



**SUMMARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM
ON NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIES:
7-9 NOVEMBER 2001**

The International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) took place on 7-9 November 2001 at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana. The Forum was convened by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the Government of Ghana, Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK, the Danish Government and the UNDP/Capacity 21, as part of the ongoing preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). Seventy-three participants from 31 countries drawn from government, civil society, the private sector and international agencies participated in the Forum.

The purpose of the meeting was to debate at the international level, lessons learned and best practices in NSDSs, to improve understanding and consensus amongst participants, and to recommend approaches that are relevant and effective for the future. Among the topics considered were the key principles and characteristics constituting sound NSDSs, country experiences in bringing together already existing country frameworks for NSDSs, stakeholder experiences with NSDSs, assessing effective processes for NSDSs, and strengthening capacity for NSDS processes. Participants also deliberated on national and regional follow-up actions and discussed recommendations and conclusions for presentation at the WSSD preparatory meetings.

The meeting's outputs consisted of the Draft Report of the Forum with country reports annexed thereto, an enriched draft of the UN document on guidance for preparing NSDSs, suggestions for key national and regional actions, and an enriched draft of the document on development of criteria to assess the effectiveness of NSDSs.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

In 1992, more than 100 heads of state met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). One of the Summit's outputs was Agenda 21, a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was

created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, in particular to monitor and report on the implementation of agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Chapter 37 subparagraph 4(c) of Agenda 21, on capacity building, states that each country should complete, as soon as practicable and if possible by 1994, a review of capacity- and capability-building requirements for devising NSDSs, including those for generating and implementing its own Agenda 21 action programme. At its fourth session held on 18 April – 3 May 1996, the CSD reviewed progress made on the implementation of Agenda 21, noting greater focus on strengthening national capacities for designing national plans and strategies for sustainable development. CSD-4 welcomed efforts to establish and strengthen these plans and strategies, and called upon Governments and international organizations to encourage the active involvement of non-state actors, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups, in the capacity building of developing countries.

Capacity building was reviewed further by the Special Session of the UN General Assembly for the Overall Review and Appraisal of Agenda 21 (UNGASS-19) held from 23-27 June 1997, which resolved that the UNDP, *inter alia*, through its Capacity 21 programme, should give priority attention to building capacity for the elaboration of sustainable development strategies based on participatory approaches. At its sixth session held on 22 December 1997 and 20 April - 1 May 1998, the CSD recommended that capacity-building efforts should be intensified where necessary, based on participatory approaches, with the aim, as called for by UNGASS-19, of having NSDSs, or their equivalent, fully in place by 2002 for implementation.

Within this framework, three regional consultative meetings have been held – for the Asia and Pacific region in November 1998 in Manila, The Philippines, for the African region in September 1999 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and for the Latin American and Caribbean Region in January 2000 in Santiago, Chile – with a view to exchange experiences in formulating NSDSs, and to consider ideas for regional cooperation on sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

REPORT OF THE MEETING

During the three-day Forum, participants worked in Plenary and working group sessions, with Plenary presentations preceding each of the working groups sessions. Although participants worked in four parallel working groups, the issues they considered in parallel varied.

At the start of Thursday and Friday sessions, 8 and 9 November, Forum Chair Cielito Habito, Ateneo de Manila University, presented a summary of the previous days proceedings. During the session, Forum Facilitator Steve Bass, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), compiled the proceedings and working group reports, which were used by a regionally representative committee constituted on Thursday evening, 8 November to prepare the draft report that was presented to, discussed, amended and adopted by Plenary on Friday morning, 9 November.

OPENING PLENARY

Edward Osei Nkenkyire, Chief Director of Ghana's Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, opened the Forum at 9:15 am on Wednesday, 7 November. He outlined the origins of NSDSs and said the Forum would undertake a review exercise that could strengthen the adoption of NSDSs and provide impetus for the widespread adoption of NSDSs worldwide.

In his welcoming remarks, Paa Kwesi Nduom, Ghana's Minister for Economic Planning and Regional Integration, noted Ghana's commitment to, *inter alia*, good governance, the rule of law and zero tolerance for corruption, which he said constituted a foundation for sustainable development. He elaborated Ghana's efforts in the preparation of the NSDS and said all stakeholders would be involved in the soon-to-be-created monitoring and evaluation structure. Dominic Kwaku Fobih, Ghana's Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, said the Forum's goal is to reinvigorate commitment to sustainable development and the objective is to address the key principles and characteristics of sustainable development. Drawing from Ghana's experience, he shared some essential elements for the development of NSDSs, and expressed hope that the Forum's findings would result in a set of principles that could constitute an Accra Declaration on NSDSs.

Hiroko Morita-Lou, UN DESA, delivered a message on behalf of Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General of DESA, expressing appreciation to the government of Ghana, DFID, UNDP and Denmark for their support in organizing the Forum. He said the WSSD would provide a critical opportunity to strengthen the foundation for peace and prosperity, and stressed the need for results in: fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization; building financial resources and technology; and translating the concept of sustainable development into working practices. He highlighted the challenges encountered in defining specific needs in developing and implementing NSDSs.

Alfred Fawundu, UNDP's Resident Coordinator, said one of the WSSD's greatest challenges is to correct the misconception that sustainable development is a code word for rationing – a “Trojan horse” requiring people to sacrifice economic growth, higher living standards and better quality of life, in order to achieve long-term protection of the environment. He emphasized the need for integration and the development of new ways in how we produce and consume, live and work, and make decisions, and highlighted past and future UNDP Capacity 21 efforts toward NSDS development.

