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REVIEW ARTICLE

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF EU SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) is committed to Sustainable Development Governance (SDG). However the enforcement of its SD agenda remains a challenge. The EU's SD strategy (SDS) is ambitious, wide in scope but flexible to adjustments necessitated by emerging challenges imposed by EU member states as they pursue their respective national interests. The Common EU SD vision is therefore undercut by various national agendas and sovereignty issues. Concurrently, the EU's external action is increasingly being integrated into its SD strategy. The EU is equally taking steps to mainstream human and environmental rights into its external action plan. Nevertheless, EU SDS is faced with significant threats, although it embodies some strengths and weaknesses in its implementation, with opportunity for improvements.

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INTRODUCTION

The EU is a global actor known for its soft power and commitment to environmental norms. In facing up to the challenges of sustainable development (SD), the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) exhibits strengths and weaknesses, with opportunities to counter emerging threats. The EU SDS unearths the EU's ambiguous posture in the interpretation of the philosophies of strong and weak sustainability. The philosophy of strong sustainability underscores that "natural capital cannot be viewed as a mere stock or resources. Rather, natural capital is a set of complex systems consisting of evolving biotics and abiotic elements that interact in ways that determine the ecosystem's capacity to provide human society directly and/or indirectly with a wide array of functions and services" (Brand, 2009 cited by Pelenc 2015, 1). Conversely, weak sustainability hinges on the claim that "natural capital and manufactured capital are essentially substitutable and consider that there are no essential differences between the kinds of well-being they generate"[1]. According to this school, what matters is "the total value of aggregate stock of capital which should be at least maintained or ideally increased for the sake of future generations" (Slow 1993 cited by Pelenc *et al*., 2015, 1). In this paper, I analyze and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the EU SDS for the next several decades. In so doing, I attempt a panoramic analysis of the legal underpinnings of the EU SDS and the competences, interpretation and its implementation in EU Member States (EU MSs). The EU SDS embodies major strengths, globally; the EU is a frontrunner and thinker on SD issues and a staunch supporter, producer and exporter of green technologies. SD is therefore, a deep-seated and overarching objective of the EU. Its commitment to environmental morality and the integration of the canons of SD into numerous policy sectors has birthed numerous pieces of legislation, statutes and a plethora of policy measures across various sectors with domestic and international dimensions. The vigour of the EU SDS has translated into the reality that, various EU MSs actively pioneer SD and environmental initiatives globally. The

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[1] See Slow (1993), cited by Pelenc *et al.* (2015): in Weak Sustainability versus Strong Sustainability: Brief for GSDR). Pp.1.

EU is expected to make a significant contribution to the ongoing climate negotiations in Paris (CAP 21) to enforce commitments to cut greenhouse gases globally. Despite its strengths, some weaknesses abound in the overall EU SDS as well. Most often, the common SDS is undercut by various national interest and sentiments of sovereignty. This breeds mistrust, resistance and reluctance, and strengthens the preference for economic growth in various member states. This impedes the universal implementation of the EU's SDS. The conceptual dichotomy between the common and national SD visions, and the structural problem and weaknesses in policy design constitute major flaws. Quite rightly, sustainability entails long-term vision goals and durable planning up to 2015 and 2020 as underlined by the EU, to nature long-lasting investments and behavioural changes. Nevertheless, more frequent assessment exercises are relevant to evaluate and revamp EU SDS. The EU's SDS is wide-ranging and cuts across numerous sectors. EU SDS legislation informs policy in the economic and industrial sectors, the energy and transport sectors, as well as the ecological and tourism sectors. EU SDS equally shapes production and consumption patterns within the Union, including in the agriculture and urban sectors. The EU's SDS is ambitious and wide in scope. Consequently, it is daunting to effectively implement and enforce across the board. In a growing EU, it is difficult to monitor Member-State action to verify compliance. Therefore, the EU's SDS is thus rich in legislation but challenging to implement and enforce.

Another inherent defect in the EU SDS is that there is no unique SD formula that can be applied to the same measure in all EU countries. Most EU nations subscribe to the "common but different responsibilities", unveiled during the 1992 UN World Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janerio. Countries were urged to "find their appropriate ways" to meet the collectively shared goal of a world in balance (SD Policies in Germany 2009, 6). Harmonizing various national SDS with the EU SDS and various EU policies remains a real challenge and threat. The current multi-level approach hampers the overall effective implementation of EU SDS in EU Member States. This will continue to be the case because member states will always give priority to their national interests.

A central message in the Commission's 2030 Communication is the need for a more predictable regulatory context for investment. Little attention is dedicated to the value of creating "a genuinely long-term" GHG trajectory linking the EU to the 2050 objectives. The EU is not currently obliged to deliver the 2050 GHG goals. The ETS creates "an implicit long-term" pathway for energy intensives nevertheless, the EU and member states are only committed to the 2020 GHG target under ESD (Tumer and Formosa 2014, 14).

1. Explaining Sustainable Development

The notion of Sustainable Development (SD) came into prominence in the 1980s. SD refers to development that does not destroy or undermine the ecological, economic or social basis on which continued development depends (Brown Noel *et al*., 1994, 6). Brundtland *et al*. (1989) contend that SD is development that lasts and that meets the needs of the current generation, without compromising the prospects of future generations in meeting their own needs. Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities (Brundtland *et al*., 1989, 8). The effective management and improvement of technology and social organization, driven by the right policies could pave the way for "a new era of economic growth". Thus, widespread poverty is no longer inevitable if policies that nurture, and favour growth are adopted and implemented. Poverty is an evil in itself thus, SD "requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for a better life" (Brundtland *et al*., 1989, 8). This interpretation tallies with the EU's vision of SD. Thus, the SDS of the EU and the vision of the Brundtland Commission focus on the population, generic resources, the loss of species, food security, energy, industry and human settlement. The aforementioned aspects of development cannot be addressed in isolation. A holistic approach is relevant in its own right.

