



**Expert Group Meeting for the Global Sustainable Development Report 2013 –  
Engaging National Assessments**

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Ministry of Science and  
Technology/the Administrative Centre for China's Agenda 21

Beijing, China, 12-13 December 2013

**Background - Follow-up to Rio+20**

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), informally referred to as “Rio+20”, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, agreed in its outcome document to establish a high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Rio+20 outcome document was adopted by the General Assembly resolution A/66/288 of 27 July 2012.

§85 of the outcome document outlines a number of functions of the High-level Forum. In particular, paragraph §85(k) calls for a *Global Sustainable Development Report*: “85. *The high-level forum could: [...] (k) Strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation, bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments;*”

The final report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (entitled “*Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing*”), while only an informal recommendation, contains a whole section (V.D) detailing the potential objectives and content of a recommended “*Global Sustainable Development Outlook*”.

The Secretary General provided further details in his report A/67/591 of 27 November 2012, entitled “*Revised estimates resulting from the decisions contained in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled ‘The future we want’*” which was endorsed by the General Assembly at the end of 2012: “64. *The Division for Sustainable Development is responsible for the subprogramme. The strategy will include:...(f) Undertaking in-depth analysis and evaluation of trends and scientific analysis in the implementation of sustainable development, including lessons learned, best practices and new challenges, and cross-sectoral analysis of sustainable development issues, including means of implementation culminating in a global sustainable development report;...*”

General Assembly resolution A/67/290 of 9 July 2013 on format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum also decided that “*the forum shall strengthen the science-policy interface by examining documentation, bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments, enhancing evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contributing to the strengthening of ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries (...)*”. The same resolution also requested “the forum to consider, in 2014, the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report, based on a proposal of the Secretary-General reflecting the views and recommendations of Member States, and relevant United Nations entities, including the Committee for Development Policy”.

## **Global Sustainable Development Report**

In response to the high-level guidance and mandates outlined above, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has lead the preparation of a prototype of the Global Sustainable Development Report. The prototype report will help to inform discussions in 2014. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Wu Hongbo, presented the Report's Executive Summary at the inaugural first session of the high-level political forum on 24 September 2013 which was held under the auspices of the General Assembly and gathered a large number of Heads of State and Government.

The Report maps the sustainable development assessments and related processes, provides science digests of issues not contained in assessments, and highlights emerging issues identified by scientists. It reviews sustainable development progress since 1950 versus goals suggested by science and in terms of trends in policy, institutions and implementation of commitments, and sketch the geography of sustainable development progress. It tells the "stories" of future pathways toward sustainable development based on the literature, contrasted against a dynamics-as-usual scenario. It discusses investment and technology needs to achieve the future pathways outlined above, provide a status report on the global Rio+20 follow-up processes on the "means of implementation", and discuss the pros and cons of new measures of progress "beyond GDP" and related means of monitoring. It identifies lessons learnt and coherent policy menus from national, regional and global case sties of the climate-land-energy-water-development nexus; and concludes with policy issues for consideration. The executive summary of the report is available at the following link <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/>

## **Rationale and Approach**

Coordinated action among the 193 UN member States on the way forward towards sustainable development has proven very challenging ever since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Environment and Development. Much political and analytical focus has been on action by developed countries and cooperation between the developed and developing countries. Yet, the economic rise of a number of developing countries over recent decades suggests that cooperation among a number of rapidly growing developing countries could make a decisive difference in global sustainable development progress. In this connection, a background study has been carried out focusing on existing national sustainable development reports or similar studies in a number of relatively large and fast-growing developing countries. Also, a number of reports have been done by the UN Regional Commissions on sustainable development progress and challenges in the regions.

The present expert group meeting intends to bring together leading scientists and experts involved in the above mentioned reports as well as planners and policy makers, in order to ensure their research findings and analytical perspectives at the national levels are featured in future Global Sustainable Development Reports. In this regard, participants will discuss scope and modalities of the future Global Sustainable Development Reports as part of the contribution to the Secretary-General's report referred above that will be discussed at the next session of high-level political forum in New York in 2014.

## **Format**

The EGM will last for two days. Day 1 will comprise discussions of the prototype report, its process and messages, as well as in-depth discussions of a number of technical issues identified by science to be considered policy makers. Day 2 will deliberate on national and regional sustainable development reports and potential frameworks for involving the national processes in the preparation of future Global Sustainable Development Reports. It will discuss options for the scope and methodology for

future editions of the Global Sustainable Development Reports, in order to provide input for the UN Secretary General's report on the topic requested in A/67/290. Specific recommendations will be discussed on strengthening the science-policy interface. The meeting may want to consider adopting an agreed outcome.

The meeting is expected to be the beginning of a series of national and regional expert consultations in support of the Global SD Report in the future.

### **Objective**

The overall objective of the meeting is to bring together views and lessons-learned from national and regional sustainable development reports, as input to the discussion on future Global Sustainable Development Reports. In particular, the meeting will discuss the scope and methodology of future Global Sustainable Development Reports, which would serve as inputs to the Secretary-General's report for the next session of the high-level political forum in 2014.

### **Participants**

Representatives of scientific communities, senior advisors, policy analysts and planners involved in sustainable development, as well as relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations, and a group of Chinese senior officials, experts and policy makers will be invited.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The outcomes of this Expert Group Meeting will only reflect the experts' views and consensus of participants, which may not represent governments' positions.

The meeting may want to **adopt an agreed outcome** on strengthening the science-policy interface and provide guidance on how to involve national sustainable development processes in the preparation of future Global Sustainable Development Reports.

The meeting is expected to provide **concrete inputs to the UN Secretary General's report on options for the scope and methodology** for future Global Sustainable Development Reports. In particular, it is expected to make **recommendations for a framework on national reporting and involvement**; as well as explore **specific institutional suggestions**, such as a special advisory group or board for the Global Sustainable Development Report, a global network of national institutions as focal points for the report, the peer review process and the role of the networks of national and regional researchers in that process etc.