



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Secretariat-General

Directorate E – Single Market and Connectivity

Minutes of the second meeting of the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU 11 October 2018

Chair: First Vice-President Timmermans

Attendance: Vice-President Katainen; Members and observers of the multi-stakeholder platform (see Annex 1); Helena Braun (Member of Cabinet of the First Vice-President); Florentine Hopmeier (Member of Cabinet of Vice-President Katainen); Céline Gauer (SG), Tine Delva (SG), Lucian Parvulescu (SG), Sami Andoura (European Political Strategy Centre).

Venue: Brussels (Berlaymont building), 11 October 2018, from 09.00 to 17.00 hours

Opening remarks and adoption of the agenda

First Vice-President Timmermans welcomed the platform's members and observers. He commended and thanked the platform's sustained efforts over the past year to support and advise the Commission, in particular through its input to the Commission's reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030", on the follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. He underlined that the platform's input, containing a common set of recommendations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, demonstrates to the Commission and all other institutions and stakeholders that when an issue is important enough and the wellbeing of our present and future generations is at stake, a diverse group representing very different interests can reach a compromise on concrete, ambitious and substantive proposals. First Vice-President Timmermans reconfirmed to participants that Europe intends to remain a frontrunner in sustainable development and is committed to taking the lead at the global level to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, even more so in the current geopolitical context and in light of the alarming findings of the latest IPCC report. He mentioned to the platform that important steps, for example in the areas of rule of law and good governance, clean energy, circular economy, sustainable finance, social inclusion, gender equality, have already been taken but that more needs to be done for Europe to develop within the boundaries of our planet and leaving anyone behind.

Vice-President Katainen emphasised the need for a positive vision for a sustainable European future. He outlined that the reflection paper under preparation will be a political vision meant to stimulate reflection and discussion on the future of Europe and that it will present sustainable development as the core principle to preserve and reinforce the growth, competitiveness and resilience of the EU27. He explained that the paper will consider the role of newly emerging trends such as the circular economy, bioeconomy, artificial intelligence and data economy. He furthermore stressed the importance of education, innovation and science, as well as the EU's trade agenda in the implementation of the SDGs. He stated that sustainability presents huge opportunities for jobs and growth and that private sector participation is a prerequisite, including through the sustainable finance agenda. Finally, he thanked the platform for their valuable input paper, which includes many elements the Commission will consider in its reflections.

First Vice-President Timmermans outlined the agenda of the day. The proposed agenda of the meeting was adopted unchanged.

Adoption of the platform's input to the Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'

First Vice-President Timmermans informed that the reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030", on the follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will be a political vision meant to stimulate reflection and discussion on the future of Europe and should be of inspiration for the discussion on the political priorities post-2019. He once more thanked the members for all the hard work done in the past year and for the resulting platform's draft final contribution to the reflection paper. He specifically commended the efforts of the European Environmental Bureau, Concord, Corporate Social Responsibility Europe, the Committee of the Regions and the Social Platform for their intensive work on the platform's contribution, being part of the team that has drafted the platform's contribution and ensured coordination between the different members. He explained the extensive consultation process between the different members of platform, through the management committee subgroup. He welcomed the upcoming approval of the platform's input, which will help the Commission in the ongoing preparation of its reflection paper. He stressed that the European Union, its Member States and European stakeholders now need to act as role models and need to put sustainable development into practice, tailored to the European particularities.

Representatives of CSR Europe and Concord - both part of the team drafting the platform's contribution - **presented the platform's input to the Commission reflection paper**. They announced there seems to be unanimous agreement to adopt the platform's input, recognising that none of the members of the platform is expected to endorse every recommendation or view entailed in the contribution. They emphasised that the outcome represents a trade-off between the different interests at stake. They asked the Commission to continue to lead by example in close cooperation with stakeholders.

Copa-Cogeca stated it could sign up to the platform's contribution as this represents a compromise between the different viewpoints. Copa-Cogeca however called for a more positive tone on agriculture, "the most necessary life maintaining sector". Instead of listing just negative impacts, e.g. on page 13 of the platform's input, the Commission's reflection paper should address the development potential and the progress made in the European Union. For the further work, Copa-Cogeca proposed the following additional words related to

the sentence on page 13, “Our food systems need to be fully aligned with the environmental and climate targets laid down in European policies and the SDGs, in particular by addressing the great development potential and initiating public policy measures to better mitigate the challenges and market failures faced by the sectors (air and water pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance, and negative impacts on public health and animal welfare) which new technology and knowledge enables.”