Within the ambit of the SD debate, Agenda 21 epitomizes a global programme of action for SD. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the proclamation of principles for the sustainable management of forests were adopted by more than 187 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, during the Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992. This effort fulfilled the mandate of the conference as underlined by the UN General Assembly, under the chair of Brundtland, to "devise integrated strategies that would halt and reverse the negative impact of human behaviour on the physical environment and promote environmentally sustainable economic development in all countries" (Noel Brown *et al* 1994, 6). The political, economic and environmental approach to SD and the ensuing European legislation on SD is inspired by the global agenda on SD.

2. Sustainable Development as a Policy Competence: Member States versus EU Level

To explore SD as a policy competence at the Member State (MS) and EU levels, one has to address the key question as to who has the power to do what? The synergy that stems from the cooperation and commitment of all EU MS to the EU SDS epitomizes strength and opportunity to improve the strategy. The EU sets the SD vision and Member States are tasked with the burden of implementation. EU MS are bound to sign up to the SDS of the EU. The EU frames and oversees its SDS. However, practical implementation is the competence of MS. MS are nevertheless receptive to EU recommendations because EU institutions embody the institutional competence that formulates the EU SDS. SD has three distinct but interrelated dimensions; the economic, social and environmental dimensions. At the national level, MS tend to prioritize the economic and social dimensions that focus on economic sustainability and the welfare of citizens, at the expense of the common EU SDS. Nonetheless, the public and foreign policy aspects of EU SD are underwritten by various active political,

legal, socio-economic and environmental structures. A major weakness of the EU SDS stems from the fact that EU MS such as Germany enjoy an economic and political leadership position that supersedes the sustainable policies of the EU. As the economic powerhouse of the EU and its policies, Germany is recently perceived as slowing down European Commission (EC) proposals to advance its SD agenda. In June 2009 Germany is on record to have discarded the National Carbon Capture and Storage Legislation (German Council for Sustainable Development 2009, 15). A significant flaw of the EU SDS is that the EU has no enforcement mechanisms. The dire lack of vertical and horizontal integration in EU SDS at the EU and national levels, has culminated in silos and separated action in the politics of SD (Sustainability Made in Germany 2009,15). The commitment of EU MS to the EU SDS has culminated in the establishment of "national strategies for SD" and the founding of National Councils for SD (NCSD), by various governments, to produce and implement the SD strategy. The production of novel SDSs at the national level is, in some instances a duplication, waste of resources and a significant weakness to the common EU SDS. The creation of NSDCs by EU governments was prompted and triggered by Agenda 21, to foster dialogue for SD among and between stake holders and governments, as well as to monitor progress on SD and encourage initiative (Niestroy 2005, 2).

The "tussle" between the EU & MSs, over the rights and obligations of implementing the EU SDS, plays out more at the governance level. EU MS perceive SD as "a learning process" that cannot be implemented like "a plan". Rather, a SDS entails flexible approaches on the part of national governments, with "firm and accountable objectives, with quantitative targets" (EEAC 2005, 2). The effective and universal implementation of the EU SDS entails top-bottom and bottom-top interchanges. The Improvement of horizontal, vertical coordination & integration of EU SD policy, demands a leadership attitude that necessitates "significant adjustments in sartorially organized government" that characterizes the EU. To date, the establishment of a fool-proof mechanism to coordinate and improve the policy coherence of EU SDS remains a daunting challenge. This requires "vertical linkages" from the local and regional levels to the EU level and vice versa through a bottom-up approach (EEAC 2005, 2).

The politics of SD designed by the EU is inspired and informed by the findings of the World Commission on Environment and Development - The Brundtland Report (1989), the Earth Summit (1992), the Conclusions of the UN Rio+20 Conference on SD (2012). The Rio+ 20, initiative reviewed the political commitment to SD and assessed progress and gaps in the implementation of agreed commitments, while addressing new and emerging challenges (EU Sustainable Monitoring Report 2011, 3). Rio+20 proposed the development of internationally recognized indicators for measuring the green economy and underscored the need to ensure SD for generations to come, underlining the green economy as "a reference value for future economic development". Thus, the EU SDS exhibits a commitment to sustainable consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, climate change and energy (Prague Memorandum 2012, 1).

