

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL,  
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

*Discussion Paper Prepared by the Vice-Chairs Mr Ositadinma Anaedu and Mr Lars-Goran Engfeldt for consideration at Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for WSSD*

The following text is submitted for consideration at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for WSSD. The paper is based on ideas contained in the Report of the Secretary General (E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/7) and comments and suggestions made by delegations at PrepCom 2 (28 January – 8 February 2002) and at the informal meeting on governance for sustainable development on 28 February 2002, held at UN Headquarters. So as to assist the discussions, we have made every effort to capture in the text all of the suggestions made by delegations.

We also note that the final shape and nature of arrangements for sustainable development governance, particularly at the international and regional levels, will depend on the substantive outcomes of the WSSD.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

### I. General considerations

1. In order to meet the challenges of sustainable development, and taking into account developments since UNCED, current systems of sustainable development governance need to be strengthened at the international, regional and national levels.
2. The overriding objective of strengthening sustainable development governance is to strengthen the governing structures and institutions in the economic, social and environmental fields as well as their respective links, so as to ensure coherence, integrate policies, limit overlap and strengthen implementation and accountability. Success in achieving this objectives requires strengthening of the various aspects of good governance at levels. (*Several delegations referred to a number of aspects of good governance including: institutions, education, science and technology, access to information, major group participation, an effective judiciary system, access to justice and respect for human rights; although some delegations noted that not all of these elements may be equally applicable at all levels. These could possibly be covered in the introduction to the Chairman's Paper as they are of a more general nature.*).
3. In this context, the general framework for effective sustainable development governance should address the following, at all levels:
  - Effective arrangements and mechanisms that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development i.e.: economic, social and environment.
  - Coherence and consistency in policy formulation and implementation.
  - Transparency and effective involvement of all relevant elements of government and of civil society in decision-making.
  - Institutional arrangements that provide for effective policy formulation, coordination, implementation and review.
4. Sustainable development governance at national, regional and international levels as discussed below is inextricably linked and mutually inter-dependent.

## **II Strengthening sustainable development governance at the international level**

5. The principal requirements for strengthening sustainable development governance at the international level are to strengthen monitoring, coordination and implementation of sustainable development including strengthening of links and collaboration between the policy and operational levels.
6. The international system should commit to a development agenda that meets the goals of sustainable development and in this context applies balanced and integrated consideration of economic, social and environment factors in policy development and implementation.
7. In regard to the economic, financial and trade aspects of international sustainable development governance, the following should be implemented by the international community :
  - Integrate long-term sustainable development goals into policies, country frameworks and operational guidelines of relevant UN agencies and the international financial institutions, while ensuring that their activities are consistent with the priorities of developing countries
  - Ensure that the macroeconomic policies and structural reforms promoted by the IMF take due account of sustainable development priorities of developing countries and avoid adverse effects on the environment and social development goals.
  - Take concrete steps towards making governance structures and decision making procedures of international finance and trade institutions more open and transparent, providing for more effective participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
  - Promote the full and effective participation of all countries in the WTO, inter alia, through enhancing the capacity of developing countries to effectively participate in trade negotiations
  - Relevant UN agencies and the WTO to continue to promote a better understanding of the link between trade and the environment and its implications for implementation of sustainable development at the national level.
8. The social dimension of sustainable development within the international system should be strengthened, including through giving greater consideration to social issues in the work of the UN system on sustainable development.
9. The outcomes of the UNEP Governing Council Seventh Session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum International Environment Governance process

needs to be fully implemented, and consideration needs to be given to the suggestion to make membership in UNEP's GC/GMEF universal.

