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Standing Committee on
Sustainable Development,
Finance and Trade

28 September 2017

Debate on *Engaging the private sector in implementing the SDGs, especially on renewable energy*

*Monday, 16 October 2017 (4.00 – 6.30 p.m.)
Multi-functional Hall, Parliamentary Center*

Concept note

This debate is organized around the theme of the resolution to be adopted by the Committee at the 138th Assembly in Geneva.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has laid the foundation for an all-inclusive sustainable development process whose success depends on the active engagement of all stakeholders. The private sector has a critical role to play in this regard. As a key provider of capital and employment, and as an engine of technological development and innovation, it can support economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

Governments, for their part, need to provide the enabling environment for the private sector to pursue these objectives in a manner consistent with the transformative agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Strong legal, fiscal and regulatory frameworks are needed at both national and global levels to better align private sector interests with the anti-poverty and sustainable development agenda embodied in the SDGs.

The modalities and scope of public-private sector engagement vary greatly between countries depending on the ratio of informal to formal actors and the relative proportions of small, medium and large enterprise. Developing countries, in particular, need to build their own industrial capacity through proactive policies to support small and medium enterprises in the informal sector and create stronger synergies between domestic companies and foreign actors, including transnational enterprises. Because they are amongst the most disadvantaged actors in the private sector, women who are or aspire to be entrepreneurs face a specific set of challenges, from limited access to credit, to licencing requirements, to various forms of discrimination.

In light of the dramatic impact of climate change on the planet and human well-being, there is an urgent need for governments and the private sector to promote clean energy development. Lack of reliable, clean and affordable energy is also a key obstacle to development, as billions of people lack access to electricity or cooking fuel.

The transition to an energy system based on renewable resources and low-emission technologies can benefit both the environment and the economy, boosting growth and employment while improving human well-being. In a world polarized between those entirely without access to clean energy and those with easy access to polluting energy sources, the transition to renewables can also help reduce inequalities among and within countries, consistent with SDG 10.

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The debate will address the following questions:

- What are the most effective modalities (financial and non-financial) for private sector engagement with the SDG agenda?
- What constitutes an enabling environment for private sector development, particularly in the renewable energy sector?
- How can all private sector actors (i.e., small and medium enterprises, transnationals, cooperatives, formal and informal actors) be engaged and their interests fairly represented in the policy process?
- What are the specific needs of women entrepreneurs in both formal and informal sectors and how can they be engaged more effectively?
- How can the private sector be incentivized to use, and invest in, renewable energies?

Speaker:

- Mr. Adrian Whiteman, Senior Programme Officer, International Renewable Energy Agency

Co-Rapporteurs:

- Mr. Andries Gryffroy, Senator, Belgium
- Mr. Duong Quoc Anh, Member of the National Assembly, Viet Nam