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**From:** General Secretariat of the Council  
**To:** Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council  
**Subject:** Key political messages for the 2023 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (10 to 19 July 2023)

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1. The 2023 annual session of the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) that will assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will be held from 10 to 19 July, under the auspices of the UN's Economic and Social Council.
2. This year's main focus will be on "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels" to further discuss effective and inclusive recovery measures to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SDGs and explore actionable policy guidance for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
3. Without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs, the 2023 HLPF will review in-depth SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

4. 40 UN Member States of which 9 EU Member States<sup>1</sup> will present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at this year's HLPF. Furthermore, for the first time since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the European Union will present a voluntary review (EU VR) of progress and challenges in the implementation of the SDGs at EU level. The EU VR was adopted by the Commission on 15 May 2023 and will be examined by the Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (WP 2030).
5. In this context, WP 2030 reached agreement on 28 March 2023 on key political messages, based on a draft prepared by the Swedish Presidency. These messages are proposed to EU Delegations and to the Member States to prepare their interventions during the Forum. They should be seen as a tool for political communication to promote Team Europe's contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
6. The Committee of Permanent Representatives took note of and confirmed agreement on the key political messages which appear in the Annex to this note<sup>2</sup> at its meeting on 5 April 2023<sup>3</sup>. It is hereby invited to submit the text to the Council for approval to make them available to EU participants for their interventions at the HLPF.

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Croatia, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 27 has been updated to reflect the latest OECD/DAC figures on Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels in 2022, which were published on 12 April 2023.

<sup>3</sup> ST 7762/2023

**Key political messages for the 2023 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
10 to 19 July 2023**

*Issues of cross-cutting relevance to the 2030 Agenda*

1. We are meeting halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and global efforts so far have proved insufficient. Already off track, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have been further hindered by the pandemic, conflicts, growing inequalities, the climate and biodiversity crisis and unabated environmental degradation. The clock is ticking and we urgently need to get on track. Fortunately, science tells us that we can still turn the tide if we work together more actively and much faster.
2. The EU and its Member States unreservedly condemn Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which blatantly violates international law as well as the principles of the UN Charter and reiterate their solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Russia's decision to bring war back to Europe puts global peace, stability and security in jeopardy, affects people in all parts of the world and imperils the very fulfilment of the SDGs in all their dimensions. We support the United Nations Secretary General's call on Russia to stop the war. The EU and its Member States remain committed to providing, along with partners, financial relief to Ukraine, and supporting its resilience and long- term reconstruction. In that context, the European Union has agreed to provide up to EUR 18 billion of Macro Financial Assistance to Ukraine in 2023. The European Council has welcomed the G7 agreement to establish a multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform.

3. Peace and security are a prerequisite for sustainable development, in line with the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, as enshrined by SDG 16. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. The political and economic disruptions brought about by the war in Ukraine threaten global recovery. Soaring food and energy prices, alongside other multiple impacts of the Russian aggression on Ukraine have put SDG implementation at global level at risk, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 7, 10 and 16, exacerbating existing challenges, in particular food and nutrition insecurity, driven by the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and potentially creating new clusters of instability. More than ever, conflict prevention, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and inclusive approaches to resilience are necessary. The forced displacement of Ukrainian people has direct and concerning consequences on SDG 3, 4, and 5. In light of the humanitarian and refugee crisis in Ukraine, the full enforcement of all international humanitarian law commitments is our first concern. Moreover, Russian shelling of industrial and energy infrastructure has devastating impacts on SDG 9 and 7 and is causing air, soil, and water pollution, and biodiversity loss, with serious consequences for SDG 6, as well as SDGs 14 and 15.
  
4. The EU and its Member States are committed to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda and recall that it constitutes a coherent and mutually reinforcing framework with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (FfD) and the Paris Agreement as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Acting in a Team Europe approach, the EU and its Member States have displayed leadership, through deeply transformative domestic policies and strategies, such as the European Green Deal, and positive contributions for the advancement of the multilateral agenda, such as the new Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument “NDICI-Global Europe” (including the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus +), flagship projects such as the Team Europe Initiatives, as well as the Global Gateway strategy.

5. The 2030 Agenda remains our universal, indivisible, inclusive and integrated roadmap to a peaceful, healthy and secure life for current and future generations while respecting the limits of our planet, leaving no one behind. As recalled in the European Consensus on Development, the EU and its Member States pay particular attention to addressing key cross-cutting issues, in particular the promotion of gender equality and a human rights-based approach to sustainable development. The EU and its Member States are committed to enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) across all internal and external policies, with particular attention for the interlinkages between the different SDGs as well as the impacts of their domestic actions in partner countries, as intended by SDG 17.14. Analysing the impact to people and regions on the ground and generating robust data could help identifying effective solutions.
  
