



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 14.11.2013  
C(2013) 7493 final

Mr Stephan WEIL  
President of the Bundesrat  
Leipziger Straße 3 - 4  
D - 10117 BERLIN

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion concerning the Communication "A Decent Life for All: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future" {COM(2013) 92 final}, and apologises for the delay in replying.*

*The Commission welcomes the fact that the Bundesrat concurs with the general direction of the Communication as well as with the Council Conclusions on "The Overarching Post-2015 Agenda", including with its underlying approach to integrate the future agenda for poverty eradication and sustainable development in the post 2015 agenda at the global level.*

*The Commission also welcomes the Bundesrat's emphasis on the multidimensionality of poverty and underscores that the compliance with human rights standards is fundamental in this respect. Accordingly, the Bundesrat raises the fundamental challenge to fight the worst forms of child labour. In fact, the Commission is committed to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Core labour standards, including to Convention No 182 concerning Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Commission promotes universal ratification and implementation of the eight fundamental ILO conventions and is working towards the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and other prohibited forms of child labour, in line with the June 2010 Council Conclusions on Child Labour.*

*In this context, the Commission is fully committed to promoting labour standards in partner countries through EU policies and instruments, including in EU trade relations. Recent EU trade agreements already include provisions on trade and sustainable development, including on the respect for core labour standards. The 2012 Communication on "Trade, Growth and Development"<sup>1</sup> has further highlighted the fact that efforts to ensure that economic growth and development go hand in hand with social justice, including core labour standards, and sustainable environmental practices, and are of particular relevance in a development context. The Commission is pleased to note the support of the Bundesrat for the*

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2012) 22 final.

*continued efforts of the EU to incorporate sustainability concerns into bilateral free trade agreements.*

*The EU will remain a strong advocate of an inclusive green economy as reaffirmed in the recent Council Conclusions "The Overarching Post-2015 Agenda". The Commission agrees with the Bundesrat that the transition towards an inclusive Green Economy is essential both within the EU and globally. The various initiatives regarding the transition towards an inclusive, resource efficient green economy will also be conducive to sustainable growth and will thus give a new impetus to growth within the EU. This concept is also included, amongst others, in the new approach to EU development policy as expressed in the Commission Communication 'Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy - an Agenda for Change'.*

*The Commission concurs with the Bundesrat's view that a post-2015 overarching agenda should be of universal relevance, and thus will also apply to developed countries. At the same time, a global framework should be operationalized by targets that respect different national circumstances and capacities. The Commission will ensure that future positions will continue to reflect all three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner.*

*The Bundesrat rightly points out that the environmental dimension of sustainable development was given inadequate weight in the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission considers the convergence of the Millennium agenda with the Rio agenda as one milestone towards a post-2015 framework that takes due account of the pressing challenges that global environmental degradation poses to poverty eradication and sustainable development.*

*In this respect, the Commission agrees that the world needs to ensure that planetary boundaries are respected. In addition to climate, this means giving adequate attention to biodiversity, water, air, land, and oceans when formulating development policies.*

*The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat's opinion on the importance of the correlation between education and sustainability, which is in-line with the EU policy. The Commission highly appreciates the reference made to the UN-decade "Education for Sustainable Development" and its successor program and hopes that lessons learned can be incorporated in future work.*

*The Commission agrees that social cohesion and justice are key development objectives. The EU considers inclusive and sustainable growth as outlined in the Council Conclusions adopted in May 2012 "Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change" as a key vehicle for promoting international equity and equality. Also, the recent Communication "Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation" emphasises the key role functioning social protection systems play to eradicate poverty, tackle vulnerabilities, promote inclusive growth and ensure equal societies. The Commission is committed to support social protection systems through its development cooperation.*

*The Commission believes that the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is based on equally important pillars, which set the long- to medium-term framework for EU policies. Annual priorities for action at EU and national levels are defined in the Annual Growth Survey, taking into account the given economic and political context.*

*The Commission has taken note of the request made by the Bundesrat on the amendment of the EU Sustainability Strategy and will take it into account in elaborating future related initiatives and policies.*

*The Commission believes that through the operational integration of the measures and actions contained in the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Europe 2020 Strategy and the*

*7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme, into Union and Member State policies and actions, sustainable development within the EU will receive renewed impetus. The Commission will continue to promote the implementation of these strategies and underlines that strong engagement of Member States is essential in this respect.*

*The Commission also concurs with the opinion of the Bundesrat that international credibility of EU efforts to promote measures aimed at poverty eradication and sustainable development depend heavily on measures adopted and implemented within the EU.*

*In this context, the Commission is also aware of the outcome of the Bundestag's Study Commission "Growth, Prosperity, Quality of Life – Approaches to Achieving Sustainable Economic and Social Progress in the Social Market Economy" which has lent itself to internal reflection on the issue. In this respect, the Commission wants to point out the work undertaken by EUROSTAT on developing and measuring Quality of Life indicators.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*