

Safeguarding the EU Sustainability Framework

Monday, June 23, 2025

To the Institutions and Governments of the European Union,

The recent EU regulatory package on sustainability (Omnibus I), aimed at simplifying rules and boosting the competitiveness of the European economy, risks dismantling the regulatory framework on sustainability that has been carefully built over the years. The removal or postponement of regulations that have been developed through a broad consensus, and which form the foundation of the transition to a more sustainable and resilient economy, is a deeply worrying ‘backward step’.

We understand and share the concern that excessive bureaucratic and regulatory demands can impact the internal operations of European companies. That is why we support efforts to reduce and streamline these demands. **However, we believe it is essential to uphold certain non-negotiable principles and political commitments that have established the European Union as a global leader in social and environmental matters** – principles that are now more crucial than ever for the Union’s cohesion and the strengthening of its global influence.

- 1. We recall that the transition toward a fairer and more sustainable economy cannot wait.** The impacts of climate change are already being felt in ecosystems and societies around the world, bringing significant economic costs and social challenges. These effects must be addressed urgently and in line with the scenarios presented by the scientific community. Achieving decarbonisation targets will require transformative changes in production models, supported by public policies that promote transparency and create clear incentives – and disincentives – for market actors.
- 2. We believe that the transition toward a more sustainable and just economy is not only a challenge, but also a strategic opportunity to build a European Union that is more self-reliant and resilient to crises and external shocks.** This is particularly important in key areas such as energy, the supply of critical raw materials, and the stability of supply chains.
- 3. We reject the false dichotomy between sustainability and social responsibility on one hand, and efficiency and competitiveness on the other.** On the contrary, these goals are both compatible and mutually reinforcing: a strong commitment to sustainability enhances competitiveness, builds resilience, mitigates risks, and ultimately contributes to long term value creation and trust.

4. **We acknowledge the efforts made by companies and other stakeholders who recognise the importance of ensuring the environmental and social sustainability of their activities.** We call for a stable and coherent legal framework that provides legal certainty and actively promotes responsible business conduct.
5. **Clear sustainability regulations create certainty and build trust among consumers and financial markets, encouraging investment in innovation and clean technologies that support Europe's social and climate goals.** In contrast, weakening these regulations risks undermining incentives to develop sustainable technologies and business models within the EU.
6. **We advocate for competitiveness rooted in innovation and social justice — not in a race to the bottom through cost cutting or the erosion of welfare standards and human rights, both within the EU and in third countries.** Europe must uphold this moral leadership not only within its territory, but also throughout the highly internationalised supply chains of major companies operating in the EU.

Agreeing on a gradual implementation of these principles with companies, or creating the necessary support mechanisms, is reasonable. However, upholding the highest standards of legislative quality, robustness, alignment with relevant international standards and clarity remains imperative for achieving policy objectives and reinforcing the EU's legislative excellence. Abandoning the regulatory progress made in social and environmental areas would be inconsistent and would undermine trust in European institutions.

For all these reasons, and to achieve the strategic goal of a sustainable and prosperous economy, **we urge the EU to send clear signals to the market so that economic actors accelerate decarbonisation, enhance their resilience to climate change, and adopt sustainable management models that respect human rights.**

SIGNATORIES

Joaquín Almunia – former Vice-President of the European Commission and former EU Commissioner (Spain)

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein – former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Jordan)

Jean Asselborn – former Minister of Foreign Affairs (Luxembourg)

Josep Borrell – former High Representative of the Union/ former Vice-President of the European Commission (Spain)

Tom de Bruijn – former Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Co-operation and former Permanent Representative to the EU (The Netherlands)

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich – Archbishop of Luxembourg

Zdzisław (Dzidek) Kędzla – former Chairperson of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Poland)

Heidi Hautala – former Vice-President of the European Parliament, former Minister for Development Cooperation and State Ownership Steering (Finland)

John H. Knox – Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law at Wake Forest University and former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (US)

Ramón Jáuregui – former Minister of Presidency, former MEP, President of Euroamérica Foundation (Spain)

Linda Kromjong – President of amfori (The Netherlands)

Mogens Lykketoft – former Minister – a.o. of Foreign Affairs – and former Speaker of Parliament, former President of the UN General Assembly (Denmark)

Lillianne Ploumen – former Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Co-operation (The Netherlands)

Hannele Pokka – former Minister of Justice (Finland)

Mary Robinson – former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, former President of Ireland

Nicolas Schmit – former EU Commissioner, lead candidate for the S&D in the 2024 European elections (Luxembourg)

Olivier de Schutter – UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (Belgium)

Velina Todorova – former Deputy Minister of Justice and former Vice-Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (Bulgaria)

Margot Wallström – former Vice-President of the European Commission and former EU Commissioner, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sweden)