## TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN DEAL FOR THE FUTURE: ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN A FRAGMENTED AND MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Ten Priority Actions for the Upcoming European Elections and the Next Leadership of the European Union

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In June 2024, EU citizens will not only elect the new European Parliament and chart the way to the formation of the next European Commission, both in charge until 2029, but also lay the foundations for the future of the EU and its global role well into the next decade.

Political parties campaigning for the European elections and the future leaders of the EU have historic responsibilities. European citizens and civil society, political parties and European institutions need to enhance European democracy, social cohesion and prosperity within planetary boundaries and strengthen the EU's global engagement for a cooperative world order. Decisive actions must be taken before 2030 to avoid irreversible environmental as well as dangerous social tipping points and to keep a chance of achieving global goals, including the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The new leaders of the EU will also be responsible for agreeing the next EU seven-year budget (2028-2035) and negotiating the next global agenda for sustainable development to continue the SDGs beyond 2030.

We, a large group of scientists, civil society representatives and practitioners from over twenty **European countries**, call on political parties and the future leadership of the European Union to lay the foundations for a new **European Deal for the Future** that answers to the multiple crises by implementing the 2030 Agenda with the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement in an ambitious, integrated and coherent way, including a longer-term perspective for the EU until mid-century.

We identify **ten priority actions** for this European Deal for the Future. These ten priority actions are jointly directed at political parties, the next European Parliament, the next European Commission, the European Council and the Member States.

The SDGs, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and oriented towards 2030, call for integrated actions to promote social and economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and global cooperation. However, at midpoint, none of the 17 SDGs are on track to be achieved globally by 2030. 85% of the 140 SDG targets reviewed are declining or show very limited progress.

Humanity is eroding the biological and physical resilience of the Earth's systems. Scientific evidence points to increased likelihood of reaching dangerous and irreversible environmental tipping points during this decade. Around the globe, social cohesion is under pressure. The international financial architecture is failing to channel global savings to SDG investments at the needed pace and scale.

Against this backdrop, the SDGs still garner political traction internationally but also locally and are, according to numerous UN reports and scientific studies, financially affordable and technically achievable. In September 2024, the **UN "Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow"** aims to reinforce the UN and global governance structures to better address old and new challenges and to formulate a Pact for the Future that would help advance the SDGs by 2030 and beyond.

Europe played a leadership role in the adoption of the SDGs before 2015. After the 2019 European Parliament elections and the formation of the current Commission, the EU embarked on an ambitious transformative agenda and became the first continent to adopt a bold net zero commitment by mid-century – via the European Green Deal. In July 2023, the EU presented at the UN its first Voluntary Review on its way to implement the 2030 Agenda.

On 22 November 2023, the European Parliament adopted important proposals for the amendment of the EU Treaties, including more ambitious provisions regarding the reduction of global warming and safeguarding biodiversity, non-discrimination and diversity, health, education, full employment, and social progress which can strengthen the implementation of the SDGs within the EU and should also apply to its external actions.

European regulations on sustainability are often considered a benchmark worldwide, influencing the behaviour of institutions, consumers, investors, businesses, farmers, NGOs and social organisations.

However, as the 2023/24 Europe Sustainable Development Report (ESDR 2023/24) released today shows, progress in Europe on the SDGs is too limited. The EU and Member States also perform poorly on the International Spillover Index. The SDGs emphasise the importance of leaving no-one behind, yet there are persistent gaps in living conditions and opportunities across population groups in Europe. Despite the adoption of the European Green Deal and other efforts to mainstream the SDGs into sectoral policies and technical agencies of the European union, the EU still lacks a comprehensive approach to truly integrate the European Green Deal for a climate-neutral Europe as well as other transformations into a broader overarching strategy to achieve the SDGs including also their social and international dimensions.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and geo-economic tensions have shifted political priorities and financial resources. Combined with the growing societal fragmentation and political polarisation, these lead to pushbacks against more ambitious legislation in the EU to implement the European Green Deal and other policies that aim to promote social cohesion and equality.

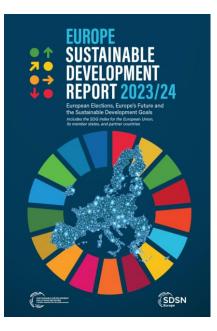
Yet this cannot be the time for backtracking or watering down what has been agreed and achieved. Instead, the European citizens and political parties should use the upcoming European elections to lay the foundations for a new **European Deal for the Future, with ten major priority actions.** This deal must be a green and social deal as called for by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) for years. Coalitions of thought leaders who can build viable political coalitions to push for truly sustainable — and more-equitable — development, both globally and in Europe, are urgently needed.

We therefore call on the new European Parliament, the next European Commission and the European Council to adopt, <u>within a year after the election</u>, a joint political statement reaffirming the EU's Commitment for the SDGs and to prepare for the next decades of global sustainable development.

Ten priority actions should be considered.

- 1. Respond to the grave danger of negative "Social Tipping Points" significantly reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion of European citizens.
- 2. Double down efforts to achieve net-zero emissions in the EU by 2050, with major breakthroughs by 2030.
- 3. Strengthen regional and local authorities in achieving the SDGs regularly monitor and report SDG progress at all levels.
- 4. Curb negative international spillovers and support the transformation towards a sustainable trade system.
- 5. Leverage team Europe for global SDG diplomacy strengthen diverse and universal formats, especially the United Nations.
- 6. Step up Europe's multilateral role lead global efforts to reform the global financial architecture.
- 7. Re-focus the EU's International Partnerships on the SDGs Move towards Mutually Transformative Cooperation.
- 8. Mobilise the financial means for the transformations toward a sustainable future.
- 9. Institutionalise the integration of the SDGs into strategic planning, macroeconomic coordination, budget processes, research and innovation missions and other policy instruments.
- 10. Set up new permanent mechanisms for structured and meaningful engagement with civil society, including youth, and within the European Parliament on SDG pathways and policies.

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[Full version and country profiles available in the 2023/24 Europe Sustainable Development Report]

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