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IFSD: Issues related to an intergovernmental body on SD

1. Introduction

Discussions on the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) have been gaining momentum. While clear signs of convergence have not emerged, there is a clearer focus on defining some of the options on the table. One set of options covers the functions of an intergovernmental body or arrangement on sustainable development (SD).

What is the role of an intergovernmental body on SD in a reformed institutional framework? How should it go about the task of promoting the integration of the three dimensions of SD? What is the balance among the following:

o Advocating for SD and setting the agenda for the future, thus involving negotiations to fill gaps and address emerging challenges;

o Reviewing progress in implementation of commitments, thus involving metrics for monitoring and mechanisms for assessing progress;

o Reviewing mainstreaming and integration of all three pillars of SD at all levels;

o Reviewing progress in meeting commitments to provide support for SD in developing countries;

o Sharing experiences and lessons learn and extending partnerships with other stakeholders, thus playing a facilitative role; and

o Building technical capacity of countries in the area of sustainable development?

After the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, the General Assembly endorsed the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as a high level commission, a status that was re-affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002 and in all subsequent sessions of the General Assembly. The CSD was thus intended as the cornerstone of the intergovernmental framework for sustainable development governance in the United Nations.

Under the broad heading of IFSD, various processes have attempted to address the sub-set of issues related to international environmental governance (IEG), primarily the status and functions of UNEP. Likewise, scholarly literature and policy work has also gravitated towards these questions, in particular the establishment of a specialized agency for the environment. Most recently, the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome, which emerged from the UNEP-led process on IEG identified five options, including reforming the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable

Development.[1] This option reflects the expansion of the discussion to cover the crucial question of an intergovernmental body on SD.

2. Mandate and outputs of the Commission

A number of SD governance reform proposals have direct or indirect implications for the Commission and the scope of its work. Some proposals, e.g. the establishment of a SD Council or the transfer of the Commission's functions to ECOSOC, would entail disbanding the Commission. Other proposals, such as upgrading UNEP to the status of a specialized agency, would at the very least invite a re-assessment of the Commission's mandate. Irrespective of the precise form of the reform proposals going forward, there is merit in examining the functions carried out by the Commission on Sustainable Development, not least to answer basic questions about what has worked and what has not. Accordingly, the aim of this note is twofold: (a) provide a brief overview of the Commission's mandate and main outputs; and (b) relate these insights to some of the proposals for an intergovernmental body on SD. Given its modest scope, this paper does not aim for systematic analysis of the Commission's track record.

GA resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 called on ECOSOC to establish the Commission as a high level commission, a status that was re-affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). The Commission's functions as outlined in the GA resolution are the following:

a) monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, based on analysis and evaluation of reports from all relevant organs, programmes and institutions of the United Nations system;

b) consider information provided by Governments, including problems faced in implementation;

c) review the progress in the implementation of the commitments set forth in Agenda 21, including those related to the provision of financial resources and transfer of technology;

d) review and monitor regularly progress made by developed countries towards achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as ODA, as reaffirmed in JPOI;

e) review on a regular basis the adequacy of funding and mechanisms, including efforts to reach the objectives agreed in chapter 33 of Agenda 21;

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* Re-issued for technical reasons.
[1] The structural, legal and financial implications of the five options are covered in a separate consultant's study.

f) receive and analyse relevant input from competent non-governmental organizations, including the scientific community and the private sector;

g) enhance the dialogue with non-governmental organizations and other entities outside the United Nations system;

h) consider information regarding the progress made in the implementation of environmental conventions, which could be made available by the relevant conferences of parties; and

i) provide appropriate recommendations to the GA, through the ECOSOC.

The resolution also enjoins representatives of various parts of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, including international financial institutions and regional development banks, to "assist and advise the commission in the performance of its functions" and "participate actively in its deliberations".

Thus at the core the CSD's mandate are monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and reviewing progress in the implementation of the commitments set forth in Agenda 21, including those related to the provision of financial resources and transfer of technology. Beginning its work in 1993, the Commission has held 19 annual sessions to date. Following reforms outlined at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and beginning in 2004, the CSD has followed a two-year cycle, with the first year being devoted to review and the second to policy decisions.

