



# DOCUMENTO CHAVE

## THE NEW EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT “OUR WORLD, OUR DIGNITY, OUR FUTURE”

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### Introduction and short presentation of the five parts of the document

The document is a joint Statement by The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, The European Parliament and European Commission. It is an update of the former European Consensus on Development, adopted in 2006. It starts (paras. 1-6) by describing Agenda 2030, with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core, as a transformative political framework to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development globally. The introductory paragraphs, referring to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as the Lisbon Treaty and the Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy, state that the purpose of the Consensus

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is to provide the framework for a common approach to development policy that will be applied by the EU institutions and Member States and guide their action in their cooperation with all developing countries.

### **Part 1. The EU Response to the 2030 Agenda**

Part 1 (paras. 7 - 18) outlines the commitment of EU and its Member States to stronger and more effective EU action in a changing world in light of the 2030 Agenda, through i.a. compliance with the principle of policy coherence for development (PCD), the principles and values set out in the Treaty of the European Union, political dialogue, a rights based approach and development effectiveness as agreed at the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 and renewed in Nairobi in 2016. It also states that the EU and its Member States value the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in development and recognise the multiple roles that CSOs plays.

### **Part 2. A Framework for Action**

Part 2 (paras. 19 - 71) outlines the framework of action of the EU and its Member States for implementing the 2030 Agenda and states that this require comprehensive national sustainable strategies that factor in the SDGs and their interlinkages. The framework addresses a wide range of issues of relevance for development policy and development cooperation and reflect the key themes of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.

### **Part 3. Partnership – The EU as a Force for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

While recognising that each country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, Part 3 (paras. 72 - 97) also acknowledge that the 2030 Agenda must be implemented by all countries and all stakeholders acting in partnership. It states that an open space where parliaments, political parties, regional and local authorities, research institutions, philanthropic organisations, cooperatives, the private sector and civil society can operate safely is critical for achieving sustainable development. It furthermore states that the EU and its Member States will deepen its partnerships with CSOs in support of sustainable development and promote an operating space and enabling environment to allow them to play their roles as independent advocates, implementers and agents of change, in development education and awareness raising and in monitoring and holding authorities to account.

### **Part 4. Strengthening Approaches to improve EU Impact**

Part 4 (paras. 98 - 116) outlines strengthening approaches to improve EU impact, including 1) mobilising and making effective use of all means of implementation, i.a. generating additional domestic resources in

partner countries through boosting international trade as an engine for development and tackling illicit financial flows, 2) ensuring policy coherence for development to achieve the SDGs and 3) development effectiveness. Furthermore, this part states (paras. 88) that EU and its Member States will promote an operating space and enabling environments for CSOs, with full public participation, to allow them to play their roles as independent advocates, implementers and agents of change, in development education and awareness raising and in monitoring and holding authorities to account.

## Part 5. Following up on our Commitments

Part 5 (paras. 117 - 123) outlines how the EU and its Members States will follow up on their commitments, including through accountability to EU citizens, reporting systems in the field of development cooperation, supporting the use of SDG indicators, producing a joint synthesis report on the Consensus on Development every four years and boost statistical capacity in partner countries. Furthermore, this part states (paras 122) that development education and awareness raising can play an important part in raising levels of engagement among the public and in addressing the SDGs at national and global level, thus contributing to global citizenship. Finally, it commits the EU and its Member States to carry out a mid-term assessment of the implementation of the Consensus in 2024.

## Comment

The new European Consensus on Development “Our world, our dignity, our future” could be read as a strong commitment by the EU and its Member States to Agenda 2030 and Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). However, as a statement of good will and commitment that does not provide any critical self-reflection of the past, nor any risk analysis for the future, it should also be read as a strong call for critical Global Education.

