



coincides with the initiatives laid out by the UN. However, it is no longer the case that if an economy is profitable, it is by definition competitive. In the current global economy, competitiveness is related to the notion of inclusive growth which, in turn, evaluates how countries can achieve growth while simultaneously balancing socio-environmental outcomes.

'Governments that exert too much power without partnering with the private sector are much less effective at getting things done'

This is more than simply a semantic digression. We can see the same mistakes that national governments have made when trying to improve the competitiveness of a country as they now attempt the implementation of sustainability agendas. Firstly, sustainability needs to be incorporated into a country's strategy, rather than as a series of initiatives that bear no direct relationship to other choices made at the national level. If a country is fully invested in digital transformation, for instance, (consider the top three in our Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2020: the US, Singapore and Denmark) then it must ensure that technology has neither a negative impact on the environment, nor jeopardizes the ability to create jobs. Secondly, for sustainability goals to be implemented, we need to start with the value drivers of such goals. For example, water san-

itation and "food for all" require significant investments in infrastructure and, to that end, Goal 9 is paramount. Reducing inequalities (Goal 10) requires a deep understanding of country-specific issues and involves the overlapping of fiscal, education and industrial policies. Once again, for the world to be sustainable, we need to start with the same policies that make nations competitive: health, education, infrastructure and government efficiency.

Finally, and as Goal 17 shows, sustainability is not just a government responsibility, nor is it exclusively a business imperative – it's both. On the one hand, companies need the support of the public sector – through fiscal incentives and governance rules – so that they can preserve profitability without damaging the planet. And on the other, governments need the support of the private sector when implementing initiatives that could prove costly (energy substitution and CO₂ limits among them) or unpopular (making certain products more expensive). Only when nations walk through this narrow corridor of effective interaction will sustainable goals be achieved. ■

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