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ESDN Quarterly Report September 2009

Sustainable development strategies beyond Europe

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This Quarterly Report (QR) focuses on sustainable development strategies beyond Europe in order to provide an overview of strategic policy documents for sustainable development in countries of various world regions. After outlining some basic international developments with regard to national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs) and different types of NSDSs, the QR provides an overview of selected sustainable development strategies of countries in the Asian & Pacific region, South and Latin America & the Caribbean, North America and the non-European Mediterranean region. In total, 16 countries and two regional cooperations (Pacific Islands Forum, Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development) are covered in the QR. For each country, the QR provides background information, lists the objectives and topics of the sustainable development strategy, includes information on responsible institutions and on implementation processes, and shows how efforts of strategy delivery are monitored and evaluated. Finally, the QR presents some concluding remarks on similarities and differences among these countries and regions.

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National sustainable development strategies: International perspectives

In this section of the QR, we provide an overview of international agreements on national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs), international definitions and principles of NSDSs, a short overview of NSDSs in different world regions and various types of NSDSs that can be found in the UN member countries.

International agreements

After the experiences with environmental policy planning since environmental policy became an independent policy field in the early 1970s (Meadowcroft, 2007; Steurer & Martinuzzi, 2005), the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 and its now famous definition of sustainable development called for more integrated and strategic policy planning (WCED, 1987). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 took up this development and formulated the need to develop national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs). [Agenda 21](#), the Action Plan of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, outlined that “governments, in cooperation, where appropriate, with international organizations, *should adopt a national strategy for sustainable development* based on, inter alia, the implementation of decisions taken at the Conference, particularly in respect of Agenda 21. This strategy should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country. (...) It should be developed through the widest possible participation. It should be based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives.” ([Agenda 21, chapter 8.7](#)) However, as Agenda 21 contains no submission date, only a few countries developed an NSDS in the subsequent years.

Therefore, a [special session of the United Nations \(UN\) General Assembly](#) in June 1997 reaffirmed the need to develop NSDSs and bring together priorities in social, economic and environmental policies (UN General Assembly, 1997). Moreover, it was agreed at this session that “*by the year 2002, the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development (...) should be completed in all countries*” (UN General Assembly, 1997, chapter 24 (a)). This agreement and the forthcoming [World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002](#), that took stock of NSDSs, led in many countries to the development of NSDSs. For the preparation of NSDSs, the UN (UNDESA, 2001) as well as the OECD (2001) developed guidance documents. During the World Summit in 2002, it was decided that it is necessary to “take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and *begin their implementation by 2005*” (UN, 2002, chapter 162 (b)). In 2003, the [UN Commission on Sustainable Development](#) decided that each member country should regularly provide information on the status of their NSDSs (UN CSD, 2003). National reporting is since then continuously undertaken and provides general NSDS related information as well as information on various policy sectors. The national reports as well as reporting guidelines can be found on the [website of the UN Division on Sustainable Development](#).

At the [2005 UN World Summit](#) in New York, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed the commitment to achieving the goal of sustainable development and to promoting the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development - economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection - as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components (UN General Assembly, 2005). Moreover, clear links were established between achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the broader objectives of sustainable development (Silveira, 2006).

Generally, the above mentioned development shows that the UN was and is an important driver on the international level for NSDSs. Moreover, the UN (particularly the programmes UNEP and UNDP) acts as a support organisation in order to assist lesser developed countries to develop and implement NSDSs, for instance, within the context of the [Millennium Development Goals](#). However, there also exist regional commitments to develop and implement NSDSs, like in the [European Union](#) and the [Pacific Islands Forum](#) (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 2008).

NSDSs: international definitions and principles

The [OECD guidance document on NSDSs](#) defines an NSDS as “a co-ordinated set of participatory and continuously

improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity-strengthening, planning and investment, which seeks to integrate the short and long term economic, social and environmental objectives of society - through mutually supportive approaches wherever possible - and manages trade-offs where this is not possible” (OECD, 2001, 25). The [UN guidelines](#) developed a set of *five principles of NSDSs*: (1) country ownership and strong political commitment; (2) integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, ministries and territories; (3) broad participation and effective partnerships; (4) development of capacity and enabling environment; and (5) focus on outcomes and means of implementation.

Generally, one can argue that NSDSs are important strategic policy documents because (a) they are integrative, comprehensive and address long-term intergenerational issues; (b) they engage a broad range of stakeholders in both decision-making and strategy delivery; (c) they should be syncretic and should adapt existing processes such as national development plans or poverty reductions strategies to sustainable development principles; and (d) they develop a cyclical and reflective governance process involving problem identification, strategy development, implementation, review and evaluation as well as strategy revision (Steurer, 2007; Silveira, 2006).

Although guidelines on developing and implementing NSDSs exist on the international level, ‘blueprints’ for effective NSDSs are difficult to formulate as institutions, capacities and sustainable development priorities different across countries. Moreover, although experiences with NSDSs are now increasing - particularly within the EU - every country has to make its own efforts how to develop and implement strategies for achieving its sustainable development objectives. It is also important to stress that not the name, but the process and principles qualify a strategy as an NSDS (UN Division on Sustainable Development, 2008).

Types of NSDSs

As countries differ regarding their institutions, political culture, development status, environmental conditions, etc, the NSDSs differ both in structure and coverage. Based on NSDS developments in the UN member states and their experiences, the UN Division for Sustainable Development distinguishes *four broad types of NSDSs*:

- ‘Generic NSDSs’ in countries that initiated completely new strategy processes to develop their NSDSs. These generic NSDSs can be mostly found in countries (a) that wanted to develop a single NSDS document to give more weight and awareness to sustainable development, (b) that found their existing strategy processes not adequate for including sustainable development principles, or (c) that previously had no comprehensive socio-economic strategies in place.
- Countries with existing processes for comprehensive development strategies often choose to further develop these strategies in order to incorporate sustainable development principles.
- Some countries choose strategies that concentrate on the environmental and natural resource dimension of sustainable development.
- Several low-income countries have integrated sustainable development considerations in their poverty reduction strategies (PRS). Whereas early PRS typically focused on economic growth and social infrastructure investment, some countries found that PRS processes were well suited to environmental considerations and to integrate policies across sectors.

NSDSs in different world regions

The website of the [UN Division for Sustainable Development](#) offers information on the multi-year work programme of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and on NSDSs of their member countries. The [CSD multi-year work programme](#) was adopted in 2003 - in the wake of the World Summit 2002 - and runs through to the year 2017. The programme is organized on the basis of seven two-year cycles (starting in 2004), with each cycle focusing on selected thematic clusters (e.g. water, energy, climate change, agriculture, transport, etc) and cross-cutting issues. The seven two-year cycles include Review and Policy Years. The Review Year evaluates progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identifying obstacles and constraints, while the Policy Year decides on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome these obstacles and constraints. The UN member countries submit national reports (based on [reporting guidelines](#)) that provide information and data on progress the thematic clusters and cross-cutting issues.

The website also offers information on individual NSDSs and thus provides an *overview of the number of NSDSs in place or in development*. The latest data on NSDSs in the UN member states is available from April 2008 (see [Figure 1 below](#)): 82 per cent of the UN member states have reported to the CSD or the Division for Sustainable Development that they were implementing an NSDS in 2007. This corresponds to 43 per cent of all countries and 79 per cent of all countries for which information is available. Compared to the last reporting in 2006, there has been an increase by 19 per cent in the number of countries that are implementing NSDSs (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 2008). As shown in [Figure 1 below](#), there are substantial variations with regard to information available and status in NSDS development/implementation in the different world regions: most NSDS implementation takes place in Europe and the Asia & Pacific region; lesser implementation takes place in Latin and South America as well as in Africa. However, it needs to be stressed that the information provided to the UN is submitted by the member states themselves and although guidelines by the UN and

OECD on NSDS development/implementation exist (see above), whether a strategy is considered as NSDS differs in the various countries. For instance, while some countries may report a general development strategy that includes sustainable development issues as NSDS, others may only report as an NSDS a strategy that was specifically developed to integrate economic, social and environmental issues (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 2008).

Figure 1: Map of countries with NSDSs



Overview of national sustainable development strategies

In this section of the report, we present an overview of sustainable development strategies in four different world regions (Asia & Pacific region, South and Latin America & the Caribbean, North America and the non-European Mediterranean countries). The information presented is largely based on our own internet search, reports about sustainable development strategies (IISD, 2004), and the information available on the website of the [UN Division for Sustainable Development](#).

Asia & Pacific region

In 2001, regional UNEP Regional Resources Centre (UNEP RRC) played a major role in the region to assist in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. A task force was established with senior officials - including officials from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), UNEP and UNDP - with the UNEP RRC Secretariat as support unit for the preparatory process to the Summit. In July 2003, the [Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation \(NORAD\)](#) and [UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and Pacific \(UNEP RRC.AP\)](#) started the implementation of the project on [National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plans \(NSDSAP\) towards Mainstreaming Sustainable Development in the Decision Making Process](#). The purpose of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the Asia and the Pacific region and to assist national governments in formulating National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plans (NSDSAP) with mainstreaming sustainable development issues in the decision making process. Three sub-regional reports and a regional position were prepared in broad consultations with intergovernmental organizations, government agencies, and civil society organizations. In total, 17 countries from the region are taking part in the project. UNEP RRC.AP publishes annual reports on the progress achieved in NSDS development; the last report from 2008 can be [downloaded here](#). Countries which were not included in the above project (e.g. China, Japan, South and North Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, southern Pacific countries) are relying on the Rio NSDS guidelines of 1992 in their NSDS development and show more an internally driven paths toward the elaboration and implementation of NSDSs.

Generally, the exiting policy frameworks in Asia, in which sustainable development principles have been included, vary significantly with regard to the economic and political conditions of the respective country. However, one can group them can be grouped under following types ([OECD/UNDESA/UNESCAP Workshop on Developing Sustainable Strategies in Asia, March 2007](#)):

- Agenda 21 (e.g. Philippines, China, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkmenistan);
- NSDSs (e.g. Thailand, Kazakhstan)
- National Action Plans (e.g. Mongolia, Japan);
- National Development Plans or Environmental Plans (e.g. India, Maldives, etc);

- Poverty Reduction Strategy (e.g. Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia);
- National Conservation Strategy (e.g. Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malaysia);
- Vision 2020 (e.g. Malaysia, Bhutan, Turkmenistan).

Major challenges in the implementation and formulation process of NSDSs in Asia and Pacific ([SDplanNet presentation at EEAC Annual Conference 2008](#)):

- The NSDS formulation and implementation processes in Asia have been mostly externally driven (mainly through UN organisation) and this has led to a project-like approach in the implementation mechanisms and to weak national ownership and problems in establishing effective governance systems.
- Separated approaches toward sustainable development have been experienced due to a lack of interconnections between the sustainable development strategies and other programmes and strategies.
- So far, concrete actions and sectoral plans on the ground are missing, and the monitoring and evaluation process have been rather weak.

Apart from the Asian countries, experiences with sustainable development strategies can also be found in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. The first two have developed sustainable development strategies or action plans and the Pacific Island Forum is a specific example of formulating a regional commitment to develop NSDSs.

Below, we provide an overview of sustainable development strategies and strategic policy documents that include sustainable development issues of seven countries of the Asian & Pacific region, plus the cooperation in the Pacific Island Forum (and the NSDS of one island as an example). We selected countries that are of significant size and geo-political importance or provide a representative example of NSDS development and implementation in the region.

Australia

Background information

Australia's response to the Brundtland Report has been to adopt and further refine the concept of sustainable development, taking into account the natural environment and values of the Australian people and the prevailing patterns of economic production and consumption in the [Australian National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development \(NSES\)](#). Australia's three tiers of government - commonwealth (federal), state and local - adopted the NSES in December 1992 at a meeting of the Heads of Government of each jurisdiction. The leading institution for the NSES in Australia is the Australian Government's [Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts](#). This department has formulated a large number of initiatives aimed at promoting and facilitating sustainable development at the local, regional and national level. Specific initiatives are targeted to [industry groups](#), [Australian government departments](#) and [local governments](#).

Development of the strategy

The process of strategy development was extensive and took over a period of two years (1990-92). It involved consultation and negotiations between key interest groups from industry, the community, conservation groups, scientific organisations and all levels of government. Each of the established nine working groups developed a comprehensive report which fed into the strategy. Cross-sectoral issues, such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, urban development, employment, economic diversity and resilience and international considerations, were the subject of a special report by the chairs of each of the working groups. The cross-sectoral report also provided a basis for the strategy.