Cielito Habito, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines, and Chair of the Forum, stressed the Forum's purpose of exchanging experiences in pursuit of NSDSs and recommending approaches for the future. He outlined session themes, defined expected Forum outputs and noted that recommendations and conclusions would be submitted to the WSSD Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) in January and would be available for use in national and regional processes. He urged participants not to revisit old debates or to redefine sustainable development, but to focus on a holistic view of sustainable development strategies.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTERISTICS CONSTITUTING A SOUND NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This issue was considered on Wednesday morning, 7 November. After a brief introduction in Plenary, the principles were considered in four parallel working groups. Each working group reported its deliberations to the Plenary, after which participants made brief comments. On Thursday morning, 8 November, Forum Chair Habito provided a summary of the proceedings.

PRESENTATION: Mersie Ejigu, Partnership for African Environmental Sustainability, introduced 15 key principles and characteristics constituting sound NSDSs, and called participants' attention to a background document on guidance for preparing NSDSs. He noted, *inter alia*, that a good NSDS: requires different approaches and strategies to suit different national needs; is necessary but not sufficient on its own; and should be realistically prepared and implemented according to guiding principles, drawing on lessons learned. He also outlined and discussed the guiding principles. Responding to participants' inquiries, he said NSDSs are applicable at all levels and noted the need to further coordinate the use of terms such as “principles,” “features,” and “objectives.”

WORKING GROUPS: Introducing the objectives of the breakout groups, Facilitator Steve Bass noted the need to reach consensus on what a NSDS is. He urged participants to review what has worked, discuss lessons learned, and examine the critical issues that have constrained NSDS implementation. Bass urged groups to address three issues; principles that have been most easily applied, presented the greatest challenges, and those that are missing.

One group made a distinction between the Rio Principles and implementation mechanisms to enable their realization, and considered Planning Ministries as the best location for NSDSs. Another said it had discussed concerns relating to, *inter alia*: participation; strategy prioritization; effect of international dynamics on national planning; and sharing responsibility of global public goods.

The groups identified a few core principles from the initial list, namely: participation; strong political commitment; shared strategic issues; national ownership of processes; capacity; a holistic approach; a focus on outcomes; and partnership based on equality. The principles that were singled out as the easiest to apply were consultation, planning and building on existing plans, strong political commitment and shared strategic and pragmatic visions.

The most challenging principles included:

- mobilizing resources;
- retaining experience;
- ensuring broad participation;
- establishing mechanisms for monitoring, follow up, evaluation and feedback;
- linking local and global commitments;

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

- linking the short-, medium- and long term plans;
- linking national and local priority actions;
- integrating and balancing the strategy;
- integrating the three pillars of sustainable development;
- aligning budgetary and strategic priorities;
- aligning partners' goals and objectives;
- defining and measuring change; and,
- finding data, particularly for monitoring and evaluation.

Additional principles were suggested, namely: equal partnerships; leadership in NSDS development; communication or access to information; priority setting; the political environment; prioritization; financing of NSDS; conflict resolution; the precautionary principle; cross-sectoral and short-, medium- and long-term views; and political, cultural and spiritual dimensions.

DISCUSSION: Participants raised concerns regarding: the lack of economic considerations in the debate; the proposed institutional frameworks; the need for an index to monitor progress; the actions needed to catalyze a demand for sustainable development; and the quality of partnerships.

Forum Facilitator Bass noted discussion on many of the issues raised was planned for later in the week. During the discussion of the Forum's Draft Report on Friday, 9 November, Chair Habito said it would be edited and circulated to participants, and urged them to submit their comments for revision to the presenter, Mersie Ejigu, by 16 November 2001.

EXPERIENCES IN CONSOLIDATING EXISTING COUNTRY FRAMEWORKS FOR NSDS

This subject was considered and concluded on Tuesday afternoon, 7 November, with Uganda and Belgium presenting their country experiences.

PRESENTATIONS: Mary Muduuli, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Uganda, discussed Uganda's success in developing and implementing a NSDS and poverty eradication strategy focusing on increasing incomes and improving the quality of life. She highlighted positive principles guiding the strategy, including, *inter alia*: strong political leadership; a shared strategic and pragmatic vision; a nationally owned and country-driven process; strong institutions spearheading the process; broad participation; and coherence between budgetary and strategic priorities. She noted challenges in: implementing an integrated and balanced strategy; setting realistic but flexible targets; linking national and local priorities and actions; and developing mechanisms for monitoring follow-up, evaluation and feedback. Finally, she emphasized the need in all country strategies for good governance, political will, evolutionary capacity and equal partnerships.

Presenting Belgium's experience, Nadine Gouzée, Federal Planning Bureau of Belgium, said the NSDSs' development started in 1997 with the adoption of a legal framework. Noting that three-quarters of the first cycle of the NSDSs – which comprises reporting, planning, consultation, integration, decision and implementation – had been completed, she emphasized that integration, in different forms, was crucial during each phase. Gouzée explained each of the phases in the cycle and highlighted: conclusions reached on the first Belgian sustainable development report; preparation and structure of the sustainable development plan; responses to the main parts of the preliminary draft plan; and the lessons learned on, *inter alia*, the need to assess results and for political

goodwill to accept them, bottom-up approaches and constructive civil society consultation. She also referred briefly to the European Union Strategy. In response to inquiries, Gouzée explained the economic, regulatory, cultural and communication instruments used to promote sustainable consumption and noted EU efforts to mainstream a monitoring system.