Sustainable development is an exceptionally broad field to cover. An assessment of the Commission's performance as an institution must be cognizant that the North-South political divide manifests itself in the work of the Commission. A fair-minded appraisal of the Commission ought thus to consider carefully whether criticisms truly bear on the CSD as an institution, or reflect a broader lack of political agreement that is also evident in other processes at the United Nations not least in the development field. An example falling into the latter category is the disagreement between developed and developing countries about the so-called "means of implementation", encompassing finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

Given the very breadth of the Commission's mandate, what is a sensible way of assessing its performance? What is a realistic yardstick for measuring its effectiveness? A theoretical approach used to analyse international regimes defines effectiveness in terms of output, outcome and impact. Here output refers to the rules, programs and regulations emanating from the regime, e.g. in this case the decisions of the Commission and related initiatives; outcome refers to change by key target groups, e.g. passage of national laws to implement international commitments; impact refers to actual improvements on the ground in the relevant issue area (Miles et al, 2002; Andresen et al, 2006). At least one comprehensive study has applied this

approach to the CSD (Kaasa, 2005). Methodological difficulties meant that output was selected as the explanatory variable for investigation; it should be readily apparent that tracing cause and effect relationships for outcomes and, even more so, impact presents problems that are insurmountable for practical purposes. In particular, since the CSD policy decisions are "soft" and do not impose binding obligations, it is very difficult to isolate impact (Kaasa, 2005); distinguishing causation from correlation remains very difficult.

The CSD has played a role in providing a 'home' for keeping the broad sustainable development agenda under active review, and has in a number of instances been instrumental in launching new initiatives and introducing topics into the broader UN intergovernmental framework (Dodds et al, 2002).

For analytical purposes, the activities of the CSD can be grouped under three headings that capture its core mandate:

o Monitoring and reviewing progress on the implementation of Agenda 21;

o Agenda setting: developing policy recommendations;

o Partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue.

2.1 Monitoring and reviewing progress on the implementation of Agenda 21

Chapter 40 of Agenda 21 calls on countries and the international community to develop indicators of sustainable development. At its third session in 1995, the CSD adopted a Work Programme on Indicators of Sustainable Development, which resulted in the preparation of an indicator set in 1996, with a second in 2001. The third, revised set of CSD indicators was finalized in 2006 by a group of experts from developing and developed countries and international organizations. The revised edition contains 96 indicators, including a subset of 50 core indicators. A cursory overview of the Division for Sustainable Development's national information database suggests that a considerable number of countries maintain some form of indicators, but whether these are based on, or draw upon, the CSD indicators is not clear. However, it seems plausible that the Commission's promotion of indicators has to some extent influenced their implementation at the country level.

The CSD has maintained a system of national voluntary reporting. Although the reporting rate may appear less than stellar, in fact observers note that reporting has been quite creditable for a voluntary initiative; rather, a more serious shortcoming in the eyes of some is that the reports are not comparable and lack quality assurance mechanisms (Kaasa, 2005). Secretary-General's reports have drawn on national reports, as well as inputs from UN system entities. A pertinent question is the degree to which national reports have been utilized in the review process, especially the review year of the two-year cycle.

2.2 Agenda setting: developing policy recommendations

The fulfilment of the agenda-setting role has seen the Commission serve as the entry point for SD issues, which have then been further elaborated in other bodies, e.g. the General Assembly. Thus, on a number of occasions CSD outputs have contributed to setting the agenda on SD issues, including agriculture, forests, oceans, freshwater, education for sustainable development, and energy. A comprehensive examination of the Commission's treatment of various themes falls outside the scope of this paper; rather, what is aimed for is to draw out selected, illustrative examples.

The CSD was instrumental in advancing intergovernmental consideration of forests, building on the Forest Principles that emerged in Rio after difficult and polarizing discussions. In a major contribution to intergovernmental forest policy development, the Commission established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (1995 – 1997) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (1997 – 2000). In 2000, ECOSOC established the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), a subsidiary body with the main objective to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. This could be characterized as the Commission's filling one of the "gaps" left on the SD agenda after Rio.

On oceans, there are a number of examples of follow-up actions flowing from CSD decisions. CSD-7 recommended that the General Assembly establish an open-ended consultative process on oceans. The Commission's decision is thorough and balanced – a model policy decision. Acting on the Commission's recommendation, the Assembly established the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans to review developments in ocean affairs.

