

Position paper

On the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament

On the Review of the Sustainable Development
Strategy. A platform for action

COM(2005) 658 final

Berlin, March 3rd, 2006

Allianz

BASF

Bayer

BMW Group

Bosch

DaimlerChrysler

Degussa

Deutsche Bahn

Deutsche Bank

Deutsche Telekom

EnBW

E.ON

E.ON Ruhrgas

HeidelbergCement

Lufthansa

RAG

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Siemens

Tetra Pak

ThyssenKrupp

TUI

VCI

Volkswagen

I. FOR A CHANGE OF COURSE: MERGING EU-SDS AND THE LISBON STRATEGY

As members of the company network econsense – Forum for Sustainable Development of German Business, we have pledged to pursue the principle of sustainable development, and desire to push ahead with sustainable development at a national, European and global level. We therefore welcome the endeavours of the European Union to strategically pursue sustainable development.

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU-SDS) is currently being reviewed in a complex procedure. The further developed strategy with a programme of action for 2005 – 2010 is to be adopted by the European Council in June 2006. We, as major German multinational companies and businesses take this review process very seriously and are fully aware of our responsibility of playing an active role in the elaboration of EU strategies hand-in-hand with policy-makers. We are in full agreement with the Commission that **a stronger European economy is crucial for the success of sustainable development**. As companies, we have an existential interest in ensuring that the right course is charted for a prosperous and peaceful Europe.

In this context, and in response to the latest Communication from the European Commission – COM(2005) 658 final – we have again jointly concerned ourselves in great detail with EU-SDS: with its objectives, its structure and origin, and with its relationship to the Lisbon strategy¹.

Notwithstanding the question of how each of the statements in the strategy are to be evaluated, we have again come to the firm conclusion that the review of the sustainable development strategy should be of a much more fundamental nature than has so far proven to be the case. **The time is ripe to merge the SDS and the Lisbon strategy in a consequent future strategy for Europe as a location for sustainable business and an attractive place to live.**

The Commission expresses the opinion that the two strategies complement each other: EU-SDS as a long-term agenda, whilst the Lisbon strategy is a medium-term programme of action. This argument is not convincing because both deal with the same political issues. It is therefore necessary to make the objectives more congruent even though the periods involved are different. What is needed is to harmonise the medium term and the long term objectives. Having these two strategies running in parallel merely deflects from the purpose of tackling the specific conflicts in a clear and unequivocal way.

EU-SDS mainly refers to the Lisbon strategy when it considers the economic dimension, and sees itself de facto as the "advocate" of social and environmental objectives. Originally, EU-SDS identified six main priority areas where non-sustainable trends needed to be tackled. **It is absolutely vital that the issue of competitiveness is given greater priority and highlighted as one of the independent key issues, and to thus correct one of the crucial shortcomings of the strategy.** Unfortunately, this has still not taken place even though the Commission itself has diagnosed on various occasions, including the review of the strategy, that there has been a significant increase in concerns regarding competitiveness in recent years and that this changes the framework within which action can take place.²

As in the past, the mutual relationships between the two strategies have not been satisfactorily explained. Debates on this issue are tiresome. The twin track "Lisbon" and "Gothenburg" reform processes have historical and organisational reasons, they are due to different responsibilities and political contexts in place. **Politicians and all of the other stakeholders have it in their**

¹ econsense also participated in the public consultation during the review of EU-SDS.

² cf. Page 2 in the working paper of the Commission for public consultation as part of the EU-SDS review, SEC(2004) 1012, 30 July 2004.

Competitiveness as a special issue is very definitely being addressed in another context: In the indicators published in 2005 intended for use in the strategy monitoring process, "Economic Development" is mentioned as a priority issue. Quote: "The Theme on Economic Development highlights the economic dimension of sustainable development in the framework, and bridges it to the Lisbon process." (SEC(2005) 161 final)

power to change course and break with old habits. The effects of strategies unfold if they succeed in promoting targeted action, bundling forces, and getting convincing processes rolling. In this context, they should be used as instruments for shaping the future of all of Europe's inhabitants.