The EU 20-20-20 Strategy saw the light of day in 2010. Its mandate is to encourage sustainable growth, by promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy. This strategy is equally dedicated to promoting smart growth, based on knowledge, innovation and inclusive economic growth (The European 20-20-20 Strategy 2010, 8). The EU SDS strategy is designed to promote a "more resource efficient, greener and more competitive European Economy". The EU 20-20-20 Strategy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, aims at ensuring 75 percent employment, the investment of 3 percent of the EU's GDP in R&D, limiting greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, even 30 percent, meeting 20 percent of EU energy needs with renewables, a 20 percent increase in energy efficiency by 2020, ensure 20 million fewer people are out of poverty and reduce school dropout rates to below 10 percent (The European 20-20-20 Strategy 2010, 3). The foundations of the EU SDS are also rooted in the Treaty on the European Union (1992). Article 3 underlines that "the union … shall work for the SD of Europe, based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment, social progress, a high level of production and improvement of the environment. It shall promote scientific technological advance"(Treaty on the European Union, 1992, Art 3). The EU SDS was launched in Gothenburg by the European Council in 2001 and renewed in 2006, with the aim of "continuous improvement of the quality of life for current and future generations" (Eurostat, 2013). The EU SDS is expressed via Directives and legislation that guide and enforce the EU's SD vision across various interrelated domains such as the economy and energy, environment, transport and climate change, as well as industry and agriculture. Consequently, the EU has consistently promulgated a plethora of legislation to enforce and implement its SD policy in the aforementioned intertwined domains.

3. EU Sustainable Development Goals

The primary goal of the EU SDS is to render current development in the EU stable and sustainable. As a result, the EU has set itself a number of long-term and ambitious SD goals to shift the EU to a "low-carbon and low-input" economy; uphold the protection of biodiversity; air, water and other natural resources; strengthen the social and "international responsibility dimensions" of sustainable development (EU Presidency Report 2009, 3). The EU SDS is therefore informed by a number of clear, but interrelated objectives that are designed to uphold environmental sustainability. The EU SDS overlaps into the energy, economic and industrial domains. The EU SDS is designed to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production in various sectors, and to uphold the construction of sustainable cities (EU Presidency Report on EU SDS 2009, 1-4). The EU SDS is therefore subsumed under a number of policy objectives. The *Climate and Clean Energy Goals* are designed to combat climate change and to meet the EU's Kyoto commitments. Equally, the EU's *Sustainable Transport Goals*, outlined in a White Paper on Sustainable Transport, cover various aspects of sustainability such as exposure to noise, emissions, biodiversity, and land occupancy. Overseen by DG Transport, the Sustainable Transport Goals embody the EU's

determination to wane the EU transport sector off the dependence on fossil fuel (EU White Paper on Sustainable Transport, 2010). Similarly, the EU *Sustainable Consumption, Production, and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan*, oversees the sustainable consumption and production strategy of the Commission. Added to the above, the *Conservation and Management of Resources* component of the EU SDS is tasked with tackling the unsustainable use of resources, and the loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, the sustainable goal of *Public Health* is intended to address emerging health threats such as "antibiotic resistance and lifestyle-related diseases". Added to the foregoing, *Social Inclusion, Demography and Migration* are part of the EU's SDS. These three aspects "ensure the synergies" within the EU SDS and other "cross-cutting strategies", by improving social and education systems and market policies. In a sense, the EU SDS aims to address poverty and various sustainable development challenges (EU Presidency Report 2009, 314).

Designed to "meet the needs of the present generations without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[2], the EU SDS "integrates immediate and long-term objects, local and global action, and regards social, economic and environmental issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress". Policy overlaps within the EU SDS have translated into the mainstreaming of SD into a wide range of policies, to fight climate change and promote a low carbon economy (Review of EU SDS 2009, 1). The EU SDS goals provide a "long-term vision, and constitutes the overarching policy framework for all union policies and strategies" that are designed to "curb and adapt to climate change, decrease high energy consumption in the transport sector and reverse the loss of biodiversity and natural resources",, in order to ensure a shift to "a safe, low-carbon and low-input economy" (EU Presidency Report 2009, 2-4).

As hinted earlier, various EU SDS goals tend to overlap, and although these objectives cut across numerous sectors, they align with each other. Consequently, the SD objectives that constitute the corpus of the EU SDS are proposed by EU member states through the Council, and voted into law by the EU Parliament. Overseen by DG Environment, EU SD goals in the area of the environment are to ensure that "environmental norms are upheld during the implementation of various public and private projects" in the EU (EU Directive on Environment 2011, Art 3-4). The aforementioned Environmental sustainable goals overlap into the economic and social spheres, which in turn overlap into the energy domain.

Overseen by the DG for Transport, the EU SD goals in the transport sector aims to ensure that EU transport systems and fuels are environmentally sustainable and guarantee improvement in the welfare of citizens (EU Directive on Maritime Fuels, 2012; EU Transport Directive, 2012, Art 2-4). Equally, and under the DG for Industry, EU EDS in the industrial sector is designed to revamp EU industrial strategy, and integrate EU infrastructure, energy and transport networks into the EU industrial strategy (EU Industrial Renaissance 2014, 1-3).

Under the control of the DG for Agriculture, and within the ambit of the EU SDS, EU agricultural strategy aims to improve food security in Europe, avoid the adverse effects of climate change, and ensure the protection of plants and wildlife, and sustainable resource management (European Commission 2013, 2-4). The EU's Agriculture strategy overlaps into the areas of climate change, natural resource management and the protection of the environment. Equally, a major objective of the EU SDS is to sustainably manage Active substances. This is intertwined with the marketing of plant products (EU Regulation No 283/284, 2013). Equally, and under the authority of the DG for Energy, 20-20-20 energy goals and the 2030 Framework for climate liaise with the economy and energy sectors, with the common objectives of improving energy security performance and sustainability (EU 2030 Policy Framework[3]). The EU 2030 Policy Framework objectives align closely with the EU Decarbonization goals, to render EU economies energy efficient and climate friendly, as outlined by DG for Climate. These goals transcend into the transport, energy, construction, agricultural and technical sectors (EU Roadmap 2050, 3-5). It is important to underscore that the EU 20-20-20, 2030 and 2050 SD goal overlap into each other.