Objectives and topics

The NSES formulated five key principles and each of the 33 chapters identifies the goals, strategic approach and objectives adopted to ensure the application of the principles in the different sectors and to take into account cross-sectoral issues. The strategy is subdivided in four parts:

Part 1 defines objectives and the guiding principles of the NSES. The core objectives are (a) to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations; (b) to provide for equity within and between generations; and (c) to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems. Some of the guiding principles of the SD are that decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations; the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognized and considered; cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms; and decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them.

Part 2 provides a broad strategic framework for those key industry sectors which rely on natural resources as their

productive base. For each key industry the strategic approach, objective and the action from the government are identified.

Part 3 provides the same information for a broad range of issues which are relevant to actions in several of the key industry sectors (cross-sectoral sectoral issues), e.g. natural resource management, waste and water resource management, health, gender issues, environmental impact assessment, pricing and taxation, education and training, R&D, etc.

Part 4 reflects on the future development of the NSESD in Australia and covers issues like conflict management; community awareness, education and participation; and monitoring and review.

Implementation

Each level of government has responded to the recommendations of the NSESD according to their specific needs and priorities. For example, the Commonwealth Government has taken measures to ensure that NSESD principles - such as the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity and the conservation of biodiversity - are taken into account in its decision-making processes. Legislation and government programs increasingly stress NSESD objectives and principles. The Australian International Development Assistance Program - which delivers Australia's Official Development Assistance - is also guided by NSESD principles.

At the state and local government levels, planning and development legislation increasingly reflects a commitment to the NSESD. These governments are tackling issues such as waste minimization and cleaner production, land use and transport planning and natural resource management against a background of the national strategies. The Australian Local Government Association, which endorsed the NSESD, has however not the power to bind local government authorities to implement the objectives set out in the strategy.

National sustainable development initiatives

The Australian Government has implemented a number of initiatives to foster sustainable development in Australia, including for instance headline sustainability indicators, Productivity Commission inquiries (on the implementation of the NSESD by Commonwealth departments and agencies and on ecologically sustainable land management) or regulatory impact statements. Moreover, several ministerial councils have been established to foster NSESD implementation, like the National Environment Protection Council, the Natural Resource Management Council, the Environment Protection and Heritage Council and Primary Industries Ministerial Council. In order to develop stronger cooperation on environmental issues between the different tiers of government, several agreements were established, e.g. the [Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment](#) and the [bilateral agreements](#).

Monitoring

The NSESD, along with the National Greenhouse Response Strategy, is the subject of continuing dialogue between the three levels of government. An Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ICESD) monitors implementation and reports to Heads of Government. A National ESD/Greenhouse Roundtable, involving industry, conservation and community groups was first convened in 1994 to examine progress with implementation. The system of annual [national reporting](#) to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is also considered an important element in monitoring progress.

Indicators

In 2001, Commonwealth Ministers endorsed a set of headline sustainability indicators for Australia. The publication "[Are We Sustaining Australia: A Report Against Headline Sustainability Indicators for Australia](#)" is Australia's first report against the set of headline sustainability indicators. The 24 indicators were selected to collectively measure Australia's national performance against the core objectives of the NSESD.

Current priorities

Apart from the implementation of the agreed strategies, current priorities include the development of inter-governmental cooperation and coordinated policies for the sustainable management of Australia's extensive coastal zone, the establishment of a comprehensive system of state of the environment reporting, greater use of economic measures and instruments in environmental policy, and finalization of a national rangelands strategy.

China

Background information

China has been attaching an increasing importance on sustainable development issues recently. This is mainly due to its fast growing population and economy that put an increasing amount of pressure on the environment and the conservation of natural resources as well as the prospect of becoming leader in green technology (New York Times, 23 September 2009).

In the wake of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the Chinese government published [China's Agenda 21](#), entitled "White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century", in 1993 as a strategic document for guiding the country's social and environmental development. That document marked the beginning of the sustainable development process in China. In order to foster the implementation of the Agenda 21 as sustainable development strategy, the [Program of Action for Sustainable Development in China in the Early 21st Century](#) has been developed by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in 2007. Generally, no legal basis for China's Agenda 21 has been defined so far, but a general framework is being developed on basis of the Programme of Action and the implementation of the priority areas of the Agenda 21.

Objectives and topics

China's Agenda 21 has 20 chapters and can be divided into four main sections: (1) general strategic issues of sustainable development; (2) societal aspects of the sustainable development; (3) sustainable development of the economy; and (4) protection of resources and the environment. Each chapter has been organized into two sections: introduction and programme areas. The introduction clarifies the objectives and significance of each programme area and the role each plays for sustainable development; each single programme area is then sub-divided into three subsections: basis for action and key problems, the objectives for solving these problems, and proposed actions for implementation.

Co-ordination with other strategies or planning process

China's Agenda 21 is integrated into the Five-Year Planning process of China's economy, however less integrated into sectoral plans and within the overall national environmental planning. China's direction for general development is being elaborated by the central committee in a 5-year [National Plan](#). The current 5-year plan (2006-2011) emphasises, in contrast to the former development plans, not only the importance of promoting economic growth but also the balanced relation of growth and environmental aspects.

Institutions

Responsibilities for Agenda 21 are divided among ministries and governmental committees, such as the State Planning Commission and the State Science and Technology Commission in cooperation with the Administrative Centre for China's Agenda 21 (ACCA21) and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is responsible for the formulation and implementation of strategies of national economic and social development, annual plans, medium and long-term development plans. [The Office of the Leading Group for Promoting the Sustainable Development Strategy under the department of Regional Economy](#) in the NDRC is responsible for promoting China's Agenda 21. Another important inter-agency body, which coordinates the China's Agenda 21 is the [Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21 \(ACCA21\)](#), which is under the supervision of the State Planning Commission and the State Science and Technology Commission. The Centre acts as the main focal point for sustainable development initiatives in China. ACCA21 advises the Chinese government on sustainable development strategies, policies and programs and participates in international sustainable development activities on its behalf.

Participation Aspects

While the government is still the major player in allocating public resources within the contemporary institutional structure in China, it has realized that sustainable development may not be achieved without the participation of civil society and NGOs. However, NGOs are required to register under a government department and are supervised by the latter, and hence, are only partly independent in their work (IISD, 2004).

Implementation

The responsibility for implementing China's Agenda 21 lies with the State Planning Commission and ACCA21; the implementation of local measures is delegated to local governments. To implement the NSDS, government authorities under the State Council have been requested to formulate various sectoral Agenda 21s and plans of action, e.g. the Ministry of Forestry formulated the Forestry Action Plan for China's Agenda 21 (IISD 2004).

In 2007, NDRC published the [Programme of Action for Sustainable Development in China in the Early 21st Century](#), which serves as an action plan for China's Agenda 21. This programme specifies the objectives, principles, priority areas and safeguard measures for the country's sustainable development in the early 21st century. The programme defines eight guidelines, followed by 6 objectives. At the end of the programme, the following priority areas are defined: economic development (e.g. industrial restructuring, regional development and poverty reduction), social development (e.g. population management, social security, health care), environmental protection (e.g. resource allocation, water management, energy efficiency, protection of natural resources), and capacity-building (e.g. legislation and enforcement, indicator system, monitoring and evaluation).

The implementation of the action plans follows over the budgetary regulation and allocation of financial resources for each province. In comparison to the former national plans, the current five-year plan defines higher financial investment for the environmental protection.

Monitoring

Since the government of China has given priority to issues related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers in the last years, a [review of the progress towards sustainable development](#), focusing in agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification in China has been elaborated by the NDRC. Plans for constant monitoring and update of long-term and mid-term planning are elaborated, but not fully installed yet. So far a comprehensive indicator system to monitor sustainable development at national level is not in place (IISD, 2004).

India

Basic information

Although it was official claimed that India is planning to develop an NSDS by 2005, our internet research suggests that no separate strategy document has as yet been adopted. Therefore, in the absence of an individual strategy, sustainable development principles have been addressed in 2002 in a detailed study, entitled "[Empowering People for Sustainable Development](#)" (EPSD), and in the [National Five Year Plans](#) (FYPs), which sets out the main development trends for the whole country.

Objectives and topics

The EPSD introduces the essential framework for sustainable development in India and has been elaborated by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The topics it deals with are democratic continuity, devolution of power, independent judiciary, and civilian control of the armed forces, independent media, transparency and civic participation. It follows multi-dimensional, sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches.

The EPSD includes four main objectives are: (a) combating poverty, (b) empowering people, (c) fostering competences in science and technology, (d) setting environmental standards and (e) improving core sectors of the economy.

The multidimensionality of the EPSD is included in the chapters on 'combating poverty', 'putting people first', 'harnessing scientific and technological prowess' and 'setting standards, institutions and legislations'. Cross-sectoral elements are included in the chapter 'Conservation of natural resources' (agriculture, forest & biodiversity, marine resources, water resources). The chapter on 'promoting sustainable development' shows a slightly sectoral approach. The sectoral orientation in the EPSD focuses on the identified core sectors energy, industry and transport. The last chapter 'unfinished agenda' refers to the unsatisfactory progress in sustainable development globally, the North-South cooperation (financial transfer and environment technology transfer to developing countries) and the remaining national challenge in achieving sustainable development.

Institutions

The leading institution is the [Ministry of Environment and Forests \(MoEF\)](#) and the National Environmental Council. The major administrative body of MoEF is also responsible for the EPSD. It initiated co-operations with research institutes, multi-stakeholder consultations, etc, in the run up to the WSSD. The [Planning Commission](#), responsible for the Five-Year-Plans (FYPs) is the central body to make sure sustainable development is taken up in the FYPs. There are several further institutions working on sustainable development issues: the [Centre for Environment Education \(CEE\)](#), the [Energy and Resources Institute \(TERI\)](#) and initiatives like the [India Council for Sustainable Development \(ICSD\)](#). The ICSD It seeks to foster cooperation and exchange between India and the international community in the field of environment and development, with the broad objectives to establish a pattern of sustainable development in India. Currently, the ICSD collaborates with the [China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development \(CCICED\)](#) in order to play a key role in bringing together experts and the policy community from India and China to foster sustainable development in the two countries.

Coordination and Linkages with other strategies

Planning is an important steering instrument of India's democracy. It is based on an iterative process involving interaction between the centre, the state and the local bodies. Multiple stakeholders participate in the planning process. Working groups and task forces are established to prepare plans and reports for various sectors. They are responsible for substantial participation of civil society.

The Five Year Plans provide medium-term strategies for overall development of the country. Sustainability concerns have become a vital element in the planning process and integrated in the [Eleventh Five-Year Plan \(2007-2012\)](#). Since 1997, the FYPs have recognized the synergy between environment, health and development and identified as one of its core objectives the need for ensuring environmental sustainability of the development process through social mobilization and participation of people at all levels. The Eleventh FYP is subdivided in three Volumes (Inclusive Growth; Social Sector; and Agriculture, Rural Development, Industry, Services and Physical Structure) and includes all pillars of sustainable development. Each of these volumes, especially the first volume, dedicates own chapters to the connection of growth with social aspects (Chapter 6) as well environment and climate change (Chapter 9).

Implementation

There is no unified process in the implementation for sustainable development since no official NSDS has yet been elaborated. There is a decentralized governance system in place for the implementation of the FYP, in which sustainable development principles are integrated. Moreover, there have been separate initiatives from different actors to promote sustainable development, especially from the MoFE, like the National Environmental Action Plan for Control of Pollution, Environmental Management System (EMS), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Joint Forest Management or the National Forest Action Programme.

Monitoring and Indicators

The commitment to principles of sustainable development is already reflected in the monitoring targets of human development and conservation of natural resources that were set up in the Tenth Five Year Plan (FYP). The indicators became an instrument in the Tenth FYP relating the importance of human development with economic growth. Earlier Plans focused on many of these, but no specific targets and indicators were set. Additionally, the EPSD introduced a few indicators to monitor social changes (India's Human Development Indicators).

Japan

Basic Information

Japan does not have a national sustainable development strategy, but an environmental plan that, with its latest version, also addresses cross-cutting issues. The [Basic Environment Plan](#) was initially developed in 1994, the second one in 2000, and the third plan - [the New Basic Environment Plan](#) - was adopted by the government in April 2006. The Basic Environmental Plans outline the government's comprehensive and long-term measures on environmental policy and related policy issues.

New Basic Environmental Plan - content, objectives and topics

The New Basic Environment Plan is a strategic plan with a cross-sectoral approach that focuses on the environmental aspects of sustainable development. The plan is divided in three parts:

Part I concentrates on the background and future directions of environmental policy, which consist of the following six development directions: (i) integrated improvements of the environment, economy and society, (ii) formation of sustainable natural land and nature, (iii) enrichment of R&D and measures considering uncertainty, (iv) the new role of the national government, local government and citizens and their participation, (v) strengthening efforts for international strategies, and (vi) formulation of policy measures from a long-term perspective.