For an assessment of this key document for the EU and its Member States, as well as for Global Education actors with the EU, it might be useful at this crossroad to look critically back at how the concept of development was introduced and has been used, misused and understood in global international relations since the dawn of the Era of Development Aid. The debate on who gained (and gains) the most from this so-called “aid”, recipients or donors, will probably go on for many years to come<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Easterly, William (2007); *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, and more recently an article by Jason Hicks in *The Guardian* 14th January 2017: *Aid in reverse: how poor countries develop rich countries* (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/jan/14/aid-in-reverse-how-poor-countries-develop-rich-countries>)

### *The concept of development in the first decades of the Era of Development Aid*

The concept and understanding of “development” reflected in the new consensus is not radically different from the first consensus adopted in 2006<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, it represents yet another step away from the concept and understanding of “development” shaped by the West after WWII. The concept of development was shaped within a framework of “development cooperation” and “development aid” from donors during the first decades of what some scholars have labelled the Era of Development Aid<sup>4</sup>. As it was eventually the Western donors - not the recipients, nor the UN - that took control of the overall design and direction of this development aid, the concept of development became more or less synonymous with the Western way of development, provided within a broader global agenda of Western donors in the context of a tense geopolitical situation<sup>5</sup>.

*“We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas”*, were the initial words of the 4th point of US President Harry Truman in his four point<sup>6</sup> speech (his inaugural speech) in 1949<sup>7</sup>. His announcement of providing assistance to “underdeveloped areas” was a genuine expression of commitment to share the advances and progress achieved by the USA, but also a mean to win the “hearts and minds” of the “developing countries” and part of a foreign policy designed to contain communism as perceived by the West. The 2nd secretary general of the newly established United Nations (UN), Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden, welcomed the idea of development aid to poor countries in Africa and elsewhere, but insisted such aid should be channeled through the UN. When the OECD in 1960 formalised such initiatives through establishing the Development Assistance Group (DAG), later renamed Development Assistance Committee (DAC), he warned against the national interests of Western donors and saw it as a threat to the UN itself<sup>8</sup>. Unfortunately, his fear was not unfounded. In its first decades, development aid also served as justification for continued Westernization and exploitation of the third world, with the Era of Development Aid as a continuum following the Eras of Colonialization and Imperialism in the context of a Cold War between the Communist Soviet Union (East) and the Capitalist USA (West) and their allies – opponents in the North following two different ideologies and models of development.

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<sup>3</sup> The former European Consensus on Development 2006 is available online: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2006%3A046%3A0001%3A0019%3AEN%3APDF>

<sup>4</sup> See for example Tvedt, Terje (1990); Bilder av “De Andre”. Om utviklingslandene i bistandsepoken (Images of “the Other”. About Developing Countries in the Era of Development Aid).

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth analysis of how the concept of development, in this early period, was closely linked to the Western model of development and civilization, see Sachs, Wolfgang (1991); The Development Dictionary, a guide to knowledge as power, Edited by Wolfgang Sachs. A up-dated edition (2010) is available online: <http://shifter-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/wolfgang-sachs-the-development-dictionary-n-a-guide-to-knowledge-as-power-2nd-ed-2010-1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> For a brief further reading, see Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point\\_Four\\_Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point_Four_Program)

<sup>7</sup> For overview and link to full text, see short introduction on wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_S.\\_Truman%27s\\_1949\\_inaugural\\_address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_S._Truman%27s_1949_inaugural_address)

<sup>8</sup> Source: The secretary-general who stood up for the UN, by John Y. Jones, director of Networkers South/North and the Dag Hamarskjöld programme at Voksenaasen (Oslo, Norway), in Pambazuka News, September 28th 2011 (<https://www.pambazuka.org/food-health/secretary-general-who-stood-un>). Jones refers to Brian Urquhart’s Hammarskjöld (1994) pp 507.

