

Business & Industry Major Group Position Paper for HLPF 2017

Summary:

The Business and Industry Major Group (BIMG) is fully committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and acknowledges the critical role it must play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development as an engine of growth and employment, as a key contributor to government revenues, and as a driver of innovation, capacity building and technological development. Addressing the challenges in eradicating poverty and creating decent and productive work for those at-risk of being left behind will require the private sector to be meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation, follow-up, and review of the 2030 Agenda. Frontline involvement already by so many companies and business associations in the shaping of the 2030 Development Agenda shows that the private sector is stepping up to participate in the transformations that are required for these challenges to be tackled; to eradicate poverty, to advance sustainability and for prosperity to thrive and be widely shared.

The private sector in all its forms – farms, small and medium enterprises, family owned companies, national firms, and multinationals – is making a major contribution to achieving the SDGs. The business sector looks forward to engaging in the HLPF 2017 as an actively engaged partner in sustainability through knowledge sharing, providing expertise in policy formation and implementation, as well as in partnerships.

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY MAJOR GROUP POSITION PAPER
FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2017**

**“REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO ERADICATE POVERTY
AND PROMOTE PROSPERITY IN A CHANGING WORLD”**

1. Introduction

Business is highly diverse in terms of sectors, size and geography. Given the array of issues that will come before the High-level Political Forum, it is essential to provide business and industry adequate representation to enable broad and deep engagement across the business community. In turn, because of the diversity of the private sector, our collective experience represents a vast pool of knowledge and working examples from which the HLPF could draw working solutions for the challenges they will face.

Wherever we live, businesses provide many of our necessities and essential services. Given the important role of business, we are confident that Member States will be prepared to work with business in its policy deliberations, implementation schemes and follow up and review mechanisms. Business takes an inclusive approach, and has an ongoing commitment to working with local communities, international agencies, governments, civil society and the scientific community to help deliver sustainability.

Businesses have already taken the SDGs on board and begun to integrate them into their sustainability efforts. Many companies and associations already gather and report environmental and sustainability information. We encourage a transparency and accountability framework to recognize and work in synergy with established initiatives; whether at the individual company level, through national business associations and sectoral efforts, according to international standards, as part of environmental or sustainability indices, global business reporting structures such as those being developed by WBCSD, or via multi-stakeholder partnerships like the GRI and UN initiatives such as the Global Compact. It must effectively work the rich diversity of existing reporting frameworks in a way that is efficient and non-duplicative.

The Business and Industry Major Group (BIMG) is fully committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and acknowledges the critical role it must play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development as an engine of growth and employment, as a key contributor of government revenues, and as a driver of innovation, capacity building and technological development. Addressing the challenges in eradicating poverty and creating decent and productive work for those at-risk of being left behind will require the private sector be meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation, follow-up, and review of the 2030 Agenda. In the following position paper, BIMG identifies what it is doing to support implementation, follow-up and review; and how it is contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with regard to those Global Goals under review by the HLPF in 2017.

2. Goal 1: Eradicate Poverty and Promote Prosperity in a Changing World

The private sector has an extraordinary potential to enable and contribute to social development, poverty alleviation and the realization of human rights. Where governments embrace a market-economy and create the enabling environment for business to flourish, progress on the goals will be accelerated. In parallel, opportunities for the realization of many human rights are enhanced. If those living in poverty are to enjoy the benefits of an improved business environment, they must be able to actively participate in the potential opportunities that this brings. To do so, requires investments in social and economic infrastructure – notably health, water and sanitation, and education – but also access to training, energy

and credit without discrimination. It involves a sustained focus on governance reforms, including those that focus on promoting transparency and eliminating corruption.

