

Defining Sustainable Development the EU Way

I. Articulating a Global EU Strategy

“The EU strategy [for sustainable development] should look beyond the Union’s present borders to be relevant for the countries that will join the Union during the coming years...Moreover, the EU policies influence prospects for sustainability **far beyond he borders of the Union**, and EU production and consumption increase the pressure on shared global environmental resources. **It is therefore important to ensure that measures we take to move towards sustainable development in Europe contribute towards sustainable development in the rest of the world.** Our policies – internal and external – must actively support efforts by other countries – particularly those in the developing world – to achieve development that is more sustainable.

To make an effective contribution to achieving global sustainable development the EU and its Member States need to co-operate effectively with other countries and international institutions, including the OECD, the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations Environment Program...The Commission will present a Communication in the first half of 2002 further setting out its views on how the Union should contribute to global sustainable development.”

COM (2001) 264 final (5/15/01), “Communication from the Commission – A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development”, at p. 9.

II. The EU is Critical of Globalization and the American Dream

“Since the Rio Conference in 1992, many new initiatives have emerged to address specific elements of sustainable development, but overall progress has been slow. A new impetus is thus required in order to tackle, in a more comprehensive and effective way, the many remaining challenges, as well as new *challenges arising from globalization*.

...**The rapid expansion in the movement of goods, services, capital, technology, ideas and people around the world – globalization...can...result in negative pressures on the environment and in risks for social cohesion if it goes uncontrolled.** Intensive energy use, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and unwillingness to add the environmental costs to the costs of production and transport are now threatening the resource base on which economic and social development depend. **Technological progress, market integration and international competition tend to bring about [negative] structural changes in the economy and the fabric of society.**

...At the source of these unsustainable trends is the complex relationship between markets, global governance and national policy. A collective effort is required at a global, regional and national level to provide a framework in which market forces can be harnessed to maintain and increase growth and to create jobs, while preserving the environment for future generations and strengthening social cohesion...Industrialized countries have important responsibilities in promoting sustainability initiatives – first and foremost, by putting their own house in order, and **by supporting a move to sustainable production and consumption patterns...**

COM (2002) 82 final (2/13/02), “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Towards a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, at pp. 3-6, 8.

“Europe...offers significant *quality-of-life* advantages. ***For most Europeans, the community's quality of life is more important than an individual's financial success.*** The more communities you join, the more options you have for living a full and meaningful life. Belonging -- not belongings -- is what brings security...the European sense of togetherness... ***Where the American Dream emphasizes economic growth, the European Dream focuses on sustainable development...[e]nvironmental awareness...***[T]he European vision...[is]...one of a new type of power, based not on military strength but on economic cooperation and the construction of ***communities of conscience***, a new kind of superpower based on waging peace...” (emphasis added).

Jeremy Rifkin, “America, Wake Up to the European Dream”, Op-ed, *The Washington Post* (Oct. 31, 2004).

“***[Within such ‘moral’ communities,] the ‘precautionary principle’ [is to be used to] regulat[e]...science and technology innovation and the introduction of new products into the marketplace...***[It] is the most radical idea for rethinking humanity's relationship to the natural world since the 18th-century European Enlightenment...The EU is attempting to establish a radical new approach to science and technology based on the principle of ***sustainable development*** and ***global stewardship*** of the Earth's environment...[And,] ***[a]t the heart of the precautionary principle is a radical divergence in the way Europe has come to perceive risks compared to the US...***” In Europe, intellectuals are increasingly debating the question of the great shift from a risk-taking age to a risk-prevention era” (emphasis added).

Jeremy Rifkin, “A Precautionary Tale”, Op-ed, *The Guardian* (May 12, 2004), at: (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/analysis/story/0,3604,1214638,00.html>).

III. The EU Should Assume a Leading Role in Promoting Global Sustainable Development

...**The European Union is well placed to assume a leading role in the pursuit of global sustainable development. It is the world's largest donor of development aid, the world's biggest trading partner, and a major source of direct private investments. It has developed and promoted a great number of clean technologies.** Throughout its own evolution, the European model of integration has been based on pursuing mutually supportive strategies for stable economic growth, social development and environmental protection...More specifically **European Union enlargement** is based on a program of assistance which aims at political stability, sound economic conditions, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. **This will provide valuable experience for tackling the same challenges at [the] global level.”**

...**Bilateral and regional agreements must underpin sustainable development**, and the European Union must ensure that its multilateral and bilateral policies are mutually consistent. **This also means addressing regulatory issues such as the environment, social development, competition, and investment in a bilateral context. The European Union is promoting deep integration and regulatory convergence through regional trade agreements between industrialized and developing countries and between the developing countries themselves.**

...Some of the action included in the European Union's internal strategy will be instrumental in diminishing the ecological impact the European Union has on the rest of the world. By managing natural resources in a more sustainable manner, and decoupling resource consumption and pollution from economic growth, the European Union will also contribute to global sustainable development.

...Priority objectives [include] ensur[ing] that the objectives of sustainable development are progressively integrated into all European Union policies, **with due respect to both their internal and external dimensions.**

COM (2002) 82 final (2/13/02), at pp. 14-17.

IV. The EU Must Promote its Sustainable Development Strategy as a Model for Global Governance and UN Reform

...Priority objectives [also include] **ensur[ing] good governance at all levels and within all countries so as to achieve common sustainable development objectives** [and] strengthen[ing] the legitimacy, participatory basis, coherence and effectiveness of global economic, social and environmental governance.

Good governance is first and foremost a domestic issue. Democracy and the rule of law call for active participation of stakeholders and are necessary prerequisites for sustainable development. **Up to now the political response to governance challenges has proved insufficient at any level – national, European or international**, public or private. Inadequate domestic policies in many countries, including developing countries, have played a part in widening the gap between the poor and the rich. Likewise, in the context of increasing interdependence, **the imbalance between market forces on the one hand, and governance institutions on the other, has resulted in a 'global governance gap'.**

*There is a growing consensus that the **global governance** system must urgently gain in legitimacy, coherence and effectiveness...* [Although]...international activities [of the] G7/8 have given political impetus to ongoing or emerging ideas, measures and policies [and] G7/8 has improved its outreach efforts to non-members and civil society, many countries are not adequately represented when it comes to formulating international initiatives...Participation, inclusiveness and transparent decision making process are essential components of good governance and contribute to promoting common universal values. **Reform of the international system of governance also needs to ensure a stronger civil voice in international fora.**

Within the context of UN reform, co-ordination among its various bodies and between the UN Organization and other international institutions must be strengthened and targeted towards global governance for sustainable development. This will allow the UN System to better respond not only to global, but also to regional and sub-regional challenges.

...In order to achieve sustainable development, domestic policies in many countries must improve and be based on good governance.

...[T]he European Union Sustainable Development Strategy...would not be complete without the inclusion of an external dimension. The present Communication contains that dimension and should be seen as an integral part of the Commission's proposal for a European Union-SD Strategy. The effective implementation of this Strategy requires the concerted efforts of both the Commission and the Member States.

...The European Union will also seek to raise the profile of sustainable development in all its bilateral and regional relations...With industrialized nations, European Union efforts must focus on extending concepts of economic and political stability to include sustainable development.

...[The European Union] will put forward the European Union Strategy at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002...It will seek to demonstrate how its strategy for sustainable development forms part of the global effort...
In 2003, a particular focus should be on how to put the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit into practice” (emphasis added).

COM (2002) 82 final (2/13/02), at pp. 19-20.