6. The EU and its Member States welcome the theme for this year's High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". Acting as Team Europe, the EU and its Member States are actively involved for the continued strengthening of the HLPF as the central coordination body for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The EU and its Member States value the participation of civil society, youth, parliaments, political parties, regional and local authorities, research institutions, philanthropic organisations, cooperatives, the private sector and other stakeholders in all aspects of the HLPF and encourage all parts of society to actively engage. As reaffirmed in the new Youth Action Plan for engaging young people in EU external action, the EU and its Member States recognise that young people worldwide are essential for conducting intergenerational dialogue and reliable partners in the implementation and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, and other major multilateral agreements and instruments, as agents of change and meaningful interlocutors in decision-making processes and governance platforms.

7. Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) provide an opportunity for enhanced multi-governance approach and multistakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation. Their peer-learning character, inclusiveness and accountability need to be ensured and strengthened. We call for honest, evidence-based and action-oriented VNRs that truthfully reflect the progress made, while also identifying challenges and gaps going forward. The EU, being at the forefront of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, has a significant role to play in this respect. The EU Voluntary Review represents an opportunity, not only to assess the achievements to date but also to support the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda implementation process, internally and externally.
8. The COVID-19 pandemic has wiped out a decade of global progress in development and set back the realisation of the 2030 Agenda. This impact has been disproportionately felt by countries and populations in a situation of vulnerability. The EU and its Member States remain committed to put an end to the pandemic and build back better and greener in a socially just manner. Equitable access to quality, safe and affordable vaccines, tests and treatment is an essential condition for recovery and the achievement of SDG 3. No one is safe until everyone is safe.
9. The political momentum to strengthen global health and enhance global health security should be seized. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over and keeping future health threats in mind, we need to push the global health agenda forward and strive for the highest attainable standards of health for all in line with SDG 3. The new EU Global Health strategy represents a new paradigm to both protect and promote health.

10. The SDG Summit in September 2023 will mark the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and the need for progress is urgent. The EU and its Member States stress the importance of the contribution of all ECOSOC segments and forums to the preparation of the SDG Summit. We expect the SDG Summit to be an open, transparent and evidence-based review of the first half of the implementation period with a focus on the necessary changes for accelerated action until 2030, in synergy with the Our Common Agenda (OCA) processes, as the Summit of the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations could also be used to spur long-term policies for achieving sustainable development. Moreover, the EU and its Member States call for a Political Declaration that is concise, operational and focused to provide high-level guidance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the recommendations of the upcoming 2023 “Global Sustainable Development Report” (GSDR).
11. The SDG Summit should be the moment for multilateral cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement. Therefore, we once again emphasise the need of an active and critical engagement of all parts of civil society and reaffirm the importance of including young people, whose voices should be physically present at the SDG Summit. The EU and its Member States anticipate the SDG Summit to build the momentum much needed as we head in to the second half of the implementation phase, a momentum that should be capitalised on bringing the attention to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda worldwide.

*SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*

12. The EU and its Member States recognise that water is a key driver for sustainable development, poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, human development, climate action, environmental protection, biodiversity and ecosystem preservation, humanitarian action, and peace and stability. Managing, protecting and restoring water and water-related ecosystems is a prerequisite to mitigate and manage the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Global and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene is a human right, fundamental to dignity, prosperity and health, including the prevention of the spread of diseases. The EU and its Member States support the “One Health” Approach in that context and, in line with the 2030 Agenda commitment to leave no one behind, pay particular attention to children, persons with disabilities and gender equality, whilst ensuring the realisation of human rights for all.
  
13. During the recently held UN Water Conference in March 2023, the international community came together to accelerate action to achieve progress on SDG 6. The EU and its Member States stress that good governance and adequate water infrastructure is crucial in addressing water challenges and a prerequisite for achieving progress on the 2030 Agenda. At the global level, the priority is to promote a UN system-wide approach to water to ensure better synergies between sectors and a continued dialogue on water related issues, contributing to stronger coherence of water efforts both inside and outside of the UN. A UN special envoy for water can play a key role in ensuring water-related issues remain high on the international agenda. At regional, national and local level, it is important to improve cross-sectoral cooperation through integrated water resources management (IWRM) and by strengthening the water-energy-food- ecosystem nexus to deliver cross-sectoral benefits at river basin level, ensuring a transparent and inclusive decision process. Strengthening of the capacities of actors at all levels and civil society and promoting human-rights-based approaches is key.