Part II provides an overview of the integrated approach in the specific implementation of environmental policy, by outlining priorities in individual and cross-cutting fields. The *six individual priority fields* comprise: global warming issues, sound material cycle society, good air environment in urban areas, sound water cycle, reducing environmental risks from chemical substances and conservation for biodiversity. These priority fields are complemented by *four cross-cutting issues* specified for the implementation like: building a system where values of the environment are actively evaluated; fostering human resources for environmental conversation; improvement of infrastructure and environmental information and policy methods with long-term perspective; and formulation of international frameworks and rules.

Part III sets the activities needed for an effective implementation of the plan, like strengthening environmental considerations and coordination by each government entity, monitoring the plan's progress by indicators. For each of the priority areas described in part II, the indicators are being selected to measure the progress.

Institutions and implementation

The [Ministry of the Environment](#) is responsible for the implementation of the Basic Environment Plan. The Environment Agency, an institution affiliated to the Ministry of Environment, and other government ministries are implementing specific measures for environmental conservation in accordance with the plan. Local governments, corporations, citizens and other societal stakeholders are also invited to voluntarily and actively engage in activities which protect the environment in accordance with the plan.

The [Japan Council for Sustainable Development \(JCSJ\)](#), founded as an NGO in July 1996, consists of representatives from the government, industry and NGOs. It aims at facilitating dialogue among its members concerning the issues of sustainable development. As an advisory body to the government, it is mandated to follow up on the progress of measures taken under the Basic Environment Plan each year.

Coordination and linkages with other strategies

Japan's efforts toward the implementation of Agenda 21 are principally based on two action plans, namely, the [National Agenda 21 Action Plan](#) (submitted to the UN in 1994) and the New Basic Environment Plan (adopted in 2006 and described above). The latter includes the four long-term objectives of the National Agenda 21 Action Plan: (1) environmentally-sound material cycle, (2) harmonious coexistence, (3) public participation, and (4) international activities.

In June 1995, the government adopted the [Action Plan for Greening Government Operations](#). The action plan requires the government institutions to apply green procurement measures, such as the use of recycled paper and energy-saving equipment, introduction of lower-emission vehicles, and reduction of CO2 emissions.

To promote environmentally sound land use, Japan has formulated the [National Land Use Plans](#). As the basic policy for economic management, the 'Social and Economic Plan for Structural Reforms - Towards a Vital Economy and Secure Life' was prepared which contains various measures for the resolution of global environmental problems.

Monitoring

In order to secure effective implementation of the Plan, the Central Environment Council [reviews the progress](#) of the Basic Environment Plan by taking into account the opinion of various societal stakeholders. Based on the review, the Council reports to the government about the results and presents future policy direction. The First Basic Environment Plan was reviewed three times and two reviews were conducted for the Second Basic Environment Plan in the past.

Indicators

Japan has developed a System of National Accounts (SNA) that includes the Satellite System for Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA), drawing upon the standards contained in the SNA Handbook on Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting of the United Nations. Particular importance is being given to quantitative and qualitative changes in Japan's forest and agricultural resources in this regard. Despite efforts of the Council for Sustainable Development, Japan has not managed to establish a coordinating mechanism in the country at the national level for indicators on sustainable development ([UN country report Japan](#)).

New Zealand

Basic information

Following the World Summit in Johannesburg, the New Zealand government launched its [Sustainable Development Programme of Action \(SDPOA\)](#) in January 2003 to ensure that sustainable development underpins all government activity, and that government decisions ensure the well-being of current and future generations. This approach is new for New Zealand since former strategies had a relatively narrow focus, even though they were based on sustainable development principles. The SDPOA ran until 2006. Since then, the [website of the Ministry of Environment](#), that was responsible for the SDPOA, suggests that sectoral issues dominate in sustainable development policy-making (e.g. sustainable architecture and design, household sustainability, sustainable businesses, etc).

Objectives and topics

The [SDPOA](#) established a set of operating principles for policy development that require government to take account of the economic, social, environmental, and cultural consequences of its decisions by, e.g. considering the long-term implications of decisions; addressing risks and uncertainty when making choices and taking a precautionary approach when making decisions that may cause serious or irreversible damage; working in partnership with local government and other sectors and encouraging transparent and participatory processes; decoupling economic growth from pressures on the environment; working in partnership with appropriate Māori authorities to empower Māori in development decisions that affect them; respecting human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity.

The SDPOA focused in the practical application of sustainable development on four priority areas:

- Quality and allocation of freshwater
- Energy
- Sustainable cities
- Investing in child and youth development

For each priority area, the SDPOA defined an overarching goal, desired outcomes, and a programme of action with detailed work programme details.

Sustainable development in New Zealand generally gives equal weight to social sustainable development (in relation to the economy and environment) with special attention to demographic trends, new roles of women in society, improvements in health and housing, and better integration of Maori communities.

Other Strategies

The SDPOA was the third document issued by the government to focus and reorient government policy and decision-making and processes. The others were "[Growing an Innovative New Zealand \(the Growth & Innovation Framework\)](#)" (2002) and "[Key Government Goals to Guide the Public Sector in Achieving Sustainable Development](#)" (2002).

The first document was designed to deliver the long-term sustainable growth necessary to improve the quality of life of all New Zealanders. The Growth and Innovation Advisory Board (established in 2002) provides independent advice to the Government on its growth and innovation programme. In 2003, the Board commissioned research that provides information about the goals and values that are important to New Zealanders. The clear priorities were identified as quality of life, quality of the environment, quality of education and quality of health services. Therefore, a link between the government's priorities for growth & innovation and sustainable development can be made since the SDAP and the Growth & Innovation Framework support each other.

Implementation

The leading institution in the coordination process of the SDPOA is the [Ministry of Environment](#). Four ministers have been appointed to drive the initiatives of the four priority areas, by giving to each minister specific responsibilities for the SDAP. According to the [Ministry of Environment](#), the focus on water, energy, sustainable cities, and child and youth development does not limit the application of the sustainable development approach: the principles set out in the SDPOA apply to all policy and decision making. Moreover, there have been several partnerships for sustainable development that New Zealand has entered into together with other countries in the Pacific Region, for tackling better the peculiarities of the region in the progress of the sustainable development programmes.

Monitoring

At the end of the SDPOA running time in 2006, the Department of the New Zealand Prime Minister and Cabinet published a report on the "[Implications of the Sustainable Development Programme of Action](#)" which was compiled by Landcare Research. The SDPOA was reviews with the intention of identifying the lessons learned as pointers for the way forward. The contribution of the SDPOA is generally seen in the broader context of increasing sustainable development in New Zealand and an increasing interest in the topic globally. The SDPOA has been a multi-faceted programme with more qualitative than quantitative benefits. The review report argues that the SDPOA has complied with most of the objectives declared at its launch with a range of success from modest to significant across the four priority areas. The major qualitative benefits are:

- Increased levels of cooperation among all agencies, national and local, involved with the SDPOA (particularly as characterised by the [Auckland Sustainable Cities Programme](#));
- Increased awareness of 'action learning' processes; and
- Recognition of the need for longer-term policy planning processes.

Indicators

In 2002, Statistics New Zealand produced an experimental set of sustainable development indicators in [Monitoring Progress towards a Sustainable New Zealand](#) in August 2002 . This was an initial report, which formed the basis for further work on a set of indicators. Based on the experience of the 2002 report and on the outcomes of the international working group to work on statistics for sustainable development (convened by the OECD, UNECE, EUROSTAT and Statistics New Zealand), Statistics New Zealand published in 2009 the report entitled "[Measuring New Zealand's Progress Using a Sustainable Development Approach: 2008](#)". The report focuses on long-term changes, and looks at the interdependencies between the environment, economy, and society within an integrated and conceptually robust framework. The framework uses the capital approach as a basis for measuring sustainable development in 15 topics.

Philippines

Basic Information

The Philippines was one of the first countries to elaborate an NSDS. Already in 1989 and thus predating the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the Philippines adopted the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development (PSSD). In 1996, a more comprehensive strategy and plan for sustainable development was elaborated in the [Philippine Agenda 21 \(PA 21\)](#). The PA 21 is a more document regarding issues covered and was formulated on the basis of an extensive multi-stakeholder process. The PA 21 has become the overarching strategy and provides the framework for sustainable development in the country. Although it was launched a decade ago, the PA 21 is "very much a 'young' document, considering the scale of the changes and innovations that it is advancing" (Lagarde, 2006,122).

Content, objectives and topics

The PA 21 provides (i) a critical analysis of the prevailing development patterns at the time of the document's inception; (ii) a conceptual framework for sustainable development as an alternative development paradigm in the Philippine context; (iii) elements of a shared vision for sustainable development among Filipinos; (iv) a set of 15 principles designed to guide development decisions towards sustainable development; (v) an operational framework which lays down the key parameters and strategies for sustainable development; (vi) an action agenda for each ecosystem and across ecosystems; (vii) a local action agenda for the country's 14 administrative regions; and (viii) an implementation framework that

reflects the multidimensional nature of sustainable development.

The PA 21 includes a chapter on 'principles of unity' that outline the conceptual and operational framework for sustainable development. The total of 15 principles includes, e.g. holistic science and appropriate technology; gender sensitivity; participatory democracy; institutional viability; ecological soundness; bio-geographical equity and community-based resource management; global cooperation. The PA 21 also points out that development to be sustainable needs to be guided by economic, political, scientific, cultural, ecological, social, environmental and institutional parameters. Figure 2 below shows the general approach for sustainable development in the Philippines:

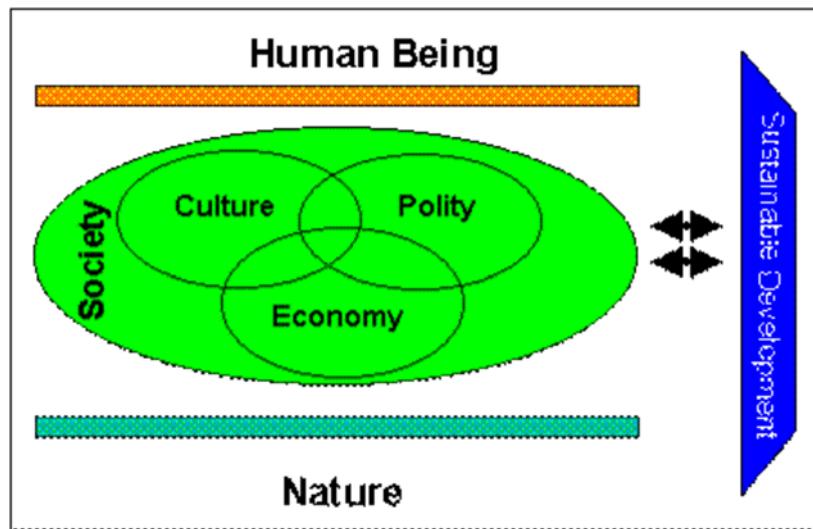


Figure 2: Sustainable development approach in the Philippines (PA 21)

The PA 21 also lays down an action agenda with related targets, time lines and involved institutions for seven ecosystems:

1. [Forest/upland ecosystems](#)
2. [Coastal and marine ecosystems](#)
3. [Urban ecosystems](#)
4. [Freshwater ecosystems](#)
5. [Lowland/agricultural ecosystems](#)
6. [Minerals and mines](#)
7. [Biodiversity](#)

Institutions

Important institutions that are responsible for sustainable development exist at the national, regional and local level. At the national level, the [Philippine Council for Sustainable Development \(PCSD\)](#) was established in 1992. The PCSD is responsible for (a) establishing guidelines and mechanisms and incorporate sustainable development principles into national and local development plans; (ii) formulating policy reforms, programmes and projects as well as recommending new legislations; and (iii) reviewing and monitoring plans, policies, programmes and legislations on sustainable development.

The PCSD is chaired by the country's central planning agency, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and has no permanent staff or budget of its own. As such it does not have the direct mandate and capacity for implementing sustainable development projects and programmes. The PCSD organization structure is composed of three levels: the Council, the Committees and the Sub-committees. The PCSD is a multi-stakeholder body with members coming from various government departments, NGOs, labour groups, the business sector and civil society organisations.

At the regional level, the NEDA Regional offices serve as the secretariat of the regional councils, hence there is an official reporting relationship between the regional councils and the PCSD. At the local level, the strategy is being coordinated from the [local sustainable development councils](#).

