

Concept note
**Capacity Building Workshop and Expert Group Meeting on Mainstreaming Sustainable
Development**
in
National Development Strategies

9th – 11th October 2013

1. Introduction

The Outcome Document of Rio+20, *The Future We Want* acknowledges the need to ‘mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions (para 3)’. The Rio+20 Outcome Document constantly emphasises the need for enhanced capacity building for sustainable development, including the provision of technical assistance which involves strengthening institutional capacity (para 277). The United Nations system is invited to ‘support developing countries and, in particular, the least developed countries, in capacity building for developing resource-efficient and inclusive economies’ (para 280). It also asks for enhanced evidence-based decision making and in this context requests contribution to strengthen ongoing capacity-building efforts for data collection and analysis in developing countries (para 85 (l)).

It is against this backdrop the capacity development workshop and Expert Group Meeting (EGM) for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into national institutions and national planning and programming is being organized. The Workshop and EGM will build on one of Division for Sustainable Development’s (DSD) core functions of building capacity in developing countries to promote and advance the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the follow up to the Rio+20 conference.

2. Background and Rationale

The Report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system ([A/68/79-E/2013/69](#)) notes that Governments attach great importance to UN support in the area of sustainable development. The report notes that there is a movement towards integrating priorities and objectives at country level that should aid in furthering sustainable development (para 39). However, the gaps and challenges that hinder the UN development system to mainstream sustainable development must be identified, addressed and regularly monitored and evaluated.

One of the main challenges that countries continue to face is that of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in planning and implementation . This is recognized in the above mentioned SG's report, which states that in Government Ministries, institutional arrangements are shaped along sectoral lines. There is thus a need to change sectoral thinking and pursue integrated practices (para 76 (b)). More efforts are needed to collectively help Governments develop policies that pursue the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. There is also no current common capability to assess the progress towards achieving sustainable development. One of the conclusions of the SG report was that 'as Member State engage in the development of new strategic plans for the 2014-2017 year, respective Secretariats will provide the support needed by member States such that these plans address the three dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated fashion' (para 82 (c)).

The call for enhanced capacity development work, particularly through the United Nations, was also made by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Task Team on Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Rio+20 which conducted a survey in August 2011 on United Nations Country Teams' provision of support to countries on their level of preparedness to address new and emerging issues, the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD). A key finding was that policies and programmes remain in fragmented sectors with little coordination, and that countries need strong support in linking the three dimensions of sustainable development. In this regard, one of the challenges identified was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept of sustainable development by Governments.

In the process of preparations for the Rio+20 conference, DESA and UNDP provided assistance to 72 countries across all regions to identify achievements and challenges and gaps in the implementation of sustainable development and to get support for a renewal of political commitment to sustainable development. A synthesis of the completed national reports submitted by countries shows that a gap exists between commitments to sustainable development and the practice of implementing sustainable development policies and programmes. The report concludes that this is largely due to integration, inclusion and coherence challenges. The conclusion drawn is that 'translating the idea of sustainable development into practice by integrating economic, social and environmental aims and approaches remains difficult for most countries' (DESA and UNDP *Synthesis of National Reports for Rio +20* at 2. Available at: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/742RIO+20_Synthesis_Report_Final.pdf)

Five priorities for capacity building were identified from the national reports for advancing sustainable development. These will form the major building blocks for the workshop because each of them is critical to the mainstreaming process and integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into national development planning and implementation. The priorities include:

- Strengthening institutions and governance systems and building capacities for collaboration and coordination.
- Unpacking, clarifying and operationalizing green economy.
- Highlighting the link between the sustainable development agenda and the MDGs.
- Meaningfully engaging stakeholders, including civil society, in the development process.
- Measuring development progress in a way that looks across the three pillars of sustainable development.

A resolution was recently adopted at the General Assembly¹ on format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It stipulates that the forum will conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. It will be important to assess how capacities can be built in order to incorporate this request and how best these countries can report to the forum.

3. Objective and Expected Accomplishments

The overall goal of the Workshop and EGM are to enhance the capacity of key stakeholders, including Government officials and civil society, to effectively integrate sustainable development into national development planning and implementation. Towards this end, the Workshop and EGM will assess progress made, identify existing obstacles and challenges, and exchange experiences and share good practices amongst participants on ways for overcoming these.

The expected accomplishments at the end of the Workshop and EGM include:

- Improved knowledge about the processes, institutions and structures required to put in place initiatives relating to sustainable development;
- Improved knowledge of capacity development and technical assistance needed to achieve integrated sustainable development programmes;
- Enhanced awareness of integrated approaches for the development and implementation of national development strategies through the development of a community of practice and the establishment of a network of practitioners.

¹ Resolution on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (9 July 2013 (A/Res/67/290))

4. Methodology

The Workshop and EGM will be held over three days and would comprise plenary discussions and working groups on sustainable development. The Workshop and EGM will develop a strategy of follow-up, including actions to be taken by different stakeholders and sectors. The participants will have an opportunity to engage in a dialogue about putting in place coordinated plans of action at the national level to implement integrated sustainable development strategies. The participants will also have an opportunity to discuss their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as on strategies for implementation in the relevant sector. The question of resources for implementation will also be addressed.

