



**ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

HLPF 2016 V22

Follow up Questions for CSO engagement in Voluntary National Review at the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) after 2016 evaluation

This template aims to identify what mechanisms are in place for government engagement with the SDGs, civil society, local governments, and current initiatives from all actors in realizing the SDGs at a national and international level.

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One year later, what has happened?

- 1. Based on the report submitted last year, has there been progress in updating the national SDG implementation plans?**
 - Adoption of the German National Sustainability Strategy by the Federal Governments in January 2017. An English Summary you will find [here](#). A comment by civil society you will find [here](#) (German only).
 - Several German Federal States have adopted sustainable development strategies as well, although they to a varying degree related to the Agenda 2030 directly.
 - The network of cities and municipalities has already adopted a sustainable development strategy in 2015.
- 2. Have the national and local governments begun the implementation that they have submitted?**
 - Yes.
- 3. Has there been and changes to local and national contexts that have provided obstacles or changes to the SDG plan from its original submission? No.**
- 4. What kinds of SDG implementation mechanisms – national and international - are being set up now?**
 - Since 2002, the purpose of the Sustainability Strategy has been to serve as a guide for a comprehensive, sustainable political agenda taking responsibility for economically, ecologically and socially sound development for all generations, though with a strong environmental focus. To support the implementation of the 2002 National Sustainability



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Strategy (NSS), the German government has set up three bodies: the State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development, the Parliamentary Council for Sustainable Development, and the Council for Sustainable Development. The State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development (SSCSD) is responsible for the coherent implementation of the NSS. Its members are the state secretaries of each ministry; the body is coordinated and led by the head of the Federal Chancellery, at the highest level of government. The SSCSD could be a very effective body for achieving coherence in government policies. However, particular ministry interest and a resource-weak bureaucracy have so far made it impossible to formulate and implement coherent sustainability policies, and it has been possible to prevent the implementation of unsustainable policies at the ministerial level. The Parliamentary Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is the parliamentary body that deals with issues regarding sustainable legislation. Its members are elected representatives from all political parties. Unlike other parliamentary committees, however, the PCSD only has the status of a council: it is not a permanent institution of the German Bundestag (parliament), but has to be convened anew in each legislative period. This weakens the efficiency and efficacy it can bring to the task of checking every piece of legislation to see whether procedures, such as a sustainability analysis, have been followed (formal check). Owing to a lack of capacity even this is a major challenge. Finally, it does not ensure that the content of a law is sustainable. Civil society recommends that the status and competence of the Parliamentary Council should be strengthened, e.g. by upgrading its status to that of a regular parliamentary committee and giving it a central role in SDG checking. This would require regular updates from the government to all parliamentary committees, as well as a parliamentary discussion of progress reports on the government's implementation of the SDGs (reports to HLPF and on GSS). The Council for Sustainable Development (CSD) is a cross-sectoral expert body which advises the German government on matters relating to sustainable development. The council currently consists of 15 members, who are all appointed ad personam by the chancellor and thus represent neither the institutions they work for nor civil society. However, the members bring not only their expertise but also their own particular institutional perspective on how to achieve sustainable development. The CSD is supported by a secretariat through which it also runs projects to raise awareness and promote sustainable development on behalf of the government. While in itself a useful tool, the CSD is often criticized for the lack of representation of the international sector, as well as its lack of transparency and its nomination procedures. Civil society has recommended that the Council's international perspective should be strengthened. Although Germany does have a governance structure in place to deal with implementing the NSS and the 2030 Agenda, the institutions remain weak and inefficient. (from: [Champions to be? Making the Agenda 2030 a Reality](#))

5. Has civil society been more, less, or similarly included in government implementation plans than what it was during the draft process?

- Civil society has been included adequately in the formulation of the new German Sustainability Strategy through online participation and exchanges with the German



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Chancellery which has the oversight over the implementation of the sustainability strategy.

6. Has a national platform been established? Have they created formal connections with government work on the SDGs?

- On civil society recommendation the German Government establishes a national consultation platform.
- Civil society actors are also invited to participate in meetings of the State Secretary Committee on Sustainable Development.
- In the ministries sustainability representatives are being named to ensure policy coherence and participation of civil society.

7. What follow up, if any, did the HLPF provide for evaluation of the SDG implementation plans?

- The German government initiated two peer-learning processes:
 - Partners for Review (lead: Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development), a demand-driven exchange and peer-learning process for state representatives at top and working level with civil society participation
 - G20-Peer-Learning Mechanism (lead: Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, G20 Development Working Group) which is still under negotiation in the G20.

8. What more can the HLPF formal and informal processes do to ensure that voluntary countries are held liable to their SDG implementation plans?