



Incheon

Communiqué

November 16, 2012

STRENGTHENING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST RIO CONTEXT

1. We, the representatives and experts of countries, United Nations system, policy think tanks, advocacy networks, civil society and academic institutions, participated in this first meeting of the UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) in Incheon, Republic of Korea from November 14 to 16, 2012 (list available in Annex1). We discussed how to strengthen planning and implementation capacities for sustainable development in the post Rio+20 context. Our three-day deliberations covered innovations, challenges and lessons learned in the preparation and implementation of strategies for sustainable development; how to mainstream Rio+20 outcomes into national strategies and other instruments; and how to accelerate implementation via knowledge sharing, capacity building and the scaling up of good practices.

2. We took account of the appreciable experience-base of strategy-making and implementation for sustainable development in all regions of the world and at national, sub-national and local levels. We noted positive trends over recent years which include the integration of sustainable development aspects directly into the existing national development plans and processes of developing countries; a high level of activity at the sub-national level; continued progress at the national level by many early adopters of strategies for sustainable development; the emergence of the green economy as a strategic response to the 2008 global economic crisis; and the inclusion of measurable targets.

3. We also noted with concern a number of undesirable trends including the recent termination of several prominent multi-stakeholder councils for sustainable development; weak or non-existent accountability mechanisms for the achievement of committed targets; and a continued disconnect between those who create strategies for sustainable development and those who are responsible for implementation. There is an immediate need to distil the key lessons learned from defunct multi-stakeholder councils in order to provide guidance to other existing and proposed councils so that they can continue to play the crucial governance role for which they were established.

4. We considered it important that sustainable development priorities should be included in national planning instruments. There is no single answer to the question of which government department or agency should be responsible for creating and implementing the strategy for sustainable development. This will vary for each country, but that sustainable development must be considered within the context of overall visions and plans. In this regard, experience already exists, for example in the form of branding of a sustainable development approach and vision.

5. We highlighted a number of important knowledge gaps and capacity building needs for strengthening planning and implementation of the sustainable development agenda at all levels. Among these are: futures and scenario building approaches; integrated planning and prioritizing methods; operationalization of multi-stakeholder



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councils for sustainable development; capacity building on investment programmes and legislative agendas; communication and marketing of the sustainable development concept; and monitoring and evaluation of progress. It was also stressed that education efforts for sustainable development need to focus on both the current and next generation of government planners and policymakers as well as civil society practitioners in order to strengthen governance at all levels.

6. We recognize the need to strengthen our planning instruments and processes to address Rio+20 outcomes, including the post 2015 development agenda. From a governance perspective, the global process for establishing a set of measurable sustainable development goals presents a tremendous opportunity for articulating a shared vision for the future and accelerating progress at the national, sub-national and local levels. Within this context the water, energy and food security nexus poses a critical challenge; thus requiring integrated analyses to support planning and implementation.

7. We acknowledged that national strategies or development plans serve as an anchor and reference point for more detailed approaches to address key challenges facing sustainable development. In this regard, the green economy is a prime example whereby a portfolio of strategic and targeted actions can effectively align economic progress and sustainability. We believe that an informal peer review process for sustainable development strategies and development plans will provide a strong basis for strengthening implementation.

8. We also noted that more work is required to move toward a shared understanding of the green economy and that this will include rethinking our economic and fiscal approach to account for environmental externalities and fossil fuel subsidy reform. We stressed the importance of developing and utilizing monitoring and evaluation tools to help inform and manage green economy transitions, including indicators that are universally acceptable, yet adaptable to national circumstances. There is also a need to continue compiling and sharing evidence of successful green economy approaches to enable national and subnational governments to develop their own road-maps for transitioning towards a green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

9. Sustainable development has been a heavily diagnosed concept over the past twenty years, but we also acknowledge that business-as-usual action in the 21st century is not an option. There is an urgent need to accelerate implementation and to scale up good practices for sustainable development at all levels. This will entail strengthening our capabilities for envisioning the future; integrated analysis and planning; multi-stakeholder deliberation; innovative investment and accountability; communication and outreach; data collection, monitoring and evaluation; and adaptation.

10. We appreciated UNOSD efforts for arranging this multi-stakeholder dialogue on a very important subject. We believe that advancing sustainable development will



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require sustained and collaborative efforts in terms of global and regional knowledge networks for sharing best practices in strategy-making and action; reviewing evidence of impact; celebrating successes and learning from failures; assessing capacity building needs and expanding implementation toolkits; and charting out new and improved courses of action. We commend the UNOSD for its commitment to sustain the momentum generated at this meeting and working with partners in moving forward the above referred efforts via a global Sustainable Development Implementation Forum to be held annually in Incheon.

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