WORKING GROUPS: Introducing questions for the breakout session, Facilitator Bass urged participants to take into consideration some of the issues raised in the discussion of the previous theme, and proposed that Groups I and II should discuss how to integrate economic, social and environmental objectives into the mainstream strategy processes and approaches to improve integration, while Groups III and IV would address institutional mechanisms and other arrangements for strategy development and implementation.

Integration of the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development into Mainstreaming Processes: Penny Stock, Capacity 21, reported that Group I discussions served to highlight case studies from different countries. She emphasized, *inter alia*: successful partnerships between civil society and the private sector to integrate views and produce multisectoral recommendations for sustainable development strategies; integrated regional and geographical solutions for land use planning; and effects of tourism on economic planning and integration with a national environment fund. She noted the need to find indicators to measure the planning process. Regarding other approaches, she stressed consideration of governance in a neutral fashion, noted discussion on trust and how to make integration happen in order to include stakeholders and engender a shared sense of responsibility, underscored transparency and information sharing, and described areas where trade-offs are needed.

Christopher Pickard, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, reported for Group II, noting that discussions bridged the two questions considered by the group. He said emerging themes included: stakeholder analysis; missing elements of social and economic development planning; geographic and spatial integration; top-down versus bottom-up approaches; discrepancies between urban and rural development; priority-driven approaches; and various institutional integration models. He said the incentives for integration are beneficial partnerships, better policies, increased transparency and knowledge, while disincentives are lack of clear goals, trust, resources, expertise or information.

Regarding other approaches to improve integration, he noted sound analysis of costs and benefits to produce a partnership framework. On trade-offs, he said the group analyzed sustainability appraisal, impact assessment and the process of trying to build consensus around decisions. He labeled trade-offs a "last resort" and stressed transparency, information and participation as improving chances of acceptance and learning from decisions made.

A brief open discussion followed the reports regarding the extent to which sustainable development is an elitist concept and its relevance to the poorest countries. One participant highlighted gaps between what is desired and what countries are able to do, and defined NSDSs as a means of committing to a process and agreeing to attain goals that may not be possible given financial dispositions. Another participant questioned how this Forum would translate through next year's negotiations, and suggested teasing out an international perspective to inform the WSSD about what is needed to support NSDSs.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

Institutional Mechanisms and Other Arrangements for Strategy

Development and Implementation: Regarding needed institutional mechanisms, Gyan Prasad Sharma, National Planning Commission Secretariat, Nepal, said Group IV had proposed multisectoral bodies, legislative provisions, national dialogues, parliament involvement and interministerial committees. Kathrin Heidbrink, GTZ, said Group III noted the need to distinguish between intragovernmental linkages and linkages with other actors, and said discussion had focused on leadership and financing of the NSDSs. On leadership, Group III: noted the effect of culture and country development circumstances in determining the leadership type; emphasized the need for a lead institution, leadership at different levels and "champions"; and questioned the legitimacy of "champions." Financing issues related to concerns about the effect of country circumstances in determining resource allocation to the NSDS, the need for transparency in both resource mobilization and expenditure and for contributions from other actors.

On how to sustain political commitment over the long term, Group III said dictatorship and participation were the two existing approaches. Noting the need for planning to supersede the four- to five-year electoral processes and project approach, Heidbrink said broad-based participation would make it difficult to change a system. On this issue, Group IV noted the usefulness of the proposed institutional mechanisms, as well as: building institutional capacity to strengthen the linkages; ensuring transparency, including through partnering with the media; developing broad-based parliamentary involvement; encouraging a bottom-up approach in planning, monitoring and evaluation; and establishing regional partnerships.

PRESENTATIONS INVOLVING ALL NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

This issue was considered and concluded on Thursday, 8 November. Following presentations by different stakeholders, four parallel working groups were established with each considering one of the four topics on participation, financial mobilization, international partnerships and capacity building.

PRESENTATIONS: Government: Ramesh Jhamtani, Planning Commission, India, demonstrated sustainability concerns in planning and how a populous developing country could formulate a NSDS using the existing institutions. The presentation focused on finance and capacity building. He noted five key elements in NSDS development, namely, the participatory process, legislative framework, institutional framework, enabling environment and environmental awareness and education. He elaborated on the institutional framework, the role of the Planning Commission and efforts to maximize resource use and the finance mix used for NSDSs.

NGOs: Reuben Lifuka, NGO Coordinating Committee in Zambia, presented a paper on involvement of civil society in the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) process in Zambia. He outlined premises to guide participation of civil society in the PRSP process and emphasized necessary factors of: political will; an integral framework; technical skills; and effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation. He stated that the Civil Society For Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was formed to facilitate participation, involving ten working groups that galvanize views and interests for both government and civil society, and detailed their activities. During discussion, one participant questioned how to harmonize positions to engage governments at higher levels and asked

whether the initiative examined resource allocation as self-sustaining and self-sufficient. Lifuka noted efforts to engage CBOs and other NGOs in the rural sector, and agreed that work is needed on self-sustaining funds.

Private Sector: Presenting the business perspective, Karin Ireton, Anglo American Plc., recalled lessons from past stakeholder engagement in post-Apartheid South Africa and highlighted problems business planned to avoid in future consultations, including too little engagement too late, endorsement instead of consultation, involvement in an undirected process and idealism that could lead to paralysis. She overviewed gains to business accruing from NSDSs and outlined the potential role of the private sector, inter alia, and solution-seeking, partnership development, social responsibility and engendering pragmatism. One participant questioned how good governance practices documented in the private sector could be applied to WSSD principles. Ireton responded that good governance within the corporate sector is attempting to address this issue, noting that South Africa will be developing a straightforward set of business principles against corruption.