Additionally, Copa-Cogeca made three specific points to take into consideration for future work:

- 1) The Paris Agreement Article 2 is the key article aiming to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees. In the same article resilience and the need for ‘low greenhouse gas development in a manner that does not threaten food production’ is also mentioned. Copa-Cogeca stated that one cannot take the scope of the Paris Agreement only partially, as otherwise, the platform will lose its credibility.
- 2) Copa-Cogeca found that the text makes a lot of reference to food sufficiency and to the fact that in Europe we have achieved food security. This is not coherent with European Union’s trade policy and the open markets reality, and not coherent with the benefits from trade and the need for food, feed and fiber production. Copa-Cogeca emphasises the benefits for growth, climate change mitigation and adaptation and stressed that food sovereignty builds walls between countries, while we should try to build progress and collaboration.
- 3) Copa-Cogeca found that the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy is not adequately addressed, also in economic terms for farmers who are earning 46,5% of the European Union’s average income. Copa-Cogeca stated that criticizing the way this is calculated can be easy, but the reality is that farmers have very thin profit margins and are subject to high risks from markets, in addition to the weather.

Finally, Copa-Cogeca recalled that agriculture and forestry are the only economic sectors that remove emissions from the atmosphere and are crucial contributors to the bioeconomy and the substitution of fossil-based material with renewable biomass. This is the science and reality-based precondition for full alignment of the Union’s agriculture and forestry with the environmental and climate targets. Copa-Cogeca underlined that farmers and forest owners are partners in this path and hoped that this will be better reflected in the future work of the Platform.

Business Europe indicated that it can adopt the platform’s input. They believe the business community as a whole, in all its diversity, needs to be at the centre of discussions on sustainability and that having the business community on board remains crucial for Europe to move forward with implementation of the SDGs. Throughout their work in the platform they have tried to show how ensuring the competitiveness of European companies can serve and promote sustainability, if the right policy frameworks are in place, and that businesses are part of the solution to Europe becoming more sustainable, and not part of the problem. Business Europe stressed that business plays a fundamental role in society, provides innovative solutions to today’s sustainability challenges, takes its responsibility to society seriously and that many companies already put sustainability at the core of their business strategy. BusinessEurope expressed hope of a better understanding of this. They highlighted that they are not completely satisfied with the content of the paper and their approval of it should not be taken in any way as an agreement on all elements and recommendations. They expressed that

their readiness to approve the paper, despite this, is testament to a constructive attitude. Bearing in mind that the EU and its member states already have a good record in implementing a sustainability approach in their policy-making processes, they called for a smart evolution rather than a revolution. They also emphasised that this is a global agenda and that the EU should mobilise others globally on it. They thanked the drafting group for their work. They emphasised that however implementation of SDGs at EU is dealt with in the future, the process should allow for a more balanced approach between the different stakeholders – the added value of the platform should be assessed, also looking at its composition and mission. For the future work of the platform, Business Europe asks to consider this, in line with the spirit of Sustainable Development Goal 17 on partnerships.

Similar to Business Europe and Copa-Cogeca, the **European Environmental Bureau** announced it would subscribe to the platform's contribution to the Commission's reflection paper, although on some points it would have preferred more ambition (for example on biodiversity, phasing out of fossil fuel and the need for a revolutionary approach to sustainable development).

All other present platform **members** indicated they could also subscribe to the platform's contribution to the Commission's reflection paper.

The Committee of the Regions furthermore stressed the need for multi-level governance for the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for a territorial approach.

The **CEMR** stressed the need to focus on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (e.g. mainstreaming in the new multi-annual financial framework, cohesion policy) and on localization of the SDGs. They emphasized the importance of strong partnerships, including with local and regional governments, for which further tools need to be built for SDG implementation.

The **European University Association** confirmed the support of the university community to the SDGs, which is already integrating the SDGs in its education paths. They underlined the importance of research and innovation and artificial intelligence which could help providing solutions.

The **International Reporting Council** welcomed the fact that the indivisible nature of the SDGs and the need for a transformative change was recognised. They stressed that business are part of the solution and that the SDGs should be integrated in business strategies. They underlined the importance of sustainable finance and better regulation tools (e.g. fitness checks of EU legislation) for sustainable development and asked the EU to continue to lead also at international level.

CSR Europe commended the members with the remarkable achievement and called for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Next to the executive summary of the platform's contribution, they also called for the joint letter of the platform members annexed to the Commission's reflection paper. CSR Europe furthermore stressed that next steps should be taken to continue this coalition of the willing, also with regard to promoting the SDGs vis-à-vis the European Parliament, Council and Member States.

The European Economic and Social Committee stressed the important role of civil society and the need for further action of the European Union in relation the SDG implementation. They underlined the importance of reporting to the United Nation's High Level Political Forum.