Another advantage of merging the two strategies is that this would improve the efficiency of the organisational processes involved in elaborating, reviewing, and especially, implementing the strategy for all stakeholders. The most recent revision of the Lisbon strategy was based on the diagnosis that the agenda was impracticable because it was overloaded, lacked co-ordination, and contained conflicting priorities. Nobody is capable of seeing the wood for the trees when there are 28 priority and 120 subordinate objectives, 117 indicators, and 300 reports by 25 member countries. How are we supposed to cope with several strategies with partially contradictory roles when we are already overwhelmed by the complexity of just one strategy?

Merging the two strategies will not diminish the complexity of the issues involved because this complexity lies in the very nature of the challenges facing sustainable development. **However, we are convinced that the interdependencies and the conflicting goals must be reflected in one coherent, transparent and continuously further developed strategy.**

It would also be prudent for the issue of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**, with which the EU is also intensively involved, to be included in the considerations given to integrating the Lisbon strategy with EU-SDS. CSR sets out the contribution of companies in implementing overall social sustainability. As a concept for sustainable corporate management, it is therefore a logical means of linking the rules of the Lisbon summit with those of the European Sustainable Development Strategy. The European Commission already emphasised this aspect back in 2002 in its Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility, COM(2002) 347. The Communication from the Commission expected shortly presenting a CSR alliance between European business and the Commission is an important step on the way to implementing a European CSR strategy and therefore also of integrating sustainable development strategy with the Lisbon objectives.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE COMMUNICATION

Re "2. Making the change: focusing on key issues"

Our most important opinions and recommendations:

- ▶ We share the Commission's diagnosis on the cross-sectoral factors which need to be taken into consideration. As businesses, we are naturally particularly interested in establishing favourable frameworks for promoting **research and technology** because this has a special impact on our area of responsibility. There is also enormous potential here for sustainable development.
- ▶ The basic course pursued by the EU in shaping its policies against the background of global competition will be crucial for the success of all of the areas on which EU-SDS has an impact. We therefore welcome that the Commission emphasises in its latest Communication the importance of considering the **inner European political processes and decision making in a systematic way by factoring in the external dimension of sustainable development** – in other words, how Europe can influence and is itself influenced by external processes. The conflicting goals must be discussed openly.
- ▶ We support the aim of European policy to become more intensely engaged on behalf of **internationally harmonised strategies** dealing with the major challenges, and to commit itself to **international co-operation and solidarity**, e.g. to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Business is seriously concerned about the distortion of competitiveness as a result of

local legislation and unilateral policies. The political will to play a pioneering role, and the strength of European values, is supported by us but must also be compatible with economic feasibility if it is to have a sustainable effect. This is the only way in which good intentions can also lead to good results.

- ▶ In the face of the structural changes being brought about by globalisation, the **power of the markets** is indispensable as a control instrument. There are no alternatives, despite its imperfections. These must be balanced out by policies after careful consideration. We are convinced, and there is a great deal of recent evidence to support this, that the challenges and tasks facing the world today cannot be solved by implementing limits and sanctions at a national and regional level. **We think regulative approaches should be replaced by market-driven innovation, continuous product improvement, and competition for the best solutions on the basis of intense global co-operation.** Effective policies should concentrate their forces on promoting creativity, research and innovation by establishing favourable frameworks, through targeted motivation, and the formulation of clear objectives. And wherever regulation makes sense, this must always be preceded by objective **legislation impact assessments**.
- ▶ At the same time, we also appeal to **our own responsibility as multinational companies** to reach better "more sustainable" decisions on the basis of greater transparency, and to promote sustainable patterns of consumption by improving the available products. We are fully aware that markets can only be groomed for "sustainable products" when every individual company on its own, as well as the private sector as a whole and the relevant branches of the economy, work jointly and co-operatively in pursuit of this objective. As companies, we play a special role and have the competence and responsibility for the further development of sustainable products by harnessing research and technology.
- ▶ The Communication emphasises the need for action to be taken at all levels. This strengthens our conviction of treating **sustainability as an integral part of our business activities (business case)**. We also make positive contributions to our stakeholder value and shareholder value by e.g. opening up new market potential, avoiding resistance and risks, reducing costs, and boosting reputations.
- ▶ The 21st century sets us a challenge for establishing a new balance between society, business and government. We need **to develop new co-operative and dynamic models**. This is a difficult searching and learning process for all stakeholders. The Commission's recommendation to engage in continuous dialogue is therefore something we wholeheartedly support and we are happy to become an active partner in this important dialogue.