Development Agencies: Adrian Davis, DFID, discussed how DFID has worked to meet international environmental development targets. He noted that the Millennium Summit goals separate environment from development and that the goals for environment are similar to international development targets. Praising the Zambia NGO example as working to apply NSDS principles, he recognized themes in Africa on poverty reduction as key to sustainable development and said that such a focus successfully merges environmental mainstreaming and environmental development. He urged countries to concentrate on principles, strategies and poverty reduction in an international context.

WORKING GROUPS: Facilitator Bass proposed that the groups examine participation, capacity building, financial mobilization and partnerships, urging that the suggested questions serve only as a guide to their discussions.

Participation: This Group considered two questions: how different actors could work together to ensure inclusion of 'bottom-up' needs throughout the strategy process; and based on their experiences, the most effective ways to promote a shared sense of responsibility, partnerships, consensus building, negotiation and conflict management.

Jay Ram Adhikari, Ministry of Population and Environment, Nepal, reported back for the group. He summarized discussion on effective ways of ensuring balance between top-down and bottom-up development, harmonizing processes, involving stakeholders from all levels of society and emphasizing knowledge sharing and experience bases. He said that preliminary experience showed a need to create better mechanisms for partnership, foster trust between governments and the private sector and develop consensus in society before committing to a process. He noted that governments should create environments to ensure development of guidelines and stressed the need for monitoring, capacity building and balancing resources.

Capacity Building: On this issue, the group examined: special skills needed for strategy processes and how to employ them, as well as how the strategy process itself could develop capacity.

Desta Mebratu, UNIDO/Eco-Tech Innovation, said that Group II's discussions identified capacity building at the human, institutional, and systemic levels. He noted that discussion focused on, inter alia: technical and negotiation capacity to further agendas; capacity to understand complexities of sustainable development; institutional capacity to

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

adapt to change, particularly internal institutional change; capacity for evaluation, vision, integration, coordination and mobilization; cultural dialogue; and networking capacity. He noted further comments on how to develop these capacities and effectively utilize them, namely, moving from a linear to an interactive approach, avoiding obsession with success, but to learn through failure, directing resource flows to local levels; and allowing time for activities to evolve and mature.

Financial Mobilization: The working group considered three questions: how finances for the strategy process could be mobilized; how the NSDS could support properly costed changes and actions; and how to integrate the strategy process into government budgeting and private sector investment programmes.

Presenting the group report, Karin Ireton said there was agreement that: NSDS financing should cover both the draft strategy and engagement with the stakeholders; and that although internal resource mobilization was necessary, external financing for countries with limited resources was inevitable. Leveraging internal funds with traditional financial instruments such as the sale of treasury bonds deriving from user fees, as well as debt management, could provide possible sources of NSDS financing. The group emphasized that: clarity in goals can attract international financing; NSDS preparation did not guarantee financial support for NSDSs; the private sector was reluctant to fund unclear and intangible outputs; and NSDSs were incremental, not one-off, outputs. The Group flagged questions on: how to mainstream NSDSs in government budgeting; the causes for non-financing of NSDSs if resources were available; and how external financing affected ownership of the process.

International Partnerships: This group was established at the request of participants, due to the recurrence of the issue at the Forum. Noting that discussion had raised more questions than answers, Ndey Njie, UNDP Capacity 21, reported that the group agreed that the sectoral orientation of government and donor organizations posed integration challenges for both actors, but recognized changes particularly in practices of consultative group meetings. Participants also agreed that international partners should: support homegrown nationally-owned strategies; provide knowledge in the short term and improve capacity to enable countries to take charge of integration in the long term; improve partnerships by shifting their focus from micromanagement to a focus on systemic, policy and cross-sectoral aspects; and to address international commitments in the strategies. He also noted the challenge of how to transform conditionalities into partnerships with shared goals, meaningful indicators and clear responsibilities.

DISCUSSION: Participants' concerns focused on: the need to expand finance discussions to the US\$1.5 trillion daily circulating in the speculative market; the linkage of the WSSD and Financing for Development (FFD) processes; trade and investment as instruments to mobilize resources; the need to demystify sustainable development "jargon"; and the differentiated capacity of stakeholders to participate in the NSDS.

ASSESSING EFFECTIVE STRATEGY PROCESSES

This subject was presented on Thursday afternoon, 8 November, and participants formed a working group to further debate the issues.

PRESENTATION: Colin Kirkpatrick, University of Manchester, presented his methodology on assessing effectiveness of NSDS processes. He introduced a framework methodology that countries

could use to assess the effectiveness of a process, specifically identifying strengths and weakness, and ways to report these to the public. In developing the methodology, he: reviewed principles for effective NSDSs and strategic planning; discussed criteria of integration, social, poverty, environmental and resource issues, and international commitments; and presented questions to evaluate effectiveness of the application of each criteria. Finally, he provided guidance on how to organize the assessment, stressed the evaluation of process rather than outcomes, and noted that the methodology had not yet been applied in practice.

Responding to participants, Kirkpatrick said: the assessment provides feedback on the usefulness of NSDSs and aims to support the Development Assistance Cooperation (DAC) requirement to implement NSDSs by 2005; effectiveness referred to how closely the process had adhered to principles; and that the lack of weighted criteria was deliberate.

DISCUSSION: Participants' concerns related to: how the proposed assessment compared to country experiences; benefits of process assessments; the criteria used to define the social dimension; and why processes are not monitored. It was noted that: process assessments are essential in the initial stages of the NSDS, but must soon give way to impact assessments; resource constraints in developing countries impeded the conduct of process assessments; and ensuring objectivity of qualitative criteria was a challenge.