Implementation

Since the development of the PA 21, the country has been navigating along a learning curve in implementing and mainstreaming the elements of the document. Many of the initiatives contained in PA 21 have been widely implemented with some agenda components registering as high as a 90 per cent completion rate. The mining sector action agenda showed the highest degree of accomplishment, mainly due to high-profile public debates. On the other hand, progress has

been slow in moving the urban action agenda where priority activities are subject to different views and where implementation responsibilities are divided among different political bodies. Implementation has also been slow for the agenda on cross-cutting concerns (e.g. governance, human development, creation of an enabling economic environment, population management, etc) (Lagarde, 2006).

At the local level, a number of local governments established structures for sustainable development, integrated sustainability concerns into their local development plans and policies, and formulated their respective Local Agenda 21s. However, many of the established structures for sustainable development are parallel mechanisms whose operations require additional resources and separate work plans. It has proven difficult to include sustainable development into given local structures and cultures as the local actors have had difficulties to relate sustainable development objectives to their regular activities (Lagarde, 2006). Moreover, the PCSD has not had sufficient resources to undertake the activities it has been called to implement. To a certain extent, this has led to the disillusionment of stakeholders to bring about the changes necessary for sustainable development and in the PCSD's effectiveness in charting the course of implementing PA 21 (Lagarde, 2006).

Monitoring

There is no established set of sustainable development indicators and accompanying monitoring and evaluation systems in place. Moreover, PA 21 activities on the national and local level often run in parallel and thus lack coordination (Lagardes, 2006).

Thailand

Basic Information

Sustainable development has become increasingly important to the Royal Kingdom of Thailand. Thailand, as a member of the United Nations, has ratified the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. As part of the 10th National Social and Economic Development Plan, the country formulated its NSDS entitled "[National Sustainable Development Strategies - A Guidance Manual](#)" covering the period of 2007 to 2036. The Guidance Manual has been released in June 2008 with the help of the [National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand](#), [UNEP](#) and [Thailand Environment Institute](#). Thailand takes actively part in the [NSDS](#) project run by the [UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and Pacific](#).

Content, objectives and topics

The NSDS of Thailand is a result of a review of several existing plans available in the country including the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan and other environmental and social plans and policies. Furthermore, it involves the review of the development status of the country. The research outcomes were used to outline the draft NSDS, which was then proposed to the meeting of stakeholders for gathering opinions and recommendations ([UN Division of Sustainable Development homepage](#)).

The NSDS contains an implementation guideline for Thailand on sustainable development. This guidance manual indicates which existing policies and measures are related to sustainable development and should serve as a guide to stakeholders, especially government agencies, on how to implement the development plan in order to achieve long-term sustainable development for Thailand.

The goals, objectives and principles of the NSDS are oriented towards four strategic goals and objectives: (1) quality, (2) stability and adjustment, (3) equity and distribution, and (4) good management systems. The conceptual framework and vision for sustainable development in Thailand is outlined in the NSDS and summarised in Figure 3 below:

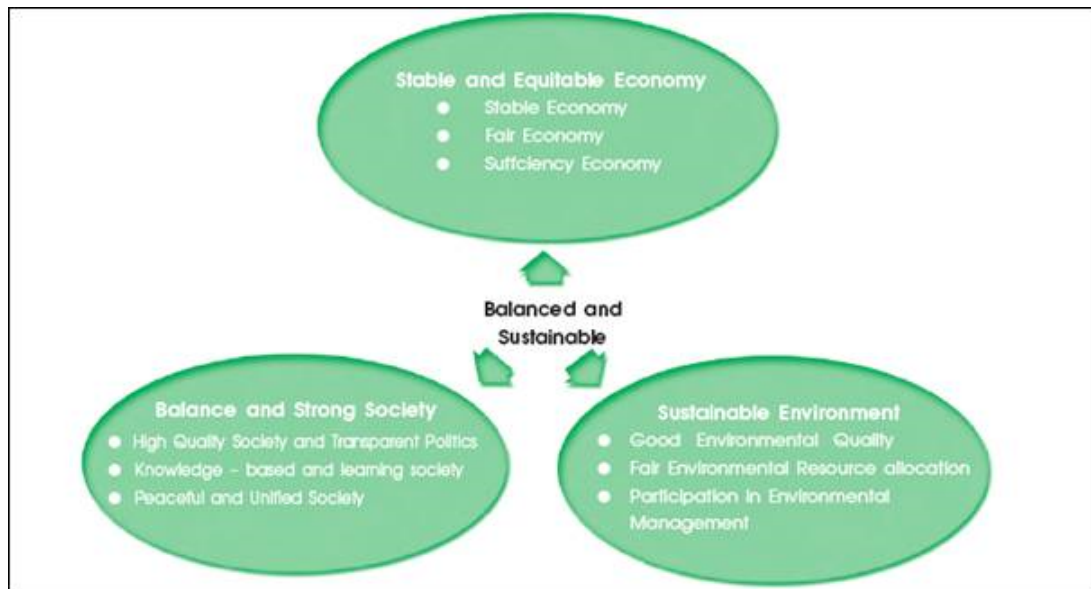


Figure 3: Vision of sustainable development in Thailand (NSDS of Thailand, 11)

Based on the NSDSs strategic goals and objectives, four broad sub-strategies were introduced as the framework for the Thailand's NSDS. For each strategy, implementation measures are indicated and indicators are defined for each measure:

1. Eliminate poverty through sustained and equitable growth:

Implemented by: reducing vulnerability and improving livelihoods; enhancing national and household savings rates; ensuring fiscal sustainability and reducing public debt; improving green productivity and economic competitiveness; ensuring energy security and renewable energy usage; ensuring food safety.

2. Enhance environmental security and sustainability:

Implemented by: ensuring water security; managing hazardous substances and waste; managing air quality; conserving and managing natural resources and biodiversity; ensuring human and environmental bio-safety.

3. Ensure good governance at all levels of society:

Implemented by: supporting education and continuous learning; improving public access to information & developing innovative systems for science and technology; promoting religious and cultural awareness and sensitivity; improving public health services and assessing rights; strengthening, protecting and developing labour rights; reducing crime and drug abuse.

4. Create a knowledge-based and ethical society:

Implemented by: improving transparency and accountability; eliminating corruption; strengthening law enforcement; strengthening public participation process; empowering local government authorities; promoting regional and international cooperation.

Institutions

The leading institution in the development and formulation of strategies is the office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). It formulates the National Economic and Social Development Plan and translates it into action within a 5-year timeframe. Moreover, it involves in the formulation of strategies for key government policies and major development projects, analyzes budget proposals by the state enterprises and related agencies and develops indicators.

The National Council for Sustainable Development was established in 2002, based on a government resolution, to formulate policy and development measures and coordinate implementation aspects regarding the two Earth Summits. The Prime Minister is the Chairman and the Council members are the representatives from all related ministries at the ministerial level and experts (UNEP Progress Report 2007-2008). The competences of the NCSDB lie in setting up the policy guidelines and framework for sustainable development and promoting the use of the country's NSDS.

With the support of the UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia & the Pacific, the NESDB has organised the consultation meetings to which representatives from government ministries (leading role: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment), governmental agencies, research institutions in the field of sustainable development (leading role: Thailand Environment Institute), civil society organisations and the business community have also participated (UNEP Report of the Stakeholder Consultation Meeting for the NSDS).

Other Strategies

As of 2006, the national policy and planning developments of Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Board have been revised to conform to the UN's framework on sustainable development. These include the 9th and 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2000-2006) and (2007-2010) respectively as well as the implementation of Agenda 21 (1992) and Local Agenda 21 (1992) during the past ten years (1997-2006).

National Economic and Social Development Plan: The 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2010) covers various development strategies and emphasizes resolving the economic crisis and human resource development issues. It focuses on holistic development within the framework of sustainable development and uses the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a guideline for balanced development, by stressing stability, transparency, accountability, equal development distribution, sustainable natural resources and environmental management, and enhancement of national competitiveness.

Implementation

The supervision and coordination of the implementation and translation of sustainable development guidelines into the decision-making process is being carried out by the UNRP Regional Resource Centre for Asia & the Pacific. The NESDB serves as a focal point for the implementation at the national level. The national government still faces the challenge to independently implement the strategy and to build up capacities for its governance mechanisms.

The Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands Forum (formerly the South Pacific Forum until a name change in October 2000) was founded in August 1971 and comprises 16 independent and self-governing states in the Pacific. The Forum is the region's premier political and economic policy organisation. Forum leaders meet annually to develop collective responses to regional issues.

Membership

The Forum's membership has increased from the original seven founding members (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga and Western Samoa - now Samoa) to also include the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. New Caledonia and French Polynesia, previously Forum observers, were granted associate membership in 2006.

Institution

The Forum's administrative arm is the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, based in Suva, Fiji. It acts as the Secretariat for Forum-related events, implements decisions by the leaders, facilitates the delivery of development assistance to member states, and undertakes the political and legal mandates of Forum meetings. The Special needs of the small island states are being supported through this unit. The Forum Secretariat works closely with a range of partners such as UN agencies, other regional organisations and development partners in a monitoring and coordination role. Political oversight and guidance to the Secretariat is provided by a Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC), chaired by the Forum Chair and comprising representatives of all Pacific Island Forum Countries.

The Pacific Plan

Through the Auckland Declaration of April 2004 to strengthen regional cooperation and integration, the Pacific Islands elaborated the Pacific Plan with a vision of 10 years. The Plan was adopted in October 2005.

The Pacific Plan proposes a new and innovative approach to the challenges that Pacific Island Countries face through a framework of intensified regional cooperation and integration. It does not endeavour to promote a 'one-size-fits-all' model of regional cooperation nor intends to limit the ability of countries in the region to pursue their own nationally based policies. It sets four objectives like economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security with goal of enhancing and stimulating them through the promotion of the regionalism. The Pacific Plan consists of six parts:

Part I includes the goal and the objectives of the plan. The four objectives are:

1. Economic Growth: increased sustainable trade (including services) and investment; efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure development and associated service delivery; increased private sector participation.
2. Sustainable Development: reduced poverty; improved natural resource and environmental management; improved health; improved education and training; gender equality; enhanced involvement of youth; recognised and protected cultural values, identities and traditional knowledge.
3. Good Governance: improved transparency, accountability, equity and efficiency in the management and use of resources in the Pacific Security; improved political and social conditions for stability and safety.
4. Security: development of plans for urbanisation, bio-security and safety.

Based on these objectives, the priorities for the region are being defined. The concept of the Pacific Plan is based on the

concept of regionalism, sharing benefits and costs, and retaining national sovereignty. Part III and IV describe the costs and benefits of regionalism and the priorities in the regional cooperation for immediate implementation for the period 2006-2008. Part V contains the implementation strategies for the Pacific Plan. It sets out the above mentioned objectives, the initiatives to undertake for the first three years (2006-2008) and the outcomes of these actions. The development and implementation of the Pacific Plan is dependent on the implementation and development of the sustainable development strategies at the national level. At the regional level, the implementation will be the responsibility of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat ([Pacific Plan](#)). Part VI sets out for the first three years (2006-2008) the corresponding indicators to the objectives of the plan and the verification sources for these indicators.

Below we present the example of the Cook Islands NSDS that was developed within the framework of the Pacific Plan:

Example: Cook Islands NSDP

Basic Information

After the elaboration of the Pacific Plan, the Cook Islands Government has acknowledged the importance of incorporating in its national development efforts the key guiding principles articulated in its various international and regional commitments. [The National Sustainable Development Plan \(NSDP\)](#), covering the period 2006-2010, was elaborated as a platform for doing so.

Objectives and topics

The primary objective of this NSDP is “to build a sustainable future that meets our economic and social needs in partnership with government, the private sector and local, regional and international stakeholders, without compromising economic management, environmental integrity, social stability and the needs of future generations” ([Cook Islands NSDP](#), 4). The NSDP defines eight guiding principles: (1) sustainable development as a national responsibility; (2) democratic principles, basic human rights, respect for cultural diversity and rule of the law; (3) equitable economic development and general access to basic health and education; (4) recognising special needs of the outer islands and disadvantaged groups; (5) national development that reflects regional and international commitments; (6) good governance, including participatory decision-making processes at all levels and including various stakeholder groups; (7) coordinated and efficient use of natural resources; (8) international and regional foreign relations based on mutual respect.

These guiding principles, together with the six priority areas identified during the 2003 National Development Forum (NDF), the post-NDF consultations, the Cook Islands Constitution and regional and international commitments, have led to the formulation of the following nine NSDP development goals: (i) well-managed private sector economic development; (ii) well-educated, healthy and productive people; (iii) sustainable use and management of natural resources; (iv) strengthened and affordable basic infrastructure, transport and utilities to support national development; (v) good governance at all levels of government, private sector and local communities; (vi) national coordination and information system for development, planning, monitoring and evaluation; (vii) cultural heritage and respecting cultural diversity; (viii) effective foreign affairs policy that meets the needs and aspirations of the Cook Islands; and (ix) safe, secure and resilient Cook Islands.