## *Western resistance to the inconvenient truths of the concept of Sustainable Development*

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the American political scientist, political economist and author, Francis Fukuyama, predicted “the End of History” - that the worldwide spread of liberal democracies and free market capitalism of the West and its lifestyle may signal the end point of humanity’s sociocultural evolution and the final form of human government<sup>9</sup>. With the alternative development model of the Soviet Union defeated, the self-confidence of the triumphant West at the time was reflected in the 1996 strategy of the OECD: *Shaping the 21st Century: The contribution of development co-operation*<sup>10</sup>:

"Development progress over recent decades has been unprecedented in human history. In the early 1950s, when large-scale development assistance began, most people outside the developed countries lived as they had always lived, scraping by on the edge of subsistence, with little knowledge of and no voice in global or national affairs, and little expectation of more than a short life of hard work with slight reward. Since then, many countries have achieved truly dramatic improvement in overall indicators of human welfare."

However, as the Cold War was fading at the end of the 1980s, the Western development model was increasingly questioned. Its focus on individualism and failure to deliver in the South was challenged through the Right to Development, first recognized in the African Charter of Humans and Peoples Rights in 1981, and later adopted by UN in 1986 in its Declaration on the Right to Development<sup>11</sup>. Its market capitalism focussed on economic growth was questioned by United Nation Development Program (UNDP), that in 1990 presented its first “Human Development Report”<sup>12</sup> and according to *The Development Dictionary*<sup>13</sup>, edited by Wolfgang Sachs in 1991, “the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape”. More importantly, Fukuyama’s prediction of “The End of history” coincided with the preparation of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992, questioning the sustainability of the Western development model. The Rio-summit built on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission), *Our Common Future* (1987)<sup>14</sup>, that defined the concept of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The inconvenient truths underlying the concept of sustainable development and the UNCED was not only about climate (as argued by the former US Vice President Al Gore’s campaign and documentary in 2006 to educate citizens about global warming), but also about a Western development model of economic growth on

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<sup>9</sup> Fukuyama, Francis (1992); *The End of History and the Last Man*.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/2508761.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> According to article one of the Declaration of the Right to Development “The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”

<sup>12</sup> The Human Development Reports (HDRs) has been commissioned annually by the UNDP since 1990, focussing on human, rather than economic development, as had long been the practice by The World Bank and other dominant actors.

<sup>13</sup> <http://shifter-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/wolfgang-sachs-the-development-dictionary-n-a-guide-to-knowledge-as-power-2nd-ed-2010-1.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

a global scale that had failed, leaving billions in poverty<sup>15</sup> outside the Western industrial countries and through its patterns of production and consumption, and had caused depletion of the natural resources of our common planet<sup>16</sup>. In short, the Western development model was a development model that was unsustainable, socially, economically and environmentally. Thus, the Rio-conference in 1992 was about setting a new course, a course towards sustainable development. It was a truly transformative political agenda, reflecting a fundamental new understanding and renewal of the concept of development. Unfortunately, this was not reflected in the OECD 1996-strategy, nor the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the UN at the beginning of the 21st Century. Their failure to do so reflected the global power relations in the decade following the Cold War and the UNCED in 1992. In practise, for the Western powers and the International Financial Institutions, the end of the Cold War opened up for free trade and economic globalisation at an unprecedented scale. According to David Korten, US author, former professor at the Harvard Business School and political activist, this process resulted in an ever-greater concentration of economic and political power in a handful of corporations and financial institutions, described in his book “When corporations rule the world”<sup>17</sup>.

The understanding of the need for sustainable development emerged at the end of a Cold War that left the world with only one “superpower”, the USA. However, the US President at that time, George Bush (the elder), stated in Rio that “The American way of life is not up for negotiation”<sup>18</sup> and within the big corporations and ruling elite of the West there was little support for major changes. Thus, a development model based on economic growth, fitting the needs of the Western powers and making a favourable environment for transnational corporations, not only prevailed in the decades following the 1992 Rio-conference, it shaped the Era of Globalisation. Also, despite heavy resistance in the South and widespread criticism from global civil society, the neo-liberal policy conditions imposed on developing countries through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) during the Reagan/Thatcher-era in the 1980s, known as the Washington Consensus<sup>19</sup>, were up-held and further developed. Later, the work of the Joint World Bank/Civil Society/Government Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) resulted in a devastating critique of structural adjustment policies in developing countries presented in a report published in 2004, *The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty*<sup>20</sup>. These policies went on, basically because the alternative policies for sustainable development, negotiated through the UN Summits of the 1990s, were not supported by the Western powers nor Financial

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<sup>15</sup> As illustrated, for example, in UNDPs Human Development Report 1992: “In 1960, the richest 20% of the world' population had incomes 30 times greater than the poorest 20%. By 1990, the richest 20% were getting 60 times more. And this comparison is based on the distribution between rich and poor countries. Adding the maldistribution within countries, the richest 20% of the world's people get at least 150 times more than the poorest 20%.”