As the member companies of econsense, we would like to highlight the following pan-sectoral aspects concerning the individual areas for action:

Re "2.1 Climate change and clean energy"

- ▶ **It is a climate policy imperative that climate change is a global problem "that demands global solutions"** as stated by the Commission. Nothing is more important for the future of climate protection than responding seriously to this view: additional forces and resources must be mobilised beyond the acknowledgement of the Kyoto Protocol in order to intensify and successfully implement international negotiations aimed at finding global, technology-oriented solutions. Society as a whole is expecting a great deal of the EU as a political voice promoting and pushing ahead with global climate protection. The pioneering role in which the European Union sees itself would prove itself particularly by the successful involvement of more countries in the joint global effort to protect the climate. This is the only way of achieving success. The CO₂ emissions of the EU-25 account for only 14 % of global emissions, and this proportion will decrease further given the rapid growth of major economies such as China. The reduction in all Kyoto gases by the EU-15 of less than 2% since 1990 has to be seen against the global rise in CO₂ emissions alone of around 25 %. It is still unclear how and whether the major emitters of greenhouse gases such as the USA, China, India, etc., can be brought on board in a global climate regime. One of the overall responsibilities of EU policy is

to harness all of the synergies which can be achieved through co-operation with the Asia-Pacific partnership on clean development and climate.

- ▶ **An isolated front runner approach will not bring the desired success, in contrast, it will counteract sustainable solutions:** if industrial production is shifted to non-EU countries because of competitive disadvantages, this will lead to more instead of fewer emissions worldwide because of the lower production standards frequently encountered in other countries. Isolated solutions are doomed to fail. In its pioneering role, the EU is currently unable to exercise sufficient economic or political pressure on other countries to apply the same high standards. The international competitiveness of its own efficient industry could therefore be at risk, in contradiction to the Lisbon objectives.
- ▶ The **emissions trading** in its current form which is exclusively limited to the EU is a hallmark of this conflict. It leads to the one-sided shackling of regions and sectors. It is therefore only right and proper that the EU and member countries wish to **review** the emissions trading instrument.
- ▶ It is imperative in the light of the enormous costs of climate protection that efforts be concentrated on **the most cost-effective measures** and the sectors and regions with the highest potential for emission reductions. **Market-oriented solutions** should be given general priority because of their cost-efficiency, although they also need to be analysed carefully first. Care should be taken when implementing new mechanisms to ensure that the burden is not borne by the sectors alone but spread in a balanced and neutral way.
- ▶ New technologies are the way to achieve real success in climate protection. The climate protection policy of the EU should therefore concentrate further on **promoting research**.
- ▶ It is particularly important for us as businesses that when the long-term goals are defined, they **take into consideration an adequate time horizon for technical development** and that **reliable political frameworks** are put in place. Energy and climate protection policies are economic policies and therefore business and investment location policies. Notwithstanding its high energy consumption, business is not only partially responsible for the problem, but also primarily part of the climate protection solution because of its innovative power.
- ▶ We support an **improvement in energy efficiency** as an important part of climate strategy. A major role is played here by energy savings in buildings, particularly old buildings.
- ▶ To gain more room to manoeuvre given the continuous increase in global emissions, further work is required to research, analyse and put into practice **prevention as well as adaptation strategies**.
- ▶ **Targets should not be declamatory alone.** It is currently questionable whether the EU will be able to comply with its Kyoto obligations: to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 8 % by 2012 compared to 1990. Before defining other ambitious targets, it is first necessary to guarantee that the existing obligations can be fulfilled.
- ▶ **More caution is required when analysing the EU's potential for renewable energy sources** and the possible conflicts with other objectives. The question is what is to be understood by the term "a far greater proportion" stated in the Communication. The possibilities of using renewable energy sources economically are subject to restrictions. Another challenge is the limited availability of biomass. There will be increasing competition in future between the use of biomass as food, an energy source and a source of materials.

Re "2.2 Public health"

- ▶ The general health of the population in EU member countries has improved considerably in recent decades. Life expectancy today is higher than ever. Scientific studies confirm a high level of environmental and health protection, and considerable health deficits in emerging countries. **A healthy economy is a sustainable basis for reducing health threats.** This relationship is highlighted by the continuing rise in life expectancy in Europe in recent decades.
- ▶ We welcome the fact that the Communication discussed here undertakes to **realign the priorities compared to the 2001 strategy** and to strengthen the focus on cross-border health threats (protection against pandemics, etc.).
- ▶ The European Environment and Health Strategy SCALE, and the associated European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010 advocate an intensification of environmentally-

related health protection, with a special focus on protecting children. We support the efforts to further improve health protection and the well-being of children. A **comprehensive approach is necessary when integrating environmental and health data** which incorporates all of the relevant facts when investigating the root causes of health problems. It is therefore also important that the Communication discussed here explicitly highlights the influence of lifestyle and nutritional factors on public health, particularly in the affluent societies of Western Europe.

Re "2.3 Social exclusion, demography and migration"

- ▶ **The Commission correctly outlines the challenges.** We need ideas and involvement from all sides to solve the problems of demographic change. We welcome that the EU intends to accelerate the processes in member countries through ideas and assistance. Societies – all of us – have mostly failed to grasp all of the consequences of an ageing society. More public education activity is also required here.
- ▶ **We also wish to expressly state here that the points also need to be set now in the companies as well.** As a business network, we have an obligation here to influence this process and will look in detail in 2006 into the consequences of demographic change on innovation strength and competitiveness.

Re "2.4 Management of natural resources"

- ▶ We have demonstrably achieved **major successes** in Germany and in Europe in the last thirty years in environmental protection and resource efficiency. This is also highlighted in the Communication "Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources (COM(2005) 670 final) dated 21 December 2005. The uncoupling of economic growth from negative environmental impacts has already been largely achieved by business without any governmental regulations.
- ▶ **The future belongs to eco-efficiency and economic technologies.** Achieving the highest possible levels of resource efficiency is in our own interests as businesses. Eco-efficiency will become an increasingly important competitive factor which will demand a great deal of innovation effort on our part in the sense of sustainable development. With regard to this area of action in particular, with its numerous political initiatives – thematic and specific strategies, plans for action, changes in public procurement strategies, integrated product policy, etc. – we are **concerned that the Commission is placing its faith in a one-sided search for solutions merely based on even greater regulation.**
- ▶ We strongly advocate that greater **trust be placed in the controlling power of the markets.** The market mechanism offers the best opportunity for tackling the future challenges associated with the use of declining resources, and to combine resource efficiency with economic growth in the sense of sustainable development. **Solutions for resource-efficient technologies (products and processes) should be left as far as possible to the "searching process" of the market.** It should also be realised when making this demand that resource-efficient production and consumption patterns are only established step-by-step within the framework of the technical and economic possibilities, and cannot be "anticipated" politically.
- ▶ **We are well aware that the market does not always quickly and adequately reflect specific shortages (e.g. of environmental goods),** and are also aware of the associated political dilemmas. Political incentives and signals may be prudent in specific cases but should only be put into effect with a great deal of caution because of their problematic secondary effects. For instance, technologies could be promoted with public financing to give them enough momentum to be developed faster and launched on the market quicker. However, long-term subsidies are damaging because they are a sign of the inefficient use of funding.

Re "2.5 Sustainable transport"

- ▶ We need a new approach to bring about the sustainable reduction of the downsides of transport: an **integrated approach to climate protection** and CO₂ reduction which involves all stakeholders in the transport sector. This will also incorporate the basic principles of shared climate protection accountability. In our opinion, this includes the following responsibilities:
- ▶ **Responsibility of the automotive industry:** greater efforts to successfully establish CO₂-efficient technologies and new technologies for alternative fuels, better consumer information to improve the market penetration of new technologies, support for more environmentally-friendly driving behaviour.
- ▶ **Responsibility of the fuel industry:** greater efforts to develop and successfully establish alternative fuels on the market, support for more environmentally-friendly driving behaviour.
- ▶ **Responsibility of policy makers:** improvement in road and rail infrastructures and integrated transport management, the creation of fair competitive conditions in the transport market, promoting new technologies and alternative fuels (e.g. BTL, hydrogen) with a promising long-term future, support for environmentally-friendly driving behaviour, fair CO₂ taxation, and strengthening environmentally-friendly means of transport.
- ▶ We welcome the greater commitment to develop the **potential of biofuels** in the interests of sustainable mobility. The increased use of biofuels is an important strategic milestone in the short and medium term in particular. With the aim of achieving faster success, we consider it a priority to increase on a broad front the mixing of bio-diesel and/or bio-ethanol with conventional fuel. The automotive industry has a responsibility to make the necessary technical adaptations to engines and develop new technologies. Policy makers and the fuel industry have a responsibility to set up the infrastructure. We are dependent here on greater efforts by the fuel industry to develop and successfully market alternative fuels.
- ▶ **Taxing passenger cars according to CO₂ emissions must be implemented linearly and in a technology-neutral way**, to fairly spread the economic, environmental and social burden (e.g. families require larger vehicles).
- ▶ It is still not clear in the automobile sector in particular which sustainable technologies will take the lead in the long term. The political frameworks therefore must ensure **that the various research and development approaches can be pursued in parallel and without bias**.
- ▶ **We agree with the idea of improving the intermodality of means of transport.** This very challenging infrastructure task of intelligently networking the various means of transport is an undisputed part of a global sustainability strategy for the transport sector.

Re "2.6 Global poverty and development challenges"

- ▶ We share the Commission's diagnosis on poverty and inequality as being one of the largest threats to sustainable development. Given the comprehensive discussion on the problem in the original EU-SDS (Communication "Towards a global partnership for sustainable development," COM(2002) 82 final), we advocate **expanding the amount of space given in the review to global issues**.
- ▶ Part of the solution of the challenges described by the Commission can be found in an expanding **economic and technical development in developing and emerging countries**. This is the vital prerequisite for any investment in the first place in improving the social and environmental situation in these countries.
- ▶ We would welcome receiving more details from the Commission on the role it sees for the **private sector**. It is important to emphasise that business can only successfully play its part when stable political conditions exist in the affected countries. This relationship is often ignored: "Business cannot succeed in a society that fails", to quote the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
- ▶ In theory, a UN environmental organisation can make a contribution to an internationally agreed process and help remove obstacles to its achievement, e.g. distortions in the competitive environment. The most important thing in practice, however, is that **the shared political will is adequate to give a UN environmental organisation the power it needs to act really effectively**.

► Re "3. Delivering results"

Re "3.1 More effective follow-up"

- **Applying indicators:** we urgently recommend that there be a **concentration on a few key indicators** which cover the whole length of the value chain and also reflect specific sectoral characteristics. **Weighting the indicators continues to be an ongoing process** in this context. The indicators should be worked on in rank order of their importance for achieving the set targets. Because indicators must be measurable and assessable, results should initially be ignored if they are difficult or impossible to verify, or they should be requested/provided on a voluntary basis. Indicators have to be active parameters and not lead to the creation of more "statistics graveyards".
- **Monitoring progress:** the new findings must be implemented quickly. The crucial success factor is a **clear definition of the responsibilities** in the EU and the member countries. Because: no responsibilities = no results. We welcome a "**light peer review**" process as an instrument for passing on best practice.

Re "3.2 Better policy making"

Improving policy coherence: impact assessment and other better regulation tools

- The instrument for assessing the impact of laws, and the associated transparency over the effects, possible reactions and interactions, is an absolutely vital prerequisite to be able to reach sustainable decisions. We support the Commission in expanding its commitment and continuing **the internal change of culture through application**. This process should take into consideration and further develop the already established principles:
 - > A coherent, transparent and reproducible methodology must be used which corresponds with the principles of better law making and is aimed at creating a coherent and therefore sustainable legal framework.
 - > The impact assessment of proposed laws must incorporate all three dimensions of sustainability.
 - > To avoid conflicts of interest, it is important that the impact assessment is not left solely in the hands of the department responsible for the actual proposal.
 - > All stakeholders must be involved at an early stage to enable all of the relevant aspects to be taken into consideration early on.
 - > Important amendments proposed by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament must also be subjected to proper scrutiny and assessment.
 - > Cost-efficiency analysis and cost-benefit analysis should be used in this order as major assessment instruments.
 - > The cumulative costs of regulations should also be included in the assessment.
 - > Laws must regularly undergo ex-post assessment to evaluate their effectiveness in implementing the original purpose.

