

Sustainable Development Goals in Hungary

Speech for Ministry of Agriculture's Minister of State for Environmental Affairs Mr Zsolt V. Németh
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Mister Chair, dear Organisers, Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen!



Leaders of states of the World have signed the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in September of 2015 as an expression of their common vision. Hungarian experts had basic role in wording these goals and their harmonization. These experts harvested international appreciation.

The agreed document names goals which are not new in the agenda of trustworthy planning governments. At the same time this new document requires **complex and systemic** management of the issues. Many of the goals cannot be understood independently: these are interwoven challenges that need complex **measure-packages** for effective responds. This of course results challenges for the systemic administration – not only in Hungary, but all around the World.

The task is not tiny: we have to transform our life for sustainability.

What if we do not take this step? What if we continue the business as usual?

How does an unsustainable world look like?

In an unsustainable world the resources of the mines can be spoiled with no limits.

In an unsustainable world we have less and less forests and more and more contaminated waters.

In an unsustainable world the air is more and more polluted, threatening health of millions.

If this sounds familiar, then this job is really required.

The UN document on Sustainable Development Goals may seem to be rather remote. For example: transition of industry into sustainability is only one of these goals. We can imagine the industry we have today, with factories and manufactories, the polluting procedures, the chimneys emitting smoke, the piles of by-product and waste – can it be sustainable?

The answer is: yes, it can. By small but firm steps **sustainable economy, or green economy is feasible.**

It is already well recognizable that states that are faster in this transition towards sustainability gain notable **advantages**. These advantages can be economic, like **increasing tax**

incomes; social as creation of **new jobs**; and environmental, as **more efficient use of natural resources**.

As Hungary is dependent concerning certain resources, development in resource-efficiency, awareness in their use has key importance for social, environmental, supply-security and competitiveness aspects. Presently we have a lot to do in this field.

For example **waste** is not only an environmental problem, but also an economic loss. But it can be act as **resource**, if we recognize and utilize all possibilities in its reuse and recycling.

It is worth to think about how we can change our production and consumption so that we have less and less waste, while utilizing all of them as resource. The best is to minimize waste generation, and to pay attention to utilize waste in its element.

Countries in Middle-Europe look to be fast in exploiting the theory of green economy. In June of 2015 Georgia hosted the Environment of Europe Ministerial Conference, having green economy as main issue. Hungary declared four notable commitments in this subject.

Hungary is engaged to have great role in forming green economy, of course making advantage of our capacities and possibilities. Modern and innovative **eco-industry** generates further developments in other sectors as well; it helps evaluation of sustainable clusters and industrial ecosystems. Similarly Hungary has great knowledge and experience in effective and also sustainable agriculture (with respecting biodiversity, limiting chemical use, increasing water and carbon storage capacity of soil, with short supply chains and farmers' markets). Of course, green economy cannot be achieved by only technologic measures. We definitely need changing our way of thinking, increasing environmental awareness...

...I kindly emphasize the fact that **Sustainable Development Goals are not only about environment**. Sustainable Development Goals embrace all fields of life: economy, financial issues, society, education, health, energy, industry – all. It would be a simple case if it were only about environment, as we have the adopted National Environmental Program (Nemzeti Környezetvédelmi Program) that has certain targets, deadlines, indicators. National Environmental Program aims to offer environmental background for putting our country onto a sustainable development track.

But the issue of Sustainable Development Goals is much more complex. All fields of life must be sustainable. For governmental aspect: effective cooperation of ministries is a must.

And what is more, effective cooperation of countries is also strongly needed...

By harmonizing relevant measures the governments can reach goals on a more effective way: with a minor budget and with greater results. Sustainable Development Goals emphasize the importance of economic, scientific, educational and other cooperation. This goes well with aims of EU-, V4-, and Danube Region Strategy as well. **Sharing good examples** is a key element of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. All states, all settlements and yes, all individuals can teach something useful, that helps achieving our common goals. As Pope Francis worded in his encyclical letter: "Everyone's talents and involvement are needed". In many cases these are only little practices like turning off the water tap while washing teeth, or selecting household waste. But these minor steps may change our world.

The technical capacity is available. Financial background is accessible. Society, decision makers and economic leaders must keep in mind the aspects of sustainability. The bigger challenge thus is the change of our way of thinking, the awareness raising. For progress I ask for your cooperation.

Thank you for your attention!