The Technocrats within the EU are fully intent on ‘mainstreaming’ the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the EU policy framework. Perhaps the term ‘deep transformation’ fits better.

The **Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future**, presented by Vice-President Timmermans, encompasses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as well as governance, within the EU and globally. Sustainable development is a shared responsibility of the European Union, the Member States and all stakeholders. It is a joint agenda for citizens, organisations and businesses in their everyday lives and operations. Society at large needs to ingrain sustainability as a guiding principle in the many choices that each citizen, company and civil society makes every day. This Communication joins up the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda to the European policy framework and Commission
priorities, assessing where we stand, identifying the most relevant sustainability concerns and ensuring that all our actions and policy initiatives, within the EU and globally, take the SDGs on board at the outset.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

2015 marked a defining year for sustainable development worldwide. World leaders adopted at the 70th UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 a new global sustainable development framework: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter the “2030 Agenda”) having at its core the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU was instrumental in shaping the global 2030 Agenda, which has now become the world’s blueprint for global sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda represents a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide. The 17 SDGs and their 169 associated targets are global in nature, universally applicable and interlinked. The 2030 Agenda integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development.

How will the Commission implement the SDGs?

The EU will implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, together with its Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The EU’s answer to the 2030 Agenda will include two work streams: the first is to mainstream the SDGs in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities; the second is to launch reflection on further developing our longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, preparing for the long term implementation of the SDGs.

Sustainable development requires a holistic and cross-sector policy approach to ensure that economic, social and environmental challenges are addressed together. The new structure of the Commission with Vice-Presidents and a project-based approach is an important instrument that
facilitates this way of working, creating a more concerted and mutually-reinforcing agenda. The First Vice-President will play a coordinating role in taking forward the Commission’s work in actively implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The Commission is mainstreaming sustainable development in all European policies, and using tools like impact assessments to evaluate environmental, social and economic impacts so that sustainability is duly considered and factored in. Ex post evaluations of legislation must also analyse all three dimensions in a strong integrated approach.

The SDGs are a collaborative agenda between all levels of government and civil society, signed by all UN members. Implementation will be taken forward in partnership with all stakeholders. To that end the Commission will launch a new multi-stakeholder Platform.

**How will the Commission measure implementation of the SDGs?**

Keeping track of progress in a systematic and transparent way is essential. The EU, in coordination with its Member States, is committed to playing an active role at each level, to maximize progress towards the SDGs, to ensure accountability to citizens, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The UN Statistical Commission agreed, in March 2016, an indicator framework comprising 230 indicators as a practical starting point for global monitoring. At national level, Member States are asked by the United Nations to put in place systems for measuring progress and reporting. The Commission will contribute by monitoring, reporting and reviewing progress towards the sustainable development goals in an EU context.

A first overview of where the EU and its Member States stand in view of the SDGs can be found in the Eurostat publication issued in parallel with this Communication. From 2017 onwards, the Commission will carry out more detailed regular monitoring of the sustainable development goals in an EU context, developing a reference indicator framework for this
purpose and drawing on the wide range of ongoing monitoring and assessment across the Commission, Agencies, European External Action Service and Member States.

How will the Commission finance the implementation of the SDGs?

The EU budget complements national budgets and the wide set of EU policy and regulatory instruments to tackle challenges both at European and at international level. The Commission has already largely incorporated economic, social and environmental dimensions, which are at the heart of the SDGs, into the EU budget and spending programmes. The performance framework of EU spending programmes for 2014-2020 already contains relevant elements to report on the three dimensions. The EU Budget Focused On Results (BFOR) initiative also aims to ensure that every euro of European tax payers’ money spent contributes as much as possible to improving our future. Looking ahead at the Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020, the Commission will explore how EU budgets and future financial programmes can best continue to adequately contribute to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and support Member States in their efforts.

How do the Juncker Commission’s 10 political priorities contribute to achieving the SDGs?

The political agenda of the current Commission is focused on jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change. The ten priorities of the agenda touch upon key challenges for Europe. Many of the sustainable development goals are deeply entwined with these challenges and the Commission’s objectives under the ten priorities including the transition to a circular economy, the energy union, quality education, training and the Youth Guarantee, sustainable finance and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Fully exploiting the synergies between the SDGs and the Commission’s highest priorities, ensures strong political ownership and avoids that implementation of the SDGs takes place in a political vacuum.
How do other EU policies contribute to achieving the SDGs?

A full overview of how European policies and actions contribute to the sustainable development goals is presented in the Staff Working Document accompanying this Communication. For each of the 17 SDGs, the most relevant actions that the European Union is undertaking are summarised.

The mapping exercise shows that current EU policies address all 17 goals. The Europe 2020 strategy plays an important role in addressing several of the SDGs. While Europe can point to good achievements and progress under all goals, strengthened implementation and further focused action in all areas will be required to implement the full Agenda by 2030. The instruments used to deliver on individual SDGs depend on where the division of responsibilities lies between the EU and Member States.

How will the EU promote the 2030 Agenda around the world?

The vision of the 2030 Agenda is fully consistent with the objectives of EU external action, including the pursuit of sustainable development. The Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union sets out the strategic direction for the EU’s external action and identifies clear links to the 2030 Agenda. It emphasises the importance of a comprehensive approach in the EU’s external actions and the need for an integrated EU approach to increase the EU’s impact in responding to and preventing violent conflicts and crises as well as of improving coherence between the EU and its Member States.

The SDGs will be a cross-cutting dimension of all the work to take forward the Global Strategy. The Global Strategy underlines that there is a direct link between our security and prosperity in our surrounding regions, including the EU Enlargement and neighbourhood countries. Echoing the SDGs, promoting resilience of states and societies at all levels is a way to promote stability and sustainable development
globally, while reinforcing Europe’s own security and prosperity.

The new European Consensus on Development – for which a proposal is presented by the European Commission today – will be an important element of the EU’s global response to the challenge of the 2030 Agenda to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide. The Commission’s proposal puts forward a shared vision and framework for action for all EU Institutions and all Member States, framed around the five key themes of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. It places particular emphasis on cross-cutting drivers of development, such as gender equality, youth, sustainable energy and climate action, investment, migration and mobility, and seeks to mobilise all means of implementation: aid, investments and domestic resources, supported by sound policies.

EU development policy guided by the new European Consensus on Development, EU Enlargement Policy, European Neighbourhood Policy, the European External Investment Plan, the EU’s humanitarian assistance and EU Trade policy, as well as the renewed partnership with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, will all make an important contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

**What is next?**

The Commission will mainstream the sustainable development goals into EU policies and initiatives, with sustainable development as an essential guiding principle for all its policies. It will use its better regulation tools to ensure that the sustainability dimension is factored into its policies. Existing and new policies should take into account the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, environmental and economic – in a balanced way. The Commission will provide as of 2017 regular reporting of the EU’s progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and will launch reflection work on developing further a longer term vision in a post 2020 perspective.

In order to promote sustainable development around the world, the EU will continue working with external partners, using all the tools that are available under its external policies and support in particular the efforts
in developing countries through the implementation of the new Consensus.

The Commission will also launch a multi-stakeholder Platform with a role in the follow-up and exchange of best practices on SDG implementation across sectors, at Member States and EU level.

On 20 December the Commission will organise a Conference in Brussels on the SDGs: “Europe’s Response to Sustainability Challenges. Delivering on the UN 2030 Agenda.” With several high level speakers.

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