

Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Ms Katarina Lalić Smajević, Acting Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-Chair

Speakers:

- Ms Karla Hershey, UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia
- Mr Yngve Engstroem, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation in Serbia
- Mr Stephen Ndegwa, World Bank Country Manager in Serbia

Attendees:

- Their Excellencies, representatives of embassies
- Business sector, gathered in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia under the Global Compact
- Focus Group of the National Assembly – Prof. Mijatović
- State Audit Institution – Mr Radoslav Sretenović
- Non-governmental sector
- UN Country Team in Serbia
- International partners
- Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

Upon expiry of the period during which development policies were guided at the global level by the Millennium Development Goals, the UN designed a new global development agenda (Agenda 2030), founded on three key pillars: eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all. The new development agenda was adopted on 25 September 2015 and comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under each goal, there are specific targets to be achieved within 15 years. There are a total of 169 targets and 232 indicators, with several indicators appearing under multiple goals. Indicators are used in monitoring strategy implementation, i.e. the achievement of the Goals.

- A specific feature of our country is that we are, at the same time, in the process of accession to the EU; hence, by working towards the many goals, we are simultaneously working towards EU accession. This is also witnessed by the title of today's meeting – **A Step Forward in EU Integration through Sustainable Development Goals.**

Working Group:

- The Inter-Ministerial Working Group was established on 30 December 2015.
- I was appointed its Chair on 6 July 2017.
- Presentation in New York, at the High-level Political Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council on 17-20 July.
- Preparatory meeting in anticipation of the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on 1 September 2017.

1. Establishment

In its new composition, the Working Group consists of representatives of

- 26 ministries, offices and agencies, plus the Chair

2. Establishment of an operational task force within the Working Group

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Republic Secretariat for Public Policies
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
- My office

Let me recall that:

- Relying on its own capacities, the state has launched the process of scanning the existing policies and their links to the Sustainable Development Goals and EU negotiating chapters – the areas of progress have been identified, as well as those in which there are deficiencies, which will receive special attention.
- This report was prepared by the technical team of the Secretariat for Public Policies with support from GIZ, the German technical support agency. The document will be forwarded to all Working Group members to obtain their opinions.
- You will see that we have 104 strategies in different areas. Some strategies, for instance the Employment Strategy, the Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development or the Youth Strategy, are relevant to multiple Goals...
- The report also shows that, under the existing strategic framework, we are already working towards the achievement of some Goals; however, there are areas without key strategies, or areas in which certain strategic documents are not monitored.

Examples:

Goal 4 – Education for All:

We have the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2012-2020, promoting high-quality preschool, primary, secondary and higher education accessible to all, which is consistent with targets 1, 2 and 3 and EU negotiating chapter 26.

Goal 8 – inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all: Our strategies for the development of free zones, improvement of the quality infrastructure system, the National Programme to Combat the Grey Economy or the programme to improve Serbia's ranking on the World Bank's Doing Business list, are already aligned with chapters 1 and 20; in addition, we are preparing e.g. a strategy on scientific and technological development, in line with chapter 25.

Plenty has been done here to put a strategic framework in place, but we will highlight only a few examples.

Goal 13 – one of the key global goals, concerning combating climate change, is linked to EU chapter 27 – environment, and calls for hard work. Some documents are in place, while many have been prepared and are awaiting adoption, with some adoption deadlines as far ahead as 2019. For example, the Strategy to Combat Climate Change, the Strategy for the Adaptation to Changed Climate, the Air Protection Strategy, or the National Action Plan to Mitigate the Impact of Drought.

Goal 14 – protection of the oceans and marine resources – has not been considered specifically.

Steps:

- The next step in our work is to organise a specialised mission with support from the UNCT Serbia and in cooperation with the EU Delegation and the World Bank. This mission will be aimed at performing another, in-depth assessment of the situation in the country on the basis of the mapping already carried out, and proposing a Road Map for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Serbia.
- The Road Map should provide specific guidelines and priorities, define the factors that can help accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Serbia, propose a financial framework, institutional arrangements and a plan for SDG-inspired dialogue for Serbia.
- A national programme and prioritisation of the set goals should follow from that report.

- We are preparing to apply for the presentation of the Voluntary National Review at the UN High-level Political Forum 2019, where the topic of discussion will be inequality.
- By then, on the basis of the MAPS mission results, we will prepare a Baseline Statistical Report, which will present the current situation in the country with respect to each of the Goals. This report will be used as the baseline for monitoring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Let me reiterate that the Working Group consists of representatives of state institutions; however, in view of the comprehensive nature of the SDGs, it will be open and all should be involved in its work.

- We will invite civil, public and private sector representatives to the meetings, depending on the topic under consideration.

- We propose to introduce a mechanism for cooperation with international organisations, which indeed align their programme and project objectives with the SDGs. Under this mechanism, the steering committees of projects under implementation will include a representative of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, depending on project contents.
- For instance, th GIZ has already invited us to nominate a representative for the new GIZ IMPACT project, to be launched next year; the project will last three years and deal with waste removal in the context of climate change, and we will be involved as of January.

National Sustainable Development Strategy:

- Adopted in 2008, in effect until 2017.
- The goal of the National Sustainable Development Strategy is to ensure the equilibrium of the three key factors, or three pillars of sustainable development: sustainable economic growth and economic and technological development, sustainable social development based on social equilibrium, environmental protection with rational use of natural resources, and to unite them in a whole supported by an appropriate institutional framework.

National sustainable development priorities of the Republic of Serbia:

- 1) EU membership;
- 2) Development of a competitive market economy and balanced economic growth;
- 3) Development and education for the people, employment growth and social inclusion;
- 4) Infrastructure development and balanced regional development;
- 5) Environmental protection and improvement, and rational use of natural resources.

Discussion:

- Ms Sonja Liht, Fund for Political Excellence
- Prof. Milorad Mijatović, Focus Group, National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
- Mr Siniša Mitrović, Global Compact, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia