

# STATEMENT



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## Overcoming hunger and promoting rural development – A paradigm shift is required

### The “Berlin Charter”: Creating New Rural Opportunities for the Young Generation

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is inviting representatives of civil society to participate in framing the so-called [Berlin Charter](#) on the development of rural areas and on supporting the young generation in Africa. The Charter is to be discussed in the framework of the BMZ conference [One World No Hunger. Future of the Rural World](#) and is subsequently to be presented to Federal Minister Dr. Gerd Müller. He will feed the Charter into the ongoing negotiation process in the Group of 20 (G20) as a further impulse for improving the group's initiatives for supporting sustainable development. The Charter is to articulate a “rural development paradigm” and to indicate measures by which sustainable rural development can be promoted, in particular through increased support for young people, in seven selected policy areas.

The perspective of sustainable rural development that is developed in the Charter points in the right direction but falls short of the requirement for a truly transformative policy in the sense of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris climate agreement. **In VENRO's view**, the vision of sustainable development underlying the Charter should be rendered more concrete and supplemented by the following aspects:

### SHAPING THE TRANSFORMATION AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The Berlin Charter refers to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris climate agreement as a “joint vision of shared responsibility across nations and societies for sustainable global development” (p. 1). In order to do justice to the transformative aspiration of this joint vision, **in VENRO's view** at least the following core principles of the 2030 Agenda should guide the Charter's policy recommendations:

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- **Leave no one behind.** This central principle of the 2030 Agenda must be taken as the basis for all policy decisions. Every contribution towards strengthening rural development in Africa must be oriented towards human rights standards, in particular the right to food, and must provide increased benefits first and foremost to those people and groups that have been most marginalised and disadvantaged so far.
- **Universality and coherence.** These principles must underlie all measures taken on the development of rural areas in Africa. This applies in particular to the contributions of the industrialised countries.

The measures formulated in the Berlin Charter should accordingly fit into this perspective of sustainable development and contribute to its realisation. **In VENRO's view**, the following additions or adjustments are therefore required in the Berlin Charter:

## **ACKNOWLEDGING RESPONSIBILITY AND INITIATING A CONSISTENT POLICY SHIFT**

The G20 itself points to its great global significance. Together, its member states account for two thirds of the world's population, 85 percent of the global economic output and 75 percent of world trade. The G20 therefore has a particular responsibility for meeting the global challenges, in particular with respect to ending hunger and poverty, overcoming social inequality and protecting the climate. It is therefore to be welcomed that the G20 is increasingly addressing these topics of international development. However, it must now also acknowledge its responsibility and initiate a consistent policy shift towards more sustainability. This includes above all taking measures that lead away from economic growth and the concomitant high resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions towards an economy oriented towards human well-being within planetary boundaries.

## **OVERCOMING HUNGER WORLDWIDE AND SECURING HIGH-QUALITY NUTRITION**

It is to be welcomed that the Berlin Charter recognises the great challenge to end hunger worldwide and in this context refers to the fulfilment of the international governmental commitments to fighting hunger (L 'Aquila Statement and G7 commitments from 2015) (p. 1). In this regard, Goal

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2 of the 2030 Agenda demands in particular to double the productivity and income of small-scale food producers and to promote sustainability in agriculture overall. In order to completely overcome hunger worldwide by 2030, the measures proposed in the Charter should be supplemented, in particular in the area of food security. **In VENRO's view**, the following measures can particularly contribute to ending hunger.

## **Prioritising rural areas and strengthening small farmers**

Small farmers produce most of the food worldwide. At the same time, they are the group most affected by hunger and malnutrition, but also by social exclusion. Strengthening them is the most effective remedy for hunger and poverty. This includes measures such as

- establishing effective social security systems, in particular in the least developed countries.
- strengthening integrated strategies of food security and rural development that address several levels, take into account concerns of other sectors and allow access to advice, markets, financial systems, education and health.
- strengthening legal certainty for access to land, seeds and water. This also includes securing land rights for rural communities and indigenous peoples in the sense of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) adopted in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- recognising farmers' organisations as legitimate stakeholders.

## **Fighting malnutrition**

The malnutrition (under- and overnutrition) promoted by the currently dominant system of agriculture and food must be overcome, in particular the chronic undernutrition of children and so-called hidden hunger. This requires

- establishing, instead of voluntary commitments by the food industry, coherent regulation at the international level oriented towards the public good and consumer health.
- implementing national agriculture and food strategies that aim to eradicate hunger in every country, as recommended in the Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food adopted by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 2004.

## **Ending hunger crises**

In view of the current and recurring hunger crises

- the financial means for humanitarian aid should be massively increased, and commitments of humanitarian aid to the United Nations (UN) and other aid organisations already made should be fulfilled.
- parties to conflicts should no longer be supported, especially arms shipments are to be ended, and the peace efforts of the UN should be promoted.
- increased medium- and long-term measures to raise the resilience of affected populations should be taken.

## **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL, TRADE AND ECONOMIC POLICY**

The Berlin Charter demands an “integrated approach” (p. 4) for efforts to generate employment in rural areas. Rural development is to be re-thought in the context of a globalising and urbanising world (p. 1). In VENRO’s view, such an approach should include the following:

### **Providing jobs in agriculture and in small and medium-sized companies**

Every year, 20 million new jobs must be created in Africa alone in order to offer a perspective also to the youth. Employment effects will be achieved above all in small-scale agriculture as well as in small and medium-sized African companies. Efforts to create employment should therefore

- focus on the African economy, with German international companies potentially involved through direct investment or provision of capital goods and services.
- always align investments with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and secure compliance with them by providing the local population with effective mechanisms for consultation, implementation, monitoring and sanctioning.

### **Strengthening small farmers as food producers**

Small farmers must be strengthened in their role as food producers vis-à-vis a (highly specialised) agriculture with elevated resource consumption, namely by

- securing the right to food through sufficient local and regional production and promoting agriculture that produces products that are necessary for a balanced diet and that prevent nutritional deficiencies.
- developing efficient value chains that allow small farmers and processors (mills, dairies, slaughterhouses) in rural areas to deliver to the growing urban markets, and thus to increase incomes and employment.

- local cultivation methods that are developed with small farmers in a participatory manner are strengthened and developed further. Training efforts in the area of information and communications technology should therefore be supplemented by corresponding offers of information.

## **Establishing a fair international trade and agriculture policy**

In order to create employment opportunities above all in rural areas and to strengthen value chains locally in Africa, the European trade and agricultural policy must be fundamentally changed and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. For example, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiated by the European Union (EU) with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states are by no means partnerships on an equal footing. It must be ensured that

- agricultural exports do not threaten the development opportunities of peasant farming, which cannot compete with the imported and often highly subsidised products.
- local and regional economic circular flows are established and resources are valorised locally. A trade and agricultural policy oriented towards the right to food must provide small farmers with easier market access.
- the scope for action of African countries and regions to support their food industry also through trade policy measures is preserved. In particular, the EPAs must be adjusted before they can be implemented.

## **PROMOTING CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AS WELL AS CLIMATE ADAPTATION**

Rural development is particularly affected by climate-related changes. Many regions in Africa, in particular in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, are already affected by climate-related changes that lead to a loss of arable land.

### **Providing sufficient funds for climate protection and adaptation**

Climate risk insurance, as mentioned as a measure in the Berlin Charter (p. 5), can contribute to buffering the effects of extreme weather events but is insufficient for dealing with long-term climatic

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changes that lead to loss of land and water resources. Instead they risk neglecting to fight the root causes of climate change.

The industrialised countries therefore should immediately

- set up a binding and reliable plan for how they intend to make available the 100 billion US dollars annually by 2020 that were pledged in the Paris agreement in addition to official development financing. They should ensure that at least half of the funds are available for adaptation measures. These must not be limit to risk protection.

## **Safeguarding the right to water**

Rural development can only succeed if access to clean water is safeguarded as a human right. Water is a necessity of life and not merely a resource for production. It is therefore imperative that

- water pollution through extensive use of fertilisers and pesticides and excessive water consumption in monocultures be significantly restricted and water-conserving cultivation methods be promoted.
- cultivation methods in rainfed agriculture that lead to higher resilience against negative effects of climate change be strengthened. In particular measures for better humus formation, which also increase soil fertility overall, should be considered in this regard.
- the high water consumption for cultivation and processing of food and fodder, which are also produced for G20-markets, is acknowledged.

## **STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND ENSURING PARTICIPATION**

It is to be welcomed that the Berlin Charter calls on the governments to safeguard and respect the rights of the youth to education, health, participation, choices and a life in dignity and prosperity. For this purpose they themselves should engage locally, nationally and internationally as actors for change in the exchange with young people worldwide. A vibrant and critical civil society is an expression of a democratic society and a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable – and thus also rural – development. However, corresponding conditions must also prevail. In many African countries, the scope for action and participation of civil society are being curtailed through increasing bureaucratic and legal restrictions, sometimes systematically. **In VENRO's view**, it is therefore urgently necessary that

- the German government advocate together with its African partners for respect for democratic and human-rights principles as well as for civil society participation. For

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example, the Africa-EU Partnership that has existed since 2007 focuses on the participation of people on both continents (“People to People Centred Approach”).

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