



*High Level Political Forum 2022 - Italian Voluntary National Review*

## **A position paper of the Forum for Sustainable Development**

### **1. Introductory and summary remarks**

- 1.1 It is important to preserve and structure more and more the National Strategy for Sustainable Development as a space for dialogue between institutions and Non State Actors and participatory policy making between institutions and Non State Actors, either profit or not-for-profit bodies that act to empower the social rights of the most vulnerable social groups.
- 1.2 The Italian Constitution modified in 2022, Art. 9 and 41: environment, biodiversity, natural ecosystems and health are now interlinked "common goods" to be protected and promoted as part of is now part of the national heritage and the Italian natural, social and cultural capital to be protected. The economic objectives of private initiative must be consistent with an objective of safeguarding social rights and the environmental equilibrium of flora and fauna. This is the outcome of a longstanding struggle and advocacy work led by ASviS and other non state actors coalitions.
- 1.3 Widespread and effective awareness raising activity on the Agenda 2030, culminating in the Sustainable Development Festival (2789 events in 4 years), organized by several hundreds organizations, under the lead of ASviS.
- 1.4 We acknowledge a general issue of fragmentation in integrating the concerns of sustainability in general policy making both within an horizontal and vertical perspective. These challenges become more urging in the current context of the war in Ukraine and other ongoing conflicts, and should be addressed in a consistent way and in structural terms. Within this perspective, it is important to enhance the role of Italy and European Union in reframing the method of multilateralism with special regards to an urgent structural reform of the United

Nations to put at the hearth human rights, solidarity, and a notion of international cooperation as a means of human development.

## 2. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: a challenge for Italian institutional system

- 2.1 PCSD is a rising priority in policy making. In order to develop the transformative potential of the Agenda 2030, it needs to be understood not only in terms of interaction between objectives and targets, but also in terms of coherence with the principles of the Agenda; and in terms of coherence between internal and external agenda.
- 2.2 A specific attention in enhancing PCSD should be paid and further developed by introducing and/or improving the gender mainstreaming in the policies and monitoring their gender impact.
- 2.3 The lack of integration between the internal and external dimensions of the agenda for sustainable development is an issue. The 'Partnership' section of the expected Strategy for Sustainable Development follows an outline that is different from that of the other sections, exclusively focussed on International Development Cooperation. It is still unclear where the dialogue on the Partnership issues beyond development cooperation should take place, including all issues related to migration, defense, trade and foreign investment policies (among others). By now, the consultation on the Partnership section has taken place within the working group on planning of the National Council for Development Cooperation; the working group working on the Agenda 2030 has then prioritized PCSD.
- 2.4 Informing the policy making in a perspective of coherence requires a complex arrangement in institutional terms. We welcome the forthcoming adoption of the Plan for the PCSD. The plan has been the object of analysis and reflection through an open process of consultation.
- 2.5 Yet, some aspects of the institutional design on the PCSD governance still require refinement, in order to become effective in contributing to the overall policy making and its aligning to Agenda 2030.
- 2.6 The system of indicators used to monitor the advancements in terms of sustainability still represents a challenge. Indicators are often conceived as a purely technical and neutral element: there is a strong need for discussing 'what' are we measuring, and to what extent we need to develop alternative metrics. In this perspective, it appears necessary to develop the presence of CSO/NSA in the technical instances where indicators are decided upon and approved, in order to identify a more appropriate set of indicators for measuring the stated objectives.



- 2.7 A major practical concern in terms of PCSD, is the way the most fragile and vulnerable strata of the population, those who are the hardest hit and pay the highest cost, will be accompanied during the transitions (ecological transition, digital transition). This should include specific awareness raising provisions and local level initiatives that may allow a gradual approach and familiarity to new systems.
- 2.8 In terms of current policy challenges, there is an important gap to be filled in how sustainable development is integrated into the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience. No meaningful process of participation was established in view of its elaboration; its formulation expresses only very weakly the need for alignment to Agenda 2030 principles and objectives; its monitoring is still very limited in terms of absence of data and accountability compromising proper evaluation processes.
- 2.9 Particularly in view of the implementation phase of the NPRR, it is important to strengthen analysis and action on coherence at the local and regional levels with the participation of regional fora and town assemblies; and more in general all provisions to foster active citizenship. Participation is key in making policies really responsive to the needs of the communities.
- 2.10 Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development needs to be brought at a more 'concrete' level in establishing a policy making where the different elements of the Agenda 2030 (economic, social, environmental) are integrated since the earliest phase of policy foresight and conception.

