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Poor Implementation: Rich countries risk achievement of the global goals

Three years after the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN member states, the global community already risks to fall short on achieving the global goals. Though many countries are progressing, it is especially the rich countries of the G20, which need to strengthen their efforts, as a lack of national implementation mechanisms and negative spillover effects threaten the global achievement.

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New York/Gütersloh, 9 July 2018. Three years after the historic UN summit in New York, where all UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2018 SDG Index and Dashboards Report illustrates, that world leaders need to strengthen their joint efforts to realize the global goals. According to report currently no country is completely on track to achieve all SDGs by 2030. The authors of the report urge the G20 leaders to set in place national coordination and implementation mechanisms, which are currently lacking in many places and prevent countries from fully achieving the global

goals. Furthermore the report shows, that many of the richest countries deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries as they are producing negative spillover effects, for example due to their lifestyle and consumption practices. The 2018 edition of the SDG Report "Global Responsibilities – Implementing the Goals" is the third edition since 2016 of the annual stocktaking of SDG progress provided by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). It comprises the SDG Index, a composite measure of progress across all goals.

G20 countries need to strengthen their efforts

The countries, which are generally closest to fulfilling the goals, are not the biggest economies but comparably small, developed ones: After Sweden, Denmark and Finland are the top three performing nations. Germany and France are the only G7 countries to enter the top ten performers. The United States ranks 35th on the Index, while China and the Russian Federation rank 63rd and 54th respectively. The Republic of Congo, Chad and the Central African Republic rank last. Whereas many high-income countries have almost completely eradicated extreme poverty or hunger they are not making significant progress on goals like "responsible consumption and production". Low-income countries however have made significant progress towards ending extreme poverty or access to health and education services. Still, poorer countries tend to lack adequate infrastructure and mechanisms to manage key environmental issues. Therefore, their overall scores remain significantly lower than those of high-income countries.

This year's SDG Report specifically sheds light on the implementing process in the G20 countries and their global role for achieving the goals. For the first time per capita data allow an account for the largest absolute gaps in achieving specific SDGs. China, India and the United States account for more than 40 percent of the world's gap on achieving sustainable consumption and production. In general out of the 15 countries accounting for the greatest gaps in achieving this goal, 11 are G20 countries. The report moreover shows that G20 nations account for the largest negative economic, environmental, and security spillovers, which undermine other countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs. Yet there is high variation among countries with similar per capita income suggesting that countries can reduce their negative effects without reducing per capita income. The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, among the richest countries in the world, are rated worst, when it comes to producing negative effects. The United States alone is responsible for almost a quarter of all negative SDG spillovers.

Moreover results show large variations among G20 countries with regard to

implementation mechanisms. Brazil, Mexico and Italy have taken the most significant steps among G20 countries to achieve the goals, illustrated for instance by the existence of SDG strategies, coordination units in governments or online platforms. India and Germany have at least partially already undertaken an assessment of investment needs. In contrast the United States or the Russian Federation have taken the least action on implementing the goals characterized notably by the absence of national plans or institutionalization measures that take the global goals into account.

Joint action is needed to achieve the global goals

"Once again, the Northern European countries come out on top of the SDG index, and the poorest countries come out at the bottom. The implications are clear: The social-market philosophy of a mixed economy that balances the market, social justice and green economy is the route to the SDGs. Countries trapped in extreme poverty need more help from the rest of the world", says Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the SDSN.

"The report shows the crucial role of the G20 countries for fulfilling the global goals. Rich countries need to act as role models and must reduce their negative spillover effects while providing effective tools and means to integrate the goals into national action plans", says Aart De Geus, CEO and Chairman of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Disclaimer: Any views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization, agency or programme of the United Nations.

About the study

The study was written by experts of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung, under the lead authorship of UN Special Advisor and world-renowned economist Prof. Jeffrey Sachs. The SDG Index and Dashboard collect available data for all 193 UN member states and tries to assess where each country stands in 2018 with regard to achieving the SDGs. The SDG Index ranks countries based on their performance across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Dashboards use a traffic-light chart to assess where a country stands on each of the 17 SDGs. SDSN is an association of research institutes formed to support the new UN objectives under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. The SDSN is committed to supporting the implementation of the SDGs at local, national, and global scales. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is one of the largest foundations in Germany. It works to promote social inclusion for everyone, and is committed to advancing

this goal through programs that improve education, shape democracy, advance society, promote health, vitalize culture and strengthen economies.

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