Using the most effective mix of instruments

- The Commission sees the task of ensuring "that markets send the right signals ("getting prices right")" as being "perhaps" the most powerful method in the mix of policy measures. **In our opinion, the discussion about "getting prices right" does not properly reflect the economic complexity and sensitivity of this issue.** The internalisation of external costs is basically correct. The responsibility of policy makers undoubtedly lies in looking further to determine the sectors in which it is feasible and produces the desired results. However, non-internalised costs (the "full costs and consequences of our decisions") can only be defined with great difficulty and imprecisely. Precisely because this internalisation can only be generated by strong political intrusion in the markets, makes it a very sensitive issue and carries the risk of giving rise to undesirable secondary effects. A great deal of care is therefore required concerning this matter. Especially limiting the influences on market pricing to Europe alone could create a special risk of distorting European price structures compared to other economies. It is worth pointing out here the danger of discriminating against specific products be-

cause the full costs cannot be completely and equably assigned to individual products, product groups or processes.

Mobilising actors and multiplying success

- ▶ We would also like to emphasise further here that it is **crucial that the media report sustainable development issues in a more targeted way** and make complex facts more understandable to a broader public. We therefore encourage the EU to do all in its power to ensure that EU-SDS is better communicated within the professions and the media. The media could considerably accelerate the necessary change processes if they succeeded in not only reporting bad news but also publishing positive reports on successes, good practice and model achievements.
- ▶ In accordance with our mission statement, we are available at any time to join in the proposed reflection process between society, policy makers and business.

III. FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY: POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVING PROCEDURAL STRUCTURE

The Commission is ambitious that the current review process takes place with the broad-based involvement of the stakeholders – in the sense of better policy making and law making. We welcome this opportunity to participate and intend to make active use of this invitation. However, experience has shown us that this is only possible with an enormous effort and meticulous comparative text analysis, which rapidly overwhelms the available resources. It is crucial for the EU's major cross-cutting strategies in particular that the greatest possible levels of transparency are ensured: the more complex the question, the clearer the structures and processes have to be. In the light of this major challenge, we would like to advocate the following:

▶ Ensure that there is a golden thread

It is very difficult to follow the steps and assessments in a review process when the referenced texts repeatedly describe the same facts in a different way, and every text has a different structure. There are many examples of this: the six priority areas for action for instance are not referred to in a standard way – it says "climate change and clean energies" in some texts, just "climate change" in others. One text labels one of the areas for action "transport and land use", whilst another only uses the headline "(sustainable) transport" or "mobility and transport". Headlines and content come in a whole manner of guises. In the latest Communication COM(2005) 658, the area for action "demographic change" was merged without warning with the area for action "social exclusion". This mish-mash of key principles, key issues, priority areas for action, overall and special objectives, targets, policies, key actions, actions etc., is almost impossible to fathom.

▶ Clearly elaborate the developments

Reviewing the strategy has the intention of showing what has changed in comparison to a reference point in time (in this case the original EU-SDS Communication in 2001), with the aim of drawing conclusions. The, in some cases, very long winded formulations in the Communications and relevant papers makes it almost impossible to identify the development steps and differentiate the new, e.g. progress in a policy making area or a change in strategy, from the old. Effective process management and monitoring is helped greatly by the clear structuring and elaboration of texts: where is the existing strategy merely confirmed and emphasised again? Where exactly has there been a shift in the assessment of the need for action, and where are changes now considered necessary? In which policy making field has which development taken place?

▶ Keep key information out of the annexes

The Commission's Communications are officially kept short. This means that there is an increasing trend for crucial – not only supplementary – information being hidden in annexes, e.g. in An-

nex 2 of the Communication discussed here. We urgently request that this practice be reconsidered. Fragmentation in this way enormously complicates understanding and evaluation, and prevents the strategy from being successfully communicated. The latter is of course absolutely vital for success. It is also often not clear which criteria were used to decide whether information should be in the main text or in the annex.

econsense

Forum for Sustainable Development
of German Business

econsense – Forum for Sustainable Development of German Business, is an active network of leading globally active German businesses and organisations interested in jointly shaping the future of sustainable business development and corporate social responsibility – in open dialogue with one another, policy makers and society. The pan-sectoral initiative with a current membership of 23 was founded in 2000 at an initiative of the Federation of German Industries (BDI). econsense co-operates with CSR Europe and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

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