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Civil society criticises “Business As Usual” as Commission publishes its plans for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG Watch Europe, a civil society alliance of more than 90 EU NGOs established to ensure the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the EU and its Member States, has criticised today’s publication of the EC Commission’s Communication entitled “Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability.”

“The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted over one year ago by all UN Member States, are a globally-agreed vision for a better, fairer world. They offer the EU a new framework to begin a critical shift away from the current unsustainable paradigm within which inequalities grow, the environment is degraded, climate change accelerates, wealth and political power are concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, and many people across Europe are deeply disaffected with the European Union, its institutions and policies” says a spokesperson for SDG Watch Europe.

“The EU must play its part in promoting an alternative model of development in which people, social justice, environmental and health protection, democracy and transparency take centre stage. Unfortunately the disappointing content of today’s Communication, and the lack of any new or concrete details about an EU-wide implementation plan, suggests that the EU is not able, or willing to realise the transformative vision of the Sustainable Development Goals” says the spokesperson.

SDG Watch Europe members have expressed their disappointment that the Communication does not provide any substantial new information about how the EU intends to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality in Europe or around the world. Rather, they say, it reads as “a justification of business-as-usual”, with existing policies such as President Juncker’s Ten Priorities mentioned, and the impression given that the EU is already delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. “Without fundamental policy changes and upscaling ambitions we will never deliver on the ambitious commitments of the new global agenda” the civil society alliance says.

SDG Watch Europe believes that the only way that the Sustainable Development Goals can be coherently implemented by the EU and its Member States is if they are willing to change direction in many key policy areas. “Many policies in Europe today are actively undermining the thrust of the Sustainable Development Goals, and increasing economic insecurity, social and health inequalities, environmental damage within and outside Europe, and - not least – causing a loss of public trust and political instability” says the SDG Watch Europe spokesperson.

The alliance claims that the lack of consultation with civil society in the preparation of the Commission’s Communication was not acceptable. They point out that Article 11 TEU places an obligation on EU institutions to consult with CSOs in order to ensure open, participatory, and inclusive

multi-stakeholder approaches, and that the SDG agenda itself contains strong commitments to involving civil society and other key stakeholders in its implementation.

“As experts in the field, our members expected to be consulted by the Commission in relation to the important exercise of "mapping" existing EU policy frameworks, and identifying the gaps in relation to Sustainable Development Goal commitments,” says the SDG Watch Europe spokesperson. “Instead, the process was vague and secretive, effectively keeping civil society at arm's length. We repeat our call to the EC Commission to urgently develop a concrete plan for SDG implementation with targets and timelines, and covering all of the goals. We also call for civil society to receive adequate information in sufficient time, and to be included as an active partner in the entire Sustainable Development Goal process from planning to implementation, monitoring and review.”

This Press Release is published simultaneously with [our Statement on the European Commission's "Communication" on the next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability.](#)

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Note to the Editor: SDG Watch Europe is a new, EU-level, cross-sectoral CSO alliance of NGOs from development, environment, social, human rights and other sectors. Its goal is to hold governments to account for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

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A Civil Society Alliance to make the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda a reality

