

President of the European Commission
Ursula von der Leyen
CC: Pascal Leardini, Kurt Vandenberghe



19 December 2019

EU needs strong leadership on Sustainable Development from the Commission President

Dear Commission President von der Leyen,

We would like to convey our genuine congratulations to your recent election as the President of the European Commission. You have put climate and environment together with an economy that works for people at the heart of your Political Guidelines. The European Environment Agency has warned in its recently published "[European environment - state and outlook 2020](#)" that we will **not achieve our 2030 goals without urgent action in the next 10 years** to address the alarming rate of biodiversity loss, increasing impacts of climate change and the overconsumption of natural resources. You have not only promised bold climate and environmental action but also a just and inclusive transition towards a sustainable Europe.

SDG Watch Europe is here to support your high ambitions. We are Europe's civil society alliance for sustainable development **representing more than 5000 organisations, local authorities, cooperative enterprises and universities across the EU** bringing together environmental and climate, social, welfare and health, humanitarian and development, human rights, education, research and cultural organisations and networks representing children, young people, women, families, and people with disabilities.

We thank you for your response to our letter dated 25 September, the anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We are pleased to hear that you have taken note of our call to **fully align your Political Guidelines with the SDGs**.

We appreciate that you have included the implementation of the **SDGs in the mission letters to all Commissioners** and that you are ready to ensure that the **European Semester becomes a tool that will drive sustainable development**. We also welcome the strong responsibility for the

SDGs given to the Commissioner for Economy as their implementation cannot be treated separately from the economic development of the Union. However, **your personal leadership as President of the Commission on sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs** is essential. This is because overall coordination and direction must come from the highest level of the Commission to ensure the coherence of its policies and actions towards a genuinely sustainable future. In recent years, several important initiatives have been introduced by the EU to make Europe sustainable; however, there is a **lack of coherence between many European policies and the sustainable development agenda**. The Common Agricultural Policy is one of many examples. It has been supporting a farming system that is the main driver of biodiversity loss in Europe without ensuring decent lives for small-scale farmers across the Union while European food consumption and production is linked to land-grabbing, deforestation, water depletion, pollution, loss of livelihoods and human rights abuses in third countries.

SDG Watch Europe sincerely hopes you and your Cabinet will take responsibility for ensuring both the coherence of all Commission's efforts and the EU's global leadership in sustainable development. Moreover, the **EC still needs to present a comprehensive strategy for a Sustainable Europe 2030** accompanied by a clear implementation plan. Last week on 10 December, the Council in its Conclusions again urged the EC to elaborate a comprehensive implementation strategy outlining timelines, objectives and concrete measures to reflect the 2030 Agenda and to mainstream the SDGs in all EU policies.

The **Decade of Action and Delivery of the SDGs runs from 2020 to 2030**. We therefore also call on you to guarantee that the Multi-Stakeholder Platform for the Implementation of the SDGs will be reconvened in a timely manner. We support the call from Platform members that has recently been sent to you to give it a clear and strong mandate to support your Commission in setting sustainable development targets for 2030 and beyond, and in monitoring and reviewing their achievement in a transparent and participatory way.

SDG Watch Europe would be pleased to meet you and members of your Cabinet to exchange views on your Political Guidelines, in particular your flagship initiatives around the European Green Deal and an "Economy That Works for People". We would like to convince you of the need for an **overarching EU strategy for sustainable development and your leadership**.

Yours sincerely, for the SDG Watch Europe Steering Group

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European and international NGO networks working on the 2030 Agenda





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National NGO networks and alliances working on the 2030 Agenda



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