WORKING GROUP: The Plenary then transformed into a working group that considered three questions: the benefits accruing from assessing a strategy process; challenges arising from a process strategy and how to redress them; and how assessing a national strategy could benefit regional or global dialogue.

Regarding benefits of assessing the strategy process, it was stressed that: it enabled the identification of process-related obstacles that could hinder impact realization; impact indicators needed to accompany process assessments, as processes and outcomes are linked; and that it would prove politically difficult for some countries to justify process assessments alone.

The group also addressed difficulties in assessing the strategy process and how to overcome them. Discussion highlighted, inter alia: the need for mechanisms for resolving trade-offs; the need for assessment directed at the process versus the outcome; and monitoring as an integral part of a cyclical and ongoing learning processes. One participant highlighted lack of cultural assessment, noted that the goal of assessment is not to validate, but to improve performance, and said that governments must overcome fears of self-criticism in order to improve. Questions were raised regarding who conducts assessments and to whom they are directed. Participants noted difficulties in assessing a process in which one did not take part while also recognizing the need for independent review to avoid self-assessment. One mentioned the need for political sensitivity and integrating government assessments with civil society assessments. On how assessments could be used for regional and global dialogue, including assessments for international frameworks and processes, responses highlighted cross-fertilization and international trade reforms.

Chair Habito summarized the discussion, noting that assessments can be valuable tools for judging effectiveness in what the NSDS wants to achieve. He supported the assessment of impacts of NSDSs on sustainable development objectives, and an assessment of the process itself. He recognized lack of political will and lack of desire for an

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

assessment culture as major obstacles, underscored lack of capacity and political support and noted confusion of parallel assessments. He also questioned whether any attempts to assess global processes had been made.

PANEL DISCUSSION ON STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR NSDS PROCESSES

This issue was considered in a Plenary session on Thursday afternoon, 8 November. An open forum followed during which participants posed questions to the panel.

PRESENTATIONS: Oscar Serrate, Global Coordinator of UNDP Capacity 21, presented a paper titled, "Are Strategies Dead?" He examined the relevance of strategies in the current environment, highlighted 21 lessons derived from different countries, noted a paradigm shift since the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in respect to the actors, themes, context and approaches, and said the renewed initiative for capacity development should focus on developing partnerships to fight poverty. Outlining UNDP's contributions to the social, economic and environmental pillars, he said on-going national Capacity 21 assessments would provide information for future strategic sustainable development initiatives, whose approach would encompass integration, participation and information.

Pablo Guerro, World Bank, outlined a comprehensive development framework (CDF), including principles of a long-term holistic view involving a vision and strategy, enhanced country ownership, partnership among stakeholders and a focus on development results. He presented a regional summary of examples of how countries fall into each category of principles and questions to assess the status of each. He discussed how to align incentives to ensure that staff work consistently with principles, noted the need for incentives to promote coordination and integration, and recognized the World Bank's poor record of harmonizing policies with other agencies.

Barry Dhalal-Clayton, IIED, presented a three-year old DAC initiative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which aimed at drawing basic principles on how to approach NSDS development and that culminated in the publication of a resource book and CD-ROM. He explained the purpose, origins and development of the initiative, the target group and processes undertaken to develop the resource book, and outlined the on-going second phase. He called for assistance in the form of additional experiences that can be shared, resourceful institutions and information networks, and feedback on the usefulness of the resource book.

OPEN FORUM: Responding to participants' comments, Serrate: said distinguishing private sector organizations from those of civil society, emphasized the new reality that the private sector is playing a major role in sustainable development; concurred on the need to enhance work at the community level; and reiterated that national assessment would provide the basis for future sustainable development initiatives. Responding to doubts expressed regarding the complementarity between CDFs and NSDSs, Guerro stressed the growing preference by the international community for single frameworks that underpin country priorities to fragmented approaches. Dhalal-Clayton acknowledged the challenge to make resources accessible to community groups, noted the need to field test the resource book and the potential for DAC members to assist in this regard through their country assistance strategies, invited offers for field testing, and said project

partners had indicated interest in continued cooperation. Regarding monitoring of DAC members' fulfillment of their international obligations, he noted established peer reviews.

NATIONAL/REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Four regional groups – Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Europe and North America; and Latin America and the Caribbean – were convened on Friday morning, 9 November, to enable participants to reflect on practical actions deriving the Forum's outputs that could be pursued at the national and regional levels. Facilitator Bass urged the groups to consider three questions: possible changes in NSDSs; proposals for regional follow-up action to support the NSDSs; and the role, and changes required of, external agencies corresponding to these changes. The regional groups reported their deliberations to Plenary and agreed to incorporate their contributions in the Forum's report.

REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS: Africa: Robert Lifuka, NGO Coordination Zambia, said discussions were heated. Regarding changes in NSDSs, he noted the need to: have an in-depth reflection on the conceptual thinking; and a more comprehensive and all embracing framework for sustainable development in some countries; allow time for the processes to mature; ensure participation is inclusive, effective and broad; provide a level playing field to enable sufficient participation of stakeholders in the entire policy process; group together the NSDSs, PRSPs and CDFs in some countries; and to ensure PRSPs are better linked to the local level. On the way forward, he noted lack of adequate preparation for the WSSD and suggested regional activities to prepare for PrepCom I and the WSSD, including through networking, advocacy activities and possibly through a regional secretariat. He also highlighted the need to influence the New Africa Initiative to ensure it embraces NSDS characteristics. On the role of external partners, the group recommended that they provide assistance to Africa in preparations for the WSSD and its PrepComs, and support African countries to move from being grant and aid recipients to key actors in trade and development, and to realize technology transfer. They also proposed the need for assessments of international and development agencies' accountability in regard to sustainable development.

