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Rethinking International Cooperation and Implementing It Differently

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Rethinking International Cooperation and Implementing It Differently

Bonn, 21 October 2013. Ten days ago the focus of "The Current Column" by Jörg Faust and Dirk Messner was a plea for the establishment of a ministry for global development. "Foreign policy and development policy are becoming more heavily intertwined because the issues of global development are increasingly becoming central challenges for foreign policy" was one of their arguments. Another argument was that "when it comes to the protection of global public goods upon which all nations rely in a closely intertwined world community, the focus is on common interests and reciprocal responsibilities, not on outdated ideas of north-south paternalism."

In today's column we will address the same goal: We want to strengthen the international willingness to cooperate. Institutions and instruments must be reformed for this. We agree with the analysis presented by our colleagues but also look toward the new challenges that we face in terms of cooperation both between different areas of domestic policy and between domestic policies and foreign policies. Issues such as climate change and food security require a new level of quality in the cooperation between departments and sectors as well as between public and private actors. Negative side effects must be avoided in related political fields. At the same time there must also be complementary strategies for shared goals. The implementation of these strategies requires the combined expertise of various departments and groups of stakeholders and the use of their various instruments.

Can one ministry perform such a role as a mediator between domestic and foreign policy? Or should that type of function perhaps rather be handled by a Commissioner for global issues and sustainable development in the Office of the Federal Chancellor flanked by an enhanced Parliamentary Body for Sustainable Development, such as recently proposed by the international peer review of the German sustainability strategy?

We feel that a Commissioner for global issues and sustainable development in the Office of the Federal Chancellor could be the better solution for enabling more coherence between domestic and foreign policies as well as cooperation between ministries.

After all, what we need today is not only the classical North-South agenda in which rich industrial nations help to reduce poverty in poor countries. Rather, what we need is to recognise and accept the fact that we, the "old" industrial nations, are facing more and more global problems that reach beyond borders and that no nation can effectively and efficiently solve alone. The increasing number of the current global challenges requires international cooperation.

For this reason it is increasingly important to reach agreements across the different policy departments of the German government in two areas: firstly to cooperate and develop joint strategies with the G20 in order to be able to achieve the set goals and secondly to develop joint multilateral strategies such as in the field of energy and climate policy, food security and raw materials policy in order to boost international cooperation significantly and make it more effective.

Should such reforms not prove successful we run the risk that the ability to solve global challenges and to ensure domestic wellbeing will be weakened. Presently cooperation for global public goods, i.e. in the field of climate policy, is primarily financed through development assistance whose budget is, however, insufficient for the new challenges. In addition, this financing has so far only been geared toward the north-south transfer of knowledge and resources. However, we need to enhance reciprocal cooperation processes. Should we be unsuccessful in adding new dynamics to global cooperation then this will also weaken the arenas where international and multilateral political initiatives are formed. However, an intensified global cooperation is required in order to develop

trust and a shared understanding that is necessary for handling the challenges we are facing in the new multipolar world.

International cooperation is more important today than ever before, both for promoting our own wellbeing as well as in the interest of global justice and solidarity.

It has already been recognised at the international level that we now have to deal with a dual agenda of international cooperation: the agenda of conventional development cooperation and the agenda of international cooperation for addressing global problems. There are currently two processes in the United Nations which can bring together the national, regional and global efforts for social, ecological and economic sustainability: the elaboration of a new global development agenda after 2015 (when the Millennium Development Goals expire) and the adoption of universal goals for sustainable development toward which domestic policies and global cooperation are to be oriented. The result is to be an integrated agenda starting from 2016 that specifies the universal

goals for growth and development strategies that are sustainable and just. The member states will then specify and implement these goals in different ways.

The Federal Government of Germany has committed itself to supporting these processes and their convergence, and to do this in a cross-departmental way, in a cabinet resolution from 21 August 2013.

It would be wonderful if Germany would implement this resolution as soon as possible and would link it to the revision of the German sustainability strategy.

A step in this direction, as proposed above, would be to name a strong Commissioner for global issues and sustainable development in the Office of the Federal Chancellor with the mandate to work towards a better integration of national interests and global challenges and opportunities in order to more effectively shape domestic policies in a more globally conscious and responsible way.



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