<sup>16</sup> The present inconvenient truths about development aid is discussed by David Sogge in Sinergias no. 5 (2017): <http://www.sinergiased.org/index.php/revista/item/116>

<sup>17</sup> Korten, David: When Corporations Rule the World, Kumarian Press (1995). <http://davidkorten.org/wcrw/>

<sup>18</sup> Source: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/05/us-lifestyle-is-not-up-for-negotiation/>

<sup>19</sup> Washington Consensus was a concept used on a set of economic policy prescriptions considered to constitute the “standard” reform package promoted for developing countries by the International Financial Institutions in Washington, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as well as the US Treasury Department. In his book “The Retreat of Western Liberalism” (2017), the speechwriter for the former US Treasury secretary Larry Summers, Edward Luce, now concludes that “the Washington Consensus prescribed open trading systems, free movement of capital and central bank monetary discipline. Countries that swallowed that prescription suffered terribly...”.

<sup>20</sup> The full report and other material can be downloaded from the web-site of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Network (SAPRI): <http://www.saprin.org/>



Institutions controlled by the West (the World Bank, IMF and WTO)<sup>21</sup>. The alternative policies, developed with unprecedented participation of global civil society at the UN Summits of 1990s and often in close partnerships with developing countries, were in effect wiped out by the adoption the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000<sup>22</sup>. The MDGs did not reflect the negotiated policy outcomes of UN Summits and were to a large extent a blueprint of the OECD 1996-strategy.

### *A meagre environment for Global Education*

30 years have passed since the report of “the Brundtland commission” in 1987 set the course towards sustainable development. The report argued that “the changes in human attitudes that we call for depend on a vast campaign of education, debate, and public participation” and concluded that “this campaign must start now if sustainable human progress is to be achieved”. This was a forceful call for global and truly transformative education as part of a transformative political programme. Unfortunately, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) 2005-2014, declared at the UN Summit in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 2002 (Rio+20), came at a stage when the UN, reflecting the current global power relations, had left the transformative political agenda for sustainable development. Thus, the political environment for quality Global Education to boost transformative change in favour of sustainable development was meagre and results of the Rio-conference in 1992 and the MDGs have, at best, been mixed.

At the UN summit in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, “Rio+20”, the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, that chaired the World Commission on Environment and Development preceding UNCED 1992, disappointedly stated that “the need for economic development overrides considerations for the environment”. Furthermore she said that “the atmosphere at this year’s summit, which marks 20 years since 1992, is very different from the first conference” (in 1992) and that “the expectation at that time was to achieve an important breakthrough and a new way of thinking”<sup>23</sup>. According to UN statistics in 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty worldwide had been reduced by more than 50 percent (in accordance with MDG 1) and the UN declared that the “MDGs produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history”<sup>24</sup>. However, statistics were uncertain and many failed to mention that the worldwide reduction of extreme poverty did not happen because of Western development aid, nor the spread of liberal democracy, but mainly because of the policies and emerging economy of China, that drastically reduced the number of extreme poor in China<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See for example the 2004-analysis, “Three Generation of UN-Civil Society Relations”, by Tony Hill of the UN NGO Liaison Service (UN-NGLS): <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/177/31824.html>

