Update 2030 Agenda and EU 2020

Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD)

Belgium Conducts its VNR

The 2017 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be a key event for our country, as we are presenting a Voluntary National Review (VNR). The HPLF is an annual United Nations assembly which oversees the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 ASD). The SDGs fall under the aegis of the 2030 ASD.

The theme of the HLPF 2017 is: *"Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world."* On the one hand, an HLPF is an opportunity to evaluate certain SDGs: in 2017, it will be looking at SDGs 1,2,3,5,9, and 14. On the other hand, the HLPF is an opportunity to conduct a VNR, for which countries may volunteer. In this study, the country explains the ways in which it has been working towards the 2030 ASD.

In the 2017 session, Belgium will present its VNR along with a number of other countries. The various governments will work together to prepare this VNR. A special report will then be drawn up in an agreed format. This report must be ready by the end of April.

The various stakeholders hope that the Belgian VNR will prove a stimulus to sustainable development. Of vital importance here is the way in which governments liaise with these stakeholders. Cur-rently, only one opinion on the VNR report is planned - that of the FRDO. In all likelihood, little time will be allotted for this opinion to be drafted.

Opinion on the National Strategy Framework Text

At the request of the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD), the FRDO, in collaboration with a range of other consultative bodies (regional and community councils), has drafted an opinion on the framework text for a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS).

This NSDS needs to enable a coordinated approach between bodies at all levels of SDG implementation.

The councils are of common accord on the importance of a robust NSDS. At the same time, the councils agree that the proposals put forward in the framework text are inadequate to the aim of attaining the objectives set out, and ask that they be more closely involved in the subsequent implementation of NSDSs.

SDGs and Business: Opportunities and Responsibilities

James Gomme of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) has emphasised how vital it is that businesses understand the importance of SDGs.

Although the implementation of SDGs falls largely to governments, these objectives will never be achieved without the involvement of businesses. Innovations are required in areas such as sustainable cities, agriculture, clean energy and healthcare. This necessarily involves the business community. The authorities need to implement legislation to support these new technologies and products. At the same time, SDGs offer businesses an unparalleled oppor-

tunity. Businesses which align their strategies with the SDGs can strengthen their economic position. Businesses which lag behind

are taking risks. An investment in SDG implementation also supports the development of a more sustainable and stable society, something which also benefits businesses.

A world of accelerating inequality, poverty and climate change is not good news for business, says Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever.

A report by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission on the business opportunities which SDGs present will be published in early 2017.

In implementing SDGs, businesses must ultimately recognise their social responsibility and their role in upholding human rights.

> *"It is time to make Europe relevant again. For its citizens, and the rest of the world."*
>
> (*Evert-Jan Brouwer, Jussi Kanner and Tanya Cox*)

SDGs.be

The SDGs.be website is now available, containing the latest information on SDG-related activity in our country.

The site was created by Belgium's Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (FIDO-IFDD) and contains useful information on Belgian politics as well as local initiatives. It also provides logos and documentation for the 2013 Agenda in both Dutch and French.

The special information brochure published by the IFDD regarding SDGs can be downloaded from the website.

The site also regularly publishes information on a range of SDG matters, and also has its own Facebook page.

The New European Consensus on Development

The Commission has published a paper on the *New European Consensus on Development*. This document forms the basis of a future strategy document for European cooperation and development policy. According to the document, there needs to be a paradigm shift, moving towards a more coherent approach to the integration of the *2030 Agenda*.
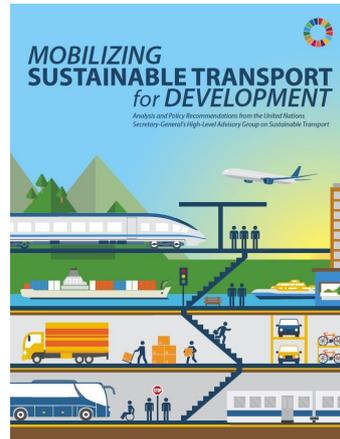
Oxfam has questioned the way in which funds are to be collected and particularly the role of private funding. ITUC welcomed the fact that the paper pays particular attention to decent work, but regretted that social dialogue was not specifically included in the proposal.