Coface – families Europe indicated it could approve the platform's input to the reflection paper, thanked the drafting team and stressed that the platform's input further supports the European pillar of Social Rights and the implementation of the UN Convention of the rights of children and the UN Convention of the rights of people with disabilities. They highlighted the importance of legislation to drive change and the important role of education and families as first educators, in achieving the SDGs. Coface families Europe stressed the need to mainstream the SDGs and to work together with "the platform-coalition" to build a sustainable future.

Mr. Potocnik welcomed the consensus on the platform's contribution and asked all members to advocate this contribution widely in the period to come. He applauded members for overcoming their different interests. He called upon the Commission to lead on sustainability and to overcome silo-thinking.

The European Trade Union Confederation inter alia called upon the Commission to take the platform's contribution into account for the preparation of its reflection paper.

The European Youth Forum were grateful for the focus on youth in the platform's contribution and asked for concrete implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

SDG Watch Europe welcomed the work of the platform and stressed the need for universal coalition for SDG implementation. They underlined that the Union should lead by example by showing that all can live in prosperity and well-being without depleting our resources. They asked the European Union to speed up its path towards sustainable development, in close cooperation with the Member States. They furthermore stressed the importance of governance tools - such as better regulation and the European Semester – and the need to mainstream the SDGs in policymaking.

Transparency international stressed the importance of the fourth dimension of sustainable development, i.e. governance. They underlined it is crucial to give people a voice and include them in policymaking. The rule of law and the fight against corruption are key in this respect.

WWF applauded the work of the platform, and especially the fact that vested interests were overcome. They reiterated that time is running out with regard to the planetary boundaries, as just confirmed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report. They stressed the need for further communication and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially in view of the upcoming European elections.

Food Drink Europe confirmed the responsibility of its sector in relation to sustainable development. They supported the idea of CSR Europe to also have the joint letter of the platform members annexed to the Commission's reflection paper. They stated that it takes time to implement policies.

The **Social Platform** reiterated the importance of governance and called for democratic and inclusive policy processes and a better representation of those who have less access to decision making.

Birdlife called for a transformational change and for the European Union to take leadership on the SDGs.

Mr. Wiebe Draijer stressed that the agreement reached between the different platform members - setting aside the divergent interests - is equally important than the platform's contribution itself. He called upon all members to take ownership of the platform's contribution.

Eurocities echoed the need to have the joint letter of the platform members annexed to the Commission's reflection paper as it strengthens the urge to "do much more".

The **United Nations** commended the members with their output. They stressed the need to leave no one behind, to raise public awareness on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and the need for the platform's input to be reflected into the Union's long term strategy.

The **IUCN** applauded the work of the platform members but reminded of the importance of natural capital as the basis for our social and economic wellbeing and not as a parallel pillar of sustainable development. They asked to attach equal importance to protecting and restoring nature as to climate change.

After the tour the table, **First Vice-President Timmermans** asked confirmation that all could agree to the adoption of the platform's input to the reflection paper. He reiterated that none of the members of the platform is expected to endorse every recommendation or view entailed in this input. He noted that there were no objections raised and considered the platform's input to the Commission's reflection paper adopted. The letter accompanying the report was signed by the members present. First Vice-President Timmermans congratulated members with the adoption of their input paper and concluded that he would take it into account in the preparations for the upcoming Commission's reflection paper. He stated he was in favour of also annexing the joint letter of the platform members to the Commission's reflection paper, next to the executive summary. He furthermore reiterated the Union's support for multilateralism in international relations and stressed the need for a vocal majority on sustainable development. He called for the platform's active engagement with the Member States in making their work known and explaining the importance of the SDGs and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels.

The UN Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR): an update on key ideas and findings

First Vice-President Timmermans introduced the delegation of the independent group of scientists drafting the Global Sustainable Development Report, which will be published in September 2019 at the HLPF/UN Summit. He then gave the floor to Professor Eeva Furman and Professor Peter Messerli, who gave an interesting presentation (see Annex 2). They explained the context and the planned structure of the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 and shed light on some of its preliminary findings. Key concepts in the presentation were those of transformations, turning points and systems thinking, and the two speakers emphasised the role of science and technology in implementing the SDGs.

The presentation was followed by a discussion between the members of the platform and the scientists. The exchanges of views concerned some of the analysis presented on SDG interactions by flows across national boundaries and the insights into governance and social capital as means of transformation. Members of the platform underlined the need for each of them to communicate better on the 2030 Agenda as well as the importance of keeping a holistic approach to the SDGs, while at the same time being able to focus on the issues that are most relevant for each stakeholder. The scientists concluded by saying that it had been very useful to have this exchange of views while their report was still in a drafting stage.