Asia and the Pacific: Ella Antonio, Earth Council, Philippines, reported that the Asia and Pacific region agreed that no changes were required in their regional strategy, since mechanisms and processes are in place, but noted the need for increased participation and improved structures. On regional follow-up, she called for an exchange of experiences and plans for future actions following WSSD, to coordinate activities, disseminate information and transfer knowledge and experiences. On the role external agencies could play, she said they should respect country needs and not impose objectives upon them, provide information and assistance, act as facilitators, and allow countries to decide on processes and mechanisms, to assure national ownership.

Europe and North America: Ian Pickard, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK, said the group had discussed the three questions together and observed that countries with national strategies had well developed mechanisms to assess the strategies and indicators, however, some countries needed to develop methods to assess production and consumption. A previous aid recipient highlighted the importance of investing in education as a way to solve other problems. The group also noted the need for meaningful participation of stakeholders and for coherence between poverty reduction and environ-

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

mental degradation. Commenting on this regional report, one participant noted that while national and regional assessment indicators may be easily transferable, they are not interchangeable with those for the local level. A participant from a developed country with experience in national and local level indicators concurred.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Max Ooft, Global Environment Facility, Suriname, said the group suggested: increasing the role of planning ministries; developing local-level indicators to complement national indicators for monitoring and implementation; focusing on assessing results rather than processes; increasing horizontal cooperation; ensuring that regional integration recognizes the diversity of the process; and giving special attention to small islands, regarding tourism and natural disasters. He noted contention over: the need to move quickly from documentation to implementation; understanding that countries are at different stages of development; and needs for institutional setup versus increasing capacity. On external agencies, he stressed the need for resources, but noted that aid is often too fragmented and specific, highlighted unmet ODA targets, and called for an assessment of international cooperation and focus on criteria for channeling of funds.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On Friday morning, 9 November, the Forum began consideration of its Draft Report. Chair Habito called for general comments and participants highlighted areas of inconsistency and noted where concepts could be added or clarified to reflect the Forum's discussion. A number of participants noted the need to use language that would not make PrepCom negotiations more difficult, repeatedly appealing to avoid a text-drafting approach.

Regarding the purpose of NSDSs, they noted, *inter alia*, that the report needed to emphasize that existing planning and mechanisms were still relevant and not different from NSDSs, and that both developing and developed countries should apply NSDSs as a matter of priority. One regional group stressed that elements relating to harmonization and integration should reflect co-responsibility, and include aid agencies, donors and countries. Some expressed the need for clarity on inclusion of CDFs and PRSPs in the NSDS process. Several said that this section should acknowledge the Millennium Summit goals, including references to sustainable development.

There was extensive debate on how to refer to NSDSs. Several disagreed on use of the acronym altogether and preferred to spell out the term to de-emphasize NSDSs as separate processes. One participant suggested always referring to "NSDSs" rather than "an NSDS," as another suggested simply spelling out "sustainable development strategies." Another proposed placing the NSDS definition in the first paragraph, but some said this might leave out countries that lack NSDSs, but have similar strategies. One participant cautioned that the NSDS is the theme of the Forum and should not be downplayed. Finally, one participant said that the report's introductory paragraph reflected language negotiated during Rio+5, and urged all the retention of agreed terminology. A participant stated, and many agreed, that the report was an attempt to reflect the reality of the discussions and should not result in negotiation of language, emphasizing that this was a summary report of a meeting attempting to capture the views of individuals, not countries.

Regarding NSDS characteristics, one participant stressed assessment of outcomes rather than processes. Another referred to text stating that NSDS guidelines should be fully tested and validated, and asked how this could possibly be done before they were put to use. Disagreement arose over the meaning of "testing and validating" guidelines, and the group agreed to delete the language. Others noted: the need for harmonized and regularized dialogue; the importance of indigenous knowledge systems; the need for finances to start, develop and maintain NSDSs; and the need to reflect that 40 countries have already prepared PRSPs, thus it was not a new idea. A proposal that partnerships with external agencies should be established as soon as NSDS preparation gets under way was challenged due to concerns regarding ownership of the processes. Participants agreed to include language encouraging the WSSD and its PrepComs, as well as stakeholders at the national levels, to use these recommendations in their preparations. Others proposed: inclusion of a note recognizing and encouraging countries that already have NSDSs; a recommendation for funds and programmes aimed at developing and implementing sustainable development strategies to be accessible to local and indigenous communities; and a reference to forward-looking assessments. In the context of institutional arrangements and conclusion, concerns were raised regarding the possibility of achieving win-win outcomes where trade-offs must be made.

Concluding the discussion, Chair Habito thanked participants for their cooperation. It was agreed that the report would be revised to reflect the proposals and then circulated to participants who would then review it and email any additional comments to Facilitator Steve Bass by 16 November 2001, after which the report would be edited and published for distribution to delegates at PrepCom II in January 2002. As the background documents and country reports would be edited and annexed thereto, Chair Habito urged participants wishing to improve their country reports to do so and email them back to UN DESA's Kirsten Rohrman, also by 16 November. Chair Habito said all the reports and documents from the meeting, including the report by IISD (Sustainable Developments) would be circulated to participants, and also be made available through the Internet.

Final Report: The Draft Report of the Forum notes the conception of NSDSs during UNCED, related commitments by governments to adopt them, and defines the envisaged purpose. It recognizes that NSDSs are processes toward sustainable development, and describes NSDSs value as: encouraging and facilitating institutional and behavioral change; improving integration of various policies, plans, objectives, strategies and processes on sustainable development; and addressing priority problems.

