

## **Report Thematic Session 3: Europe as an actor of International Cooperation and Development**

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Stefano Signore, DG DEVCO, lead a session addressing the role carried out by Europe as an active player of International Cooperation and Development during the traineeship welcome conference which was attended by around 350 new trainees. The session began with Mr Signore's presentation about the gamut of roles played by the EU targeting the implementation of various developmental goals globally and later took an interactive form as participants put forward various questions which were addressed by him.

Signore opened the session by highlighting priority number nine of the Juncker commission that focused on establishing Europe as a stronger actor on the global scene. By presenting a quote from Juncker, *"As long as children are dying of hunger every day in Africa, Europe will still have work to do. Europe has a responsibility to change this situation"*, he tried to shed more light on the essential role of the EU as a global actor so as to assist countries experiencing diverse developmental issues.

He moved further to talk about how commitment to MGDs and SDGs working parallel to other implementing actors and bodies has helped in achieving different developmental goals globally. For instance, between 2000 and 2015 there has been an accounted 42 % reduction in the number of children out of school. Similarly, infant mortality has halved down from around thirteen million to around six million.

Mr Signore also elaborated on the contribution of the EU to different MDGS. 46.5 million people were assisted through social transfers for food security. Similarly, 13.7 million new pupils were enrolled in primary education. Likewise, 300.00 new female pupils were enrolled in secondary education and 18.3 million children under one year of age were immunized against measles. In line with the MDGs, extreme poverty has been reduced by half and hunger has also been significantly reduced.

Mr Signore highlighted that although the MGDs had been successful in gathering a lot of positive outcomes they also had to be updated with the course of time to become more specific and clear. He elaborated on how the SDGs has been designed to cover a much wider spectrum of public goods and issues ranging from sustainable consumption to peace and security to decent work and economic

growth. Mr Signore emphasised that SDGs are universal and apply to all UN member states and that implies that all emerging issues are closely linked and should be tackled together cohesively. He addressed that many issues such as climate change, inequalities across countries and consumption of resources are topics concerning a wide range of nations and therefore a matter of global interest. He also highlighted the human right component of SDGs which postulates that special attention and services needs to be delivered to pockets of people who can lag behind in terms of developmental objectives such as minorities, migrants, people with disabilities and indigenous people thus making sure that no one is left behind.

Mr Signore also briefed about the position of the EU as the world's leading aid donor. In 2015 the 28 Member States & the European Commission were responsible for more than 50% of the world's development aid (ODA). Currently, the EU, together with its member states, is the largest donor of humanitarian aid and development assistance worldwide, with €75.5 billion in 2016 alone.

Mr Signore also explained how as a global actor the European Union has been able to hold a wide geographical coverage in terms of aid spreading across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. He explained that the EU has been successful in working in 139 countries across the world through its wide-spread delegations. He also went on to explain further about how SDGs were translated to certain EU policies for example with the introduction of various agendas such as the EU 2030 agenda and the global strategy in 2016 which included development policy as a core part of its vision. This assisted in developing a new consensus for development which the commission proposed in November 2016 and was adopted before this summer. The European Commission and member states adopted a common text on how to implement the developmental policies and this consensus is built on 5 Ps namely; people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

Mr Signore also talked about the core aspects of the new consensus on development which focuses on systematically integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions on sustainable development and addresses vital nexuses such as that of migration and security. He then opened the floor for trainees to put forward any questions, queries or comments.

The session was enthusiastically applauded by all the participants and lead to a number of interesting questions being put to the panel. One of the questions put forward was that in view of Brexit, would the EU be shifting its focus from delivering developing aid to countries that once were British colonies. Mr

Signore clarified that this would not be the case as most of these countries still fall under the list of countries with a low development index and would therefore continue to be the focus of EU aid.

A trainee from Ireland shared his experience of observing various places in his hometown facing issues of poverty and related this scenario in linking how European Union as a soft power while focusing on international aid can also in parallel address sustainable development for its own member states. Mr Signore agreed that although outside conventional expectations, places in Europe also still face pockets of poverty and exclusion and that is something essential to consider. He stated that the commission has issued a paper on social Europe and there will be a summit in Gothenburg in November to discuss this further. He also added that there has been a lot of mobilisation on the themes with the help of various instruments that lie at the European level such as European social funds. He also stated that there were also different policies formulated in line with various SDGs to ensure sustainable development and its efficient implementation.

Likewise questions were also raised on how the European Union has shifted more from aid to partnership, and if there are any strategies to hold the EU accountable for creating a high level of dependence among nations receiving aid. Mr Signore highlighted that this shift has been established as something vital. He elaborated that many initiatives were designed to ensure this for example by focusing on building sound public policies, sound financial management at the national level and ensuring the mobilisation of domestic resources for working on task avoidance, tax evasion, illicit financial flows, corruption and the like. He stated that this would assist in building stronger partnerships in comparison to creating dependence.

Addressing a final question put forward by one of the trainees on whether the European Union would continue to work on peace through NATO or through a European common defence mechanism, Mr Signore concluded that despite the costs, the security dimension should be embedded as much as possible as there is no peace without security and development and no development without peace and security.