisheries and sustainable blue economy are examples of areas where cooperation can make a difference and be a vehicle for conservation and protection. The EU and its Member

States are fully committed to improving universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation and enhancing integrated water resource management, which are key drivers for sustainable development.

Sustaining efforts to ensure access to sustainable energy

38. Sustainable energy lies at the heart of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, and is a fundamental part for realising the European Green Deal in the EU and with our external partners, as proposed by the European Commission. Accelerating the transition to sustainable energy must be a core element in our economic recovery strategies.
39. The EU and its Member States underline the need for **collective concerted action to close the clean energy access gap to improve energy efficiency** and to step up the **transition to renewable energy** across all sectors. In the building sector, this includes smart energy infrastructure, deep energy renovation and construction of nearly zero-energy buildings.
40. The global energy transition needs to be **fair and inclusive**, ensuring that no one is left behind. Efforts need to be intensified to improve access to reliable and affordable energy and end energy poverty for those that cannot afford key energy services to ensure a basic, healthy standard of living.
41. Addressing climate change is as urgent as before COVID-19. The postponement of UNFCCC COP26 until 2021 must therefore not prompt a delay in climate policy work. The update of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the submission of the Long-Term Strategies before COP26 provide the opportunity to **increase the level of ambition** in order to accelerate the global energy transformation, enhancing **coordination between the Paris Agreement and the SDGs**.
42. The EU and its Member States will increase efforts and support in promoting and implementing ambitious energy and climate policies across the world. This will include **strong environment, sustainable energy and climate partnerships** (Green Alliances) with our immediate neighbourhood, but also with Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean and the Pacific. Building on the recommendations of the High Level Platform for Sustainable Energy Investments in Africa, the EU aims at increasing its efforts on access to sustainable energy in Africa. Moreover, **increased cross-border and regional cooperation** will help achieve the benefits of the clean energy transition at affordable prices.
43. The EU and its Member States will promote the **phasing-out of fossil fuel subsidies**, while maintaining social safety nets, in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities.

Responding to the economic shock, relaunching growth and sharing economic benefits and addressing 'developing countries' financing challenges

44. Economic growth has **increased national incomes** across countries **significantly but unequally**. This has contributed to advances in human well-being, but the **effects on**

human society, climate change and the global environment are unsustainable and can be a source of conflict.

45. The **European Green Deal**, proposed by the European Commission, sets out a comprehensive roadmap to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a resource-efficient, sustainable and competitive economy where climate neutrality is achieved by 2050 and where economic growth and resource use are decoupled, while making the transition just and inclusive for all. It proposes a number of ambitious initiatives to be pursued in multilateral and bilateral formats.
46. Becoming climate-neutral by 2050 while protecting the environment and preserving solidarity in the Union is ambitious and means significant **investment efforts across all sectors**. The proposed **European Green Deal Investment Plan** is envisaged to be a core part of the response to that challenge, as the investment pillar of the Green Deal. This Plan is expected to set up the new strategy on how to mobilise private and public investments both at European and national levels over the next decade, to decarbonise our economies.
47. **Fighting climate change and environmental degradation** is our common endeavour and requires action from all regions and Member States. As not all regions and Member States start from the same point, ensuring a just and socially balanced transition is integral to the EU's ambitious agenda. Moreover, our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic should not undermine ongoing efforts to limit environmental degradation and improve the environmental health of our societies.
48. The **European Semester** process, which is the annual integrated framework for the coordination of Member States' economic, fiscal, employment and social policies is being adapted to **integrate the relevant SDGs** and will contribute to the progress towards their achievement. Country Reports include a dedicated annex showing each Member States' SDG performance.
49. **Gender equality** brings more jobs and higher productivity – a potential that needs to be realised as we embrace the **green and digital transitions** and face up to our **demographic challenges**. The EU and its Member states will continue to pursue policy objectives and actions to advance gender equality in Europe and in partner countries. We will continue to engage actively to achieve gender equality and the **full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls** and their empowerment.
50. Under the European Pillar of social rights, everyone has the **right to equal treatment and opportunities** in the areas of employment, social protection, education, global public health and access to goods and services available to the public. The EU and its Member States will continue to combat all forms of discrimination.
51. The EU and its Member States will cooperate with developing countries across the various world regions in a tailored manner, to address the challenges created by the current crisis. They will **work with the African Union towards a renewed strategy with Africa** with the aim to strengthen their strategic alliance with the continent and drive broader social and human development, as well as to enhance cooperation on multilateral affairs. This presents **new opportunities** arising from the digital transformation, the demographic dividend, low-cost renewable energy, the just green transition and a low-carbon, climate resilient, blue and circular economy.

