



Moving resolutely forward, ensuring that no one is left behind

Discussion paper by the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development in preparation for the meeting of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

On 27 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the Agenda 2030, with the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These 17 goals dovetail development and sustainability aspects and replace the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2001. The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development welcomes the commitment of the Federal Government in the framework of the multinational negotiations and now calls on the Government to help ensure that the SDGs are translated into action at national and international level in an effective and ambitious manner.

With its National Sustainable Development Strategy, the German Federal Government has decided in favour of a framework for implementation of the SDGs which is not only tried and tested, but also flexible. The Advisory Council thus stresses once again the importance of the current process of updating and revising the Strategy. A balance must be struck between implementation of the SDGs in their entirety and effective priority-setting in line with Germany's responsibilities, capabilities and development needs.

Ambitious implementation of the global sustainability goals requires the existing problematic issues to be tackled resolutely *in Germany by Germany* and across the world *with Germany's support*. To this end, it will be vital for Germany to ensure the coherence of its policies, with regard both to the national framework and to the impacts of German policymaking beyond its borders. Germany is in a good position to successfully implement the SDGs and should use this position to support others on the path to sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles. Yet, in Germany too, there is often a gap between ambitions and reality, such as in the areas of decarbonisation, protection of biodiversity, promotion of sustainable forms of production and consumption, as well as farsighted planning for our urban areas. Germany should use the impetus created by Agenda 2030 to assume more responsibility at international level for peace and good governance, the creation of decent jobs, a responsible trade and taxation policy, and adherence to social and ecological standards along the entire supply chain. These approaches also make a major contribution to the vital task of addressing the underlying causes of refugee flows.

The aims set in the SDG framework are relevant to everybody. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states: "This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity". The impetus created by the adoption of the SDGs should thus be used intensively to mobilise additional new players. The Federal Chancellery as the lead agency for sustainability policy has a particular responsibility. Coordination processes and sustainability management both within and amongst federal government departments must be enhanced, for example. Amongst other things, the Advisory Council advocates establishing the position of "sustainability officer" at director-general or director level in all federal departments. In this



context, care must be taken to ensure that they are able to work mainly on enhancing coordination. Responsibilities at *Land* and local-authority level must also be clarified. In addition, cooperation with local sustainability initiatives and activists in the towns and municipalities should be intensified. The Advisory Council therefore welcomes the establishment of four Regional Sustainability Networks (RENN) in Germany, to be supported and coordinated by an office at the Council for Sustainable Development.

When Agenda 2030 was adopted, Germany stated its willingness to be one of the first countries to report back to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The Advisory Council welcomes this decision, since the Federal Government is in this way signalling the high priority given to sustainability as a political leitmotif in Germany. Many details concerning the order of events and organisation of the presentations of the first reporting group, which consists of a total of 22 member states – including China, Morocco, Mexico and Turkey – remain to be clarified. This first meeting of the HLPF from 11 to 20 July 2016, headed “Ensuring that no one is left behind”, should thus be used as an opportunity not only to present in a transparent fashion the results to date and planning of implementation in Germany – encompassing both successes and challenges – but also for Germany to demonstrate its willingness to act as a reliable and credible partner and a motor for successful implementation of Agenda 2030. Strong monitoring and reporting procedures at international level are a central factor, which will be decisive for the success of implementation. The Advisory Council thus explicitly welcomes the clear support expressed for broad reporting by Germany at UN level and its intention to take the lead on this and set a good example. It is important to avoid “cherry picking”. The Advisory Council thus calls on all federal departments to be aware of their responsibility for the implementation not only of those SDGs directly within their remit, but also of Agenda 2030 in its entirety, and to be constructively involved in compiling the HLPF report.

In addition, the role of parliaments must not be ignored. The implementation of Agenda 2030 is explicitly not only the responsibility of the governments, but also requires involvement of various actors. It is our task as members of parliament to work towards a coherent German sustainability policy and to ensure that laws promote sustainable development. In order to send a strong signal regarding the responsibility of parliaments and the importance of constructive cooperation between parliaments and governments worldwide, the Advisory Council advocates members of parliament also being involved in the international reporting and monitoring process.

One of the central aspects of the SDG implementation process is the adoption of suitable global and national indicators, which must then be monitored at regular intervals and, where necessary, adapted or developed further. In this context, the Advisory Council supports the efforts of the Federal Government in the global indicator framework and calls on the Government, during the current decisions on indicators for the National Sustainable Development Strategy, to reflect the overall spirit of the 2030 Agenda and promote through suitable indicators the ambitious goals for implementation. The Advisory Council continues to support efforts to strengthen the implementation structures within the Federal Government for the National Sustainable Development Strategy and Agenda 2030 – especially the processes of indicator development and measurement – including by making available more personnel resources.