<sup>22</sup> In the run-up to the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, signed up for the document, “A Better World for All”, issued by the IMF and the World Bank. To civil society representatives and others, gathered in Geneva to prepare for the Millennium Summit, it came as a shock. In a letter to Annan dated June 28th, the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Konrad Raiser, asked, “If the UN abdicates its independence and its authority, to whom are the peoples to turn?” For the full text of the letter, see <http://www.rorc.org/Artikler/724.html>

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by the Norwegian News Agency (NTB) on June 20th, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/07/06/mdg-s-produced-most-successful-anti-poverty-movement-in-history-un-report.html>

<sup>25</sup> According to the MDG Monitor the most populous countries in the world – China and India – played a major role in the worldwide reduction of poverty and confirms that “the remarkable progress in China led to reduction in extreme poverty in Eastern Asia from 61 percent to 4 percent between 1990 and 2015”. Source: <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/mdg-1-eradicate-poverty-hunger/>

## *Are prospects for Sustainable Development better today with Agenda 2030?*

The task of achieving sustainable development, as spelled out in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is still formidable. Are the prospects for sustainable development, with the SDGs within Agenda 2030 and the new European Consensus on Development, better today than during the 25 years following UNCED 1992?

The global political context is definitely very different. From a unipolar world with the US as the only superpower in the early 1990s, global power has moved from the West, to the East and the South, in an increasingly multipolar world. As a consequence, since the turn of the Century, the Western development model and its liberal democracy, as well as Western domination in global affairs and global development, has been challenged in many ways.

For many in Europe and the USA, the most dominant challenge seems to come from the Muslim world, following the emergence of al-Qaeda and 9/11 and later the emergence of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the Middle East and multiple terrorist attacks in European cities. By some, various events and violent attacks by Islamic jihadist groups were seen as part of “clash of civilisations”, as predicted by the late Samuel Huntington in 1992<sup>26</sup>. What the future holds for this prediction remains to be seen, but in Europe, issues related to Islam as a challenge to the West are currently high on the agenda.

At another level, Western global dominance was not least challenged within the global trade negotiations at the WTO. Since “The Battle of Seattle” at the WTO-ministerial in Seattle in 1999<sup>27</sup>, the West have no longer been in a position to dictate global trade rules, as observed and expressed by the Norwegian foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre following the breakdown of WTO-negotiations in 2009: “Perhaps I witnessed the breakdown of a World Order”<sup>28</sup>.

In recent years, as many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to some extent experienced improved economic growth, their dependence of Western aid has weakened. Many former recipients of Western development aid are increasingly looking to China, currently the second largest economy in the world, for solutions to their development challenges. The rise of China has also challenged Western values and liberal democracy, as experienced by Norway after 2010, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. The government of China reacted strongly, stopped ongoing negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement and cut all political contact with Norway. This conflict was just recently resolved, in December 2016, through an agreement between the governments of China and Norway that according to critics is “humiliating” for Norway. Many claim that Norway has conceded to Chinese power in order to promote Norwegian commercial interests at the cost of human rights and democracy<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> See Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clash\\_of\\_Civilizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clash_of_Civilizations)

<sup>27</sup> See Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999\\_Seattle\\_WTO\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_Seattle_WTO_protests)

<sup>28</sup> Source: Norwegian daily Aftenposten, February 18th 2009 (<https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/o6VK0/En-ny-verdensorden>)

<sup>29</sup> Paragraph 3 of the agreement reads as follows: “The Norwegian Government fully respects China's development path and social system, and highly commends its historic and unparalleled development that has taken place. The Norwegian Government reiterates its commitment to the one-China policy, fully respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity,



It remains to be seen to what extent this shift of power and influence will enhance and/or hamper sustainable development, in the South and in the North, but within this increasingly multipolar world, no longer controlled by the Western powers, the development discourse and concept and understanding of development has, on key aspects, been radically changed.