10. A strategic partnership for implementation of sustainable development, should be formed at the highest level, between agencies and organisations of the UN system, international financial institutions and the WTO. The purpose of this strategic partnership would be to provide an effective arrangement for promoting implementation of sustainable development at the international level through a coordinated approach to implementation of Agenda 21, the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, relevant sustainable development aspects of the Millennium Declaration; the Monterrey Consensus; and, the outcomes of the Fourth World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting ( Doha).
11. The General Assembly, as the highest inter-governmental mechanism, is the principal organ for ensuring effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Assembly should organize a regular review of implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of WSSD. The United Nations should also adopt sustainable development as an overarching framework for its development activities. UN organs, programs and funds as well as UN specialised agencies and financial institutions should incorporate sustainable development objectives into their work.
12. There is a need to strengthen ECOSOC's role in promoting sustainable development through measures such as:
  - Ensuring that ECOSOC's role in the arrangements to follow-up the Monterrey Consensus in partnership with the World Bank and the IMF are closely linked with its follow-up of the Johannesburg Summit outcomes .
  - Using 'co-ordination' and 'operational activities' segments of ECOSOC sessions for consideration of relevant aspects of UN system's work on sustainable development, as well as possibly including a segment on sustainable development in the ECOSOC substantive sessions.
  - Promoting greater policy coordination among the functional commissions, including through inviting the commissions and expert committees to channel those parts of their reports, which are closely related to the agenda of the CSD in a given year through the CSD.
  - Ensuring that those expert bodies of ECOSOC with mandates relevant to sustainable development, report to the CSD.
  - The CSD and the Commission on Social Development could develop strengthened collaborative measures including stronger links between the Secretariats of the two Commissions and joint meetings of the two

bureaus. Stronger links between the CSD and the Commissions on Human Rights; Population and Development; Status of Women, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the UNFF should also be implemented.

13. All efforts must be made to ensure co-operation and synergies and avoid duplication in the work of international institutions. Thus, there should be clear division of responsibility according to comparative advantages; and institutions are strongly urged to draw on the expertise of other institutions, as appropriate. In regard to these matters, there should be mechanisms for regular and transparent communication among the relevant institutions.
14. Therefore within the international governance system there is a need to strengthen inter-agency arrangements for co-ordination of sustainable development, inter alia through:
  - Establishing an inter-agency coordinating body on sustainable development to ensure effective coordination between international agencies in the follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit outcomes and which would include the principal UN agencies dealing with sustainable development, the international financial institutions and the WTO and which would report to the CSD.
  - Promoting action orientated and flexible inter-secretariat coordination arrangements (thematic task forces, networking) and joint programming with a focus on implementation, in the context of on-going reform of the Chief Executive Board or CEB (formerly Administrative Committee on Coordination) .
  - In the context of the inter-agency coordination arrangements, further strengthen the Task Manager system to ensure more direct and meaningful involvement of UN system agencies and financial institutions in the implementation of joint programs and initiatives and, in the coordination of agency support to CSD.
  - Linking and harmonising efforts by the CEB and its High Level Program Committee, Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Environment Management Group and the UN Development Group (UNDG) with UNEP joining the UNDG.
15. In promoting improved coordination it will be important to ensure that inter-agency co-ordination bodies, as a rule, report regularly to relevant intergovernmental policy-making bodies.
16. To promote effective implementation of sustainable development at the international level the following is also required:

- Streamline the international sustainable development meeting calendar so as to reduce the number of meetings; reduce the length of meetings; and, reduce the amount of time of meetings spent on negotiated outcomes in favour of more time spent on practical matters related to implementation.
  - Integrate, as appropriate programmatic initiatives of the Johannesburg Summit across the jurisdictional boundaries of sectoral institutions and ensure the involvement of the relevant elements of civil society and the private sector.
17. The strengthening of international arrangements for sustainable development governance will be an evolutionary process. The international system needs to keep under review relevant arrangements, identify gaps, eliminate duplication of functions and continue to strive for greater coherence and integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