Bolstering local action to control the pandemic and accelerate implementation

52. The Political Declaration of the SDG Summit provides a momentum to bolster local action to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **The EU and its Member States share a commitment to empower local and regional authorities, in particular cities, as well as communities** in making the SDGs a reality, also in light of the current pandemic.
53. Local and subnational authorities are essential actors to ensure local ownership of SDGs by citizens and to best translate national development priorities into local realities. Strengthening local democracy and participatory processes is a powerful tool to foster local engagement from citizens, civil society organizations, enterprises and other stakeholders, whereby conditions for leaving no one behind can be created.
54. The Decade of Action of the SDGs should be driven by **strengthened partnerships and cooperation** of local, regional and national governments with international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, business associations, youth, academia and other actors.
55. The EU adapted the UN's New Urban Agenda to the European context by setting areas of action for European cities, with Member States, and other stakeholders, in order to improve the **consideration of the urban dimension in all policies, multi-level dialogues and partnerships**.
56. Climate change can bring drastic consequences for cities and communities all over the world. In urban environments, ecosystem services and urban greenery are key to strengthen the resilience of cities and their resistance against high temperatures and flooding.
57. The EU has developed a European handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews, which is a useful instrument to **monitor progress and sustain transformative and inclusive action** of local and subnational actors towards the achievement of SDGs. The **Urban Data Platform** collects and provides territorial data and indicators on the status of cities and regions in Europe and can support the analysis of transition to sustainability by our partners.

Means of Implementation

58. The EU and its Member States underline that implementing the ambitious 2030 Agenda requires the mobilising and effective use of all available Means of Implementation, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and taking into account the additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have to scale up **innovative solutions** to address the significant needs by mobilising sufficient funding to accelerate action to achieve the SDGs. We will encourage efforts to reach a better alignment of public and private resources with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement for a sustainable recovery.
59. The EU and its Member States recognize the need to increase financial **resource mobilisation from all sources** – public and private both domestically and from international sources, and to deliver on commitments regarding **official development assistance**, in particular to Least Developed Countries. The EU and its Member States recognize that in order to reach the SDGs significant investments will need to come from the international private sector. The EU will support the mobilization of private finance by providing innovative financial instruments, by creating enabling environments for sustainable investments at the country level, particularly in developing countries. The EU and its Member States will continue promoting fair, progressive and transparent tax systems and combat illicit financial flows, tax avoidance and corruption.

60. The EU and its Member States recognize the benefits of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) that will help to better measure and improve transparency on all official and officially supported resources contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and that will importantly also involve emerging providers. The role of the UN Working Group on Measurement of Development Support, in line with the 2030 Agenda and building on previous relevant work in this area, is key.
61. High debt servicing can hamstring some developing countries' immediate response to COVID-19 and impedes investment in the SDGs. Therefore, coordinated debt relief involving both official and private creditors to countries in unsustainable debt situations may be necessary, combined with appropriate policy reforms and a scale-up of SDG related investment.
62. We also strive to increase the level of ambition on the non-financial means of implementation, including promoting a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system.
63. The EU and its Member States stress the importance of **Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)**, as well as that of **regulated markets and entrepreneurship** for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda especially in the Decade of Action, with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development. The COVID-19 crisis underlines the importance of digital transformation in terms of, for example, health, education, particularly distance learning, and economic recovery. The EU has contributed to the work of the UN-led Inter-agency Task Team on STI Roadmaps for SDGs and plans further active involvement in this area, including through the EU's Smart Specialisation Strategies.
64. We also **welcome this year's report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development**, particularly the analysis on digital technologies including its taxation and the recommendations in terms of policy options to make the most of their potential for the benefit of people whilst managing risks and closing the digital divide within and among countries.
65. The EU and its Member States support the **Integrated National Financing Frameworks** to facilitate government-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda by supporting governments have a better understanding of the landscape for financing sustainable development at country-level, including all financial and non-financial means of implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; develop a financing strategy; and coordinate efforts to mobilise financing and align investments with national sustainable development priorities.
66. **Translating the SDGs into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks** is crucial. Capacity-building efforts and peer review can help to support this process.
67. We support **empowering institutions at all levels, including at the domestic level, that can better address interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between different SDGs** through a **whole-of-government approach**. We recognize the importance of policy coherence for development, which requires taking into account transboundary impacts of

all policies on developing countries, as an important contribution to the broader policy coherence for sustainable development.

68. The EU continues to provide support to civil society, with the aim of creating an **enabling environment** and whole-of-society approach in partner countries and promoting the capacity of civil society as **actors of development and governance**.
 69. Equally, we underline the **need to address gaps and overlaps in data on the SDGs**. Increased efforts are needed to ensure that **objective, high quality, timely, reliable, comparable and disaggregated data and statistics** are available, in order for all countries to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to contribute to global assessments of progress. International partnership is crucial to support building statistical capacity, promoting and facilitating the **use of new technologies** as well as **digitalisation** and **data infrastructure**, in particular in developing countries.
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