Extending the coverage of energy beyond the rather cursory treatment of the issue in Agenda 21, the decision on energy at CSD-9 systematically covered key energy issues – accessibility, energy efficiency, renewable energy, nuclear energy – and identified associated challenges. Given that energy lacks an institutional "home" in the UN system, CSD-9 provided an opportunity to consider energy within the broader sustainable development context, while integrating the concerns and perspectives of different groups of countries. Although energy proved to be a contentious issue, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) made considerable steps forward, including the need for providing financing for modern energy services, as well as the diversification of energy resources towards cleaner and renewable energy. At CSD-15 when energy and climate change were on the agenda, however, the fault lines re-emerged, and the Commission was unable to reach consensus, victim perhaps of prevailing disagreements among key actors over climate change.

The above examples suggest that the CSD, or a similar body, can provide useful policy guidance and contribute towards setting the intergovernmental SD agenda on selected issues. Successfully influencing the intergovernmental SD agenda requires addressing a combination of issues that are ripe for discussion and consensus-building among countries, conditions that may not exist in a predictable pattern. This suggests that, in addition to agenda-setting, an intergovernmental body on SD should perform other, bread-and-butter functions of a more routine and predictable nature. In this regard, it has been suggested that it may be worth exploring ways of establishing more robust connections with those UN actors responsible for implementation at the country level. It also points to the need to have enough flexibility to address new and emerging issues and to be able to react quickly if and when the need arises.

2.3 Partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue

The CSD has been characterized by openness toward the participation of major groups (civil society). Multi-stakeholder dialogues, introduced at CSD-6, have given greater prominence to major group participation, but questions remained as to their actual impact (Dodds et al, 2002).

The idea of voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships to facilitate and expedite the realization of sustainable development goals and commitments was an important contribution of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Following the attention given to voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships at WSSD, CSD-11 set out guidelines for partnerships and requested that the Secretariat establish a database to register what became known as CSD Partnerships. The provisions related to partnerships established a flexible framework and provide a solid mandate to work with all stakeholders, notably the private sector, which often does not find an easy fit with the UN. The Partnership for Cleaner Fuels and Vehicles stands out for having catalyzed private sector participation and for having achieved a tangible goal, namely the global phase-out of lead in fuels. The SG report on Partnerships states that the majority of partnerships working towards sustainable development tend to have a multi-sectoral approach to implementation. Agriculture, energy for sustainable development, education and water are among the leading primary themes identified. Partnerships have showcased their work through the partnership fairs, held at the CSD sessions, contributing to broad-based participation. The Learning Centre – consisting of courses designed impart practical knowledge and know-how to CSD participants –improves understanding of sustainable development issues and helps to promote implementation.

Although the CSD can rightly be said to have pioneered multi-stakeholder partnerships on this scale, Rio+20 offers the opportunity for reflection on strengthening this mechanism to promote a more participatory approach to the implementation of sustainable development. UNCSD can be a platform to revitalize partnerships, especially public-private partnerships, making them more effective in advancing the sustainable development agenda and, in particular, in leveraging additional resources for implementation of commitments.

Table 1. "Strawman" grouping of sample CSD outputs

	← Less effective More effective →		
Monitoring & reviewing progress	Country reporting Monitoring financial contributions Reporting on follow-up & implementation	SD Indicators	
Agenda setting	**Energy** – UNGASS (1997) expanded consideration of energy & transport; policy decisions at CSD-9 (2001) contributed to JPOI; no consensus at CSD-15.	**Water** – Assessment of Freshwater Resources (1997), priority theme at CSD-6 in 199[ ] and considered at CSD-12/13 (2004/5)	**Forests** – Inter-governmental Panel on Forests (1995), International Forum on Forests (1997) and recommendation to establish UN Forum on Forests (2000) **Oceans** – recommended establishment of open-ended consultative proce[ ] on Oceans (1999)
Partnerships & multi-stakeholder dialogue & engagement	Engagement of UN system entities (UNDP, IFIs, etc)	Multi-stakeholder dialogues (1998); value seen as declinin[ ] over time CSD partnerships, instituted after WSSD	Overall openness to and participation of Major Groups

Source: Adapted from Dodds et al (2002, 2011) and Kaasa (2005).

3. Participation

A common criticism levelled at the CSD is that high-level participants are mainly from environmental portfolios, as opposed to other ministries – finance, economy, planning, development – that are regarded as also playing a critical role in sustainable development at the national level. A partial analysis of ministers recorded as having spoken in the CSD bears this out: ministers of environment accounted for fully 80 per cent of ministers speaking in the course of the first 10 sessions of the Commission. In many cases, high-level representation below ministerial rank, e.g. senior civil servants, has also been drawn from the ranks of the environment ministries. However, some caution is called for in measuring participation in terms of speakers at formal CSD sessions. In some cases, more than one minister or high level official may have attended the session, but only one was chosen to speak. Since the post-WSSD introduction of regional implementation meetings (RIMs), the level of participation and engagement in these forums could also be counted as a measure of commitment to the Commission's agenda. The CSD ha also benefited from the participation of principals and senior officials of UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and IFIs. Also, many countries leave formal statements to political groups, e.g. G77.China and EU. Perhaps more fundamentally, a truer measure of participation would also account for involvement in the Partnership Fair, Learning Centre, side events, and other events taking place around the CSD.

Overall, many countries show a fairly stable pattern of representation, with several European countries together with Australia and Canada very frequently being represented by Ministers of Environment, or ministers with environment in their portfolios, which have been placed in the same category here. Some countries, e.g. the U.S., have most often been represented by that part of the executive responsible for foreign affairs. In the case of the U.S., the State Department has played a coordinating role for the sometimes extensive input of other parts of the federal government.

The analysis of countries recorded as having spoken also evinces the strong influence of foreign affairs, which predominates over senior-level (non-ministerial) participants from environment or other parts of government. Participation of ministers who did not have environment in their portfolios was limited; the participation of non-environment ministers increased in relation to certain themes, e.g. agriculture and energy. With a few exceptions, there is very little evidence of ministers from portfolios that might

relate in a cross-cutting manner to sustainable development, such as finance, commerce or planning.

The predominant participation of Ministers of Environment in the CSD must also be considered in light of UNEP's Global Ministerial Environmental Forum (GMEF), which since 2000 has provided an annual opportunity for environment ministers and high-level officials to meet with the mandate to "review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment." General Assembly resolution 53/242, which established the GMEF notes "…the need to maintain the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development as the main forum for high-level policy debate on sustainable development", as do subsequent GA resolutions.

Some observers argue that the disparity in representation between developed and developing countries leads the latter to fall back on general political positions, rather than more detailed engagement with substantive issues (Kaasa, 2005). To some degree, this also pertains to the predominant conception of the Commission as either primarily a forum for negotiation or as a forum for sharing experiences and best practices, with negotiations taking an ancillary role.

Table 2. Snapshot of participation

	CSD-1	CSD-5	CSD-9	CSD-13	CSD-15	CSD-17	CSD-19
Member States attending		116	140	162	162		144
Ministers speaking*	35	42	37	89	107	54	16***
% Env Ministers**	77%	90%	75%	49%	54%	83%	63%
UN system participation		Pres of GA ASG of FAO ES CBD	ES of UNEP CEO GEF Asst Admin. UNDP VP World Ban	DSG SG of WMO	SG, ES UNEP, ED UN-Habitat, ES CBD, ED UNID(ES ECLAC, CEO GEF, VP World Bank		SG

 * Counting solely Ministers or Deputy/Vice Ministers recorded as having spoken during the session, as reflected in official records.

 ** Ministers with environment listed in their portfolio.

 *** More than 40 ministers or Deputy/Vice Ministers were listed as attending the session.

4. Starting with a clean slate: proposals for strengthening an intergovernmental body on SD

4.1 Integration

As described above, the Commission has chalked up a number of achievements. Yet as Member States and other stakeholders engage more deeply with the institutional framework, there is a willingness to consider a fresh start with respect to the intergovernmental arrangements on sustainable development. If it is to be an improvement over current arrangements, a future intergovernmental body on SD must aspire to do justice to the enormity of the challenge, but at the same time be solidly grounded in political and institutional reality. This implies addressing three areas where the present arrangements are under-performing: integration, implementation and coherence.