To foster enabling economic environments for alleviating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Providing sound, open and transparent government, free from corruption and inefficiency, while striving to make investment and partnership opportunities accessible to all. The need for transparency extends to all institutions, government entities as well as businesses and civil-society organizations.
- Establishing a stable macroeconomic and regulatory environment, supported by sound fiscal and economic policies and enacting clear and stable rules, such as uncomplicated ways of starting and running a business, and fair and stable rules on taxes and regulations, encouraging businesses to hire and keep workers.
- Ensuring a proper implementation of regulatory reforms particularly focusing on removing overlapping and unnecessary regulations by different levels of government at the national level.
- Guaranteeing the public's right to information and access to government data, while protecting confidential business information.
- Facilitating local businesses' own learning curve and innovation so that technology development can become localized and appropriate to the needs of local actors.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Progress on SDGs will be furthered by investing in initiatives that create jobs, stimulate trade and minimize barriers to markets, and generate increased income by enhancing food value chains, including through the development of local and sustainable supply chains and services. Agriculture is the primary driver to abate hunger and reduce poverty, which is felt acutely in rural areas. Throughout history, agricultural prosperity has gone hand in hand with successful economies. And food security has a direct impact on national security – politically, socially and economically. Food security and nutrition also underpin achievement of health goals. Goal 2 inextricably links nutrition to agriculture, as well as to many other Goals related to health, land use, climate change, water, sanitation, education, employment, social protection, infrastructure, gender equality and resilience.

To subside hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition as well as promote sustainable agriculture, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Supporting an open, fair and development-friendly trading system, substantially reducing trade-distorting measures including agricultural subsidies, while improving market access for developing country products.
- Maintaining a balance between the need for the financial system to support recovery in the short term and the need to strengthen the health of the financial sector in the long term in the implementation of new financial regulatory measures.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Healthier societies help increase productivity, socio-economic stability, and strengthen economics overall and, therefore health expenditure should be seen as an investment rather than as a cost to the public sector. Sustainability of health targets will require long-term investments by government and other stakeholders, including the private sector. Sustainability of healthcare would mean that the system is able to meet the health needs at all stages of a person's life, through prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and care. To achieve healthy lives at all ages, Member States should focus on long-term sustainable frameworks to

prevent and manage infectious, chronic, and injury-related conditions, as well as commit to prioritizing health in all policies and involve all relevant stakeholders. It also requires parallel commitment to foster an innovative eco-system in life sciences that will continue to enable the research, development and scientific partnerships that lead to new, patient-centered, medical interventions and health services.

To encourage healthy life-styles and promote well-being for all at all ages, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Maintaining a balance between the need for the financial system to support recovery in the short term and the need to strengthen the health of the financial sector in the long term in the implementation of new financial regulatory measures.
- Engaging in open dialogue with business to find solutions that are appropriate for local circumstances.
- Providing, sustainable social protection systems including access to universal primary education, and basic healthcare among others.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Gender equality is not only a human right, or a legal and social issue, it is also an economic issue. Women's entrepreneurship constitutes an important and often untapped source of economic growth for eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world. While there is considerable evidence of success in the integration of women in society, the issue of the empowerment of women remains critical and much more needs to be done. Countries that do not capitalize on the full potential of one-half of their society are grossly misallocating their human resources and compromising their ability to compete in the global economy. Enabling women to develop their skills and qualifications and to join the labor market boosts incomes and wellbeing throughout the society. At the national level, governments in countries at all stages of development should enable women to develop their skills and qualifications to join the labor market and boost wellbeing throughout the society as well as listen to the voices of women entrepreneurs, and incorporate a women's entrepreneurial dimension in the formation of all SME-related policies.

To promote gender equality and empower all women and girls, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Promoting equal legal rights and non-discrimination for men and women of all ages.
- Enabling women to develop their skills and qualifications to join the labor market and boost wellbeing throughout the society.
- Encouraging governments to listen to the voices of women entrepreneurs, and incorporate a women's entrepreneurial dimension in the formation of all SME-related policies.
- Embracing an inclusive and open society, with equal opportunities for all.

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

Investment in infrastructure of all kinds – physical assets (e.g., roads and bridges) as well as sustainable solutions for the delivery of reliable energy, clean water, communications, logistics and mobility – will be key to achieving the SDGs and their core mission of poverty reduction. Business has a stake in and role to provide quality infrastructure, whether built or “human”, and ensuring that it is responsive to societal needs and economic growth imperatives. Further developments should reflect an integrated interpretation of what infrastructure consists of, how it is best planned and managed at local, national and regional levels, and the importance of improved collaboration among private and public sector actors.

