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Bundesrat Resolution

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A decent life for all: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future

COM(2013) 92 final; Council doc. 7075/13

At its 909th sitting on 3 May 2013 the Bundesrat adopted the following position pursuant to Sections 3 and 5 EUZBLG (Act on cooperation between the Federal State and the *Länder* in matters relating to the European Union):

1. The Bundesrat welcomes the EU's proposal, as it should allow a joint EU plan to be made for creating an overarching framework for ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future after 2015 in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the agreements reached during the Rio+20 Conference.
2. The Bundesrat welcomes the fact that in its Communication the Commission proposes to consolidate the two separate UN international development processes, the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the follow-up process to the Rio Conference on Sustainable Development in a coherent overall process for global sustainable development.
3. In particular, the Bundesrat welcomes the Commission's focus on eradicating all forms of poverty, and highlights the particular significance of the fight against the worst forms of child labour resulting from poverty and economic inequality. In this context, the Bundesrat calls on the Commission to develop a procedure that prevents the import into the EU of goods produced using the worst forms of child labour.
4. The Bundesrat believes that the system of international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently pursued and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that will apply from 2015 should form a coherent and universally valid strategic system of goals. The global goals should be supplemented by subgoals adapted to the situation and potential of the countries or groups of countries. In the new global system of goals, equal importance must be given to each of the three dimensions of sustainability, i.e. the ecological, social and economic dimensions, especially in these times of the global financial crisis and the resulting pressure to make savings in many countries.
5. In order to reflect the particular challenges in the developing countries, goals in the areas of the fight against poverty, nutrition, access to education, health and gender equality should, as in the case of the MDGs applying until 2015, also play an important role in the international community's new system of sustainability goals. The ecological dimension of sustainability, which has only partially been taken into account in the current MDGs, should be extended to include the following areas, among others: climate protection/change, renewable energy, protection of biodiversity and forests, soil protection, and access to clean water. The economic dimension of sustainability must also be adequately reflected in the new system of goals. In the context of developing the green economy, goals in the areas of increasing resource efficiency, fair and sustainable international trade structures, sustainable consumption, knowledge transfer of sustainable solutions, and sustainable tourism should be considered, among other things. Horizontal

goals, such as education for sustainable development, sound governance, respect for human rights, and peace and security must also be included in a new global system of goals.

6. In view of the significant increase in the social differences caused by the distribution of income and assets in many countries, and even in many European countries over the past two decades, a global system of goals will also have to take into account the developments within the countries, but without too much intervention in the internal political processes. Subjects such as social protection and society's social cohesion will therefore have to be given greater importance in the global system of sustainability goals.

7. The planetary boundaries, meaning the capacity of the global ecosystems, represent the binding framework for a global system of sustainability goals.

8. In order to do justice to the elementary significance of the interplay between education and sustainability, the Bundesrat believes that endeavours should also be made to harmonise the UNESCO World Programme of Action for Education of Sustainable Development to be launched in 2015 with the global system of sustainability goals. The form taken by this World Programme of Action, which is meant to continue the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014, is particularly suited to launching the implementation of the global sustainability goals, while allowing the individual countries to set their own priorities.

9. The Bundesrat believes that the EU will be able to be a credible and effective participant in the forthcoming international negotiations only if it gives the same importance to the ecological, social and economic dimensions of sustainability in its own system of goals. However, in this Communication, the Commission cites the Europe 2020 Strategy as the most important point of reference for its considerations regarding sustainability (see Section 3.3), although it makes only a marginal reference to the social and ecological dimensions of sustainability. The more comprehensive EU Strategy for Sustainable Development is given only one brief mention in the Communication. The Bundesrat therefore urges the Commission to give this strategy equal importance in its future considerations regarding the integration of the international development processes and their implementation at EU level. The very diverse measures at EU and international level for implementing the results of the Rio+20 conference listed in Annex I to the Communication show that there is an urgent need for a coherent overall strategy and a clear benchmark for sustainability at EU-level

10. The Bundesrat therefore repeats the request it made to the Commission in its Opinion of 1 February 2013 on the Proposal for a Seventh EU Environment Action Programme (document 745/12 (Resolution)) to amend the EU Sustainability Strategy by 2014. The same request was made to the Commission unanimously by the EU Council in October 2012 (see conclusions of the Environment Council of 25 October 2012, Council document 15477/12). This Communication shows that the Commission has not yet acted on the request to amend the EU Sustainability Strategy. It would appear that a fundamental reworking or updating of the EU Sustainability Strategy can now no longer be avoided in view of the of new international development goals that need to be implemented in the EU.

11. The Bundesrat points out once again that we also need social innovations in order to bring about the necessary change in international and European societies towards a way of running the economy and of living that takes our planet's capacity into consideration. The Commission's Communication does not go into sufficient detail

regarding how a transformation to sustainable and resource-efficient lifestyles (sustainable production and consumption models) can be achieved. The Commission's current approach with its strong focus on growth – at the end of section 4.1.2 the goal of “rapid growth” is even mentioned without any kind of qualification – appears out of date in the light of the results of political debate, for example in the Bundestag's Study Commission “Growth, Prosperity, Quality of Life – Approaches to Achieving Sustainable Economic and Social Progress in the Social Market Economy”. The EU's basic approach during the international sustainability negotiations should therefore include the instrument of social innovation for sustainable and resource-efficient lifestyles.

12. The Bundestag acknowledges the on-going and forthcoming measures at EU-level for implementing the results of the Rio+20 Conference. With regard to the area of trade, the Bundesrat welcomes the fact that the Commission has already concluded in its Communication of 20 June 2011 “Rio+20: towards the green economy and better governance” that the inclusion of sustainability provisions as part of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements also needs to be promoted.

The Bundesrat calls on the Commission to ensure, when concluding trade agreements, that sustainability provisions which also include core labour standards, such as the implementation of Convention No 182 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, are defined as being mandatory and liable to sanctions. At the same time, referring to its Resolution on Preventing Access to the Market for Products of Exploitative Child Labour (Bundesrat document 309/10 (Resolution)), the Bundesrat calls on the German Federal Government to sign EU trade agreements only if they include mandatory human rights and social standards along with corresponding verification and sanction mechanisms.

13. The Bundesrat asks the Federal Government to take its position into account in the further negotiations at European and international level and, in the light of the great significance of this matter also in respect of efforts by the *Länder* to achieve sustainability, to keep it up to date on the progress in the negotiations at European and international level.

14. The Bundesrat is sending this opinion directly to the Commission.