4.2 Implementation

There is a widely shared view that an intergovernmental SD body must be a more forceful and effective agent for promoting and facilitating implementation of sustainable development. While remaining an intergovernmental body, and not an implementation actor as such, the SD body could promote implementation through improved monitoring and review, focused policy guidance, and a more catalytic approach to partnerships. .

Enhanced standing vis-à-vis UN system entities would be an important characteristic of an intergovernmental SD body. The Commission has very little influence, persuasive or otherwise, over the operational parts of the UN system, except for the few examples above when it managed to have its recommendations endorsed by the General Assembly, and it has not generally been successful in catalyzing action. One notable example was the 16th and 17th sessions of the Commission that dealt, among other issues, with agriculture, as it so happened at the peak of the food crisis in 2008-9. Although the Commission adopted a strong set of policy options, none of the implementing agencies of the UN system took it up in their governing bodies, with the result that implementation of the Commission's decisions was limited and amounted to some technical capacity building projects.

A more meaningful linkage between the SD body and UN system entities would ensure that intergovernmental policy decisions

become more relevant for countries' sustainable development agendas. An option in this regard would be to build on the experience of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) carried out by ECOSOC, supplemented by an implementation matrix, which would improve review of UN entities' performance in the relevant areas of work. Rigorous reporting by the UN system entities would strengthen partner countries, putting them in the driving seat. It has also been suggested that enhanced review of multi-stakeholder partnerships from the CSD could make them a more effective instrument for implementation (Beisheim et al, 2011).

The introduction of (universal or voluntary) periodic country presentations could serve to promote implementation through shared learning (Beisheim et al, 2011). The practice of country presentations could over time become one of the core, re-current activities of the intergovernmental SD body. A review of UN system and IFI support to countries could be included in the process (Strandenaes, 2011). The experience with the UN Human Rights Council provides valuable lessons with respect to establishment of such a mechanism, as do other bodies. If a thematic focus is desirable, countries could have the option of specifying one or two "sectors" for presentation, or certain themes would be specified for a particular cycle. The lesson from a range of review processes is that they can be structured to focus on mutual learning and support, through a country-led, non-adversarial process.

The Commission has improved linkages with the regions through the holding of regional implementation meetings (RIMS) during the review year, which encouraged the participation of regional actors, including the UN regional commissions. For its part, the ECOSOC has the Development Cooperation Forum, which addresses broader policy issues. An intergovernmental SD body would be able to build on these efforts, while also engaging UN system initiatives directed at the country level, e.g. the UN Development Group and Delivering as One.

4.3 Coherence

A SD body should also be able to foster greater coherence among all the relevant UN system entities. On one hand, the SD body could establish a cooperative relationship with the governing bodies of the key funds, programmes, and the Rio conventions dealing with sustainable development. If the SD body is structured as a subsidiary body of the GA, it would be better placed to establish meaningful, institutionalized relationships with the governing bodies of funds, programmes, and the Rio conventions. Currently, the conventions report to the GA (Second Committee), but not to ECOSOC, which is a significant gap that could be filled by a SD body.

A critical question confronting the proposal for a SD body relates to the ECOSOC. The argument can be made that that the kind of functions described in this note could be assigned to a reformed

ECOSOC. However, it should be borne in mind that ECOSOC has a distinct Charter mandate, including responsibility for matters unrelated to sustainable development, e.g. humanitarian policies and coordination activities (Strandenaes, 2011). Doing justice to sustainable development would entail regular, in-depth consideration, a step that could risk overloading the Council's already busy agenda. Overall, the Council can and does engage in political debate on issues agreed in its functional commissions; however, the Council generally does not engage in detailed dialogue on the recommendations of its functional commissions, nor are discussions structured to aggregate recommendations - into a substantive discussion on the three pillars of sustainable development. There is also little horizontal dialogue among the different functional commissions of ECOSOC. Their agenda and work is independently set, and there is little cross-fertilization of ideas. Silos rather than integration characterize the current situation.