The Draft Report outlines NSDS process guidelines, recommending that they: are integrated and balanced across sectors, territories and generations; involve broad participation and effective partnerships; strengthen country ownership and commitment; develop capacity and build on existing knowledge and processes; and focus on outcomes. It stresses the challenges of integration, participation and assessment, while recognizing them as critical tasks in implementing these process guidelines.

Regarding institutional arrangements for effective NSDSs, the Draft Report:

- advocates harmonizing the multitude of similar comprehensive frameworks for sustainable development, including CDF and PRSP;
- calls for strong institutional leadership and coordination regardless

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

- of the nature and number of institutions driving the process;
- stresses the need for ownership and incentives for involvement;
- highlights NSDSs' links to planning and budgetary authorities and systems;
- notes that institutions at the local level could be a stronger driving force than they have been and proposes strengthening local authorities to ensure an enabling environment;
- supports decentralization;
- suggests other means to improve institutional integration, including, *inter alia*, pilot activities and shared tasks; and
- recognizes that trade-offs cannot be ignored, but must be faced in a transparent manner for NSDSs to be credible and effective.

Regarding participation and partnerships, the Draft Report states that multistakeholder participation is needed at all stages of NSDS processes, notes that government has a role to play in ensuring access to participation and in creating an enabling environment, and suggests that the role played by each stakeholder should be recognized and mutually respected in order to achieve equal participation. It stresses the need for the same information base for all stakeholders, that stakeholder views impact equally on the actual decision-making process, and that partnerships among different stakeholders are built around concrete initiatives to ensure strong stakeholder commitment.

Regarding capacity requirements for effective NSDSs, the Draft Report discusses manifestation of needs at the human, institutional and systemic levels. The human dimension relates to technical skills, capacities for learning, and dynamics such as perception and cultural orientation. Institutional capacity requirements include ability to adapt, adoption of new approaches, policy mainstreaming, and monitoring and evaluation capabilities for learning purposes. The systemic dimension shapes the enabling environment and involves policy and legal frameworks, definitions of roles and mandates, and enhanced networking capabilities. It notes that different approaches and entry points can be utilized, encourages inclusive approaches and stresses that resources must reach local communities and not be confined at the national level.

Regarding financial requirements, the Draft Report: notes that financing is required on a regular basis if the NSDSs are to be iterative processes; and recognizes that many developing countries will need external funding to help start or support NSDS processes, stressing that external agencies should ensure a nationally-owned process. It also states that internal mobilization of funds improves ownership of the NSDS and emphasizes the importance of assessing current finance flows within the country in relation to sustainable development goals, and to design strategy processes that can influence finance flows toward sustainable development.

Regarding the role of external partnerships, the Draft Report notes that the complexity of strategies for sustainable development is mirrored by the complexity of international organizations and their roles in sustainable development, and calls for incentives within international institutions to ensure integration and notes that consultative groups being established in developing countries can promote good partnerships. It notes that perceived conditionalities can be turned into partnership to foster capacity building and transfer of knowledge, and adds that NSDSs are a principal means for articulating and acting on a nation's international obligations and aspirations.

Regarding assessment of progress in NSDSs, the Draft Report:

- states that both process assessment and outcome/impact assessment are needed, and that a good process will be able to link them;

- notes that the relative mix of process assessment and outcome/impact assessment will change according to the stage of maturity that NSDSs have reached;
- highlights that the assessment criteria are best set at the time of developing the NSDS;
- states that, as far as possible, the assessment should be participatory;
- notes that a number of difficulties are commonly faced with strategy assessment, including, *inter alia*, agreeing definitions and integrating different assessments; and
- observes that an effective NSDS process itself is a good means to directly address these difficulties over the long term.

Taking these issues into account, the Draft Report then recommends:

- harmonizing existing frameworks for integrated development;
- driving the NSDS process by a multiplicity of efforts orchestrated by an authority with a cross-sectoral mandate;
- promoting decentralization efforts and local capacity building;
- establishing and institutionalizing mechanisms for multistakeholder participation;
- providing capacity building and equal access to information by all stakeholders, particularly less-privileged groups;
- establishing concrete initiatives to promote and facilitate partnerships among stakeholders;
- providing adequate financing support for NSDSs on a regular basis;
- providing mechanisms for networking among NSDSs; and
- making participatory assessment mechanisms for both processes and outcomes/impacts an integral part of the NSDS process.

In conclusion, the Draft Report stresses that NSDSs must be integrative, participatory, nationally-owned, built on existing knowledge and processes, focused on outcomes, and based on timely action. They must also recognize and reconcile trade-offs and seek win-win outcomes. It further emphasizes that NSDSs should be an embodiment of commitments to action by all stakeholders concerned and recognize that sustainable development is something that people achieve for themselves through individual and collective change.

CLOSING PLENARY

John Reed, Canada, on behalf of the participants, thanked the Chair and organizers for a "great workshop" at which they had learned a lot. Concurring, Colin Kirkpatrick, University of Manchester, thanked Chair Habito for his skillful and effective conduct of the meeting.

Chair Habito thanked the participants for their contributions and expressed hope that they would maintain contact, and collaborate further with each other in the time preceding the Johannesburg Summit, and then called the Forum to a close at 1:15 pm.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE WSSD

CONFERENCE ON EQUITY FOR A SMALL PLANET: This conference will be held from 12-13 November 2001 in London, UK. It will focus on the dynamics and tensions between globalization and local livelihoods, and provide a platform for Southern experiences to inform the agenda for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. For more information, contact: IIED Conference Organizer; tel: +44-20-7388-2117; fax: +44-20-7388 2826; e-mail: wssd@iied.org; Internet: <http://www.iied.org/wssd/meetings.html>.