4. Survey of EU-Level legislation on Sustainable Development

The primary and secondary legislation issued by the EU constitutes the legal underpinning of EU SDS, to be executed by various MSs. The EU's SD model is evaluated by Eurostat. The EU's commitment to environmental sustainability has birthed a number of Directives and legislation. EU Directive 2011/92/EU on the environment enforces the assessment of the environmental effects of public and private projects on the environment and the extraction of minerals. Within the ambit of this law, private and public projects are subject to "environmental impact assessment", to identify the effects of projects on humans, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, landscape, climate, cultural heritage and material assets. Such findings must be made public (EU Directive on Environment 2011, Art 3). Within the EU SDS, Economic and social sustainability are enshrined within a sustainable energy security strategy that integrates environmental sustainability. The EU Energy Efficiency Directive 2012/27/EU enforces the aforementioned 20-20-20 objectives outlined by the 2009 Directive, and establishes a common framework of measures to promote energy efficiency (EE); 20 percent on EE by 2020 and beyond. This law is designed to remove market barriers and overcome market failures that hinder energy efficiency in the supply and use of energy in the EU. It obligates the EU 28 to "use energy more efficiently at all stages of the energy chain", from the producer to the final consumer and ensure efficiency in energy generation. Equally, EU countries are to consume no more than 1483 Mtoe of primary energy or, no more than 1086 Mtoe. They are obliged to set indicative national EE targets in terms

[2] The EU's philosophy of sustainable development is informed by the Brundtland interpretation of the concept of sustainable development. [Online] Available: http:www.Ec.europa.eu/environment (November 27 2015).

[3] Details and ample information about the EU 2030 Policy Strategy [Online] Available: http: www.europa.eu/climate policy (August 30, 2014).

of energy consumption by 2020, and to achieve energy saving via "energy efficiency obligation schemes", in combination with adequate policy measures to improve EE in the transport, household and industrial sectors. The public sector of Member States is tasked with "renovating 3 percent of buildings owned and occupied by the central government". Energy saving measures, accurate individual metering and energy audits in large enterprises (every 5 years) to incentivize SMSEs are equally enshrined in the energy law (EU Parliament Directive 2012/27, Art 3-24).

Transport, the environment, welfare and agriculture are intertwined in the SD debate. The EU SDS has established a nexus between climate and environment, agriculture, transport and fuel policy. EU climate action, as embedded within the EU SDS, outlines common fuel quality rules, to diminish greenhouse gas emissions from transport, air pollutants from vehicles, guarantee a single fuel market and ensure that vehicles operate correctly across the EU. The legislation demands the reduction of greenhouse gas intensity of vehicle fuel by 10 percent by 2020, to "ensure a low carbon fuel standard". This goal lines up with the aforementioned 20-20-20 vision. The Fuel Quality Directive applies to diesel, petrol and biofuels used in road transport, and gasoil for non-road-mobile machinery. The Directive obliges a 6 percent reduction in greenhouse gas intensity of fuels by 2020, and an additional 2 percent reduction through the development of techniques such as carbon capture and storage and a further 2 percent reduction from the purchase of Clean Development Mechanisms. The Fuel Quality Directive provides for biofuel sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions are expected to be 60 percent from the fossil fuel they replaced from 2018. Equally, Biofuels cannot be sourced from land with high biodiversity or high carbon stock, as stipulated in Art 9 of Kyoto and the EU Directive on petrol, diesel and biofuel. The *EU Transport Directive (2012)* enforces the SDS and environmental policy of the EU. It aims to achieve air quality that does not have "negative impact on, and risk to human health and the environment". It advocates emission abatement methods on fuel used on board vessels, gasoil, alternative fuel, compliance method for low sulphur marine fuel & ensures that marine fuels are not used in EU territorial seas, exclusive economic zones and enforce pollution control zones (EU Transport Directive & Directive on Marine fuels 2012, Art 3-4).

The industrial sector is part of the corpus of the EU's SDS. The industrial strand of the EU is enshrined in the EU's Industrial Policy. EU industrial strategy is committed to "Industrial Renaissance". Aligned to the EU SDS, this industrial policy is oriented towards completing the "integration of information, energy and transport networks", to enable the EU market to "work seamlessly" with integrated infrastructure (EU Communication: A European Industrial Renaissance 2014, 1).

The EU SDS integrates the EU Common Agricultural Policy (2013). This legislation focuses on food security, climate change, the sustainable management of natural resources, the countryside and its perilous natural resources and the protection of fauna and flora. Under this law, EU farmers are tasked with producing food sustainably whilst protecting nature and safeguarding biodiversity. EU SDS is committed to environmentally sustainable farming that uses natural resources prudently, and is "essential for food production and the quality of life today, tomorrow and for future generations"(EU Commission 2013, 3-4).

The sustainable management of active substances within the EU is enshrined in a number of SD legislation. EU Commission Regulation No 283 of March 2013, outlines the data requirements for the sustainable management of active substances. This law is further strengthened by EU Regulation No 284 that regulates chemical plant protection products and the placing of plant protection products on the EU market (EU Regulation No 283/284, 2013). Equally, the sustainable management of cosmetic products, the protection and availability of information to consumers and the free circulation of such products is overseen by EU Regulation No 1223. This law obliges producers to provide consumers with comprehensive information on the content and composition of products, to protect the health and interest of consumers. Similarly, packaging must adhere to product criteria to avoid contaminating the final product.[4] Added to the above, product info must state the origin & methods of the production of products, to enable users make informed choices. This legislation "provides for the assessment of product safety and outlaws the testing of cosmetic products on animals" (EC Regulation 1223, 2013).