### 3. Agenda 2030 and localization: the role of territories and local authorities

- 3.1 Policy integration for sustainability is a challenge in integrating the different levels of policy making, linking the concerns rising at local level with those emerging at national and supra-national levels. The metropolitan areas may represent a crucial crossroad as a sharing, innovation and experimentation arena, as well as international decentralized cooperation ground experiences may be regarded as inspiring sustainable practices.
- 3.2 It is important to take sustainability concerns to a better level of integration between the environmental level needs and requirements and the social level issues by conceiving integrated policies that encompass both dimensions since the very beginning and generate shared measures that give value to civic commitment.
- 3.3 Territorial dimension represents the level in which the integrated approach to sustainable development can be effectively designed and implemented. This includes small, medium and metropolitan areas, as well as marginalized and sparsely populated areas.



- 3.4 Governance arrangements and planning/programming measures for sustainable development should be designed at all these levels and especially to the metropolitan dimension, in which the Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainability is representing an important tool for policy integration.
- 3.5 Fostering an adequate and homogeneous level of participation at local level is an important element to be developed; these processes should include non-formal actors and groups, which are active at the grassroots levels.
- 3.6 Improving the relations between local forums and national forum, with bottom-up mechanisms, as well as virtual and physical channels of communication, that will allow to introduce points of attention from the “grassroots” to the national level.
- 3.7 Deepening the involvement and support of “sustainability makers” into the regional and metropolitan forum.

## 4. The participation of Non State Actors and Civil Society Organizations: spaces, effectiveness, perspectives

- 4.1 The Forum for Sustainable Development is the arena that promotes the participation of Non State Actors and Civil Society (associations, cooperatives, NGOs and not for profit organizations, charities and foundations, as well as small, medium and large enterprises) to the processes of assessment, review and reformulation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. The different legal status of the members has produced positive exchanges of ideas and points of view. However, in order to improve the outreach of the National Strategy, some discontinuities need to be addressed.
- 4.2 The Forum has produced relevant contributions to the Strategy, in terms of policy recommendations. The working groups of the Forum have produced five Positions Papers that have suggested specific points of attention and cross-cutting topics that address new challenges for the Strategy. In order to make the engagement of the actors more effective, the Forum’s role needs to scale up in the ‘ladders of participation’ towards ‘empowerment’.
- 4.3 The Forum as a whole within its different working groups strongly argues in favour of the need of pursuing a 'just' transition; aware of its social dimensions, and of the need to fight against inequalities; oriented towards the protection of the rights of people, territories, natural capital, biodiversity; aware that the sustainability of our country is played out in a global context.



- 4.4 The participants to the Forum have also underlined some aspects that must be improved. These are particularly referred to the networking dimension (more opportunities to build relations and exchange knowledge), the institutional dialogue (exchanges with national, regional and local institutions), the relevance of creating an enabling network and promoting productive dialogues, the outreach of the Forum (enhancing the capacity to involve more deeply the participants into initiatives for dissemination), and its capacity to become a credible point of reference for local actors and grass roots initiatives.
- 4.5 We therefore suggest the need of strengthening the central coordination group to support the Forum for networking and dissemination activities. These activities will be co-designed by the components of the Forum and will be managed by the coordination group.
- 4.6 The participation of Non State Actors and Civil Society to the Forum of Sustainable Development requires specific arrangements and mechanisms; however the key issue is the participation to the policy formulation and implementation processes, and to the monitoring and assessment activities. That needs to be operationalised through specific institutional and dialogue arrangements, in order to have these voices actually heard. Under this perspective, the Forum should be conceived as a tool for a wider empowerment of societal actors in sustainable development pathways, as well as to make the implementation process of the Strategy more accountable.
- 4.7 We also see the opportunity for building communication initiatives at local level, jointly prepared by regional and national Forums' members; and designing specific initiatives to create or strengthen communication channels between Forum's members and sustainability activists (especially youth organisations) at local level, according to approaches of "open innovation", which can nourish synergies among different perspectives . The same perspective should be pursued in strengthening the relations of the Forum with educational entities and training agencies in order to improve the capacity to spread the culture of sustainability. Also online communities need to be considered.
- 4.8 A perspective for the participation of Non State Actors and Civil Society should involve a clear concern for the participation of young generations, and the possible contribution of relevant/non formal actors, beside the needed attention for formally represented actors and stakeholders.

