Major Group Position Paper

The Business and Industry's vision and priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals

March 2014

Introduction

This short position paper details the Business and Industry Major Group's vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the wider post-2015 development agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded multi-stakeholder engagement programme *"Sustainable Development 2015" (SD2015)*. This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups. A synthesis report of these position papers is provided by Stakeholder Forum in order to identify common priorities and important differences across the Major Groups' positions and compare them with the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals' (OWG) 'focus areas', published in February 2014. The review will be used as a basis for engagement between the Major Groups and the OWG, and to establish priority clusters for further coordination and advocacy work on those themes. The individual papers will be updated by the respective Major Groups in September 2014 following a series of global and regional capacity building, outreach and advocacy exercises under the *SD2015* programme.

Business and Industry Major Group's Position

Open markets and private enterprise are critical for sustainable development. No other human activity matches private enterprise in its ability to assemble people to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. But in order to harness the power of private enterprise to contribute to development, governments must establish good governance and a conducive operating environment. Under the right framework, the private sector and the wealth it generates can be integral partners to social development and environmental sustainability. Since their creation in 2000, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have served as a useful framework for global action and cooperation on development. Now, almost 15 years later as the UN embarks upon an inclusive process to determine a Post-2015 Development Agenda, the positive role of business is recognized by governments and civil society.

Business has consistently emphasized the importance of mobilizing domestic resources and encouraging local entrepreneurship, foreign direct investment and other private capital flows, overseas development assistance and integrating the informal economy into the formal economy. Creating an environment conducive to enterprises of all sizes and in all sectors to develop, create jobs and pursue technological innovation and cooperation – coupled with sound governance and policies to enable inclusive growth and equitable distribution, while reducing barriers to international trade and foreign direct investment – is the best model for promoting sustainable development.

Coming out of the historic Rio+20 Conference, the United Nations is uniquely positioned to deliver a Post-2015 Development Agenda around which all stakeholders – governments, private sector, and civil society, can address the social, environmental and economic challenges our world is facing. For the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda, covering countries in all stages of development, to succeed it will be essential that businesses of all sizes grow and flourish in a responsible and sustainable manner. It is these businesses, working within all societies that will create the jobs and livelihoods, and provide the necessary technical resources to create and deploy new solu-

tions to the sustainable development challenges the international community is facing today. More than ever, economic growth, trade, investment, entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable job creation are recognized as fundamental for development.

Key to this will be:

1. The inclusion of an overarching vision to "eradicate extreme poverty," with one integrated approach reflecting all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – with one set of combined goals.

2. The recognition that the pursuit of sustainable development will require collaborative action between all actors in society – business, governments, and civil society.

3. The recognition that the earth is finite. Resources must be respected and managed efficiently to ensure a net positive contribution over the long term. Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) should take into account the economic and social benefits to achieve sustainability while striving to eliminate the negative environmental impacts, including climate change, enveloping the ecosystem that is our home.

4. The need for good governance focused on: smart regulation with minimal bureaucracy; rule of law; and well functioning national institutions notably to reduce corruption and informality. The implementation of regulations and policies that encourage better practices by governments, businesses and civil society.

5. The need to support policies and institutions to protect and promote human rights including: democratic values, independent courts, free speech, and individual liberty.

6. The need to align and scale up corporate sustainability based on universal principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption in order to promote transformative impact on markets and societies.

7. The need to foster economic growth, trade and investment, promote entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainable job creation and the establishment of new enterprises.

8. The need to create the right physical conditions for businesses to operate through: investment in and maintenance of basic infrastructure, including road and rail; electricity generation and supply, including renewable energy; information and communication technologies; water and wastewater services; and the recovery of resources and used materials.

9. The need for collaborative and collective action to encourage research, development, and diffusion of new technologies, support technology transfer and their appropriate deployment.

10. The need to recognize the complementary roles of public and private financing conducive to development, and thereby foster the use of financial instruments to catalyze private finance.

11. The need to strengthen: food and nutrition security (recognizing the opportunity to improve agricultural productivity in many developing countries); energy security; water security; and information security.

12. The empowerment of women as important contributors to economic development.

13. The critical need to invest in 'education for all' and to build human capital.

14. The need for reliable and accurate global statistics to provide the information and data on which progress can be monitored and sound decisions based.

Business has a critical role to play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development as an engine of economic growth and employment, as a key contributor of government revenues, and as a driver of innovation, capacity building and technology development.   The success of sustainable development and poverty alleviation will be enhanced by actively engaging the private sector.

The promotion of consensus-building through stakeholder dialogue – notably between governments, business and civil society – is vital for designing effective solutions and for implementing them in practice. Consultation with the private sector in the elaboration of national and sector plans is a prerequisite to broadening country ownership of the development process and ensuring inclusive growth, and expanding economic opportunity for all segments of the population.

The contribution of business to sustainable development has always been seen as a complement to the role of governments. Ultimately, success will depend on the willingness and capacity of governments to create and implement the appropriate policy frameworks, and to pursue partnerships with business and other stakeholder groups.

The United Nations is the pre-eminent global platform uniquely placed to lead the world community to adopt a new development agenda. Business will continue to engage respectfully and openly with communities, governments and other stakeholders around the world in pursuit of the of sustainable development objectives. Business and Industry look forward to bringing the vast real world experience of its business members to this effort.