*Role and function of the Commission on Sustainable Development*

18. The CSD has had, and will continue to have a key role within the UN system in relation to sustainable development. While the role, functions and mandate of the Commission as set out in General Assembly Resolution 47/191 continues to be the relevant its future operations and working modalities will need to be modified in the context of the foregoing considerations. Consideration however, should be given to making membership of CSD universal.
19. Within this context the CSD should give more emphasis on actions to ensure implementation including promoting concrete partnerships for the implementation of sustainable development goals. The CSD should also foster strengthened policy coordination within the UN system on sustainable development.
20. In relation to its policy formulation role, the CSD should:
- Focus on new or emerging issues related to sustainable development, within the framework of implementation of Agenda 21, and refrain from re-negotiating aspects of Agenda 21 or other previous agreements.
  - Focus on the cross –sectoral aspects of specific sectoral issues as they relate to implementation of sustainable development and which are not being dealt with elsewhere in the UN system .
  - In relation to the above, build on the work of other institutions and structures which have the mandate for specific sectoral issues, and, as required, refer aspects of these issues to these institutions for more in-depth consideration.
21. In relation to its implementation role, the CSD should give emphasise the following:

- Review progress in, and promote further implementation of agreements, commitments and partnerships that have been launched under the auspices of the WSSD and CSD, as well as other related partnerships, including through specific forums at CSD meetings.
- Review issues related to financial resources and transfer of technology for sustainable development as well as capacity building. On the latter aspect the CSD should encourage exchange of experience with respect to national and regional sustainable development governance.
- Foster partnerships at all levels, involving governments, international institutions and other stakeholders aimed at finding practical solutions and approaches to specific sustainable development issues. This should include the CSD developing partnerships with other UN bodies and international financial institutions in implementing WSSD outcomes and CSD decisions.
- Analysis and exchange of experience with respect to tools that assist sustainable development planning, decision making, implementation etc. such as sustainable development strategies, sustainable development impact analysis and use of indicators. In this regard, the CSD could give consideration to more effective use of national reports and regional reviews.
- Consider limiting the frequency of negotiated decisions to less frequent intervals. In the intervening periods the CSD should focus on actions related to implementation of previously negotiated agreements, initiatives and partnerships.

22. In relation to policy coordination as well as stakeholder involvement and building partnerships the CSD should:

- Provide during its sessions for more direct and meaningful involvement of implementing agencies and international financial and trade institutions, at a senior level, including interactive discussions between governments, international agencies and stakeholders.
- Provide at the international level a primary meeting point of stakeholder interests relevant to sustainable development. For CSD meetings that are focussed on practical experience of implementation, governments, international organisations and stakeholders should be encouraged to include on their delegations experts experienced in implementation of actions under consideration.
- Give greater consideration to the scientific contributions to sustainable development, through for example, drawing on scientific advice of specialist organisations, encouraging countries to include scientists in their delegations

and encouraging national academy of sciences and international and regional scientific networks to be involved in the CSD.

- Receive and consider reports from the inter-agency coordination body on sustainable development ( see paragraph 14).
23. Every effort should be made by Member States to include in their delegations to CSD representatives of agencies responsible for economic, social and environmental affairs or as appropriate strategic planning or coordinating agencies.

### **III. Strengthening sustainable development governance at the regional level**

24. Implementation of sustainable development needs to be more effectively pursued at the regional level by involving the UN Regional Economic Commissions and Sub-regional groupings. In this regard the regional level should be much more involved in preparations for CSD meetings.
25. In particular, and taking into account relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the UN Regional Commissions should:
- Fully integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development into their work, in a balanced way, so that the Commissions become regional sustainable development commissions. In this regard the capacity of the Regional Commissions to support sustainable development should be enhanced, including their capacity to undertake inter-disciplinary analysis of sustainable development issues within regions.
  - In cooperation with other regional bodies provide forums for exchange of experience, good practice, case studies and partnership experience related to sustainable development implementation. Reports of these regional information exchanges could be submitted to the CSD as part of its annual preparation.
  - Consider establishing regional processes by which national reports on implementation of Agenda 21 are reviewed and analysed and substantive recommendations are made to governments, relevant regional and international organisations, including the CSD. The regional level should be the prime level for reviewing national reports on implementation of Agenda 21 and national sustainable development experience.
  - Actively encourage new partnerships to tackle sustainable development challenges in the region and should develop open and transparent dialogue processes with multi-stakeholder groups in a manner consistent with CSD practice

