

WITH THE “AGENDA 2030” ON THE WAY INTO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The year 2015 was a very significant year for the world community, possibly even the most significant year since 1992, having been both the year of the pioneering UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio and the year when the Agenda 21 and other policy documents for sustainable development were adopted. While the UN plenary session in New York, was adopted on September 24th and 25th, with the “Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which the heads of state and governments accepted at the climate summit COP21 on December 7th and 8th in Paris a legally binding agreement for the worldwide reduction of greenhouse gases. Both conventions form the beginning of a new era of global cooperation even if, for the moment, one nation or another takes future threats less seriously and negates the resulting challenges. Meanwhile it has become common knowledge that the Agenda 2030 consists not only of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals SDG, but also of four parts:

1. The political declaration of the signatory states
2. The Sustainable Development Goals SDG and secondary goals or target specifications
3. The financial Means of Implementation Mol
4. The Follow-up and Review proceedings of the implementation

The SDG catalogue at the center of the implementation with its goals and target specifications forms the core, but is only a part of the total package:

The political declaration

The declaration constitutes the political confession of the signatory states to implement the goals of the agenda for sustainable development. Leave no one behind is one of the most important principles embedded in the declaration.

Only when all countries and groups have accomplished the SDG, are they considered fulfilled. No social group or country should be excluded from or unable to follow the agenda process.

As additional principles as basis for action are human rights, the pursuit of structural transformation, the integration of the different dimensions of sustainability like environment, economy and social issues, as well as a strengthened global partnership.

Admittedly, the central statement is hidden in a posterior paragraph of the declaration and consists of the “universality” of the Agenda 2030.

The millennium development goals were conceived as a direct task for developing countries, whose implementation the global north could support with self-determined contributions, whereas the SDG are drafted as a global challenge to be faced by all countries of the Earth. Our planet is conceived as the totality of “One World”.

The traditional division of developing and industrial countries, of north and south, of recipients and donors becomes obsolete, because we all have to accomplish our specific tasks to create a sustainable and livable future for the following generations of our planet.

Formulated pointedly: Since September 2015, Germany is considered a developing country just as Peru, Gambia and Bangladesh. The term developing country – as soon as the SDG become relevant – will be obsolete and substituted by new realities, where the poor and the rich still exist, less on the interstate level, but within individual societies.



This development is not a futuristic vision, but a global reality that is already taking place and can be observed in many countries in the most varied regions of the world.

The universality of the Agenda 2030 is therefore neither an abstract idea nor a utopian lip service.

It is rather the consequence of a fair and just global distribution of tasks directed not only at states and their current governments, but also at regions and communities, at society as well as at the individual and their family, at civil society agents as well as regionally or internationally active business enterprises. This holistic concept of assumption of responsibilities embodies the second essential aspect of universality in the Agenda 2030.

2. Sustainable Development Goals SDG

On formulating the SDG the Open Working Group OWG of the United Nations has remained faithful to principles that should be global in nature, universally applicable and thus transferable to all states. According to many critics the SDG, with 17 goals and 169 sub-goals, are neither easily transferable nor comprehensible in its numbers. Since the SDG and their sub-goals are directed at all agents worldwide, diverse interests, wishes and demands had to be included in the SDG catalogue. Therefore, we can positively state:

An all-embracing global work order with 17 goals and 169 sub-goals, written on less than 10 pages, represent a quite acceptable scope.

3. Financial means to implement the SDG.

An important recognition of previous processes was that the global community must take care of funding as soon as possible to achieve an agreement on new development goals. The corresponding strategies were discussed and adopted during the funding conference from July 13th to 16th 2015 in Addis Abeba. The goal of the conference was the creation of a robust framework for global development financing in the next 10 to 15 years that connects all financial sources and generates optimal synergies among the funding targets of the three dimensions of sustainable development. Furthermore, a catalogue of 100 comprehensible measures was drawn-up that can be used by individual countries to contribute to the fulfillment of the Agenda for Sustainable Development by mobilizing all resources – finances as well as technology, innovation and trade - with concrete political actions. (Means of Implementation MoI).

4. Proceedings to monitor the implementation

Besides the memorandum of understanding, the target catalogue and the financing framework, the extensive monitoring and evaluation mechanism - follow-up and review – forms the fourth integral part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. All agents (states and regions or supranational institutions like the European Union, commercial enterprises, large civil society organizations etc.) are monitored regularly by United Nations institutions with regard to advances of implementation of sustainability plans drawn-up by the agents.

The corresponding committee is the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development HLPF under the patronage of ECOSOC. The follow-up and review-procedures are designed to readjust and control during the implementation phase of programs and measures, to compare measures taken by the individual states, for best practice identification and to determine final results after termination of the programs involved. They should also guarantee that the sustainability plans and action programs of individual agents follow ambitious objectives that can be realized, but are neither unattainable nor banal in nature.



WHERE ARE WE TODAY?

In the second year after the adoption of the agenda, many national governments are busy defining their respective objectives. The phrasing of an overall national strategy of sustainability constitutes not only the basis for the activities of national governments, but also the framework definition for subsequent local authorities (provinces, districts, communities), companies, institutions (universities, hospitals etc.) and civil society organizations. All should ideally define their respective sustainability plans. Germany already formulated its first sustainability strategy in 2002, which is verified and adapted every four years. In January 2017 the federal government adopted the latest version.

Crucial for the implementation of measures to fulfill strategically defined targets are the means of implementation (Moi) and, especially, the availability in sufficient measure. These Moi encompass much more than the financing of measures and programs, but include among others, capacity building (the shortage of professionals frequently already starts on the national level!), the purchase or transfer of necessary technologies, reliable data and statistics for the design of efficiency oriented measures and a working coordination of politics within and between individual government levels.

Visibly the political agents become aware that SDG represents a complex system of interdependencies and interactions.

The common point of view that poor countries should limit themselves to the essential goals of covering basic human necessities and minimal social standards, while rich states should increasingly focus on goals of climate and environment is no longer sustainable.



The 17 SDG are simply too interdependent on their mutual effects. Therefore, a success with SDG X can simultaneously trigger another success with SDG Y and a failure with SDG Z. To recognize and understand these processes is the basic condition for efficient coordination and actions. Leadership of the “master plan” must be exercised on the national political level. It must provide necessary resources and infrastructure and implement consistently measures and projects that have been recognized as correct, even if general conditions deteriorate or individual groups of society resist the plan due to certain interests. In this context, the political capacity is essential.

Politicians must recognize the processuality of the Agenda 2030 and react to changing parameters with corresponding flexibility, readjusting programs or even redesigning them.

The implementation of Agenda 2030 can only be accomplished if governments adhere to good governance and act accordingly. The more the agenda engine accelerates in coming months the more countries and governments are subject to the pressure to succeed, especially if neighboring nations lead by good example.

Winfried Weck
15.06.2017



Winfried Weck, M.A is the coordinator on development policy and human rights of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) headquarters in Berlin. Having a scientific background as Master on Islamic Sciences and the Modern Middle East he served as advisor on development policy and international security

questions at the headquarters of the Christian Democrat Party in Germany.

Since 1998, Winfried Weck has been working in KAS as country director to Peru, Indonesia and East-Timor, and to Ecuador and Bolivia. Between 2002 and 2006 he headed the Domestic Programs Department (Protocol) of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Berlin.