

SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC
17th PARLIAMENTARY TERM

DOC. XVIII

No 194

RESOLUTION OF THE 13th STANDING COMMITTEE

(Land use, Environment, Environmental Assets)

(Rapporteur DALLA ZUANNA)

Approved at the session of 14 March 2017

ON THE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS -
NEXT STEPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN FUTURE: EUROPEAN
ACTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY
(COM(2016) 739 final)

pursuant to Article 144(1) and (6) of the Rules of Procedure

Sent to the President's Office on 17 March 2017

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The Committee,

having examined the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability (COM(2016) 739 final),

whereas the purpose of the Communication is to present the relationship between the ten priorities of the European Commission and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the United Nations on 25 September 2015;

noting that the Communication states that the SDGs are already being pursued through many EU policies, and are incorporated in all ten of the Commission's priorities;

whereas the Communication gives an account of EU policies in relation to the pursuit of the SDGs, presenting an overview of the contribution made by these policies and by EU initiatives to achieving these goals both within the European Union and through its external activity;

whereas the 2030 Agenda that was adopted in September 2015 unambiguously asserts that our current model of development is unsustainable, not only environmentally, but also in economic and social terms and that the understanding of sustainability as a purely environmental issue has been left behind once and for all, affirming an integrated vision of the different dimensions of development;

whereas it calls upon all countries to contribute to the effort to find a sustainable way forward for the world, no longer distinguishing between developed, emerging and developing countries; whereas all segments of society, from business to the public sector, from civil society to philanthropic organisations, from universities and research centres to those working in the information and cultural industries, need to be closely involved in implementing the Agenda,

issues, for matters within its remit, a favourable opinion with the following comments:

the Commission should place the 2030 Agenda at the heart of its commitment to build a European Union of the future, including with an eye to the revision of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It should therefore propose to the Council and the European Parliament an ambitious roadmap to secure a world-leading role for Europe in sustainable development, ensuring full consistency between the EU's internal policies and those directed outwards; it should also propose action to ensure that the EU's decision-making procedures allow the effective development of impact assessment models for European policies based on the sustainable development goals;

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there should be clarification of the role of the Union in the pursuit of Agenda 2030 goals in areas which, in the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the Union and the Member States, are the responsibility of the latter. Such clarification is missing from the Communication, but the Committee considers it important for the Commission to act as a stimulus for the Member States, promoting the use of best practices in the relevant fields;

the Committee considers that the Union should have the task of fostering action by the Member States and of ensuring coherence between their policies so as to make action in pursuit of the SDGs more efficient and effective for the individual States and for the European Union as a whole;

the Commission should carry out analyses and studies to guide the efforts of Member States towards the actions that can most effectively contribute to achieving the goals specified, also taking account of the possibility of integrating related actions and generating potential synergies;

this Committee notes the absence from the Communication of any explicit mention - which is, in its view, indispensable - of the central role that business and industry must play in the pursuit of the SDGs, and insists that companies must be involved as active participants in working towards those goals. Businesses played a key role at the approval stage of Agenda 2030, and their involvement would pre-empt the risk of their losing their sense of responsibility in this sphere and passing up on the opportunity to participate in implementing the Agenda;

the Committee would also point out that the approach taken to individual sectors in the Communication lacks a comprehensive medium-to long-term vision as to how the 'European model' should be altered to achieve the SDGs and move beyond the view of sustainable development as a purely environmental matter. To achieve such a comprehensive approach, the Committee suggests adopting instruments for the ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of the individual policies in terms of all the SDGs taken together. This will require investment in both the production of timely statistics on all the relevant economic, social and environmental aspects, and in the development of analytical models to assist the Commission and the Member States at the policy design stage. This would make it possible to evaluate every new legislative proposal in the light of the full spectrum of SDGs.