26. Intra-regional co-ordination between regional commissions, regional offices of UN agencies such as UNDP and UNEP and regional development banks and with sub-regional inter-governmental bodies with regard to their sustainable development activities should be strengthened. As appropriate, the secretariats of Regional Commission should consider establishing regional inter-agency sustainable development arrangements to provide a forum for enhanced –inter-agency regional coordination on sustainable development; to focus effort; and, to avoid programme overlaps.
27. Strong links between UN Regional Commissions and sub-regional bodies should be established.
28. In order to improve regional coordination on sustainable development, regional commissions, UN agencies, regional development banks and sub-regional bodies consider developing, or further enhancing, regional sustainable development strategies and action plans that reflect regional priorities and also provide the basis for regional implementation of Agenda 21, WSSD outcomes and future CSD decisions. Review of implementation of the regional strategies and reporting to the CSD would be an important function of the Regional Commissions.
29. The international community should give particular emphasis to support of regionally agreed development programs that promote sustainable development e.g. New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

#### **IV. Strengthening sustainable development governance at the national level**

30. Countries should continue to promote coherent and coordinated approaches to sustainable development governance at the national level as this, in part, provides an important element for achieving coherence and consistency at regional and international levels.
31. National sustainable development councils or equivalent bodies should be established by all countries to provide a high level national focus on implementing sustainable development. Such bodies should be composed of relevant government ministers and representatives of major groups and other stakeholders and should be chaired by a senior government minister.
32. Countries should re-commit to developing national sustainable development strategies (using the relevant guidelines for such strategies) involving all relevant government ministries and stakeholders as soon as possible.
33. Countries should ensure that there is policy coherence between their national development frameworks, consistent with sustainable development, including Poverty Reduction Strategies in countries concerned, and UNDP should continue

to play an active role in the development and implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

34. There is a need for a continuing and strengthened role of the international system in supporting capacity building for sustainable development governance. Therefore the following should be implemented:
- Enhance practical contributions by the UN system organisations to national sustainable development efforts, using the experience gained in the UN Development Group and the UN Development Assistance Framework..
  - Ensure that the UN system helps developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition to overcome the fragmented approach to national development plans/strategies and approach social, economic and environmental policies in a more coherent way, while at the same time ensuring full ownership and leadership by the countries.
35. Efforts by developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition to enhance national governance arrangements for sustainable development need to be complemented by undertakings by the international community in support of new or enhanced national governance capacity building programs related to sustainable development. Some of the critical areas for capacity building include:
- i. Cross-sectoral approaches to formulating national strategies (or visions) and plans for sustainable development.
  - ii. Participatory, multi-stakeholder approaches to dialogue and planning, with a focus on listening and responding to the views of more marginalized and more vulnerable groups, and more effectively linking local and national-level policies and decision-making.
  - iii. Policy analysis and management capacity, including multi-sector and inter-disciplinary analysis of economic, social and environmental policy issues, and the use of multi-dimensional planning and assessment approaches and tools, including strategic environmental assessment.
  - iv. Negotiation and implementation capacity, for ensuring effective participation in international environmental and economic agreements and instruments.
  - v. Aid co-ordination and management capacity, including capacity to efficiently and effectively manage programme and sector-wide approaches.
  - vi. Capacity development in monitoring and evaluation through, inter alia, support for improving public sector management and performance, including, data collection, the use of sustainable development indicators and complementary quantitative techniques.

36. UNDP's Capacity 21 Program as a key mechanism for supporting national sustainable development capacity building efforts should be significantly strengthened.
37. The GEF should become more involved in projects with domestic environmental benefits, including in the area of technology transfer and capacity building. In addition the GEF should be more responsive to the needs of developing countries in a timely manner. (*This suggestion was made by a group of countries – but possibly could be dealt with in the finance part of the Chairman's papert as it might be more relevant in that section*)
38. While partnerships between governmental and non-governmental actors on programs and activities are becoming more and more important for the achievement of sustainable development at all levels, the need for such partnerships is particularly important at the national and sub-national levels.
39. Local empowerment and decentralisation of decision making through Local Agenda 21 programs and other sub-national sustainable development strategies and approaches that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development must be promoted further by national governments.