The EU SDS integrates climate-friendly development that seeks to decarbonize various sectors. The EU SDS is expressed through its climate action and the adoption of the 2050 Decarburization Roadmap in 2011. The Roadmap has the mandate to achieve a low carbon economy, by adopting cost-efficient strategies to render the EU economy "less energy consuming and more climate-friendly". The 2050 strategy is designed to cut greenhouse gases and promote clean technologies in the EU and aims at a "competitive low-carbon economy in 2050", to ensure a resource efficient Europe, and cut greenhouse emissions by 80 to 95 percent by 2050, through domestic reduction. It identifies transport, power generation, construction, buildings, industry and agriculture as the main sectors responsible for emissions. These sectors need to make an efficient transition to a low carbon economy-low carbon society; innovation, green growth, jobs, resource and energy saving and clean air for Europe's SD (EU Roadmap, 2050: 3). The 2050 strategy enforces its predecessors; the 20-20-20 vision and the EU 2030 Framework for climate and energy policies. The 2030 EU policy framework was designed to render the EU economy and energy systems "more competitive, secure and sustainable"[5].

5. Appraisal of EU Member State's Attitudes towards Sustainable Development

By virtue of their membership, EU MSs are bound by the EU's SDS. Given the cross-cutting nature of SD, and like similar policy areas such as energy security, the prioritization of

[4]The EU2010 Frame work Legislation [Online] Available:http: www.europa.ac/legislation/customers (September 19, 2015).

[5] Entire text of the EU 2030 policy framework [Online] Available: http: www.ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/2030/index (August 17 May 2015).

national agendas tends to undercut the common EU vision. Sovereignty concerns in various national contexts, impedes the inclusive and uniform implementation of the common SD vision in various Member States such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) and others. Before surveying the attitudes of EU MS towards SD, it is relevant to briefly discuss EU SDS, to highlight the SD indicators on which the strategy hinges. The EUs SD indicators embody "a clear and easily communicable structure and relevance of political decision-making, based on priority policy issues" (European Union Evaluation Report 2013, 21). The SD goals enshrined in the EU SDS are designed to systematically pursue a broad but coherent SDS. Europe's SDS hinges on twelve underlined indicators that are used to evaluate progress made in implementing the EU's political, economic and environmental models of SD. The EU SD Indicators (SDI) are designed and organized within a cross-cutting "theme oriented framework", that provides a "clear and easily communicable structure and relevance to political decision-making". These SDI hold significant opportunities. They embody priority questions, and are "flexible to adjust to possible changes, priorities and objectives, considering novel issues and priorities that emerge" (Eurostat Statistical Book 2013, 22). The ensuing EU SDIs "follow a gradient from economic, through social, environmental to the global and institutional dimensions" (Monitoring Report of EU Sustainable Development Strategy, 2013:21). This framework and thematic areas embody the Political, Economic and Environmental Categories, Models and Approaches for the EU SD Policy.

6. European Union Sustainable Development Indicators

To pursue a broad but systematic SDS, the EU has established twelve indicators as objectives; benchmarks that define the EU SDS. These indicators are used to evaluate progress. The *sustainable socio-economic development* indicator is a core element of the EU SDS. It is designed to promote a "prosperous, innovative, knowledge-rich, competitive and eco-efficient economy", that will provide full and high-quality employment and living standards across the EU. The sustainable development indicator is significant in that, it highlights the economic dimension of SD. It increases the prospects of positively impacting the EU's SDS by upholding eco-efficiency in the economic sector, and advancing sustainable economic development in an eco-friendly fashion, through innovation. The *sustainable consumption and production* indicator is designed to promote "sustainable consumption and production patterns", that address socio-economic development within "the carrying capacity" of ecosystems while, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, as an indispensable requirement for SD. This indicator has the operational objectives and targets focus on sustainable resource use and waste, consumption patterns and production patterns (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 86-85). This indicator is all the more important because the production and consumption patterns in the North have been very unsustainable. The industrial revolution is largely responsible for the current adverse effects of climate change. Better still, energy consumption and production patterns; in a major energy intensive nation such as the USA is highly unsustainable and environmentally hazardous. The sustainable consumption and production commitment represents an opportunity for the EU to excel in its leadership position in matters of sustainable development. This measure impacts the EU SDS because it ensures the sustainable use of finite resources and checks resource waste. It equally, guarantees that consumption patterns, especially energy consumption is sustainable and well regulated, and ensures the eco-management and audit of production patterns, especially energy production.