It would be incorrect to view a SD body as duplicating the ECOSOC, or as diminishing and weakening its authority (Strandenaes, 2011). Rather, a SD body would essentially take to the next level functions currently carried out by the CSD, more or less self-contained and without integration into the broader agenda of the ECOSOC. In this regard, a high-level body on SD would thus recognise the urgent need to give greater priority and standing to functions already being carried out, albeit not at the desired level of performance.

Coherence across functional commissions could be improved – at present intergovernmental bodies operate in a silo fashion, e.g. there has been little cross-pollination between the CSD and the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Statistical Commission or the Commission on Population and Development, all of which have relevance for sustainable development. A high-level intergovernmental body on SD could engage more in-depth with these functional commissions on common sustainable development concerns, thus promoting a more coherent treatment, and even work on mutually beneficial projects that would involve more than one commission. There is certainly scope for creative thinking, which would strengthen, rather than weaken any of the institutions involved.

The fact that a SD Council would interact with functional commissions under the ECOSOC could be dealt with through appropriately structured reporting relationships. Thus, while a SD body would be a subsidiary organ of the GA, on some matters it would also innovatively draw on the work of the ECOSOC machinery, e.g. on issues pertaining to functional commissions, which could report through ECOSOC to the SD Council.

4.4 Steps towards a SD body
The experience with the Commission suggests that careful thought would need to go into the agenda of the new SD body.

The selection of topics, in particular the number of issues per session, is a candidate for an overhaul. While recognizing that the Commission's multi-year programme of work was designed to unify issues into a thematic cluster, the fixed nature of the agenda has contributed to the perception that the Commission is not sufficiently responsive to current SD debates. Sharper, more focussed engagement with a more limited set of issues would lead to a more strategic – and manageable – approach. This would entail consideration of the following:

o   revising the multi-year programme of work, so as to permit greater flexibility to deal with emerging issues;

o   building in a follow-up "space" for core issues/clusters of issues, e.g. energy, water and sanitation, food/agriculture, SIDS;

o   revamping the cycle to consist of a "technical" session and an "integration" session.

The technical session would be similar to the current review cycle, permitting in-depth discussion and shared learning in relation to selected topics. The integration session would have as its purpose bringing together environment, economy and social ministers to deliberate a common agenda. Periodic country presentations (whether universal or voluntary) could then be designed as integrative reviews spanning and linking the three pillars. A regular follow-up mechanism has also proved beneficial as it monitored the implementation of suggested policies.

The manner of establishing the HRC is instructive, as the General Assembly resolution that established HRC (60/251), apart outlining the Council's functions and participation, left it to the HRC itself to devise its own programme and work modalities through a process on "Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council". The option of a successor body to the CSD also needs to address issues about its programme and working methods. In terms of institution-building, the lesson from the HRC and other exercises such as UN Women is that, once the broad functional framework has been agreed, the implementing details can be filled in. The review of the work of the HRC after five years has also proved a beneficial tool for increasing efficiency of its work.

Twenty years after UNCED sustainable development has been mainstreamed to a remarkable degree, whether it is in the business sector or in the work of UN agencies. Does that success weaken the case for a dedicated, high-level intergovernmental body on sustainable development? Heartening as the acceptance of sustainable development is, objectively the sustainable development agenda has expanded, not shrunk, since 1992. In short, a good case can be made for a high-level standard-bearer for sustainable development.

Even so, the question could well be asked whether a successor to the CSD is simply old wine in a bigger, shinier, bottle. First, if it is accepted that an intergovernmental body on sustainable development meets a genuine need, then it can be argued that tinkering with the existing arrangements is an inadequate response. Good as the record of the CSD has been, starting with a clean slate opens a new door to real institutional innovation and, importantly, breaks from negative perceptions that have, rightly or wrongly, taken hold about the CSD. The new arrangements would need more time and greater flexibility in meeting, as in the case of the Human Rights Council. Second, it could be argued that the importance of SD has superseded the institutional level of CSD and it is time to have an elevated body overseeing this agenda. This note has outlined what CSD did well and where it was lacking. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of CSD has been that, as the high level intergovernmental body for sustainable development in the United Nations, it has kept sustainable development on the agenda. That agenda – it is widely recognized – needs to encompass all of the three pillars in the hands of an institution focused on promoting integration by reaching out to all relevant ministries, major groups and the parts of UN system.

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