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A Climate for Change:
New Thinking on Governance for Sustainability
June 23 – 27, 2013, Salzburg, Austria

"Strengthening rule of law and other sustainable governance indicators"

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The topic of the session is directly related to the current debate on the UN Post-2015 development agenda. Organized as a multi-stakeholder process based on intense consultations with governments, international organizations, NGOs and other civil society actors, this debate aims at defining measurable targets to achieve (1) inclusive social development; (2) inclusive economic development; (3) environmental sustainability; and (4) peace and security at a global scale. Such a new agenda on "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs), succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), should provide guidance for priority setting at all levels – global, regional, national and sub-national. According to the latest UN System Task Team Report on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda the main challenges for sustainable development and inclusive growth are: massive inequalities within and among countries, growing environmental footprints, shifting demographics, a knowledge challenge (due to inequalities in access to ICT networks, education and knowledge systems), insecurity, and governance and accountability deficits.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung aims to contribute to solving the above challenges through various projects and cooperation with international partners. In many projects we directly address questions of inclusive growth and sustainable development. One of these projects is the "Sustainable Governance Indicators" (SGI) instrument (www.sgi-network.org) – a cross-national, indicator-based comparison of all OECD and EU countries. The project is guided by the following key questions:

- How successful are OECD/EU member states in achieving sustainable policy outcomes?
- How well developed are the governance capacities of OECD/EU countries in terms of the interaction between government and societal actors?
- What is the quality of their democratic order?

These questions reflect the key dimensions of the current debate on sustainable development as set forth in the UN System Task Team Report. In this context, it is important to note that sustainable development can only be achieved through a holistic approach. This means that we not only need measurable targets with regard to policy outcomes in the areas of economic, social and environmental sustainability. We also need to address the question of *democratic governance*, which comprises fundamental aspects such as rule of law, accountability and human rights. From the perspective of long-term system stability and sustainable political performance, the quality of democracy and governance are crucial aspects of a society's success. For that reason, the UN report underlines that "democratic and coherent global governance mechanisms" and "good governance practices based on the rule of law" are important "enablers" for sustainable development and its four dimensions (inclusive social development, inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security).

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To strengthen rule of law as well as all other important elements of sustainable governance, several requirements must be met:

- We need a broad normative framework for sustainable development → new UN Post-2015 Agenda as a key instrument of global governance → UN as the legitimate multi-stakeholder platform to set up this new agenda and to monitor the countries' achievements and commitments regarding the agenda's targets over the next years and decades.
- In this context, clear objectives and measurable targets are needed.
- Positive "coalitions of the willing" (consisting of governments, businesses and institutions from civil society) that go ahead in accordance with the agenda's objectives are important to serve as good examples, provide guidance and exert pressure on laggards.
- However, we should not impose a one-size-fits-all model. Each country must choose the path suited to its own national conditions.
- International organizations, media and civil society actors have to exert pressure on those countries that are not acting in accordance with the fundamental sustainable development objectives → naming and shaming processes and highlighting good examples / innovative policy and governance approaches towards sustainable development.
- For that reason, we need evidence-based instruments for such naming and shaming mechanisms and positive mutual learning processes: The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) project is one of such instruments, as we seek to contribute to the debate on "good governance" and sustainable policymaking, identify successful models and foster international learning processes within the OECD/EU and beyond.

www.sgi-network.org