14. Water is a shared resource and Transboundary Water Cooperation is central to sustainable water management, to adequately respond to the diverse water-related development needs while preserving the ecosystems and their services, and to promote peace, security, conflict prevention and stability – all in the context of climate change, impacts on the hydrological cycle and rising demands. In that context, the EU and its Member States advocate for enhanced accession and implementation of the UN Water Conventions (Helsinki 1992, New York 1997).
15. The EU and its Member States recognise the significant financing gap for water and sanitation infrastructure and services, which requires accelerated efforts to mobilise innovative and inclusive finance from public and private, as well as international and domestic sources.

*SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*

16. Achieving progress on SDG 7 to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is a priority for the EU and its Member States. In this context the EU will work closely with its global partners to support universal access to safe and sustainable low-carbon technologies, energy efficiency and the development of an interconnected energy infrastructure, maximising the benefits of leapfrogging to renewable energy sources.
17. While measures against the COVID-19 pandemic have helped to put the EU on track towards its 2030 energy efficiency target, the unjustified and illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine has introduced heightened uncertainty to European energy security as well as the economic situation, which is also reflected in the rising energy prices, demonstrating the urgency of a targeted revision of the electricity market in the EU. The EU and its Member States have launched the REPowerEU plan to respond to the need to rapidly reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels, to accelerate the green energy transition in the EU, and to support EU's efforts in enhancing its climate ambitions.

18. The EU and its Member State reaffirm their support for a global and just energy transition, towards achieving climate neutrality, that ensures safe, sustainable and affordable energy for all, including for communities that are most vulnerable and the furthest behind. We acknowledge the Joint Communication ‘EU external energy engagement in a changing world’ as an essential element of the ‘REPowerEU’ plan proposed by the Commission. Through our Climate and Energy Diplomacy, the EU and its Member States will continue to increase cooperation and work closely with ambitious partners and organisations on the global just transition towards climate neutrality.

*SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*

19. The EU and its Member States reaffirm that building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fostering innovation holds the key for sustainable development across the world and is a crucial part of the puzzle for fighting climate change, improving global health security and boosting the competitiveness of the world economy as well as advancing a socially and environmentally sound transformation of the economy.

20. Through the Global Gateway strategy, the EU and its Member States aim to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy, and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. With the Team Europe approach as the principal means of delivering, the strategy brings together the EU foreign policy and external relations priorities and the financial and development tools under the new Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF, into a positive offer of investment into infrastructure and the associated norms, standards and regulatory frameworks, and will directly support the implementation of the SDGs across its investment priorities.

21. The EU and its Member States recognise the significant role of research and innovation (R&I) in delivering on the digital and green transition to achieve progress on sustainable development. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to maintain openness in international R&I cooperation to further strengthen the quality of R&I and engage in mutually beneficial and reciprocal collaboration and joint activities with partners from third countries and regions, based upon the common interests, values and the principles set out in the SDGs and in other relevant international instruments. The EU and its Member States underline that R&I should promote the well-being of people and other living beings in a sustainable and mutually respectful approach to all of the planet's environment and resources, economic and societal prosperity, and knowledge transfer. Team Europe calls for combating any discrimination and promotes inclusiveness and gender equality, in particular equal opportunities in careers and the integration of a gender dimension in R&I activities.
22. The EU and its Member States are committed to making European transport more sustainable, inclusive, intelligent, safe and resilient, and to ensure a major contribution by the transport sector to meeting the objective of a climate-neutral EU by 2050 in line with the Paris Agreement, as well as the binding target of a net domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the EU of at least 55 % by 2030 compared to 1990.

*SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*

23. The EU and its Member States recall that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a shared responsibility that requires a whole of society approach, through continuous and strong involvement of all stakeholders, including all regional and local authorities and cities, which play a key role in increasing resilience and in leading the transition to low-emission, resource efficient and circular economies, which fosters innovation and sustainable growth. It is estimated that 65% of SDGs' targets cannot be reached without the coordination or involvement of local and regional governments.