Business plays a leading role in harnessing the enabling potential of infrastructure, innovation, and scientific as well as technological advancement. However, business will only be able to do so in partnership with governments and other stakeholders, and in a policy environment that encourages innovation as well as scientific and technological advance, and that strengthens the capacity of developing countries to absorb, adapt, and apply these advances to their local settings. Business contributes to encouraging access through capacity building and education initiatives, promoting innovation, public-private research and development partnerships, where businesses work with other stakeholders

Improving connectivity through regional infrastructure is essential for prosperity and sustainable growth. It is one of the most effective ways to contribute to poverty reduction in many countries around the world. Cross-border infrastructure projects have helped raise household incomes through improved access to markets and enhanced trade and investment by reducing the cost of doing business. Member States are encouraged to recognize that enhanced connectivity catalyzes trade in all economies and industries, which in turn contributes to creating prosperity globally.

Going forward private sector investment in infrastructure deployment in access, connectivity and innovation will need to increase rapidly and further still. Ensuring public policies promote, not deter, investment in next generation broadband technologies that enable new bandwidth intensive and quality sensitive applications and services is important. Similarly, investment in high speed networks and ICT services can create a platform for economic growth, job creation, and greater competitiveness among business.

BIMG encourages governments and the international community to engage with business on the opportunities and enabling frameworks to strengthen access and inclusiveness, resilience, and “smart” and other innovation-related aspects of infrastructure investment and delivery as part of the 2030 Agenda. To foster resilient infrastructure as well as promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Enhancing the participation of the private sector in infrastructure development and maintenance that ensures efficient infrastructure management and a decent return on investments undertaken by the private sector.
- Improving project preparation and development of policies and mechanisms that would attract long-term and institutional investment.
- Adopting policies that foster transformational innovation and scientific and technological advance, with special attention to policy frameworks that provide adequate and enforceable protection for intellectual property rights and increased public support for sustainability-enhancing research and development.
- Establishing adequate market and regulatory conditions combined with available local knowledge and capacity to achieve success of technology diffusion and adoption.
- Improving access to information and communications technology that spur growth towards healthy communities in every sense – civic engagement, health, education, food security, clean and efficient energy, and stability.
- Developing reliable and predictable transit infrastructure and services that would facilitate trade.
- Ensuring a steady and sustainable supply of bankable infrastructure projects.
- Strengthening productive capacity by providing universal access to financial services and infrastructure, such as transportation and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Business is committed to the blue economy and advancing the development and implementation of industry-driven solutions to ocean related sustainable development challenges. Leaders from various ocean industries, including shipping, oil and gas, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, ports, dredging, cables, as well as the maritime communities, are already collaborating on responsible use of the seas and ensuring that the ocean business community's role in ocean sustainable development is understood by all relevant stakeholders. Many companies are working hard to reduce their marine ecosystem footprint. However, the best efforts by a single company, or even an entire sector, will not be enough to address the cumulative impact on our inter-connected marine ecosystem.

Companies dependent on the ocean are achieving business value from working with others in the ocean business community to address shared challenges regarding sustainable development, science, and ocean stewardship. To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, Member States should seek to implement the following policy objectives:

- Promoting congress of and partnerships between industry leaders in ocean sustainability, stewardship, and science to create collaboration to address marine environmental challenges and sustainable ocean development
- Adopting policies and frameworks that support pre-competitive research, innovation, and market-based deployment of cleaner technologies and know-how.

3. Conclusion

A 'new way' of working with business is already apparent in the 2030 agenda and the work of the HLPF review process. In 2016, the SDG Business Forum was held as a Special Event of the HLPF. It was hosted by the International Chamber of Commerce, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Global Compact and organized with the support of members of the Global Business Alliance for 2030. It included a review of business engagement on all 17 SDGs, as well as four separate sessions examining private investment, partnerships and monitoring progress. The Forum stressed, among other things, the need to enhance UN engagement with business around the SDGs and the potential for further increasing the participation of business and industry in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Frontline involvement already by so many companies and business associations in the shaping of the Post-2015 Development Agenda shows that the private sector is stepping up to participate in the transformations that are required for these challenges to be tackled; to eradicate poverty, to advance sustainability and for prosperity to thrive and be widely shared. The business sector looks forward to engaging in the HLPF 2017 as an actively engaged partner in sustainability through knowledge sharing, providing expertise in policy formation and implementation, as well as in partnerships. The case for sustainable development is increasingly recognized as a core feature for long term success in the private sector. Working together with governments, multilateral institutions and civil society towards the successful monitoring and implementation of the SDGs is the only way forward to ensure a long lasting prosperous future for all.