As reflected in Agenda 2030 - and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replacing the MDGs - current international development goals are no longer something to be achieved by “underdeveloped” countries in the South with the assistance of “developed” and industrialized countries in the North/West. The SDGs are goals set for all countries. The former North/South-divide, after a period with pockets of “North” in the South and pockets of “South” in the North, has to a large extent been exchanged with a divide between the global elite of the winners of globalisation and the rest<sup>30</sup>. Through the Era of Globalisation, the “race to the bottom” in the South and the East, as transnational corporations roamed the world for low wages and high profit, finally reached also the West. Thus, the development goal of reducing inequality within nations, as part of SDG 10, is increasingly relevant also within EU and the formerly “developed” world.

For poor countries, traditional and reformed development assistance is still part of the package, and the role of EU and its Member States as donors has certainly been given much attention in the New European Consensus on Development. However, the overall rationale and focus is on enhancing national resource mobilisation and transformative policies to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development globally and in all countries. It is agreed that this can only be achieved through policy coherence taking the impact of all policies into account. These fundamental changes in the concept and understanding of development is in itself no small achievement – adding to the transformative changes contained in concept of sustainable development. The extent to which it will provide for success for the SDGs in 2030 remains to be seen.

### *New challenges within the West*

In recent years, Western-led globalisation and liberal democracy, that has been part and parcel of the Western development model imposed on the world, has also been challenged within the US and Europe itself. Last year this was expressed by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as the new US President in 2016. In 2017, we witnessed increased support across Europe for anti-globalist, anti-EU, anti-muslim, anti-immigration and nationalist views within populist movements and political parties. Such sentiments became visible after the financial crisis 2007-2008, that hit many within the working and middle classes of Western Europe. At the same time, the challenges of immigration facing the now multi-ethnic Western Europe were increasingly acknowledged, as expressed by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who in 2010 declared that the multicultural society had failed<sup>31</sup>. These sentiments were strengthened after jihadist terrorist attacks by supporters of the Islamic State (IS) in several major European cities in recent years and the migrant crisis in 2015, that also brought the issue of identity politics to the forefront as a reaction to decades of multiculturalism

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attaches high importance to China's core interests and major concerns, will not support actions that undermine them, and will do its best to avoid any future damage to the bilateral relations.” The full text is available here: <http://english.cctv.com/2016/12/19/ARTI7rOa34eN6NwpRJ6XXub5161219.shtml>

<sup>30</sup> See for example Standing, Guy (2011); *The Precariat, the new dangerous class*. In this book, Standing presents the Precariat as an emerging class, comprising the rapidly growing number of people facing lives of insecurity, moving in and out of jobs that give little meaning to their lives.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11559451>

promoted by a liberal elite whose leadership is now questioned by voters, also within Western Europe. These trends are seen by many as a threat to the foundations of liberal democracy, undermining the traditional political parties that have been key actors in shaping many of the western European welfare states after WWII, in particular the social-democratic parties. These trends also appear to develop as a new dividing line in Europe between East and West, perhaps reflecting a historic divide between outward looking countries in Western Europe, including the former colonial powers, and inward looking and land-locked countries in Eastern Europe.

### *Some key challenges not addressed by the new European Consensus on Development*

As the new European Consensus reflects little or no critical self-reflection of the past, nor any in-depth analysis of the present, one could easily be led into the illusion that achieving the SDGs is well within reach, thanks to the wisdom and commitments of EU and its Member States. However, as indicated above, the historical record of the governments of Western donor countries is not convincing within the field of international development cooperation, nor within its efforts towards sustainable development. Key challenges not addressed by the new consensus include:

