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Climate protection is now! But on its own it's not enough

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It's not only Greta Thunberg or Fridays for Future that made it clear that we must respect our planet's limits. Sustainable development is more than just environment and climate protection. It is the guiding principle of our world and considers the environment, the economy and social affairs as equal and interconnected.

In 2015, 196 countries joined the Paris Climate Agreement to limit global warming average increase to well below 2°C, with a maximum temperature increase of 1.5 °C, comparable with pre-industrial times. At present the average global warming is already 1.1 degree.

That same year, 169 countries signed the 2030 Agenda that outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are intended to guide world politics towards sustainable development. However, although much time has elapsed since then to achieve the sustainability goals, very few people even know them. Only ten percent of the population can relate to the term sustainability.



We're simply not yet on the right path to sustainability. Consumption continues to grow steeply. In the past 10 years, for example, the purchase of textiles has risen by 60 percent worldwide. We pollute drinking water worldwide with serious consequences for 2'000 million people, who currently have no access to clean drinking water. The amount of electronic waste is increasing and the vast majority of it is not recycled, which means that valuable raw materials are lost.

In June 2020 another record level of CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere was measured - and the trend is rising.

It's true that the main concern for climate protectionists is the reduction of CO₂ emissions. But the figures suggest that a more comprehensive approach is needed for sustainable development. And that's why climate protection *alone* is just not enough.

The final statement of G20 summit in the year 2019 included the 2030 Agenda and the commitment to pursue sustainable development. However, more is definitely needed to boost it, as demonstrated by the mediocre interim results presented at UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in 2019.

At the current pace, even the most progressive countries in northern Europe won't achieve the SDGs by 2030. Indeed, the consumer behaviour of the rich industrialised countries in particular is the subject of criticism. The UN has warned that without a better performance of the G20, which is responsible for 75 percent of global CO₂ emissions, the agenda's aim won't be achieved.

If, as forecasted, the world's population increases from 7.1 billion to 9.7 billion by 2050, humans and the planet will face many challenges. Asia's rise will undoubtedly also lead to a higher energy demand, more consumption and production. This could undo the progress we have made on climate protection, on a global scale.



A «Green New Deal» has now been called for in order to make the EU climate neutral by 2050. However, a great deal of capital is needed for the transition to an economic model that focuses on resources and the environment. For that reason, the financial sector as a whole must support sustainability. To this end, the European Commission has presented the first legal framework. It focuses on sustainable objectives to spark transformation and innovation.

For this to happen, a public discussion on a broader approach to sustainability is necessary. It should not be a look back to the «Eco-Agenda» but rather an aim to implement overdue reforms to enhance *economic transformation*, *climate protection* and *innovation*, so that we can continue to live well, and also offer the future generations of our planet a good life.

Source amongst others: Sabina Wölkner. Agenda 2030: Mut zur Nachhaltigkeit! - Konrad Adenauerstiftung. 16. September 2019