

Presentation Belgium on SDG Implementation during CEP

During my brief presentation I'll give a short overview of how the sustainable development goals are anchored in Belgian institutions, allowing them to nourish the overarching strategies that guide the policies in Belgium.

Belgium has a long tradition in committing to sustainable development, both at the federal and the federated levels, and has a strong institutional set-up in this respect. Sustainable development is part of our constitution and recognized as a general policy objective to which the federal state, the communities and the regions must contribute. One way for them to do so is law-making, the other, the development of sustainable development strategies that offer added value in terms coherence and have a transversal and participatory nature. In addition to SD strategies on the different policy levels in Belgium, the first National Sustainable Development Strategy was approved earlier this year and focusses on the implementation of Agenda 2030. The institutional framework also allows for transversal work and participation through the Interministerial Conference for Sustainable Development that was established to that end.

I'll now move to providing short examples for the implementation of SDGs that fall under the thematic focus of next year's HLPF.

Regarding the water SDG, "integrated water management" is one of the main tenets with which we aim to improve and restore surface water bodies, groundwater bodies and protected areas. This is achieved through a series of decrees and territorially focused river basin management plans. By joining efforts in special protection areas, both in terms of drinking water supply and conservation of nature, win-win situations in different policy areas are created. Public water corporations are responsible for the collection and treatment of wastewater and the protection of water resources, which allows distribution companies to ensure a sufficient supply of qualitative drinking water.

The Belgian implementation of SDG 7 on energy focusses among other things on the renovation and energy efficiency of buildings. Sustainable construction is a way of turning environmental improvements into a source of economic opportunities and job creation. Improving the energy performance and renovation degree of our housing stock is an important goal which we aim to achieve through instruments such as the Energy Performance Certificate, digital passports for houses and a mobilization of the construction sector through a roadmap for renovation.

In our efforts to achieve SDG 11 we promote the role of technology and innovation in sustainable development and urban renewal through targeted "smart city" approaches. In this framework, solutions such as reducing congestion, the sustainable distribution of goods from and to city centers, ensuring optimum parking policies and improving air quality are offered. One concrete example is the low-emission zone in Antwerp, which is facilitated by a data sharing platform and which is being implemented in other cities now as well.

It was particularly difficult to limit myself to one example for implementation of SDG 12 on SCP, given the many actions we take in this field. Efforts in this area are guided to a large extent by actions towards a circular economy. Policies aim to produce, use and consume materials, commodities and their derivatives as efficiently and effectively as possible, and close materials cycles. Economic and legal instruments go hand-in-hand with awareness-raising campaigns in the "Flemish Materials Program", which won the "Circulars Award" at the 2016 World Economic forum.

For SDG 15 many actions are taken as well. One of these is the deployment of the BeBiodiversity strategy, implemented since April 2017 in partnership with the private sector, which aims to move

markets towards more biodiversity-friendly products, working simultaneously on the supply and demand sides. During its three years in operation, a decision-making tool will be developed with the collaboration of the regional authorities to promote and propose biodiversity actions related to land, infrastructure, production and purchasing processes. A concept to assess the impact of the production of terrestrial organic raw materials on biodiversity will also be tested. A communication campaign (awareness-raising, education and mobilization) using various tools (website, social networks, video) will guide the strategy (15.5). Additionally there's a tailored Belgian Biodiversity Platform that animates several Communities of Practice (CoP) which are active interdisciplinary groups of researchers, policy makers and stakeholders who collaborate on specific topical issues related to biodiversity.

With regards to SDG 17 I can report that with just below 0.5% of gross national income currently spent on official development assistance, Belgium still has some considerable catch-up effort to make in order to reach the internationally set 0.7% target which was recommitted to in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The target, which was nearly reached in 2010, is in the Belgian case also an objective set by law. Budgetary strictures deriving from austerity measures following the global economic and financial crisis are currently still being felt throughout the governments' expenditure, and development cooperation is no exception here. A specific Belgian commitment, in the spirit of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda's encouragements to that end, has been to dedicate at least 50% of its ODA to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile states by mid-2019.

Of course, given the limited time, these were but few of the examples. For a broader view I warmly welcome you to consult the National Voluntary Review that Belgium has presented during this year's HLPF and which contains an overview of the challenges we're still facing and more measures with which we aim to tackle them, including our actions abroad.

Thank you for your attention.