The NSDP defines for each of these sustainable development goals the specific challenges as well as ‘key outcome targets’ for the period 2006-2010.

Implementation

The NSDP implementation framework is divided into four parts:

1. *The NSDP Matrix*: each coordinating agency is given a set timeframe in which to achieve the relevant ‘key outcome targets’ and will be held accountable for their performance. The matrix is divided into three parts: strategy, key outcome targets and coordinating agency.
2. *The Sector Strategies*: The NSDP does not present detailed sector-based policies or projects. These will be identified in the individual sector strategies. For those sectors where a strategy has not been developed, the NSDP provides direction to achieve alignment and consistency with guiding principles made by the Cook Islands Government.
3. *The Ministry/Department Business Plan and Transition to Corporate Plans*: Each ministry/department is asked to prepare a business plan in the form of an annual ‘statement of intent’ and which is used as the basis for the respective ministry’s/department’s national budget submission. The coordinating agencies are asked to develop corporate plans in which the sector strategies and the NSDP should be translated into ministry/department plans of action.
4. *The National Budget*: The National Budget should provide the resources needed to ensure the effective implementation of the NSDP.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The NSDP contains measurable targets and indicators which will be used to gauge implementation progress and achievements.

The NSDP Advisory Committee (NAC) - comprising representatives from the government and heads of ministries, the private sector and community groups - meets on a quarterly basis to provide a high level, multi-stakeholder analysis reports of implementation results before they are presented to the government cabinet every 6 months. The reports are then made available to the public and development partners after presentation to the parliament. The National Planning Division, as the Secretariat to the National Advisory Committee, is responsible for coordinating, compiling and analyzing all inputs into the progress reports and reporting to parliament, through cabinet, on the implementation of the NSDP and the outcomes achieved. Figure 4 below shows the NSDP monitoring and evaluation framework:

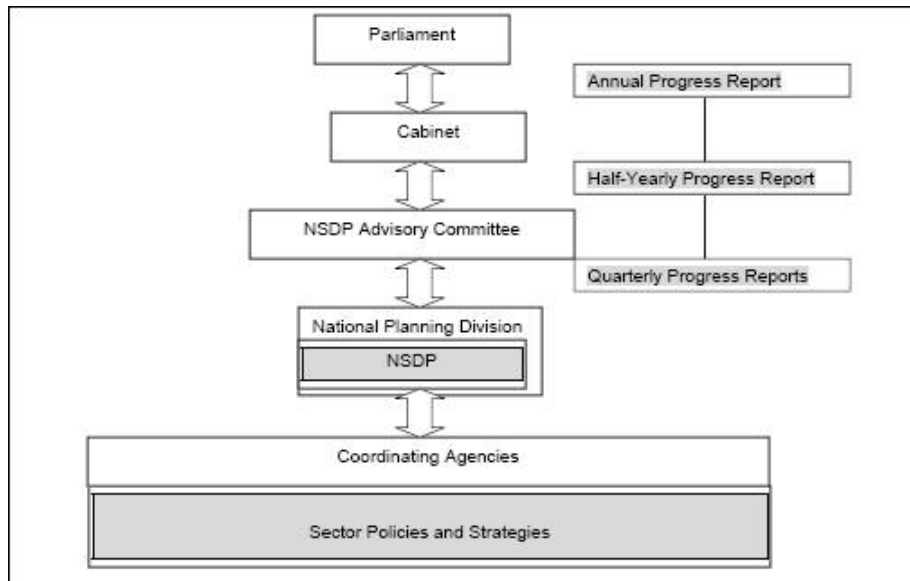


Figure 4: Cook Islands NSDP monitoring and evaluation framework

South and Latin America & the Caribbean

Since 2002, a joint initiative on sustainable development has been established, the [Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development \(ILAC\)](#), with support from the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. ILAC was approved in August 2002, during the [First Extraordinary Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean](#), on occasion of the World Summit on Environment and Sustainable Development of Johannesburg. It has the following four objectives:

1. To consolidate and continue efforts being made in Latin America and the Caribbean, at different levels of government and civil society, to overcome obstacles in putting into effect programmes and projects of interest to the region so as to comply with the recommendations of Agenda 21 by placing emphasis on the effective development and implementation of participatory mechanisms;
2. To develop, in selected areas, actions based on the political will of states that encourage participation by the private sector and civil society to promote investments that may generate sustainable productive activities and maintain sustainable livelihoods while, at the same time, allowing for the conservation and sustainable use of essential environmental goods and services;
3. To promote, on a foundation of ethics, the implementation of competitive sustainable development models backed by public policies designed to develop science and technology, financing sources, human resources capacity-building, institutional development, the evaluation of environmental goods and services as well as sustainability indicators adapted to each country's social, economic, environmental and political conditions, or to the needs of sub-regional groups of countries; and
4. To contribute, within a political framework, to identifying and prioritising financial, technical and institutional mechanisms to effectively implement Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the 22nd United Nation General Assembly Special Session, thus facilitating the transfer of, access to and development of technology and knowledge and promoting the adoption of suitable regulatory frameworks.

The ILAC developed a comprehensive agenda, which opened up a space for the then merging subjects, as well as for those issues of more relevance and projection from the point of view of the environment and the sustainable development. The application of the agenda has been fostered through the Regional Action Plans (RAPs) adopted by the Forum of Ministers. ILAC has developed goals, indicative purposes and indicators for six main topics: (a) biodiversity; (b) management of water resources; (c) vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities; (d) social issues, including health, inequity, and poverty; (e) economic aspects, including competitiveness, trade and the patterns of production and consumption (energy); and (f) institutional aspects.

In the South and Latin America & the Caribbean regions, one can differentiate between various strategic policy frameworks for sustainable development or frameworks in which sustainable development issues are addressed (IISD, 2008; IISD, 2004):

- National Agenda 21 (e.g. Brazil)
- National Development Plans that include sustainable development issues (e.g. Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica)
- Long-term visions for societal and human development (e.g. Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico)
- National Sustainable Development Plan (e.g. Guyana)

The countries in Latin America have been struggling to stabilize their economies and this influenced the way how sustainable development is addressed as economic planning holds centre stage in public policy-making. Moreover, sectoral strategies dominate and this makes integrated and strategic efforts towards sustainable development difficult to achieve.

Below, we present the NSDSs or similar strategy documents from selected South and Latin American as well as Caribbean countries. We selected countries which are of geo-political importance, for which detailed information is available in studies and reports and which have ongoing activities addressing sustainable development strategically.

Brazil

Basic Information

The [Brazilian Agenda 21](#) was adopted in July 2002 in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. This comprehensive strategy is not classified as an official government document. Rather, it was created through years of extensive consultation (1997-2002) across all sectors of society, and is consequently classified as a “social pact” (Ministry of Environment, 2002). The relation of the Agenda 21 to government policies is mainly through its link to the multi-year National Development Plan.

Objectives and topics

The Brazilian Agenda 21 is linked with the government’s multi-year plan and defines 21 objectives, for each one including actions and recommendations, organised in four priority areas. Below, we list the priority areas and their respective objectives:

1. *The economy of savings in the knowledge society*

Objectives: sustainable production and consumption; eco-efficiency and social responsibility of companies; recovery of the strategic planning, infrastructure and regional integration; renewable energy and biomass; information and knowledge for sustainable development.

2. *Social inclusion for a solidarity society*

Objectives: permanent education for work and life; promoting health and preventing diseases; social inclusion and income distribution; better sanitation to protect the environment and health.

3. *Strategy for urban and rural sustainability*

Objectives: management of urban space and metropolitan authorities; sustainable development of rural Brazil; promoting sustainable agriculture; promoting the LA 21 and integrated development; implementing public transport and sustainable mobility.

4. *Strategic natural resources: Water biodiversity and forests*

Objectives: improving water quality in the hydrographic basins; forestry policies, deforestation control and biodiversity corridors; governability and ethics for the promotion of sustainability; decentralisation and the federative pact: partnerships, consortiums and local power; state modernisation: environmental management and economic mechanisms; international relations and global governance for sustainable development; civic culture and new identities in the communication society; ethics and solidarity for sustainability.

Coordination and linkages with other strategies and planning processes

Under the Brazilian constitution, the government’s multi-year national development strategy ([Plano Plurianual - PPA](#)) must be prepared every four years and approved by the National Congress. It defines the priorities for the social areas, investment on infrastructure and in income generating sectors. The latest PPA, covering the period 2004-2007, resulted in a major budget cut for the environmental sector. However, “the great innovation of the new PPA is the insertion of the environmental dimension on the National Development Strategy. The new government wants to integrate environmental questions with Brazil’s development policy. The other four dimensions of the Plan are: social, economic, regional and democratic (IISD 2004, 14).

Brazil is also actively involved with other South and Latin American countries on a variety of sustainable development

initiatives, such as the [Latin American and Caribbean Initiative \(ILAC\)](#) (UNEP, 2008).

Institutions

The [Commission for Sustainable Development Policies and Brazilian Agenda 21 \(CPDS\)](#) was created in 1997 to coordinate the preparation of the Brazilian Agenda 21 and to propose sustainable development strategies for the country. In 2004, the Commission was expanded from 10 to 34 members, representatives of the government, civil society and NGOs. Its main goals are to monitor the implementation of the Brazilian Agenda 21, support the Agenda 21 initiatives and define and implement a process to certify Local Agendas 21. The Ministry of the Environment is acting as president of the Commission. Its [Secretariat of Institutional Coordination and Environmental Citizenship](#) is responsible for elaborating, coordinating and following the implementation of the Brazilian Agenda 21 as well as for stimulating the implementation of Local and Regional Agendas 21.

Implementation

The Brazilian government has committed itself to the implementation of sustainable development by including objectives of the Brazilian Agenda 21 into the Federal Government's multi-year National Development Plan (2004-2007). The Agenda 21 places the responsibility of implementation directly on the various sectors of society, including governments of all levels, private sector companies, and civil society organizations and was never intended to be a purely governmental document.

The various objectives of the Brazilian Agenda 21 are under different stages of implementation. The participatory integration of the various federal public policies and local actions are part of an often slow process, particularly in a country with the dimensions and diversified economic and cultural characteristics of Brazil. ([UN NSDS Status Report Brazil](#))

Monitoring

The Brazilian Agenda 21 highlights some of the sustainable development accomplishments that have occurred over the past decade. However, the Agenda 21 only makes one reference specifically to monitoring, alluding to the creation of an implementation report. No reference is made to the responsibility of monitoring and reporting. With regards to sustainable development indicators, the Ministry of Environment in Brazil is responsible for developing an indicator set.

Costa Rica

Basic Information

Costa Rica has been a pioneer in incorporating sustainable development into decision making at the national level (IISD, 2004). Already in 1994, the government made sustainable development one of its central policy themes and major efforts were set in motion to look at the country's sustainable growth potential in an integrated way. Current activities appear to be decentralized in the form of several strategies that relate to sustainable development. However, the most comprehensive document that outlines an integrated approach and includes sustainable development issues is the National Development Plan.

National Development Planning and sustainable development strategies

The [National Development Plan \(NDP\)](#), covering the period 2006-2010, is the planning instrument that integrates the strategic public policies to achieve the development objectives to create good quality-of-life conditions for the population. The NDP includes the following objectives: fighting corruption, combating poverty, integrating Costa Rica into the world to create quality jobs, developing a modern educational system, combating crime and drugs, organising state priorities, improving the national infrastructure system, actively pursuing foreign policy. The NDP also addresses cross-sectoral issues like social policy, productive policy, environmental sustainability, foreign policy as well as legal and institutional reforms. For each of these cross-sectoral issues, the NDP includes a chapter that outlining the context of the respective issue, a definition of the vision and challenges as well as several objectives. Strategic actions are also defined in order to achieve the NDP objectives. Each sector is allowed a maximum of 10 strategic actions that will feed into the NDP. Each strategic sectoral action has to come up with a budget estimates that needs to be submitted to the Costa Rican Ministry of Taxes. This ministry elaborates every year a national budget to be approved by Congress.

Since 1999, Costa Rica's strategic efforts related to sustainable development through the [Ministry of the Environment and Energy](#) appear to be focused on implementing Agenda 21 at the local level as a tool to "generate multi-stakeholder participation planning for constructing sustainable development. Based on this experience they are striving to develop a national Agenda 21. There is no information if this has already happened.

Institutions

The [Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy \(MIDEPLAN\)](#) is the government ministry responsible for the formulation, coordination, and evaluation of the priority programmes for the government. It defines national objectives and global goals. It plays a decisive role in the supervision and coordination of the implementation of the NDP.