- 1) The fragile and fading global leadership of the USA and current challenges facing Europe, may provide opening spaces for China and governments of other emerging economies. Chinese economic and development involvement, through aid, loans and investments in low- and middle-income countries has increased substantially during the last decade and recently we have seen signs of Chinese global leadership on issues like Climate and Free Trade. The effects a possible future global leadership of China and others may have – for good and worse - on the global performance on the various SDGs, remains to be seen.
- 2) In the current situation, there are reasons to fear that the political will of the EU and its Member States to improve performance in light of the SDGs may not be strengthened, but rather weakened. Focus of security and national interests may take the upper hand as Europe, if current trends persist, increasingly focus their attention on EU's internal challenges and foreign policy issues related to defending European values and economic and political interests. Instead of improved policy coherence for global sustainable development, to which the EU and its Member States are committed through the new European Consensus, we may see the strengthening of “policy coherence for national and security interests”. In addition, the threat to liberal democracy, and indeed the concept of democracy itself, from so-called populist political parties and movements, within the EU and its Member States may further undermine the willingness and ability of Europe to pursue Agenda 2030.
- 3) If Western donor countries and governments had possessed the political will to head towards global sustainable development following the UNCED in 1992, they might have reached far, given the global dominance of the Western powers after the end of the Cold War. Today, achieving global goals will be more difficult for the EU and its Member States as their power and influence is steadily fading due to a) political decisions that has transferred economic and political power at both the national and global level from governments (and the UN) to the big transnational corporations, b) global power moving from the West to the East and South and c) the current fragile state of the EU. Agenda 2030 will require unprecedented political will within EU and its Member States, other governments in the West, as well as “the Rest”, and improved international cooperation in an increasingly multipolar world.

## *The role and potential of Global Education*

Despite the many explicit, implicit and other challenges, the new European Consensus on Development do constitute hope, joint aspirations and a framework for a common approach to development policy for EU and its Member States. What may be the role and potential of Global Education?

Among the 7 paragraphs outlining how the EU and its Member States will follow up on their commitments, it is welcome that one of them (para. 122) states that “development education and awareness raising can play an important part in raising levels of engagement among the public and in addressing the SDGs at national and global levels, thus contributing to global citizenship”. However, this hardly represents any improvement compared to the 2006-consensus and the potential for Global Education to play a key and positive role rests on the premise that we will have more and better Global Education that goes far beyond awareness raising about the SDGs and the New European Consensus. It will require critical Global Education that insists on asking difficult questions, like the very basic: What can possibly go wrong?

In this respect, the new consensus, as did the former, recognises the important role of NGOs. According to the new consensus (para. 88) EU and its Member States “will promote an operating space and enabling environments for CSOs, with full public participation, to allow them to play their roles as independent advocates, implementers and agents of change, in development education and awareness raising and in monitoring and holding authorities to account”. At a time when the role of NGOs and civil society at large is under threat around the world, also in Europe, this is most welcome and will hopefully have a positive impact on the operating space and funding for NGOs in this field in the coming years. NGOs and civil society do play an important role in Global Education, or Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) as is the concept/phase used in the consensus, but so do the formal education sector, media, academia and other actors as well. While the specific mention of NGOs is welcome, it is hardly sufficient as a follow up of SDG 4, target 4.7, that reads:

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

Furthermore, the extent to which the EU and its Member States “will promote an operating space and enabling environments” for critical Global Education within the formal education system remains to be seen.

30 years ago, the report of the “Brundtland Commission” argued that “the changes in human attitudes that we call for depend on a vast campaign of education, debate, and public participation” and concluded that “this campaign must start now if sustainable human progress is to be achieved”. Regrettably, due to the geopolitical situation and the lack of political will among Western powers at that time, as well as among elites in developing countries, progress towards sustainable development has been grossly insufficient.

Today, not least as the negative effects of climate change and inequality are increasingly felt around the world, the urgency of the need for sustainable development is even more upon us than during the UN Summit

in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At this crossroad, with a different geopolitical situation and Agenda 2030 adopted by the UN, the potential for critical Global Education to contribute, as part of a campaign like the one envisaged by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, should not be underestimated. This would require a strategic and coordinated effort by many actors. Thus, the EU and its Member States, as part of a follow up of the consensus and in partnership with NGOs, academia and other key actors, should consider the development of a strong addendum on the role of global education, building on the work done by a multi-stakeholder group after the first European Consensus<sup>32</sup>.

[Índice](#)

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<sup>32</sup> The European Consensus on Development, The Role of Development Education & Awareness Raising (2007). [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/publication-development-education-for-the-european-consensus-200806\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/publication-development-education-for-the-european-consensus-200806_en.pdf)