The *social inclusion* indicator seeks to jointly address "social inclusion, demography and migration", as key challenges of the EU SDS. The goal with this indicator is to create a socially inclusive society that enhances solidarity between and within generations, by securing and increasing the quality of life of EU citizens, as a precondition for lasting individual well-being. The operational objectives of the social inclusion indicator are to "eradicate monetary crisis, and improve living conditions, access to the labour market, and "to enhance training and reduce early leavers from education. Social inclusion is intertwined with the *Demographic Change* indicator. This indicator seeks to "secure, and increase the quality of life of citizens as a precondition for lasting individual wellbeing". This entails improving life expectancy, old-age incomes and public finance sustainability (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 99-133, 156). On a global scale, development patterns tend to flourish more in the North, and some East Asian countries, at the expense of the global South. This has often triggered people flows from the South to the North. The social inclusion indicator is an important arsenal in the EU SDS, to reverse social exclusion both within and without EU societies. Sustainable transport, climate change and energy are interwoven as SD indicators. An eco-friendly transport and energy strategy will go a long way in curbing carbon dioxide emissions and the adverse effects of climate change. Ecologically hostile fossil fuels tend to intensify the effects of climate change.

The *public health* indicator, seeks to promote "good public health on equal conditions and to improve protection against health threats", while the *climate change and energy* indicator is dedicated to limiting the negative effects of climate change on society and the environment. This entails cutting greenhouse gas emissions by sector, and diminishing energy dependency through energy efficiency (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 178-179). The adverse effects of climate change include extremes of climate and the propagation of disease. Thus, the relevance of the public health indicator in the EU SDS is relevant in its own right. By putting in place measures to diminish exposure to air pollution and toxic chemicals, there are prospects to diminish death rates from clinical diseases provoked by the adverse effects of climate change on a global scale. Similarly, the protection of biodiversity, fresh water resources, marine ecosystems and safe land use practices, together constitute the *natural resource pillar* of the EU SDS. EU sustainability strategy on natural resources is designed to "improve the management and avoid the overexploitation of natural resources" while, highlighting the values of ecosystem services (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 217-234). Natural resources are vital for development. The industrial sector in Europe and most of the North is powered with resources from

SSA. Without a sustainable development cap, to ensure the sustainable exploitation of finite resources, SSA states will not benefit from the natural resources they are naturally endowed with, for their own development. Thus, the sustainable management of natural resources, as conceived within the EU SDS will preserve natural lands, forest bird and animal populations, and ensure intergenerational justice in resource management.

The *global governance indicator* of the EU SD global partnership, combines global poverty and various SD challenges as key priorities. The target of this indicator under the EU SDS is to promote SD activities worldwide, by ensuring that "EU's internal and international policies are consistent with global SD and its international commitments". This equally embodies the foreign policy component of EU SDS. Within the ambit of the *global partnership* indicator, the EU finances SD around the world and applies SD to global trade, with respect to its imports from developing countries, and global resource management between local, regional and global actors in SD (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 235-257). The enforcement of the canons of SD and those of climate change demand global governance and leadership. The depletion of the planet's resources on a global scale, and efforts to save a planet in peril, are matters that entail global leadership. The EU has been a major player in various climate gatherings, with a leadership goal on SD.

EU MSs exhibit similar and sometime divergent approaches in implementing the EU SDS. Some EU MSs prefer and confine the leadership and coordination of their SDS to a Prime Minister, to enhance commitment in individual ministries, with the ministry of environment on the lead. Such EU countries are convinced that coordination at the highest level makes for progress and policy coherence in matters of SD (EEAC, 2005:2). EU member countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Poland and UK, have established SD Councils (SDC). SDCs are specific and valuable mechanisms that foster the SD dialogue among stakeholders. They have the potential for "innovation approaches and solutions and for achieving unexpected agreement". SDC are national government constructs, that are independent in their deliberations. They serve as the bridge between "non-government and government actors, and transport collective views and knowledge of civil society to the government" (EEAC 2005, 3). Most EU countries prefer the SDC to the government-led representational model because, it encourages the "opening of minds and horizons as a prerequisite for innovation, and encourages the activities of civil society and achievement in selected policy fields" (EEAC 2005, 3).

The UK and Belgium have "quasi federal structures" to oversee SD. Their preference is to address SD at the regional level, not without challenges. Belgium stands out as an EU member state that has attempted to harmonize EU-level SDS with the Belgian SD agenda. The Belgian SD Council (BSDC) regulates and coordinates the Belgian federal policy on SD. The BSDC is a multi-stakeholder that "encourages the SD debate" with members of government. With an advisory role, and tasked with "sensitizing organization and citizens on the subject of SD", the BSDC oversees the implementation of Belgium's international commitment such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity (FCCCCBD), Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg and the Doha Agenda[6].

Given the nexus between economic productivity and SD, the posture of Germany as the biggest EU economy is interesting within the EU SD debate. The German SDS is overseen by the German Council for SD (GCSD). The GCSD "heads" the SD agenda on the national scale and partners in SD initiatives on the intergovernmental level. It backs the UN vision to "adopt SD goals as an integral part of the universal post 2015 Agenda"[7]. Germany has been at the forefront of SD thinking and action, as the world's leading exporter of green technologies. The establishment of the German Sustainable Award has strengthened corporate social responsibility, and inspired churches, NGOs and other institutions, to establish sustainable projects and expert grouping award schemes (Sustainability Made in Germany 2009, 14-15).

Germany has used its leadership position in Europe, to push for a strong SD and environmental agenda. It prioritizes its national SD agenda to the EU SDS. In 2009, Germany dismissed the carbon capture legislation and the setting of carbon standards for vehicles. Contrary to the EU long-term approach to SD, SD planning in Germany deviates from long-term planning. It is associated with "soviet-style 5-year central planning" (Sustainability Made in Germany 2009, 14-15). The German approach to SD is dictated by its economic leadership. German businesses have been at the fore, in developing sustainable techniques via sound entrepreneurial management that is dedicated to meeting domestic needs, while expanding Germany's export potentials. Critics have blamed Germany for using its leadership position and political muscle to prioritize its economic interest, to slow down progress on the overall implementation and enforcement of the EU SDS.

