



Ending poverty together; new partnerships to improve everyone's lives

*by Neven Mimica**

2015 is a truly momentous year for international cooperation and development. I have been privileged to participate in the Addis Ababa financing for development conference and the UN summit in September in New York to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed as part of the 2030 agenda move us beyond the traditional development challenges, addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, in a balanced way and by integrating gender, peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and good governance. The agenda is based on human rights for all, without discrimination of any kind. The fight against all forms of inequalities is also at the heart of the agenda. This is a major paradigm shift which should allow us to address the challenges facing the world today. Building further on these significant achievements, the international community can now also look forward to a decisive and positive outcome from the climate change conference in Paris at the end of this year.

The message from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the last 15 years is that we have made some good progress in improving the lives of the poorest people around the world, in particular in areas such as reducing poverty and improving school enrolment. In most countries, girls are enrolled in school at an equal level to boys. However, despite this progress, there are still many millions of people around the world who continue to need help in areas such as maternal and child mortality.

The 2030 agenda is universal and commits all countries in the world to contribute to creating a better life for their own people and for everyone around the world. This is why the European Union is determined to play its part in pushing forward in areas such as the circular economy and an improved digital single market. Our citizens can improve their lives by using all the available new technology to generate innovation in areas such as food production, controlling food waste and modern health applications, which help our citizens stay healthy and avoid illness. We stand ready to share these innovations and experiences.

Moreover, in 2015 we launched the European Year for Development, where we engaged with our citizens to explain what is happening on development internationally and also to listen to our citizens to understand what matters to them.

Further strengthening EU-CELAC cooperation has been an important aspect of our work in this landmark year for development. At the EU-CELAC summit last June in Brussels, we all agreed a declaration where 62 states from both sides of the Atlantic, representing one third of UN members, committed themselves to eradicating poverty in all its forms and achieving



sustainable development through our economic, social and environmental development efforts.

The EU, Latin America and the Caribbean can add value to global efforts by coming together to deliver on the 2030 agenda and the SDGs. We all want a partnership of equals in our mutual interest. We can celebrate the fact that many Latin American and Caribbean countries have already become upper middle-income countries. These countries are determined to play a new role on the international scene. A new approach to international cooperation between our two regions is taking shape. We have a new Regional Facility for International Cooperation for joint activities in less developed countries within the region. The LAC region's economic and social growth and development path can be made sustainable over time, guaranteeing the respect of human rights, democratic principles and environmental protection.

SDG 10 covers inequality. There is increasing evidence that high inequality is detrimental to growth and may also have adverse effects on social and political stability. We can create partnerships for results in the area of addressing inequalities, both within and among countries.

The European Union supports smart, inclusive and sustainable growth to achieve a decent life for all. This means meeting the basic needs and rights of the world's poorest people, including those who have been marginalised and excluded from the benefits of economic growth. Supporting the goals of increasing equity and reducing inequality will help ensure social cohesion and the long-term sustainability of poverty reduction.

We are working to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth through our AL INVEST 5.0 programme. To reduce inequalities, we want to promote gender equality through the EUROsociAL+ programme. We are also working at continental level on programmes to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities.

Central America and the Caribbean are particularly vulnerable *to climate change and its impacts*, especially the small island developing states. A significant part of our resources will be allocated to SDG 13. Programmes to promote environmental sustainability and combat climate change are currently being formulated for the period up to 2020. Together, we can positively influence the negotiations at the UNFCCC COP21 towards an ambitious, forward looking and legally binding climate deal.

Our Caribbean cooperation will be focussed on SDG 7, *access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*. Caribbean countries want to reduce fossil fuel use, increase the



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share of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency. The EU is ready to provide financial and technical support for these changes.

The EU-LAC Foundation could support these objectives by contributing to connecting the intergovernmental process with the business, academic, and social sector, as well as with the civil society. Robust and effective follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda will be critical to its success. All countries should monitor their progress against the SDGs, to ensure credibility of our commitments and show accountability to our citizens. The follow-up and review arrangements should be inclusive, participatory and transparent and ensure that no-one is left behind.

***Neven Mimica** is the European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development.

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