

# Interview

with Adolfo Ayuso-Audry

**Adolfo Ayuso-Audry is the Director General in the Office of the Mexican Presidency, where he is responsible for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He was a member of the group of experts chaired by Helen Clark that produced the third peer review of the German Sustainable Development Strategy in 2018 at the invitation of the Federal Government and facilitated by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE).**

What would you say was the best part of the German Sustainable Development Strategy?

The best part is the three dimensions that Germany chose in order to realise sustainability – the idea that Germany has to work on this at home, is called on to act at all levels of politics and also wishes to cooperate with partners for the benefit of the world. This international perspective is a revolutionary approach to understanding and realising sustainability. We would be living on an entirely different planet if all countries adopted this kind of understanding. Another great aspect is how the strategy features indicators for gauging success, clear goals and an understandable structure. There are also examples of successful implementation here, which is really important. And of course, there's the fact that the strategy is revised again and again. This really is a typically German structure ...

Very systematic ...

Yes, very systematic. This is something that we in Mexico and elsewhere could take as a “gift” for developing our strategies in a similar way.

Where is the German Sustainable Development Strategy at its weakest?

I think it is lacking on the communication front. I don't think people are very familiar with the 2030 Agenda, in other words the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals. This isn't exclusively a German problem – it's the same all over the world. We would have to realise an immense communications strategy in order to show people what sustainability is based on simple examples. The ideas behind the sustainability strategy aren't widely known, even though people in Germany address these issues more than others do. But more really could be done in that regard.



The percentage of people who can tell you what the 17 goals behind the 2030 Agenda are is probably very small, right?

The principles behind the strategy are likewise not widely known: for instance, universalism – i.e. that the goals apply to everyone equally. You can do your bit to help achieve Goal 14, Life Below Water, here in Berlin too. These ideas need to be disseminated more so that people also reconsider their own behaviour. Do they really need that big luxury car and do they really have to eat meat every day? There are plenty of examples. Many people buy items of clothing that they only wear once, if at all, before throwing them away. What this means is discussed in Germany within the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles. The price of clothes is not commensurate with the production resources used, from the materials and energy needed to the resultant environmental pollution. I am impressed with how the German textiles industry is addressing these issues.

Unfortunately, though, this is only a small industry in Germany.

But the issue is being discussed, at least.

The global Sustainable Development Goals are actually an invitation for countries to renew their industries and society. Are there countries that have understood this?

Well, yes – Germany ... (laughs). There are obviously also others. The countries in the north are doing a lot, while others still have some way to go. The 2030 Agenda really is an incredible opportunity to work on achieving goals together. On the other hand, these ideas can also be easily adapted to the municipal level, where there is still a lot to do. In Mexico, for example, we are very happy to have introduced the ideas of the global Sustainable Development Goals into local politics in 30 out of 32 federal states. This took a lot of work. But more can still be done. Because it is currently people living in the capital cities at the most who are aware of the existence of the 2030 Agenda,

while the concept is still entirely unknown in the more provincial areas. And time is running out – more than two years have already passed since the 2015 resolutions.

Globalisation fatigue is very prevalent in Europe and elsewhere. The pledge made at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio that the end of the Cold War meant greater global cooperation, global trade and global exchange is now seen by many as a threat to their way of life and to their certainties. The global Sustainable Development Goals are the exact opposite of the escalating nationalism and populism. Does the 2030 Agenda even have a chance in the current political climate?

I have observed these trends too and understand these populist movements. But what I always say is that there are no straight lines in the universe. Nobody expected the global Sustainable Devel-

opment Goals to be enforced and implemented easily. There are always setbacks. But it is also no coincidence that Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities, tackles precisely the area that hurts a lot of people. Globalisation is good. But in the 19th century too, during industrialisation, there was the belief that mass production would lead to the eradication of poverty. This was not the case. Nor will it be the case with globalisation. The rich got richer, while the poor got poorer. The illusion that globalisation would make everyone rich did not materialise. Even so, the only way to combat nationalism and populism is by working together, through global cooperation such as the 2030 Agenda.

The interview was conducted by Dagmar Dehmer.



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