The multi-stakeholder platform: future work

The members and observers of the platform participated in an interactive session in 'world café style' and discussed the future work of the platform. On content, the platform considered that they should focus on influencing the priorities of the next Commission, the Members States and the Union at large; on the Union reporting to the United Nation's 2019 High Level Political Forum; and on strengthening communication efforts, also with the national members of their respective organisations. There were furthermore a number of concerns with regard to the complexity of the platform work, its representativity and transparency towards other constituencies. It was therefore suggested to review the working methods and mandate of the platform and the effectiveness of its composition before moving on to other work. Members highlighted the need for more capillarity and larger funding to obtain a snowball effect among stakeholders. They also expressed the need to have an organisational membership in the platform as well as the possibility to invite experts to take the floor on behalf of the elected members. Platform members also underlined that meetings should be result-oriented and not just organised for the sake of it. Members noted how the platform itself had been relatively passive over the last year, while the management committee had in practice been very active; they considered that it should be the other way around, with the platform as the decision-making body, and the management committee only as an implementing body.

European Sustainability award

The Secretariat-General of the European Commission gave an update on the selection process for the European Sustainability Award. It thanked the members of the platform for their valuable input in preparing the launch of the first European Sustainability Award in June 2018 and it recalled the specific objectives of this initiative. The main rules of participation were also evoked: that seven Awards should be given to the following stakeholder categories: two for public bodies (above and below 100.000 individuals), two for private bodies (large enterprises and SMEs), two for civil society/NGOs (for projects taking place inside and outside the EU), and one for youth organisations; that the Awards are immaterial and also there were no participation or submission fees; that applicants should be based or registered in a Member State, that they should submit completed projects that have produced results by the time of submission, that the projects should address the three dimensions of sustainable development as well as a specific theme ('Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'). The call for submissions closed on 14 September 2018 and 148 applications were received (the presentation in Annex 2 shows the distribution of applications per category as well as their geographical distribution). In accordance with the rules, an evaluation committee composed of EU officials working in the field of sustainability was carrying out a first eligibility screening to ensure that applications fulfil the necessary requirements. During a

pre-selection stage, the evaluation committee would then evaluate each application and prepare a shortlist of outstanding applications per category. A jury will then decide on the winners unanimously, based on the shortlist, and the winners will be announced during a ceremony to be held in the first part of 2019.

The members of the platform were subsequently consulted on the nominations for the Jury and endorsed them unanimously. Four members had volunteered to be members of the Jury: Mr Bojanic (European Youth Forum), Mr Davignon (CSR Europe), Ms Drieskens (Coface – Families) and Mr Potočnik. In accordance with the rules of contest, the Jury consists of the four said members of the platform and of the Secretariat-General as chair. Members of the platform discussed the gender balance of the Jury and aspects related to the award ceremony event.

Conclusion and any other business

The Commission once more commended and thanked the members and observers of the platform for their work, especially on the platform's input to the reflection paper. The platform will be informed as soon as possible on the next meeting date and related agenda.


Meeting closed.

Annex 1 "Presence list"

Organisation	Representative
Birdlife	Martin Harper
Businesseurope	Rebekah Smith
CEMR	Frederic Vallier
COFACE Families Europe	Annemie Drieskens
Committee of the Regions	Arnoldas Abramavicius
CONCORD	Johannes Trimmel
COPA COGECA	Liisa Pietola
CSR Europe	Etienne Davignon
EUROCITIES	Nikolaos Kontinakis
EESC	Brenda King
ENEL	Migliorato Marina
EPHA	Sascha Marschang
ESADE Business School	Eva Jane Llopis
ETUC	Liina Carr
ETUCE	Michelle Olivier
EUA European University Association	Thomas Jorgensen
European Environmental Bureau	Jeremy Wates
European Youth Forum	Dejan Bojanic
International Integrated Reporting Council	Richard Howitt
Social Platform	Joanna Hainsworth
SDG Watch Europe	Ingeborg Niestroy
Transparency International	Carl Dolan
WWF	Andrea Kohl
FoodDrinkEurope	Mella Frewen
Fair Trade Advocacy Office	Francesca Giubilo
Personal capacity	Wiebe Draijer
Personal capacity	Janez Potocnik
Observers	
Committee of the Regions	Roby Biwer
EEAC Network	António Abreu
ESDN	Wolfram Tertschnig
IUCN	Luc Bas
OECD	Liva Stokenberga
United Nations	Lucas Thierry
World Bank	Jos Verbeek

Annex 2 - Presentation


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