

Communication 'A decent Life for All: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future'

Reference: MEMO/13/143 Event

Date: 27/02/2013

Other available languages : None



MEMO

Brussels, 27 February 2013

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WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Eradicating poverty and ensuring that prosperity and well-being are sustainable are two of the pressing challenges facing the world.

Over the last decade, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped drive the eradication of poverty and further human development. Progress has been made, but challenges remain that still need to be addressed. In autumn 2013, a UN General Assembly special event will take stock of the efforts made towards achieving the MDGs, discuss ways to accelerate progress before 2015, their target year, and start exchanging on what could follow after 2015.

At the same time, at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, the international community agreed to step up action on key sustainability challenges and started the process for the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be taken forward by the UN Open Working Group on SDGs. The commitments made at the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012 now need to be implemented, and the Communication outlines some key actions to that end.

The challenges of eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainability are universal and inter-related and need to be addressed together by all countries. The Communication proposes a common EU approach to these issues and several principles for an overarching framework for post-2015 which would provide a coherent and comprehensive response to the universal challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in its three dimensions, thereby ensuring a Decent Life for All by 2030.

WHY IS THIS COMMUNICATION NEEDED?

This Communication is the first step for following up the commitments of Rio+20 at EU and international level and for the purpose of the review of MDGs and the establishment of a post 2015 framework. It proposes a common approach for the engagement of the EU in forthcoming international processes and events relating to poverty eradication and sustainable development (notably: UN Open Working Group on SDGs and the UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs), enabling it to provide coordinated and timely inputs. This Communication suggests elements for such a common approach.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF TODAY'S COMMUNICATION?

The Communication takes stock of MDG achievements and addresses the need to implement the main Rio+20 outcomes and commitments through actions at EU and international level. It further addresses the fact that the follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference and the MDG review and future development agenda processes are currently running on two separate tracks. The Communication recommends that, as soon as possible, these processes should converge and be integrated into a single overarching framework for post-2015.

The overall objective of this new post-2015 framework should be to ensure a "Decent Life for All" by 2030, ending poverty in all its dimensions (economic, social, environmental) and giving the world a sustainable future. This framework would include a limited set of goals

The framework should cover:

- basic human development (based on updated existing MDGs and also reflecting issues such as social protection),

- drivers for sustainable and inclusive growth and development to ensure structural transformation of the economy needed for:

 - the creation of productive capacities and employment and the transition to an inclusive green economy capable of addressing climate challenges, and

 - the sustainable management of natural resources

The framework should also address justice, equality and equity, as well as the empowerment of women and gender equality, which are not only vital for inclusive and sustainable development, but also important values in their own right.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

The objective of the framework would be to ensure a Decent Life for All: it would apply to all countries and benefit every citizen of the world, irrespective of where they live.

The Commission suggests global goals representing commitments by all countries, together with tailored goals and/or targets at the national level, in order to increase domestic ownership and accountability.

Within the EU, the follow up to Rio+20 through a range of actions and initiatives will implement commitments for sustainable development at EU and Member States level, in particular through the Europe 2020 Strategy.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

In order to further elaborate thinking on goals, the EU should continue its open dialogue with all relevant stakeholders. This will contribute to the EU's active input into the work of the Open Working Group on SDGs, which will make recommendations for action to the UN General Assembly.

The EU needs to engage fully in the forthcoming international processes with coherent and coordinated inputs at the UN and in other relevant fora. A debate with Council is envisaged in spring 2013, with a view to the agreement of the EU's common position for such international processes and events. Discussions with other EU institutions are also expected. An EU common approach will be needed by mid-2013.

Background: EU contribution to the Millennium Development Goals

Taking the EU and Member States collectively, the EU is the world's largest provider of official development assistance (ODA), amounting to EUR 53 billion in 2011, or half of the global total. The EU is also the most significant trading partner for developing countries, as well as a key source of technology, innovation, investment and entrepreneurship. Together, these elements have meant that the EU has been able to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the MDGs.

For example, between 2004 and 2009, more than 9 million pupils were enrolled in primary education thanks to Commission support (MDG 2 – Achieve Universal Primary Education). The Commission contributed to the inoculation of 5 million children against measles in the same period (MDG 4 – Reduce Child Mortality), while Commission support resulted in more than 10 million consultations in reproductive health and 4 million births attended by skilled health personnel (MDG 5 – Improve Maternal Health).

For more information

Full text of the Communication:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/2013-02-22_communication_a_decent_life_for_all_post_2015_en.pdf

Public consultation on the post-2015 development agenda, 2012:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/public-consultations/towards_post-2015-development-framework_en.htm

Public consultation on Rio+20 follow up, 2012:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/rio20_en.htm

Website of EuropeAid

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

Website of DG Environment

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/environment/index_en.htm

Website of the European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs

Website of the European Commissioner for Environment, Janez Potočnik

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/potocnik

Millennium Development Goals

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>