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Climate Action and Human

Wellbeing at a Crossroads:

Historical Transformation or Backlash?

#CrossroadsBonn



The Climate – Justice – Cooperation Nexus: 10 Cornerstones of the Great Transformation towards Sustainability

Memorandum

The challenge of our generation:

Avert dangerous global warming – invest in social cohesion and wellbeing of people – build local, national, and transnational alliances for transformative change towards sustainability

The Climate – Justice – Cooperation Nexus: 10 Cornerstones of the Great Transformation towards Sustainability

- 1. We can reach the goals of the Paris Agreement – but ambitious action is needed now!** Climate change is a threat to humanity. Irreversible Earth systems changes need to be avoided. This is a civilisational challenge which requires unprecedented joint action around the globe. We are under huge time pressure. Global CO₂ emissions must decline to zero by mid-century in order to achieve the ambitious Paris goal, aimed at stabilising the global mean temperature well below 2 degrees C, and if possible at 1.5 degrees C. This translates into a stylised “carbon law”, whereby emissions must be halved every decade in analogy to the Moore’s law of semiconductors. We have the resources and the technology to achieve this, but do we have the political will and the resolve? Recent developments, such as the declaration by the US President to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, can be interpreted as a major setback. At the same time, they may inspire counter-movements, strengthening the determination to vigorously combat climate change. In particular, OECD countries and emerging economies should make commitments within the G 20 and within their national policies to ensure the achievement of global decarbonisation by the middle of the century.
- 2. Investment into decarbonisation and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing - like two sides of the same coin!** Without significant investments aimed at combating social imbalances and simultaneously strengthening social cohesion including elimination of all gender inequities, we will be witnessing a spread of counter transformation blocking fundamental decarbonisation and progress toward sustainability and social justice. This will be most prominent where “our country first”, xenophobia, authoritarian, nationalism, and climate sceptics are gaining support. Climate protection and social as well as gender justice can only be achieved together. The Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development need to be brought forward and implemented simultaneously.
- 3. There are major causes for concern: Global cooperation and even peace are under pressure!** There are some worrying trends, which are working against the global collaborative effort required to act jointly, across borders and sectors to avoid dangerous climate change. Not having one of the major economies in the world as part of this global effort is highly detrimental to the global purpose and unity that has been built over two decades since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (on 10 December 1997). Nations focusing inwards exactly at a time when cross-border collaboration is needed is an obstacle for action and global progress. Escalation of conflict with North Korea and Iran threatens global peace, and ultimately diverts the attention from humanity’s quest to prevent dangerous climate change and destabilisation of the planet.
- 4. Global cooperation cannot succeed without justice and social cohesion!** Current developments around the world demonstrate that social justice is not only the foundation for climate protection and decarbonisation, but also the basis for international cooperation. If social cohesion begins to disintegrate in our societies, dangerous nationalism will rise, while the willingness of transboundary collaboration for climate protection and global sustainable development will recede.
- 5. Reasons for optimism: Technological breakthroughs and innovations are driving the transformation!** Despite these worrying trends, we observe significant breakthroughs in renewable energy and major increases in electric mobility taking place worldwide, both in some of the largest economies and in many developing countries. Sub-national, urban, and regional leaders are taking actions into their own hands, by making settlements not only sustainable, but also transforming them into smart cities that benefit from digitisation advancements. The key is improving efficiency across all sectors, allowing more to be achieved with less. New behaviours, lifestyles and technologies are converging toward fully-decarbonised, “smart”, inclusive, and resilient societies.
- 6. Reasons for hope: New narratives for sustainable futures create trust!** Anxiety about the future is an impediment to a sustainable transformation. Many resent the loss of control by governments: international cash flows, refugee movements, global data flows, and transboundary diseases are causing uncertainty. Uncertainty is at the same time an inherent part of the transformation towards sustainability. But the 2030 Agenda can create a climate of trust and hope for the future; it is a new global social contract, promoting attractive and diverse visions of wellbeing for all people in cities and regions, and thereby creating an overarching positive narrative for the 21st century. The sustainability transformation will not only be driven by technologies, incentives, and new business models, but also by cultural change, creativity, and passion.

7. **De-risking financing is the key!** The essential way forward is to assure adequate financing of sustainable development. Public funding to enable the sustainability transformation and joint worldwide efforts to stabilize the global commons are very important. But public funding alone is not enough. Redirecting private financing in a smart way can achieve multiple benefits, without increasing costs. For example, measures for reducing air pollution and increasing energy security can reduce total investments by roughly 40% if coordinated with climate policies. These opportunities need to be translated into real investments through assurances and guarantees, in order to reduce risks and attract financial flows toward achievement of sustainable futures.
8. **Europe and Germany need to become climate pioneers again!** They have already made significant contributions towards global climate protection. Nevertheless, Germany will fail to achieve its 2020 climate goal of reducing its emissions by 40%, unless coal use is reduced immediately and eliminated by 2030. With COP23 occurring in Bonn, it is imperative that Europe becomes a shining example for climate protection again. French President Macron, the future Federal Government in Berlin, and other leaders in Europe must place climate protection, resilience, social cohesion, and global cooperation for sustainable development at the centre of rebuilding and strengthening the European Union. New coalitions must be forged, especially with China and emerging economies, towards the sustainability transformation.
9. **The Paris Climate Agreement and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can only succeed if cooperation with de-**

veloping countries is significantly strengthened!

If Africa is not succeeding, Europe cannot flourish either – this is one lesson observed from the recent refugee movements. The poorest countries require support in reducing poverty and inequity, in order to successfully achieve the global transformation toward climate resilient and sustainable societies. Small Island States and other vulnerable societies need support to avoid social disasters, and to minimise loss and damages driven by global warming. But paternalistic “development aid” is not a solution. We need to establish a culture of global cooperation based on mutual respect and joint learning. Small islands states, and many other developing countries are increasingly proactive drivers of the sustainability transformation. They should be supported massively. Industrial and emerging economies must learn about the importance of genuine partnerships for global sustainable development as means for stable foreign and security policies. For Europe, the future partnership with Africa will become the model case for jointly shaping the future.

10. The century of Global Commons and Global Public Goods for the benefit of all, instead of “Our Country First”!

The 19th and 20th centuries were clearly the age of individual national states. The 21st century offers the opportunity to sustain the planetary and social basis of humankind. The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement provide the vision for developing a global culture of cooperation where in addition to national wellbeing also global welfare and the concept of our global commons converge into a new foundation for human development. As our societies, science, arts, cities and regions become more and more connected through networks across boundaries, a new foundation would be established for achieving a sustainable future for all.

Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner, Director of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and Co-Director Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research (GCR21)

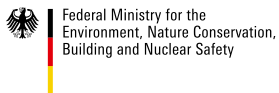
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