In 1998, Costa Rica made efforts to provide the sustainable development governance mechanisms by establishing the National Council for Sustainable Development and the Inter-institutional High Commission for the Osa Peninsula. This body was developed as an instrument to promote dialogue and consent between diverse sectors in the field of environmental management and sustainable development. However, the council failed to create collective dialogues, discussion or decisions (IISD, 2004)

Implementation

To create the NDP, the MIDEPLAN designed a methodology and presented it to each sectoral ministry so that they elaborate their own sectoral plans. The strategic actions formulated by each sector that are incorporated into the NDP must be designed following the guidelines of the MIDEPLAN. Each strategic action must include

- Specific objective;
- Indicators: each objective has an indicator, measurable both in quantitatively and qualitatively;
- Base line: the result for each indicator before the new implementation progress begins;
- Objectives;
- Budget estimates;
- Responsibilities: people in charge of implementing each sector's strategies as part of the NDP.

The NDP is designed to be implemented during four years. MIDEPLAN published annual evaluation reports of the strategic actions carried out and the impacts achieved.

Mexico

Basic Information

It has become increasingly evident in Mexico that development at the expense of the environment and natural resources is no longer feasible. Therefore, during the last few years the government has tried to give sustainable development a raising importance and integrate the concept in the constitution, the general laws and national strategies.

Mexico does not have a single, cross-sectoral NSDS in place, but has included sustainable development in major national policy strategies. Mexico's main planning Instrument is the National Development Plan (NDP), currently covering the period 2007-2012. It contains not only the government's principles but also its objectives and strategies. It is the central document for the whole federal public administration and is legally approved by the Mexican Congress. Sectoral programmes from the different ministries that also include sustainability elements support the NDP.

Content, objectives and topics

The National Development Plan includes five main areas, each of them is covered in a chapter of the NDP: (1) State of rights and security, (2) competitive economy that generates employment, (3) equal opportunities, (3) environmental Sustainability, and (4) effective democracy and responsive foreign policy. For each of these areas, information on the present situation in the country is presented. This provides the basis for formulating the objectives and strategies that are established. Moreover, the NDP proposes an integral strategy in which the four areas are strongly interrelated. Sustainable Human Development (SHD) is being represented as the prerequisite for the integrated development of the country.

Other strategies related to sustainable development

The Mexico Vision 2030 Project, integrated in the first chapter of the NDP, establishes the future for a Sustainable Human Development. The NDP 2007-2012 is for a major part based on these principles and tries to achieve an integral development of the nation with a view towards new generations (IISD 2008). SHD assumes that the goal of development consists in creating the atmosphere in which present and future generations can develop their capacities and opportunities. This is based on the concept of SHD as formulated by the UNDP in their 1994 World Development Report.

The National Program of the Environment and Natural Resources promotes six main goals: (i) integrated ecosystem management - focus on watershed rather than political boundaries in the management of water, land, air quality, forests and biodiversity; (ii) policy integration - sustainable development should be the shared responsibility of federal secretariats and agencies; (iii) environmental management - halt and reverse environmental contamination and degradation of ecosystems; (iv) provision of environmental services - improve management of natural ecosystems and ensure that those who benefit pay for these services; (v) enforcement of environmental legislation - strengthen inspection and compliance; and (vi) public participation and transparency - publish environmental information and respond to public demand for environmental protection (SEMARNAT 2001).

The vision of the National Program of the Environment and Natural Resources is to promote new forms of participation by

Mexican citizens to inform the policy-making process for the environment and to maintain an active involvement in the protection of natural resources and the environment generally (IISD 2004,4). Moreover, the National Program of the Environment and Natural Resources proposes action plans, goals and strategies to effectively manage environmental issues and in many cases the Program sets clear objectives and targets, some of which are time-bound (SEMARNAT 2001).

The Program to Promote Sustainable Development in the Federal Public Administration represents an effort to co-ordinate public policies towards sustainable development by including sustainable development targets and action plans in sectoral planning. "Presidential" targets have been set for all secretariats, including performance requirements in terms of environmental outcomes and public administration (OECD, 2003).

Institutions and participation

Mexico established in 1995 a National Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, with the participation of representatives from civil society, the business and academic sectors, both federal and state institutions, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Council consists of 66 members and is chaired by the head of [Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources \(SEMARNAT\)](#) who has an overall coordinating responsibility. Four Regional Consultative Councils for Sustainable Development were also established to co-ordinate with state, regional and national organizations.

For the current NDP (2007-2012) the consultation was carried out with the participation of citizens, legislators, political parties, civil society organizations, indigenous people, municipal and state government. As part of the sectoral program development process, each ministry is required to conduct consultations with citizens and other stakeholders to inform the development of their programmes (IISD 2004).

Implementation

The National Development Plans are multi-year programs established by the Mexican President at the beginning of the presidential term. Sectoral programmes serve as policy guidelines, specifying goals and strategies in each sector to be implemented during the next six years. Under the direction of the current NDP, the commitment of sustainable development is shared by the various sectoral ministries and federal agencies. These agencies are responsible for promoting sustainable development in their activities and programs through specific actions and goals. Selected sustainable development initiatives are the Environmental Health Action Program, the programmes to combat poverty (Program for Education, Health and Food and the National Program for Micro-regions) and the Environmental Education Programmes.

Monitoring

Each ministry must report to the President of Mexico at the end of the year on progress in meeting its interim environmental targets. Targets for the following year are then set accordingly. On an annual basis, the President presents a report to the Congress discussing the general state of the country's administration.

The Mexico Vision 2030 Project introduces an informative Manual of 2030 indicators. Since the NDP is based on this long term plan, it is planned to monitor the plan by using its indicators. There are 28 indicators divided over the different areas and topics on the following issues (IISD, 2008): jurisdiction (5 indicators), economic development (7 indicators), social issues (9 indicators), environmental protection (3 indicators) and governance (4 indicators).

North America

Canada

Basic Information

Sustainable development principles have been applied in Canada since 1995 by ways of the Auditor General Act. Until 2006, rather than creating a single NSDS, Canada assigned responsibility for sustainable development to individual government departments and agencies. This responsibility is laid out under the Auditor General Act, which requires 31 departments to submit to the parliament so-called [Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies](#), in which each departments defines objectives and plans for action to implement sustainable development. The departmental strategies are required to be updated every three years. The Canadian government departments prepared their first strategies in 1997, with subsequent revised versions completed in early 2001, 2004 and late 2006. This has been a decentralised approach which gave the Canadian provinces at least as important a role in promoting sustainable development as the federal government. Since 2006, important steps towards the development of a NSDS have been initiated.

Towards a National Sustainable Development Strategy

In spring 2006, [Environment Canada](#) led a government-wide initiative to strengthen coherence and accountability across departmental sustainable development strategies that resulted in a set of federal sustainable development goals and a common reporting framework. This new approach is outlined in the document titled [Coordinating the Fourth Round of Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies](#), a guiding document for the departmental sustainable development

strategies for the years 2007-2009. This document aim to strengthen coherence and accountability by defining 6 government-wide sustainable development goals in two areas: *Environmental Quality Goals* - clean water, clean air and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; *Sustainable Development Management Goals* - sustainable communities, sustainable development and use of natural resources and governance for sustainable development. Bases on these goals, the government departments and agencies had to base their [departmental sustainable development strategies for the period 2007-2009](#).

Based on these efforts, an important step towards a Canadian NSDS was taken in 2008: The [Federal Sustainable Development Act \(FSDA\)](#) received royal assent in June 2008 and include the requirement to develop a federal sustainable development strategy by June 2010. The federal strategy should include federal goals and targets for sustainable development along with implementation strategies for each. Through this, the FSDA aims to strengthen sustainable development practices within the federal government. It is regarded as a positive step towards being more accountable to the citizens in the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices. And it should allow the government to set environmental sustainability priorities more effectively and to align the work of federal departments to support these priorities. Moreover, the FSDA requires the establishment of a sustainable development advisory council to advise the Government of Canada on the federal sustainable development strategy. The council should feature a broad membership, including representatives from provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal and non-governmental organizations, and business and labour communities.

Institutions

[Environment Canada](#) is the leading institution that provides guidance on the structure, format and priorities for the sustainable development strategies to all federal departments and agencies. There is also a working-level information sharing group, chaired by Environment Canada called the Interdepartmental Network on Sustainable Development Strategies, which has members from all federal departments and agencies that prepare sustainable development strategies ([UN NSDS Profile for Canada, 2007](#)).

In addition, the [Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development \(CESD\)](#) in the Office of the Auditor General is given overall responsibility for reviewing departmental sustainable development strategy submissions and for reporting to the parliament on the extent to which departments are implementing and achieving the goals and objectives laid out in their strategies. Although the purpose of the CESD is not to coordinate the departmental strategy process, the reports of the CESD have provided guidance to departments with respect to the content of the strategy and to the overall approach to sustainable development at the departmental level.

The new development based on the FSDA of 2008 require the establishment of a sustainable development advisory council to advise the government on the federal sustainable development strategy and the establishment of a new office within Environment Canada to develop and monitor progress on the strategy from 2010.

Other inter-departmental and inter-governmental organizations and institutions that inform and guide policy decisions with respect to sustainable development include:

- [The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment \(CCME\)](#) is an inter-governmental forum for discussion of environmental issues of national and international concern.
- [The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy](#) is an independent advisory body that provides decision makers, opinion leaders and the Canadian public with advice and recommendations for promoting sustainable development.
- [The Interdepartmental Network for Sustainable Development Strategies](#) is an inter-departmental forum to facilitate and guide the development of departmental sustainable development strategies.
- [The Sustainable Federal House in Order DG Committee](#) is an inter-departmental committee which provides guidance with respect to 'greening government'.

Participation

As part of the process of developing departmental sustainable development strategies, each department is required to conduct consultations with clients, partners and other stakeholders. The consultations are to be based on detailed issues to be considered by the departments and are intended to inform the development of the strategy and, in particular, the goals, objective, targets and action plans.

Monitoring

Since the development of the first strategies, departments have reported annually on their performance in implementing their commitments through their annual Departmental Performance Reports to Parliament. The Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) plays a significant and important role in advancing the sustainable development agenda in Canada. The Office also [reports](#) every year on the government's performance on environment and sustainable development matters, with a particular focus on yearly progress and challenges in

implementing sustainable development strategies.

The Sustainable Development Strategies Management Review ([latest version of 2008](#)) summarises what has been learned during the preparation and implementation of sustainable development strategies. The latest version based the analysis on the means to improve the government's approach to sustainable development and considerations for the new FSDA legislation. The FSDA outlines for the future NSDS an important audit and assessment role for the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, largely through amendments to the Auditor General Act. Through these amendments, the Commissioner will be expected, by reviewing a draft of the NSDS, to evaluate whether the targets and implementation strategies are capable of being assessed.

USA

Basic information

The USA have no single NSDS document and process in place. Due to the peculiarities of the American federal system, the governance approach in environmental protection and healthcare system is decentralized and the competences in these fields lie in the hands of the federal states. The governance mechanisms in the USA are mainly coordinated through partnerships and agencies and subordinated to the USA federal states. Generally, environmental policy-making is the prevalent approach rather than integrated sustainable development. Attempts towards sustainable development were undertaken during the Clinton administration.

Created by an Executive Order of the President Clinton in 1993, the [President's Council on Sustainable Development \(PCSD\)](#) was explicitly charged with recommending a national action plan for sustainable development to the President. In 1999, the PCSD issued the document, "[Towards a Sustainable America: Advancing Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century](#)". The document defined 10 national sustainable development goals and reflected upon cross-sectoral issues. The main objective of the Council was to forge a consensus among the various stakeholders (government, business and industry, private citizens, non-profits, labor, etc.) and create a viable sustainable development strategy that articulated the interests and concerns of all groups. The PCSD ceased to operate in 1999 and its work was not continued under the Bush administration.

Strategic Plans

The 1993 [Government Performance Results Act \(GPRA\)](#) requires strategic plans for all agencies containing long-term goals and objectives as well as performance indicators for all government programmes. Most agencies are involved in strategic planning. The strategic plans were issued by several agencies since the Rio Summit in 1992, including the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA), the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); moreover, various agencies within the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture emphasized sustainable development as a conceptual framework for their activities.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) plays an important role in environmental policy in general and for the protection against environmental pollution in particular. EPA leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts. Furthermore, EPA develops on a five-year basis their strategic plans, which identify the measurable environmental and human health outcomes the public can expect over the next five years and describes how it is intended to achieve those results. For further information on the EPA Strategic Plan 2009-2014 please [click here](#).

The [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes. Several agencies, including the Department of Energy and the US Forest Service, are setting goals for achieving sustainability for topics and issues that fall under their responsibility. In addition, several agencies are developing joint strategies to address particular issues such as pesticide management and ecosystem maintenance.