Newsflash

TEEB insists that the "Planet" SDGs constitute the basis of the entire Agenda 2030. | In 2017, Belgium will present a Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the HLPF. A British report analysed the VNRs presented in 2016 and came up with a number of recommendations. | The ECDPM explains why a joined-up approach to SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement is crucial. | How can we achieve transformational change which will tackle the causes of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation? The UNRISD report takes a more in-depth approach to the issue. | How can we mobilise sustainable transport for SDG implementation? A United National Special Report provides a number of recommendations. | A WRI report on sustainable cities. | Are the SDGs mutually compatible? Can the emphasis on economic growth and consumption be reconciled with other objectives? This article examines the issue. | What is the role of public development finance (aid) in a post-2015 world? An Oxfam report. | European Commission proposals for SDG implementation do not go far enough, says the IDDRI.

A Coal-Free Solution to World Poverty

The problem of world poverty can be resolved through a strong policy on the use of clean energy and alternatives to coal. This is the message of this compelling ODI report.

Whilst climate change might be hard to control, opportunities to get people out of poverty will drop sharply between now and 2030. Coal constitutes the highest source of CO_2 emissions. Despite claims to the contrary by the coal industry, we need to find other resources, particularly sustainable energy solutions.

There are more efficient options than coal to lift people out of poverty, and the authorities should actively and wholeheartedly support these initiatives.

According to the report, the G20 countries should stop all forms of subsidy for fossil fuels.

"How the EU intends to respond to global challenges and reform its own policies under the 2030 Agenda remains unclear."
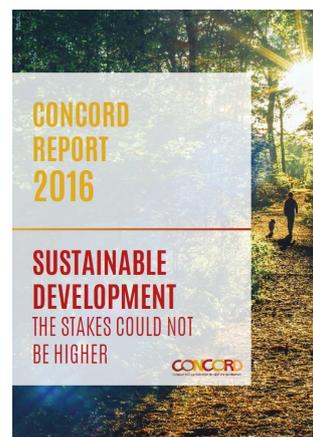
(*Christine Hackenesch and Niels Keijzer*)

The CONCORD EU Sustainable Development Policy Report

In November, the European coordination body CONCORD published its annual report on the EU's sustainable development policy.

The report looks at the way that the EU is implementing the 2030 Agenda and whether it is ensuring sufficient policy coherence.

The report looks at five strategic areas in the EU with particular focus on good practice and strategic recommendations. It examines sustainable food consumption, migration policy and sustainable economic policies.

EU Remains Weak

How will the EU implement the SDGs? In the past, clarity on the matter has not been forthcoming, but the Commission has now put out a document. In the run-up to this, this summer saw the publication of this report by Karl Falkenberg. And the long-awaited Commission document: *Next steps for a sustainable European future* (with an appended Staff Document) was published in late November.

On the one hand, the Commission wishes to make SDGs part of current European policy. On the other, it intends to come up with a long-term post-2020 vision. In this document, the Commission outlines the steps which the EU are already taking, listing them by SDG and in the order of their priority for the Commission. There are few new initiatives announced and it is no longer really a matter of changing the EU's existing institutional framework. However reports are regularly drawn up and a multistakeholder platform will be set up.

On the positive side, the Commission has created a clear map of the degree to which SDG's have already been integrated into current policy. Nevertheless, a number of observers have found this Commission document disappointing. It cannot be deemed a critical look at its own policies, whilst the development of its post-2020 vision is far from clear. The EU's approach to SDGs seems to simply be a matter of "business as usual".

SDG Watch expressed deep disappointment with the document, as has the WWF.