

# **Institutionalizing sustainable development indicators for measuring progress of national strategies**

**Expert Group Meeting  
Barbados, 17-19 September 2009**

Co-organized by

**Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, Government of  
Barbados**

and

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for  
Sustainable Development**

## **Draft Concept Note**

National sustainable development strategies (NSDS) came to the forefront of the international sustainable development debate in 1992 when Agenda 21 recognized them as important tool to advance sustainable development goals at the national level. In 2002, countries committed themselves in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JOI) adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to formulate and begin implementation of NSDS by 2005. The United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) works to support governments' efforts' toward developing and implementing NSDS.

Effective monitoring of an NSDS has been identified as major challenge for ensuring successful implementation of NSDS. Many countries use indicators of sustainable development to monitor progress in achieving the goals of their NSDS. Indicators of sustainable development were recommended in Agenda 21 as they can help countries make informed decisions concerning sustainable development. In addition to the question of identifying suitable indicators, a main challenge is to find appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure that indicators are reported on effectively and within the agreed timeframes and agreed periodicity.

NSDS can also play an important role in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) and the Barbados Plan of Action on sustainable development in small island developing States (SIDS) at the national level. An NSDS provides a unified framework for advancing sustainable development goals objectives of SIDS identified individually at the national level and jointly at the international level. Indicators used for monitoring progress of the NSDS allow then for simultaneously monitoring implementation of the MSI, thereby ensuring consistency of indicators used at the national level and avoiding duplication.

Barbados, having already in place its overarching National Sustainable Development Policy 2004, recently completed its National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2006-2025. The fourth

of the six strategic goals contained in the Plan is “Building a Green Economy – Strengthening the Physical Infrastructure and Preserving the Environment”. The Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage is taking the lead for monitoring this goal, has identified key indicators of sustainable development for this purpose.

“Building a Green Economy” calls for increasing the efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources as well as for reducing resource degradation. Therefore, it has added international significance in the context of the 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns that will promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems, called for in Chapter 3 of the JPOI. The elaboration of the 10 Year Framework is supported by the Marrakech process lead by UN DESA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which is expected to conclude 2011 when the 10 Year Framework is scheduled to be launched.

Indicators can be a valuable tool for tracking progress towards SCP as well as for monitoring the outcomes and impacts of specific SCP policies. Consolidating SCP indicators into existing national economic and social reporting processes, as currently undertaken in Barbados, can strengthen the linkages between SCP and other sustainable development issues and, at the same time, allow countries to achieve greater economies of scale and associated efficiencies.

The expert group meeting, co-organized by the United Nations Department for Economic Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage of the Government of Barbados, will bring together experts from various countries and organizations in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The meeting aims to share experiences on three related topics. The first is the selection of appropriate indicators for measuring progress of strategy implementation, with a view to identify which selection criteria and which commonly available indicators have been successful. The second topic concerns the integration of indicators related to major cross-cutting issues of sustainable development such as sustainable consumption and production patterns into the overall strategy monitoring framework, such as to harness thematic linkages and to increase the coherence and efficiency of reporting processes. Thirdly, participants will share views on choosing institutional arrangements for monitoring systems and on ways to ensure their effective and continuing implementation, taking into account commonalities as well as idiosyncrasies of the overall institutional systems of the participating countries. The meeting will take Goal 4 of the NSP of Barbados and the proposed indicators as point of departure. Participants will share good practices and experiences that could be relevant for Barbados as well as for other countries. In addition to a report summarizing the proceedings, the meeting is expected to produce a set of options that countries in the process of selecting and institutionalizing indicators for measuring progress of national sustainable development strategies and plans may want to consider.