Activities in federal states

Several federal states have begun to tackle sustainable development issues more strategically over the last years. One example is the '[Sustainable Oregon](#)' initiative. In May 2000, an [Executive Order](#) directed the state government of Oregon to become a leader in sustainable practices. As part of this order, [internal government operation objectives](#) have been formulated, including economic, community/society and environmental issues. A [new Executive Order](#) was issued in 2006 that includes, besides general objectives for the state government, a 'Sustainable Practices Toolbox for State and Local Governments'.

Several initiatives have also been established in California, although they focus primarily on climate change and energy efficiency. '[Green California](#)' is the attempt of the state of California to reduce energy and resource consumption in state buildings, while lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and creating healthier environments in which to work, live and learn. The '[California Sustainability Alliance](#)' is a multi-stakeholder initiative that addresses issues like energy efficiency, climate change, principles for 'smart growth', renewable energy development, water use efficiency, waste management, and transportation management.

Monitoring

The [National Environmental Monitoring Initiative](#) is an initiative of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources which brings together environmental monitoring and research organizations from across the United States. It links large-scale survey information and remote sensing with ecological process research at a network of multi-resource, intensive monitoring areas. It has the general aim to provide greater understanding of what controls ecosystem health at the regional scale where resource management decisions are made.

The Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) is a research program to develop the tools necessary to monitor and assess the status and trends of national ecological resources. In 2002, an [EMAP Research Strategy](#) was developed that defines the goal to develop the scientific understanding for translating environmental monitoring data from multiple spatial and temporal scales into assessments of ecological condition and forecasts of the future risks to the sustainability of our natural resources. EMAP's research supports the [National Environmental Monitoring Initiative](#) of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR).

Mediterranean countries

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development

Basic Information

Considering its specific economic, social, environmental and political features, the status and evolution of the Mediterranean have always been of great interest to its countries and partners. From the protection of the sea against pollution, the interest was progressively expanded to land-based development and its impacts on the environment, to coastal management and finally to sustainable development with the establishment of the [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development \(MCSD\)](#). Cumulated knowledge, coupled with political support and commitment to a common vision, has prepared the ground for the preparation of a regional strategy for sustainable development. Its preparatory process, coordinated by the MSCD's Secretariat, has been very interactive, involving various stakeholders. The strategy, adopted in 2005, has raised awareness and induced the preparation of various national sustainable development strategies (Hoballah 2006).

Content of the strategy, objectives and topics

The [Mediterranean Strategy](#) entitled "[Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development: Framework for Environmental Sustainability and Shared Prosperity \(MSSD\)](#)" adapts to the regional context and provides a regional stimulus for the implementation of the relevant Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, on the basis of recent developments in regional cooperation, with particular reference to the [Mediterranean Action Plan](#) and the [Euro-Mediterranean partnership](#), the [Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development](#) and the [EU Sustainable Development Strategy](#). The development of the MSSD results from a consultation process that mobilised most Mediterranean stakeholders including governments, the civil society through the participation of NGOs and key experts. Considering the absence of a regional authority, the MSSD serves as a framework for all strategies being formulated or updated in the region. As such it is not strictly binding and consistency of both strategic orientation and proposed actions may vary.

Applying the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to regional concerns and realities, the MCSD members identified six major challenges – five for structuring the foundations of the common vision and one for securing effective implementation towards sustainable development. The six key challenges for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region are:

- Development and environment protection;
- Poverty and inequality;
- Innovation and economic entrepreneurship;
- Preservation of cultural diversity;
- Governance; and
- Peace and security.

The MSSD has four major objectives and seven priority fields of actions. The *four objectives* are (1) to contribute to economic development by enhancing Mediterranean assets, (2) to reduce social disparities by implementing the Millennium Development Goals, (3) to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources, and (4) to improve governance at the local, national and regional levels. The last objective is particularly important for the implementation of the strategy. Generally, the above objectives are to be seen in cross-sectoral manner and cross-cutting issues (Hoballah 2006).

The MSSD's *seven priority fields of action* are (i) improved provision of water supply, including demand management; (ii) improved, rational use of energy, increased proportion of renewable energy, mitigation of climate change and adaptation

to its consequences; (iii) sustainable mobility through appropriate transport management; (iv) sustainable tourism as a leading economic sector; (v) sustainable agriculture and rural development; (vi) sustainable urban development; and (vii) sustainable management of the sea, coastal areas and marine resources.

Institution

The [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development \(MCSDD\)](#) was established in 1996 with the mandate (a) to identify, evaluate and examine major economic, ecological and social problems set out in the Mediterranean Agenda 21 (Agenda MED 21) and to facilitate the exchange of information among institutions implementing activities related to sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and (b) to enhance regional cooperation and rationalize intergovernmental decision-making in the Mediterranean basin for the integration of environmental and development issues.

The MCSDD is made up of 46 members out of which 22 are permanent members, representing each of the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention, including Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, the European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey. Additionally, the MCSDD comprises 24 rotating representatives from the wider stakeholder community (local authorities, the business community, NGOs, scientific community, intergovernmental organisations and other experts). The MCSDD operates through working groups that look into specific issues of sustainable development important for the region.

Monitoring and Indicators

The [Mediterranean Action Plan \(MAP\)](#), together with [Blue Plan](#) has developed [sustainable development indicators](#) for the MCSDD follow-up. The main indicator set has been [updated in 2009](#). It is intended to use the indicators also for the implementation of the NSDDs in the region.

Implementation

Effective implementation of the NSDD calls for concrete and coordinated initiatives at the national and regional levels. At the national level, the Contracting Parties are at the core of implementation. Pursuing sustainable development in the Mediterranean region is a task of transforming governance (Hoballah 2006,163). To move seriously toward sustainable development and implement efficiently requires adequate structural changes in economic, social, environmental and political sectors. Consequently the Mediterranean countries are then faced in adopting a lot of reforms through their existing institutions, fiscal policies, production and consumption patterns, development policies and so forth.

MCSDD has requested the Secretariat to collect and analyse the actions and implementation measures and monitoring mechanisms, introduced by the Mediterranean countries to foster Sustainable Development. Based on the survey of the MCSDD Secretariat the Mediterranean countries have developed different strategic frameworks, action programmes or action plans inspired by sustainable development considerations. The region could be broadly divided in the following groups (Hoballah, 2006):

Group 1: Countries (non-European) with an NSDD or strategic plan for SD or Agenda 21: e.g. Israel, Tunisia.

Group 2: Countries preparing national environmental strategies or national strategies/plans for environment and sustainable development: e.g. Algeria, Morocco.

Group 3: Countries with national environmental action plans (NEAPs): e.g. Egypt, Lebanon, Syria.

To sum up, despite the slowly implemented policy reforms and steadily progressing culture of change in the region, the MCSDD programme of work, its various studies and proposals, together with its multiple working sessions and consultation processes has strengthened regional cooperation and regional consensus. It has successfully put sustainable development higher on the political agenda and, as a result, various regional and national programmes were revised accordingly. It promoted the aim to raise awareness, increase political interest, strengthen cooperation and build capacity for sustainable development at regional, national and local levels. Finally, it also encouraged countries to initiate, develop and implement their respective NSDDs (Hoballah 2006, 166).

For more detailed information on individual country approaches and progress towards the elaboration and implementation of NSDDs and national action plans for sustainable development and the environment, we decided to choose one country for each of the above mentioned group. The following countries were selected: Israel (for the first group), Morocco (for the second) and Egypt (for the third).

We would like to point out that the information we are giving provides a snapshot of the situation. However, since the required information was not always available, the country profiles do not always take into consideration the current evolution of the preparation and implementation processes. It must be said that our research has been based on internet websites and reports published from national authorities.

Egypt

Basic Information

The most relevant strategic paper for sustainable development in Egypt is the [“National Environmental Action Plan \(NEAP\): Environment at the Centre of Modernizing Egypt 2002-2017”](#), published in 2001, which serves as a wide framework for the environmental policy-making. The primary aim of the NEAP is to provide support for the introduction of a participatory and demand-driven environmental planning process, taking into account sustainable development issues.

Content, objectives and topics

The NEAP covers a period of 15 years (2002-2017), divided into five-year circles for implementation: the first plan (2002-2007), the second one (2007-2012) and the third one (2012-2017). They are all supposed to be integrated in the other government development plans.

The strategy is divided in eight parts: Part 1 deals with the most important environmental topics for the country: water quality and management, air quality, management of land resources, desertification, the protection of marine environment, solid waste management, biodiversity, biological safety and environmental hazards. Part 2 describes several constraints to environmental protection and the driving forces resulting from several sectors like energy, tourism, agriculture and fishing, manufacturing and mining etc. Part 3 defines the action agenda for the eight priority topics developed in Part 1. Part 4 identifies several cross-cutting issues for societal sub-groups (e.g. youth, women, elderly population, disabled persons, etc) and economic issues related to the environment (e.g. globalisation, natural resource accounting, economic instruments). Part 5 outlines issues of institutional capacity-building and legislation. Part 6 focuses on Egypt’s international, regional and bilateral cooperation and partnerships with other organisations. Part 7 concentrates on the financial aspects of the NEAP (e.g. national budget, funding tools, etc). Finally, Part 8 offers an overview of the implementation plan by breaking the NEAP in three five-years plans and monitoring measures.

Institutions

The leading institution in policy-formulation, preparation of plans and coordination is the [Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency \(EEAA\)](#), which operates as the executive arm of the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA). The EEAA has set up a Committee for Sustainable Development which directs its work towards networking with all the involved parties to knit a common strategy for the process of sustainable development. The mission of the agency is to (a) prepare the NEAPs, (b) implement pilot projects, (c) draft the necessary norms and standards to ensure environment protection, (d) formulate the basis and procedures for the assessment of environmental impacts of projects, and (e) supervise the [Environmental Protection Fund](#).

Participation

The development of the NEAP with the identification of environmental priorities and necessary initiatives has been carried out through a consultative process involving key stakeholders from central and local government as well as interest groups and organizations. Within this context, a number of consultative workshops were carried out during 2000/2001 targeting different groups of stakeholders such as women, youth, the media, universities, and the private sector, with the purpose of creating a number of working groups to provide input to the NEAP, both at the strategic and operational level. Further input was provided by the EEAA, line ministries, local government, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGO's) during the second consultation process of the NEAP to produce an Agenda for Action with detailed description of proposed programs and projects.

Implementation

The NEAP states that “developing and enhancing institutional structures for sustainable development is key to fostering much-needed collaboration and coordination between and among various government ministries, agencies, local communities, NGOs, the private sectors, civil society in general, and the international community” (NEAP Egypt, 2001, 159-160). Moreover, the NEAP argued that capacity-building, training and education are key requirements for institutional transformation to achieve sustainable development. Therefore, horizontal policy-integration, stakeholder involvement and capacity-building are regarded as important means for implementing the NEAP.

Monitoring/Indicators

Annual guides for environmental data and indicators have been prepared by EEAA in collaboration with other authorities. The [annual guide for 2008](#) is composed of a ‘methodological framework’, an overview of the environmental conditions in Egypt, and 10 priority topics including a set of indicators. The priority topics are: fresh water quality, coastal water quality, biodiversity and protected areas, land use management, forestation, air quality, noise, energy, transport and solid waste management.

Israel

Basic Information

The process of formulating a sustainable development strategy for Israel was influenced by both international events and national factors. Within Israel, several studies were undertaken, dating back to 1997, where particularly a master plan for

the 21st century -[Israel 2020](#) - reviewed the issues likely to influence long-term development policy. This was the first step toward introducing the concept of sustainable development into government discussions.

The second important step on the road to sustainable development, was the elaboration of [sustainable development strategy documents](#) between the years 1997-2000 within the framework of the [Coastal Areas Management Programme \(CAMP\)](#) signed between Israel and the [Mediterranean Action Plan](#). The sustainable development strategy documents were prepared from seven target groups (industry, energy, transport, tourism, agriculture, the urban sector, and biodiversity) composed of stakeholders including central government, local government, private sector, academics, NGOs in the seven sectors. The elaboration of these preliminary documents, published in 2002, was important for the formulation of conclusions and recommendations for a national strategy on sustainable development.

The third important step on the path toward sustainable development occurred in May 2003, in the form of a [Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development](#) (based on a government decision) which determined that the policy of the government of Israel will be based on the principles of sustainable development. Today most of Israel's government ministries have prepared strategic plans on sustainable development aimed at promoting the integration of the three components of sustainable development in government policy.