JOINT MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCIAL COMMITTEE OF THE IMF AND THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF THE WORLD BANK: This

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

meeting will take place from 17-18 November 2001, in Ottawa, Canada. For information, contact: IMF External Relations Department; tel: +1-202-623-7300; fax: +1-202-623-6278; Internet: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/nb/2001/nb01103.htm>.

ASIA AND PACIFIC WSSD REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: The Asia and Pacific WSSD preparatory meeting will take place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 27-29 November 2001. For more information, contact: Hiroko Morita-Lou, UN-DESA, New York; tel: +1-212-963-8813; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: morita-lou@un.org; Internet: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>.

MEETINGS OF THE OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP OF MINISTERS OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ON INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE (IEG): The fourth and fifth IEG meetings will be held on 1 December 2001 in Montreal, Canada, and at the end of January 2002 in New York, USA, prior to the second Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The next special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place from 13-15 February 2002 in Cartagena, Colombia. For more information, contact: Masa Nagai; tel: +254-2-623493; fax: +254-2-230198; e-mail: Masa.Nagai@unep.org; Internet: <http://www.unep.org/IEG/>.

GEF COUNCIL AND REPLENISHMENT MEETING: The next Global Environment Facility meeting on the replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund will take place from 3-4 December 2001. The GEF Council Meeting will take place from 5-7 December 2001 in Washington, DC. The Council meeting will be preceded by an NGO consultation on 4 December 2001. For more information, contact: Mohammed El-Ashry, CEO; tel: +1-202-473-3202; fax: +1-202-522 3245; email: gef@gefweb.org; Internet: http://www.gefweb.org/Replenishment/Schedule_of_Meetings/schedule_of_meetings.html.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FRESHWATER: This conference, hosted by the German Federal Environment Ministry and the German Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation, will be held from 3-7 December 2001 in Bonn, Germany, and will review Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 focusing on freshwater issues. For more information, contact: Angelika Wilcke, Conference Secretariat; tel: +49-228-28046-57; fax: +49-228-28046-60; e-mail: info@water-2001.de; Internet: <http://www.water-2001.de>.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON OCEANS AND COASTS AT RIO+10: ASSESSING PROGRESS, ADDRESSING CONTINUING AND NEW CHALLENGES: This conference will be held from 3-7 December 2001 in Paris, France. It is intended to provide an overall assessment of progress achieved on oceans and coasts. For more information, contact: Catherine Johnston; tel: +1-302-831-8086; fax: +1-302-831-3668; e-mail: johnston@udel.edu; Internet: <http://www.udel.edu/CMS/csmpr/rio+10/>.

SOUTHERN NGO SUMMIT: This summit will take place in January 2002 in preparation for the WSSD; the exact date is yet to be determined. For more information contact: Esmeralda Brown, Southern Caucus Chairperson, New York; tel: +1-212-682-3633; fax: +1-212-682-5354; e-mail: ebrown@gbgm-umc.org.

FOURTH SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT: This meeting will convene from 14-25

January 2002, at UN headquarters in New York. For information, contact: Financing for Development Coordinating Secretariat, 2 UN Plaza (DC2-2386), New York, NY 10017; tel: +1-212-963-2587; fax: +1-212-963-0443; e-mail: ffd@un.org; Internet: www.un.org/ffd.

SECOND PREPARATORY SESSION FOR THE 2002 WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: This meeting will take place from 28 January - 8 February 2002 in New York, USA. It will review the results of national and regional preparatory processes, examine the main policy report of the Secretary-General, and convene a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Major groups contact: Zehra Aydin-Sipos, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-8811; fax: +1-212-963-1267; e-mail: aydin@un.org; Internet: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>.

DELHI SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2002: This meeting will be held from 9-11 February 2002 in New Delhi, India. The theme will be "Ensuring sustainable livelihoods: challenges for governments, corporates, and civil society at Rio+10." For more information, contact: Beena Menon, for registration; tel: +91-11-468 2100 or 468 2111; fax: +91-11-468 2144 or 468 2145; email: beenam@teri.res.in; or Mudita Chauhan-Mubayi, for the Agenda; email: muditac@teri.res.in; Internet: <http://www.teriin.org/dsds/index.htm>.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT: The UN International Conference on Financing for Development will be held from 18-22 March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico. It will bring together high-level representatives from governments, the UN, and other leading international trade, finance and development-related organizations. For more information, contact: Harris Gleckman, Financing for Development Coordinating Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-4690; fax: +1-212-963-0443; e-mail: gleckman@un.org or; Federica Pietracci, tel: +1-212-963-8497; e-mail: pietracci@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd>.

THIRD PREPARATORY SESSION FOR THE 2002 WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: This meeting will take place in New York, USA, from 25 March - 5 April 2002. It will aim to produce the first draft of a "review" document and elements of the CSD's future work programme. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA; (see above).

FOURTH PREPARATORY SESSION FOR THE 2002 WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: This meeting will take place from 27 May - 7 June 2002 in Indonesia. It will include Ministerial and Multi-stakeholder Dialogue segments, and is expected to result in elements for a concise political document to be submitted to the 2002 Summit. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA; (see above).

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The World Summit on Sustainable Development will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2-11 September 2002. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA, New York; tel: +1-212-963-5949; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Major groups contact: Zehra Aydin-Sipos, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-8811; e-mail: aydin@un.org; Internet: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>.