



**Declassified<sup>1</sup>**

AS/Soc (2018) 28

3 September 2018

Asocdoc28\_2018

## Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

# The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – how parliaments and member States of the Council of Europe can contribute

Rapporteur: Ms Jennifer de Temmerman, France, NR

### Introductory memorandum

#### 1. Introduction

1. On 27 June 2017, Ms Ingjerd Schou and 30 other Parliamentary Assembly members presented a motion for a resolution on “The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – how parliaments and member States of the Council of Europe can contribute”. The motion recognised the need for Council of Europe member States to co-operate with the United Nations and to work to honour their international commitments, while stressing national parliaments’ supervisory role in this context.

2. The motion was referred to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development for report, and I was appointed rapporteur on 6 December 2017.

3. In this report, I will look at how the member States incorporate the sustainable development goals in their public policies and consider ways of making those policies more effective, in particular through the involvement of parliamentarians.

#### 2. Aim and scope of the report

4. Our Common Future, a report published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by the Norwegian, Gro Harlem Brundtland, which is more commonly known as the Brundtland report,<sup>2</sup> first defined the concept of sustainable development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.”

5. On 25 September 2015, 193 countries adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, following on from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). 17 goals with 169 targets set out a vision for our future, a future which is fairer, more equitable, peaceful and ecological, and which reconciles environmental, as well as social and economic aspects. Agenda 2030 and its sustainable development goals aim to eradicate poverty, to protect the planet and ensure prosperity.<sup>3</sup> They seek to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality.

<sup>1</sup> Introductory memorandum declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 18 September 2018 in Lisbon.

<sup>2</sup> Our Common Future (Brundtland report), United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution 70/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015.

6. Several goals here come within the Council of Europe's field of activity, for instance the goal of peace, justice and effective institutions (16, including target 16.2: "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children"), the goals of combating poverty (1), ensuring education (4), achieving gender equality (5) and combating climate change (6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15). In several of these areas, the Council of Europe has drawn up specific conventions and, through their implementation, can contribute in a measurable way to achieving the sustainable development goals.<sup>4</sup>

7. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the United Nations' central platform for annually reviewing and following up Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has been held at UN headquarters in New York every year since 2015. It brings together business, civil society, government and political stakeholders to review progress in achieving the sustainable development goals.

8. At least 80 ministers and deputy ministers and 2 500 non-state players took part in the official sessions and side events this year. Many speeches highlighted progress made since 2015. For instance, the proportion of people living below the extreme poverty line has decreased significantly, from 27% in 2000 to 9% in 2017. Moreover, maternal mortality has fallen substantially since 2000, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, where it declined by 35%. However, this progress must not hide the slow progress in certain areas, for instance access to basic services linked to the use of water and electricity and the lack of decent housing and resilient infrastructure to keep pace with growing populations.

9. The ministerial declaration pledged "to step up our efforts and take the bold actions needed to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and build sustainable and resilient societies everywhere, reaching the furthest behind first and ensuring that no one is left behind."<sup>5</sup>

10. In this connection, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, welcomed the growing involvement of civil society, the private sector and the scientific community. The involvement of governments and also of local and regional authorities was noted. However, only one event was held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with participation by parliamentarians varying widely between countries.

11. Nevertheless, national parliaments play an important role in meeting the sustainable development goals, as they represent the people and oversee and scrutinise what governments do. For the goals to succeed, the national parliaments of the Council of Europe member States must contribute to putting the sustainable development goals on the agenda in their countries and put pressure on their governments to follow up their sustainable development goal commitments.

12. Next year, as every four years, the Political Forum will be attended by the heads of state. On that occasion, it would be good for the involvement of parliaments, in particular in Council of Europe member States, to have advanced and for progress to have been made with the sustainable development goals in our countries.

### **3. Working methods and planning**

13. The report will explore good examples of the implementation of projects linked to the sustainable development goals in Council of Europe member countries, as well as legislation and public policies which promote them. It will take account of the following factors: the means of implementation in the various countries, those relating to the different goals set depending on the sectors, similarities and differences between member States, local contexts and the various related constraints and possibilities for action.

14. Conclusions will be drawn regarding the means available to governments for achieving the various goals which are particularly relevant in connection with the Council of Europe's work. These will be compared with the policies actually introduced and their projected impacts. Proposals will be made for speeding up the achievement of the goals, partly through greater involvement of parliamentarians in this area.

---

<sup>4</sup> The European Social Charter, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

<sup>5</sup> Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council at its 2018 session, E/2018/L.20–E/HLPF/2018/L.2.

15. To gain a better understanding of the issues and obtain first-hand accounts of significant projects, I will no doubt propose a fact-finding visit. In particular, I will draw on the voluntary national reviews submitted by some member States to the HLPF as well as any examples of best practice which fellow members of the committee provide me with to determine the most relevant visit.

Date	Action
<i>Summer 2018</i>	Participation in the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in New York with the French ministerial delegation
<i>Committee meeting, Lisbon, 18 September 2018</i>	Consideration of an introductory memorandum and exchange of views with experts
<i>End of 2018</i>	Fact-finding visit (date and place to be confirmed)
<i>Committee meeting, Strasbourg, January 2019 part-session</i>	Consideration of a preliminary draft report
<i>Committee meeting, Paris, March 2019</i>	Consideration of a draft report and adoption of a draft resolution

The formal deadline for the adoption of this report in Committee is 13 October 2019. It is due to be considered by the Assembly in a joint debate during the April 2019 part-session.