Sustainable Development Strategy: Vision and Principles

The [national approach of Israel toward sustainable development](#) is based on the elaboration and implementation of individual strategic plans for sustainable development in each of Israel's government ministers in order to mainstream sustainability into the ongoing work of various departments. The process of drafting an official document for an overarching NSDS is still not finalized, but the framework for the several strategies is set through the elaboration of a common vision through the inter-ministerial committee, goals and principles, within which all ministries can seek synergy and joint interest.

One of the first steps in launching the process of developing an NSDS for Israel was to examine sustainable development principles formulated by international bodies such as the United Nations, OECD and European Union and by countries with long-term experiences in sustainable development, such as Canada, the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands, in order to adapt them to Israel's special conditions. The process involved input from government ministries, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. Based on this process, 16 principles for sustainable development were identified in order to form the common basis for the sustainable development strategies which are now being formulated by each ministry, a so-called 'common language of sustainability'. The 16 principles can be found [here](#) and include integrated resource management, mainstreaming of sustainable development principles into action plans and policy, polluter pays principle, eco-efficiency, sustainable consumption, accountability and transparency, precautionary principle, public participation, inter-generational and intra-generational equity, etc.

Institutions

The overall responsibility for sustainable development lies with the [Ministry of Environmental Protection](#). A major element in the government decision on sustainable development was the appointment of an inter-ministerial task force in 2003, headed by the Director General of the Ministry of the Environment and composed of all relevant stakeholders, to oversee the drafting of the strategic plans and to propose the 16 principles for sustainable development as common basis for the ministries and policy sectors.

Implementation

Each government ministry has drafted a [strategic plan for sustainable development](#), for the period until 2020, which includes a ministerial action plan and measures of implementation. Ministries have also mapped and identified their sustainable development practices according to a standard format and according to the 16 principles of sustainable development which were formulated for the national level. Specifically, each ministry has identified the following: (i) current activities that promote sustainable development in order to reinforce these activities and grant them priority in resource allocation within the ministry; (ii) activities which contradict sustainable development and barriers to promoting sustainable development so that appropriate steps could be taken to remove these barriers; and (iii) areas that had been neglected previously and require further action.

Significantly, ministries with economic policy responsibilities have taken the lead in drafting and implementing sustainable development strategies. This has facilitated the initial mainstreaming of sustainable development into government policy. For example, the Ministry of Finance is actively seeking ways to promote energy conservation and to implement green taxes in the transportation sector. On its part, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour will incorporate environmental criteria into its review of financial support requests by industry and into its advice to small- and medium-size enterprises and will promote environmental technologies through grants for research. The Ministry of Housing and Construction intends to issue green building guidelines on planning and construction of sustainable communities and will implement experimental projects and guidelines on groundwater enrichment via roads and drainage systems which divert surface runoff to open spaces. In parallel, the inter-ministerial committee has identified several cross-cutting issues which are of special importance to the promotion of sustainable development in Israel, including: energy savings and conservation, sustainable building, the potential use of greywater, the rural sector and sustainable transportation.

In parallel to the governmental framework, [local authorities](#) have also initiated the preparation of [Local Agenda 21 programs](#), with the support of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the guidance of the Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership. In addition, a coalition of environmental NGOs, called '[Paths to Sustainability](#)', plays an active role in the inter-ministerial committee and delivers 'shadow reports' on sustainable development.

Monitoring and indicators

A review of Israel's path towards sustainable development with a focus on environmental aspects is reported and tracked from the [Ministry of Environmental Protection](#) on an annual basis. The latest report was published in 2008 and can be downloaded [here](#). There is as well an implementation assessment report of Agenda 21, entitled '[Implementing Agenda 21 in Israel](#)', published in 2002.

Over the past several years, academics, environmentalists and professionals from different sectors and disciplines in Israel have been working on the formulation of sustainability indicators for Israel. One major project, conducted by the Environmental Policy Center of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Central Bureau of Statistics, addressed the elaboration and definition of the applicability of the indicators of the Mediterranean Action Plan to Israel. Based on background papers in different sectors and subsequent discussion in workshops, six groups into which indicators could be grouped were identified: (a) sustainable economic growth; (b) social and environmental equity in the present generation; (c) ability to cope with environmental issues; (d) protection of the interests of future generations; (e) efficient utilization of resources; (f) quality of life of the present generation. Several indicators were proposed, for each of the above fields, forming a summary list serving as basis for data collection efforts by the relevant bodies in Israel. These indicators were published in the report entitled 'Sustainable Development Indicators in Israel, Summary Report Phase I'.

Based on the work undertaken in the second phase of the project, entitled '[Indicators for Sustainable Development in Israel, Second Phase](#)', 10 indicators, which relate to the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability, were identified for initial analysis and publications. The 10 indicators are:

1. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
2. Ratio of external debt to GDP
3. Expenditure on food out of the total Income of households
4. Motorization rate - number of vehicles for 1,000 Inhabitants
5. Car 2wnership levels by income deciles
6. Life expectancy at birth
7. Energy consumption
8. CO2 emissions
9. Open space per district
10. Salinity of groundwater in the coastal and mountain aquifer

In September 2008, the Israeli government approved the proposal of the Prime Minister's Office to require statements on aims, goals and clear performance indicators in proposed government decisions to enable monitoring of policy delivery and attainment of goals in relation to sustainable development.

Morocco

Basic information

The approach of Morocco mainly addresses the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The two main strategic documents are the National Strategy for the Protection of the Environment and Sustainable Development (SNPEDD) from 1995 and the National Plan of Action for the Environment (PANE) of 1998. The first one serves as a general framework for sustainable development and the second one as an implementing guideline.

Morocco, like many other countries, adopted a sectoral approach to development, resulting in practices that run contrary to the principles of sustainability. The country's administration is characterised by being based on a strict hierarchy, and by the unwillingness of disclosing information and the administration has very few legal means at its disposal to protect the environment, making it rather difficult to adopt a transversal approach to environmental issues (IISD, 2004). However, the Moroccan government has in recent years given signs of willingness to change that by decentralisation processes that are giving more regional decision powers to regional governors and councils and thus enhancing the possibilities to integrate actions and policies to a greater extent.

These efforts reached its peak in the elaboration of a new strategy covering the framework and action plan for Morocco, entitled 'Stratégie de proximité du Département de l'Environnement', that has been developed from the National Council for Environment (CNE) and the State Secretary for Environment (SEE) and published in 2009. New in this strategy is its strategic orientation which gives a more concrete guideline from the incentives to the actions. It describes the new orientation at the territorial level, by defining the local weakness and challenges in the environmental aspects and tries to fill the gaps that have been claimed in their environmental and sustainable development policy.

Objectives and topics

The main objective of the SPNEDD was the integration and strengthening of environmental concerns in economic development activities. The SPNEDD set out medium-term (2005) and long-term (2020) objectives for the quality of the environment and promoted the integration of environmental considerations into economic and social development policies.

The new orientation of the Strategy entitled "Stratégie de proximité du Département de l'Environnement" (SP) is built on this vision and emphasizes more environmental protection and improvement of the citizens' quality of life, by taking into consideration the imperatives of economic development and conditions set forward by the globalisation and the free trade agreements between Morocco, the EU and the USA. The elaboration of the SP is the response to the accused delay in environmental management, by setting clear objectives in restoring the environmental conditions for natural resources, in reacting to the citizens needs in the last developed areas of the country and establishing a solid basis for local sustainable development. Based on this new orientation in the objective, the Ministry of Environment has started to make steps in the identification of the advantages, of the constraints and of the ecological problems at the local level and it has also made steps in raising awareness of the socio-economic dynamics of the regions, their priorities, and their financial resources.

The Strategy presents the necessary approach to tackle and reach the objectives of this new orientation. This new strategic path gives a valid meaning to sustainable development, which is intended to be achieved through the environmental action plans and the active partnerships with local authorities. The new strategy is based on the introduction of an integrated approach of sustainable development at the territorial level, at the programme level and at the partnership level:

- The territorial approach is based on the following actions decentralisation of the governance structures in the reinforcement of the local authorities, introduction of regional observatories for sustainable development, and introduction of regional committees for the environment impact studies.
- The programmes approach focuses on the following topics: waste management, quality of air, industrial pollution, quality of citizens' life, landscape management, biodiversity, decontamination.
- The partnership approach focuses on integrative partnership convention between the State Secretary for Environment (SEE) and the regional authorities. This part is seen as the main pillar of this strategy and represents an important step in the concretisation of the government strategy actions aimed to install the basis for sustainable development in Morocco. This participative approach is based on partnerships with all the actors at national, regional and local level.

Implementation

The National Plan of Action for the Environment (PANE) of 1998 represented a big milestone compared to the single project approaches that characterized policy-making in Morocco during the 1980s and 1990s. PANE is, therefore, a good example of the efforts made to overcome the sectoral approach in planning exercises. This action plan has adopted (a) an integrated approach, (b) provisions for Agenda 21, (c) a participative approach, (d) planning instruments already elaborated, and (e) a vision of long-term actions and financing (IISD, 2004). The weakness of functional connections between the national and the local level in promoting the implementation of the SPNEDD and the PANE has forced the government to solve and address this deficit through the new strategy „Stratégie de proximité”.

Institutions

Morocco reacted actively to the increasing environmental concerns by establishing the Ministry of the Environment just after the Earth Summit in 1992. Another step taken by the government was the restructuring in 1995 of the National Council of the Environment (CNE), originally created in 1980, as consultative and coordination body for stakeholders. The Council is composed of representatives of all ministries and is chaired by the governmental authority in charge of the environment (State Secretary for Environment SEE). The council has five commissions on human settlements; nature, natural resources and hazards prevention; legal and international relations; prevention of pollution; and culture, information, communication and education. Regional and provincial councils have been set up to promote sustainable development and implement programmes compatible with national environmental priorities (IISD, 2004).

Linkages to other Strategies

The National Plan for Economic and Social Development (PDES), which incorporates actions in relation to sustainable development, defines priority actions which have to conform to the action measures of PANE. Other important

programmes are the National Plan to the Fiscal Stability, National Programme of the Reduction of Industrial Pollution, Clean Cities Programme and the National Plan of the Waste Management.

The SNPEDD, the PANE and now the new strategy of the Ministry of Environment are examples of the government's attempt to overcome the very compartmentalized and sectoral policy approach regarding sustainable development issues that characterizes the Moroccan administration.

Monitoring/Indicators

To ensure the follow up processes to achieve environmental protection and sustainable development, Morocco has been involved in the framework of the [Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development](#), to set up an indicator system for sustainable development specific to the national context. The National Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators (CNIDD) was set up to create a programme to test and validate the Mediterranean indicator set. In this context, the CNIDD used the framework of the [Blue Plan for the Mediterranean](#). After a participatory process, a set of 65 indicators has been chosen for monitoring sustainable development.

Conclusion: Similarities and differences

In this final section of the QR, we summarise some of the main similarities and differences in the countries and world regions covered in their efforts to strategically address sustainable development:

- The strategic policy frameworks that include sustainable development issues (e.g. generic NSDSs, sustainable development included in other policy strategies, etc) vary significantly among the countries and world regions and are largely dependent on the respective political-administrative systems, economic development, environmental conditions, institutional capacities, political culture, etc.
- Generally, the UN is an important driver for the development/implementation of NSDSs or addressing sustainable development more strategically. The UN developed guidelines for NSDSs and also acts as support organisation, particularly for lesser developed countries. For instance, UNEP is supporting the development and implementation of NSDSs in the Asian & Pacific region and was involved in the establishment of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC).
- The external support of the UN and donor organisations (e.g. Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation in the Asia & Pacific region) has many advantages. However, experience shows that this external support is currently accompanied by weak national ownership and challenges in establishing effective governance systems in the respective countries.
- 'Generic NSDSs' can only be found in a limited number of countries in the world regions covered (e.g. Thailand, several Pacific Island countries); several other countries have adopted national Agenda 21 strategies (e.g. China, Philippines, Brazil). Nevertheless, sustainable development is increasingly included into strategic policy documents, most often in national development plans (e.g. India, Mexico, Costa Rica). Moreover, environmental policy plans are still dominant in several countries, some of them also address cross-sectoral issues (e.g. Japan, Egypt).
- Although efforts to address economic, social and environmental issues in sustainable development strategies, environmental sustainability is in many countries the prevailing approach.
- Several NSDSs or strategic policy documents that include sustainable development issues refer to cultural aspects or national heritage and governance mechanisms as important issues.
- Some regional commitments to develop NSDSs or integrated sustainable development approaches have emerged in several world regions, e.g. the Pacific Island Forum, the Latin America and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Although sustainable development is increasingly taken up by various countries in the different world regions (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 2008; Meadowcroft, 2007), major challenges remain, e.g. concrete actions on the ground, integrating sustainable development into all policy sectors, coordination of sustainable development objectives among government levels as well as developing comprehensive and effective monitoring and evaluation processes.

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