At the national level, the German SDS is sectarian in practice. The German parliament has broken up SD into sectors that hinge on various German institutions, assigned with specific tasks. The sectarian approach impedes attempts at concerted action and often translates into crises of ineffectiveness. Nevertheless, the German Bundestag is amongst the few parliaments on the globe to actively monitor the German sustainability strategy and to put together a commission to improve comprehensiveness in sustainable issues (Sustainability Made in Germany 2009, 14-16).

7. The EU in the World: Sustainable Development as Foreign Policy (FP)

The EU is a prominent global actor, known for its soft power. As cases in point, the EU is globally active in climate diplomacy. Its Emissions Trading System (ETS) represents a model at a global scale in carbon trading. The EU ETS symbolizes "a cornerstone of the EU's policy to combat climate change, and a key tool for reducing industrial

[6] The Belgian attitude to Sustainable Development within the ambit of EU SDS [Online] Available: http www.eeeac.eu/doc (November 15 2015).
[7] The German Council for Sustainable Development [Online] Available: http www. Nachhaltigkei.de (November 03 2015).

greenhouse gas emission cost-effectively". Thus, the EU ETS embodies "the biggest international system for trading greenhouse gas emission allowances" (EU ETS Factsheet 2013, 2-6). Equally, the EU is actively involved in seeking sustainable peace in various hot spots in the South, such as South Sudan. Europe equally promotes the development and use of clean alternative energies through the EU-Africa Strategic Energy Partnership, and supports the renewable energy initiatives of the African Union Commission. Furthermore, Europe's commitment to global governance and ability to conduct FP with SD has birthed the global governance and global partnership pillar of EU SDS. The global governance indicator is intended to promote "coherence between local, regional, national and global actions, in order to enhance their contribution to SD". This is intended for policy coherence and effectiveness in matters of SD. The global partnership pillar, is thus dedicated to promoting SD actively worldwide and ensure that the EU internal and external policies are consistent with global SD and international commitments (EU SD Evaluation Report 2013, 256-275).

SD objectives were inscribed in EU treaties earlier on (TEU, 1992: Art 2, 3 & 11). Over the years, the EU has evolved from an actor focused merely on the internal component of European integration, to a global actor, especially in trade and development cooperation (Lisbon Treaty 2009, Art 208). The EU proliferates its SD goals around the globe, via its external action agenda, thereby, transcending its traditional interpretation of SD, to adopt a broader vision. The EU has broadened and consolidated its SD vision in ensuing meetings and communiqués, notably during the Barcelona Summit and in the Treaty of Lisbon. The development, globalization and environment nexus has boosted the EU's commitment to environmental and social standards in economic and industrial activity as a way of upholding its SD commitments globally. This has culminated in the promotion of environmental standards and the mainstreaming of environmental protection as a vital component of SD, used to shape FP (Purdey 2013, 5).

Development and trade are the first area of EU action. It has strengthened this role as a commitment (Lisbon Treaty 2009, Art 207-208). Within its external action framework, the EU is committed to upholding SD and associated human rights, democratic and environmental rights, in a transversal relationship with third world countries (Lisbon Treaty 2009, Art 2&6). EU has taken measures to "mainstream" human and environmental rights into its entire action plan and attempted to export EU SD and human right values in its relations with third countries globally. All EU external action is increasingly being integrated into the EU SDS (TEU 1992, Art 3).

EU blends SD with foreign direct investment. Its SDs has bred external measures that govern EU foreign direct investment (FDI) in developing countries and EU MS. This has broadened the EU's use of SD as a driver of its FP agenda. Faced with growing levels of FDI in developing and ACP countries, and given the prospects of violating socio-economic rights in the South, the EU has enhanced its existing SD instruments and developed fresh measures to uphold its own responsibility as "home state" of most multinational companies and the host states (Correaa 2013, 142-143).

The EU has integrated SD goals into its new agreements with third countries. EU has incorporated full SD chapters, entailing commitments for labour standards, environmental norms and specific provisions to regulate the behaviour of foreign investors. Moreover, it has devised internal rules that underscore its commitment to SD, to enhance corporate social responsibility for extractive industries (COM 2009, 400; COM 2001, 366). This is crucial for developing countries because environmental degradation affects vulnerable developing nations, as a consequence of the development action of the North. The unsustainable exploitation of finite resources across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), leads to the removal of forest cover and soil erosion. Resource exploitations by actors from the North, usurps the resources needed for Africa's development. Equally, the massive acquisition of vast chunks of arable land across SSA by rich and powerful multinationals from the North and capital-rich Gulf and East Asian states, to grow grain for the food security of their populations, as well as for the production of biofuels, is resulting in a massive loss of fauna and flora, the illegal acquisition of natural resources on acquired lands, as well as unprecedented deforestation. The forests of the Congo Basin in Africa and the Amazon are key in curbing the effects of climate change on a global scale, for the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. SD is integrated into the *Cotonou Agreements (Art 32*), to oversee environmental and labour standards for the current generation, while upholding the rights of future generations. This approach was endorsed by the European Parliament on the grounds that, "trade must be at the service of development and the fight against poverty". Given that SD must enhance environmental protection and socio-economic development, the EU inserts binding social and environmental norms in trade agreements (European Parliament Resolution 2010, 7).