The workshop would be organised and planned with an analysis of how the institutional framework for sustainable development has been addressed in the national reports submitted for the preparatory process leading up to the Rio+20 conference. An important issue would be strengthening institutions and governance systems for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into national development planning and implementation, which underscores the need to strengthen institutions for collaboration and coordination within and across sectors to overcome fragmentation and cleavages in Government policy so that that divergent groups and interests can coalesce to work towards sustainable development in an integrated fashion

A report by DSD will be compiled and recommendations made which will constitute the substantive foundation of the workshop and facilitate discussions. There will be a particular emphasis on integration and how this has been addressed in terms of policy and institutions. During the workshop, countries will have the opportunity to share experiences, including sharing good practices and challenges and gaps, in implementation of integrated sustainable development. Participants will also share experiences of where they are most in need of capacity building work and what support is needed including the tools and mechanisms that may be needed to effectively integrate sustainable development into policy planning and programming.

Relevant Major Groups, civil society stakeholders and national and international experts would be invited to join the Workshop and EGM. They would assist in assessing the progress towards sustainable development in their countries and would play an important role in advocacy and activism in the area of sustainable development as well as useful resource for capacity building. The Workshop and EGM would stress the role of Major Groups and other stakeholders in sustainable development. They play an important role in advocating and informing States of their obligations, and helping to assess laws, policies and programmes, monitor and evaluate the implementation of sustainable development policies.

The report of the Workshop and EGM would result in a broad framework for the focus of DSD's capacity building work.

5. Target group

The participants of this Workshop and EGM will include approximately 30 Government officials from key Ministries, mostly from least developed countries. In addition, 10 participants from Major Groups, civil society stakeholders and national and international experts would be invited. A select group of United Nations Country Team members would also be invited.

DESA/DSD outpost offices in Incheon, Zaragoza and Nagoya will be invited to attend and participate for supporting knowledge and learning networks.

6. Timing and Duration

The workshop will be held from the 9th to the 11th of October.

7. Venue

UN Secretariat

8. Working language

The working language of the meeting will be English with simultaneous interpretation into French.

Draft Agenda

| Time | Session |
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| Wednesday 9th October | |
| Opening session | |
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Opening remarks |
| Setting the context | |
| 9: 30 – 10:30 | <p>Importance of Rio+20 and its follow up for national implementation of sustainable development</p> <p>This session will examine international processes to follow up on the Rio plus 20 conference on sustainable development held in June 2012 and their implications for policies at the national level.</p> <p><i>The Future We Want</i>, the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, is available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The high level political forum</i> http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1556 • <i>The Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals</i> http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549 • <i>Sustainable development within the framework of the post 2015 development agenda</i> http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/ • <i>Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing</i> http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1557 |

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| | Discussions |
| 10:30 – 10 : 45 | Coffee break |
| 10 45 – 12:30 | <p>Panel discussion on achieving sustainable development at the national level</p> <p>This session will examine effective implementation of integrated and inclusive sustainable development, and how it can be best achieved, exploring possibilities to enhance inclusiveness, cooperation and coordination of all relevant actors at the national level, both state and non-state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contribution of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR)</i> http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/qcpr.shtml • <i>System of environmental economic accounting of the UN Statistics Division</i> http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seea.asp • <i>Measuring Sustainable Development: Integrated economic, environmental and social frameworks. OECD</i> http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforum/33703829.pdf • <i>Rio + 20 national preparations synthesis report</i> http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/742RIO+20_Synthesis_Report_Final.pdf • <i>Country case studies – Institutional frameworks for sustainable development: report prepared by DSD</i> <p>Discussions</p> |
| 12:30 – 2 :00 | Lunch |
| 2:00 – 3:30 | <p>Breakout groups: Exchange of national experience and lessons learned on the gaps and challenges in achieving sustainable development</p> <p>Selected countries will be given the opportunity to make presentations about the challenges and gaps to incorporate sustainable development in their national development strategies.</p> |

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| 3:30 – 3:45 | Coffee break |
| 3:45 – 5:00 | <p>Breakout groups: Exchange of national experiences and lessons learned on good practices in achieving sustainable development</p> <p>This session, which will continue from the previous session, will allow participants to share experiences on progress made, identify existing obstacles and challenges, and share good practices on mainstreaming sustainable development into national development strategies.</p> |
| Thursday 10th October | |
| 9:00 – 10:00 | Report back to plenary and discussion on the main conclusions from breakout groups |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Coffee Break |
| 10:15 – 11:15 | <p>The role of DSD Outpost Centres</p> <p>Presentations from DSD Outpost Centres about their roles in sustainable development and their contribution to supporting countries in mainstreaming national sustainable development into national development strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, (UNOSD) Incheon, Republic of Korea http://www.unosd.org/ • United Nations for Regional Development (UNCRD), Nagoya, Japan http://www.uncrd.or.jp/ • United Nations Water for Life, Zaragoza, Spain https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/water_cooperation_2013/index.shtml <p>Discussions</p> |

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| 11:15 – 12:00 | <p>Mainstreaming of sustainable development at all levels</p> <p>This session would outline challenges of mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system</i> <p>http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2013/69</p> |
| 12:00 – 1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30 – 3:30 | <p>Role of relevant actors in mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels and role of the United Nations System and civil society</p> <p>This session will, on the basis of the previous session, underline the role of all relevant actors to mainstream sustainable development at all levels and will discuss challenges and ways forward.</p> |
| 3:30 – 3:45 | Tea |
| 3:45 – 5:00 | <p>National experiences: the high level political forum (HLPF)</p> <p>This session will examine ways in which countries can most effectively make voluntary national presentations at the high level political forum. It will examine the capacity development needs of countries and look at how the United Nations can support voluntary national reporting, including in preparing and making presentations at the HLPF and monitoring.</p> |
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| Friday 11th October | |
| Looking Ahead | |
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Recap of day 2 |

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| 9:30– 11:00 | Programme support |
| 11:00 – 11:15 | Coffee break |
| 11.15– 12:30 | Learning networks |
| 12:30 – 2 pm | Next steps Closing |