24. Urgent global challenges have a direct and local impact on towns and cities throughout Europe and globally. They may also intensify disparities in our societies. In addition, digital technologies are drastically transforming society, creating potential political, social, ecological and economic benefits while at the same time triggering profound new challenges such as the digital divide, lack of privacy, security issues, adverse environmental impacts and market dependencies. Considering these challenges, the EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to making cities and communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The EU and its Member States stress the importance of gender equality and addressing the drivers of inequality for promoting inclusive cities. Through its external actions, the EU and its Member States provide substantial support to sustainable and inclusive urban development in our partner countries, in particular through the Global Gateway, the external dimension of the European Green Deal and EFSD+. Moreover, the EU and its Member States stress the importance of localising the SDGs, support the implementation at all territorial levels, facilitate peer learning between regions and cities at global level and encourage a greater engagement in Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).
25. The EU and its Member States underscore the value of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) as a key driver for the achievement of SDG 11 in Europe and stress the strong interlinkages between SDG 11 and SDG 6, 7 and 9 also under in depth review this year. Specifically, they endorse the role of EU partnerships (such as on Energy Transition, Inclusion of migrants and refugees, Urban Mobility, Climate Adaptation, Circular Economy and Culture and Cultural Heritage) to achieve the three pillars of the UAEU: better regulatory frameworks, better funding and better knowledge.

*SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development*

26. In light of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the climate and environmental crisis and increased geopolitical insecurity, there is a crucial need to further accelerate mobilisation of all sources of finance towards sustainable development in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (FfD).

27. In 2022, according to preliminary data from the OECD DAC, the EU and its Member States, as Team Europe, remained the world's largest provider of ODA having increased its collective ODA to €92.8 billion (+ nearly 30% compared to 2021 in real terms) and accounting for 43% of global ODA among DAC countries (0.59% of their combined gross national income (GNI)). The EU and its Member States remain committed to meeting our collective short-term and long-term targets, in particular the internationally agreed goal of providing 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA, and 0.20% of ODA/GNI to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) within the timeframe of the 2030 Agenda. Acting together in a Team Europe approach, we aim to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of our development cooperation, aligning with partner country needs and contributing to SDG implementation.
28. LDCs should be a key focus of our attention. The EU and its Member States take note with appreciation of the adoption in March 2022 of the Fifth UN Programme of Action for the LDCs and of the Doha Conference held in March 2023, and invite the international community to support LDCs towards their sustainable, irreversible and smooth graduation. Other countries in special situations – such as fragile and conflict-affected States, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) – should also remain at the centre of our efforts to build partnerships for sustainable development.
29. The EU and its Member States affirms the importance of partnerships and trade agreements for the economic growth, high value-added jobs, diversification and resilience of supply chains, including those for raw materials essential for the green transition, and for the promotion of international human rights, including labour rights, as well as for environmental standards and gender equality. Thus, the EU and its Member States are dedicated to continuing negotiations on an EU Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence that aims to ensure that companies active in the internal market contribute to sustainable development and the sustainability transition of economies and societies through due diligence regarding adverse human rights and environmental impacts.

30. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda's call, the EU and its Member States work on scaling up sustainable finance in partner countries. One example is the development of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) and its wide adoption within the UN System, to provide more transparency on resources for sustainable development, aligned with the SDGs. The EU and its Member States also support more than 80 countries' development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs), to map the landscape for financing for sustainable development at country level and to develop country-led financing strategies to reach the SDGs. Furthermore, we promote sustainable finance frameworks and instruments such as green bonds, which will benefit from the recommendations by the high-level expert group on Sustainable Finance in low- and middle-income countries. In order to support private investment in partner countries consistent with the SDGs, we provide finance and guarantees through the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). Through the Global Gateway Strategy, The EU and its Member States promote resilient and financially sustainable connectivity investments and inclusive and transparent partnerships. The strategy will increase investments promoting democratic values, high standards, and good governance and will allow our partners to develop their societies and economies with lasting benefits for local communities.
31. The EU has been a strong advocate of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative as part of the G20 action plan to respond to the crisis and of the swift and transparent implementation of the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the DSSI. We welcome the US\$ 650 billion special drawing rights (SDRs) general allocation issued in August 2021 by the IMF and the efforts being done for the voluntary re-allocation of SDRs via the IMF established tools. The EU continues to support domestic revenue mobilisation, as the most sustainable and reliable way of financing effective government responses and public services delivery. Given the huge financing gap to reach the SDGs and a sustainable recovery, the EU also continues to support the scaling up of sustainable finance, including private finance. It is committed to aligning investments with the 2030 Agenda and to promoting sustainable public procurement practices.

32. The EU and its Member States actively support the digital transition of partner countries, and launched the Digital4Development Hub, a strategic platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination. Particular attention is paid to strengthening digital rights in partner countries. We recognise the importance of indicators in measuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that evidence-based data leads the transition to a sustainable future. We support partner countries to address existing gaps in SDG-measuring and reporting, with trademark initiatives, such as Copernicus, the EU-AU Data Flagship and the Global Development Data Tool.

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