The EU conducts its relations with multinational enterprises (MNEs) with SD, reminding them of their responsibilities in the South, where they operate. It equally utilizes SD to address novel challenges and requirements, such as the increasing demand in FDI and global trade (Lisbon Treaty 2009, Art 207). Employing the SD weapon, the EU has attempted to strengthen corporate social responsibility (CSR), initially through soft law and gradually through hard law. It consistently inserts SD clauses and specific investment provisions in new agreements with third countries, while enhancing its responsibilities, through the new Transparency and Accounting Directive. This is vital for developing countries that relate with the EU. They are inclined to use labour standards and environmental norms as a bargaining chip for investment. In the absence of a global legal framework, the EU is devoted to SD and strives to incorporate SD into a legal framework internally and in its relations with third countries. SD serves a bearing for EU economic partnership diplomacy, with the Caribbean countries (CARIFORMUM) of the ACP family. The EU-CARIFORMUM Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are a classic dramatization of conducting foreign policy with SD. SD goals are applied & integrated at every level of the EPAs (Cotonou 2005, Art 3). Article 9 of Cotonou underlines that "respect for all human rights & fundamental freedoms, including respect for fundamental social rights, democracy based on the rule of law and transparent & accountable governance are an integral part of sustainable development."

(Cotonou 2005, Art 9). The CARIFORUM EPA aims to achieve SD via a trade partnership that promotes regional integration & the gradual integration of CARIFORUM Countries into the world economy, including capacity building measures that support increased investment. SD is the presiding principle governing the EU-Caribbean economic partnership. SD is also endorsed in sections of the agreement dealing with environment and social provision (EPA-CARIFORUM 2008, Art 1). In the application of the agreement "full account shall be taken of human, cultural, economic, social, health and environmental best interests of their respective population and future generations and that the decision-making methods shall embrace the fundamental principles of ownership, participation and dialogue" (EPA-CARIFORUM 2008, Article 3).

Conclusion

The current legal, economic and political landscape has changed since the last package was negotiated in 2007, making a deal for 2030 even harder to reach. An economic and financial crisis, an increased emphasis on ES and sovereignty, and a revision of the EU Treaties in 2009, are all potential obstacles to achieving a legally and scientifically sound 2030 framework (Client Earth 2013, 3). SD goals were inscribed into Treaty of the European Union (Art 2 & 11) earlier and other EU treaties. Enshrining SD into EU law is crucial because, the Brundtland interpretation provides no legal underpinning. The EU SDS is wide-ranging and cuts across numerous sectors thus, it is challenging to implement and enforce. EU Member States have signed up to the SDS of the EU. However, Member States tend to prioritize national; their SD agendas due to sovereignty sentiments and the dedication to back and boost economic growth. In a sense, it remains a challenge to effectively monitor Member-State action and verify compliance to SD commitments in a growing EU. From the foregoing analysis of the EU EDS, it is evident that the EU has made considerable progress in translating and applying SD as an instrument for conducting EU foreign policy. Nevertheless, the lack of political will on the part of some member states constitute a major hurdle for the EU SDS. The EU SDS harbors some weaknesses nonetheless; it also holds prospects that guarantee its expansion and durability in the next several years. It is useful to emphasize by way of conclusion that, the EU SDS projects strength of the EU as a global actor and global leader in the politics of SD. However, there is room to improve policy expansion and effectiveness. The key weakness to be addressed is enforcing the common vision at the national level. EU SDS must be holistic to find a balance between EU-level and national-level SD governance. Moreover, economic, social, environmental, transport and urban construction models are intertwined and cross-cutting. This is a daunting challenge, given that policy implementation remains a national competence. The EU SDS must jointly encourage leadership and ownership via a top-bottom and bottom-up approach in a process driven by firmness and flexibility. Care must be taken to ensure that national SD strategies do not blur the common EU SDS, especially because. The link between national SDS and EU SDS is currently very loose and occasionally, both levels tend to ignore each other during implementation in member states. EU needs to look into and take into consideration national SDS, when preparing proposals/recommendations. Member states understandably focus first on national governance, in order to reflect better on the appropriate approach to translate the EU SDS in national SD policy. EU legislation on various aspects of SD is sidelined in preference in national SD strategies. It is laudable, but tricky for the EU to uphold its SD vision in dealing with ACP nations, with which it strives to conclude EPAs. EU needs to slow down in formulating new SD policy, and focus more on policy implementation and enforce implementation. This will entail investing adequate resources to translate existing legislation on EU policy on SD into action and concrete results. To obtain and access the policy-effectiveness of the EU SDS, the EU needs to implement policy control measures. Assessing current EU SD policy raises the prospects of effective implementation of SD measures in the EU as a whole. The EU needs to combine near-term and long-term measures to enforce its SDS and governance across various sectors. The EU SDS reflects broader EU policy in the area of energy and the environment. Sovereignty concerns tend to undercut the common EU agenda. The new framework Directive would mobilize near term tools of governance – principally 5 yearly carbon "budgets" as opposed to long term "targets" that cannot be enforced until they expire and encourage member states to behave as "free-riders", knowing the Commission is unlikely to enforce in any event. In a sense, long term and binding system of budgets linked to explicit and enforceable reporting and pathway adjustment obligations would give the economy and more direct and clear indication of the stability of commitment to the decarburization objective (Tumer & Formosa 2012, 14-15).

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