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# **A Proposed Options-Based Methodology for Shared Learning and Peer Review of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSDS)**

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## **1 Background**

In his speech at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the President of the French Republic, M. Jacques Chirac, made a commitment that France would be prepared to submit its national strategy for sustainable development to be ‘peer reviewed’ by other countries, following the proposal by the European Union to develop such a system in order to promote the sharing of experience.

As a follow up, a project was initiated in 2004 and managed by the French Ministère de l’Ecologie et du Développement Durable (Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development) and the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The project aimed to develop and test a methodology for ‘peer review’ of NSDSs, using the French NSDS as an experimental case.

The hope is that the approach will be found to have broad value and that one or two other countries will be willing to use it and modify it as required. Subsequently, following such additional testing, development and trial application, it is hoped that a suggested generic approach along these lines will be presented and recommended to the CSD in 2006. It is further hoped that such an approach will be of help to countries as they seek to meet the UN target on NSDS<sup>1</sup> set out in the WSSD Plan of Implementation (para 145).

A technical workshop, held in Paris, on 8-9 November brought together four partner (peer) countries (Belgium, Ghana, Mauritius and the UK) as well as representatives of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the European Commission (DG Environment) and a range of actors who had been involved in developing and implementing the French NSDS. This workshop considered approaches to undertaking a peer review process.

It is fully recognised that, in the past, some countries have been uncomfortable with the term and notion of “peer review”. But it is increasingly being used (eg the African Peer Review Mechanism launched by the African Union in 2003 as a voluntary self-monitoring approach – now being undertaken by 22 countries). In the context of NSDS, the emphasis is on “shared learning” by exchanging experiences and understanding how challenges are being met. Therefore, the terms “peer review” and “shared learning” are used together to reflect the dual aim of the proposed approach.

This approach is set out in this paper and was agreed by participants at the technical workshop for testing on an experimental basis through its application to the French NSDS. A key challenge for this exercise was to show the common benefits of such a process for both the five countries involved and for the international community, and to encourage other countries to launch their own peer reviews to further test, adapt, and modify the approach (as needed or appropriate), so that it improves on an iterative basis. Following the pilot exercise in France, the

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<sup>1</sup> Take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005

four partner countries have expressed interest in the possibility of participating in similar processes.

## **2 Guiding factors**

The proposed approach aims to satisfy various ‘guiding factors’:

- The need to be cost-effective;
- The approach should be voluntary;
- It should be relatively simple and replicable;
- It should be capable of being undertaken over a relatively short time;
- It should be flexible with options, but with an agreed common methodological framework to ensure coherence between successive review exercises;
- It should be non-judgemental (the aim is not to ‘name and shame’ or to undertake a ‘performance assessment’);
- It should focus on sharing experience and learning lessons;
- A non-prescriptive, options-based, shared-learning approach would be likely to be the most acceptable to countries;
- The review process will be jointly owned by the focus country and the partner countries (the peers).
  - The focus country will be responsible for considering how it responds to any recommendations made and how it will use the review report;
  - The team of partner countries will be able to take a view on whether generic lessons have relevance and application ‘at home’;
  - The shared knowledge will highlight common lessons for what works well (leading to success) and what works less well (leading to failure or presenting a continuing challenge), and these lessons which will have international relevance.

## **3 Options -based approach**

An options-based approach is proposed that a country can tailor to suite its own needs and circumstances. For example, the purpose and utility of a review exercise might well be different in a country which is developing its first ever strategy compared to one in the process of revising its third or fourth strategy. And a country might wish to structure the methodology according to where it is in the strategy development and implementation cycle (eg at the early analysis and design stage, several years into implementation of a strategy geared for a set period, or at a monitoring and review stage). The selected options might also depend on funding and time available.

## **4 Key steps**

The approach envisages four key steps, after identification of the partner countries:

*Step 1: Decision to undertake a peer review process*

- Define the benefits of the process (particularly to convince politicians);
- Define the objectives, the needs and expectations of the focus country;
- Define the means (available/required finance, expertise and time);

*Step 2: Defining and applying the methodology*

- Preparatory phase
  - Produce draft background papers (government and body/mechanism to gather views of civil society) (see section 5.1 (a) below);
  - Initial meeting with invited partner countries – to agree scope, options and participants;
  - Further information gathering;
  - Completion of final consolidated background report.
- Review workshop – involving participants from:
  - (a) 2-4 invited partner countries (a mix of developed and developing countries). From each country: one participant from government, one from outside government
  - (b) the focus country (key strategy actors from government and civil society and other stakeholders).

*Step 3: Preparing a report on the outcomes and recommendations*

*Step 4: Deciding how to use the outcome report, e.g.*

- To benefit and improve the NSDS of the focus country;
- To influence change – in the focus country, in partner countries, and internationally.

## **5 Core elements of the framework methodology**

The proposed framework methodology should involve two key stages:

- A *preparatory phase* to prepare a background report describing the administrative structures and decision-making in the country and the actual process of developing the NSDS and harnessing views on key issues and challenges;
- A *review workshop*: involving participants from other countries, as well as the key people involved in developing and implementing the strategy being reviewed and representatives of stakeholders.

### **5.1 Preparatory Phase**

#### **a) Preparation of initial background papers**

Besides the NSDS document itself and other related materials, a concise background report (20-30 pages) will be essential to enable the partner countries to understand the strategy process followed (such information is seldom evident in any detail in strategy documents), its status and a range of views. This report should include a description of the administrative structure and mechanisms of governance and decision-making in the country. It is important to recognize that the architecture and operation of governance systems at different levels differ between countries, as well as the meaning of terms such as national, provincial and district, and that the processes of governance are changing (Appendix 3).

The report should be structured to cover four key aspects of the strategy: process, content, outcomes and monitoring, and should also discuss key successes and challenges. These five themes are suggested to provide the structure for the review workshop (see section 5.2).

The first step to develop such a background report will be for the government to take initial responsibility to compile a draft (report A), assembling and summarising all relevant information and gathering together key documents (published and unpublished).

The government should then invite a recognised forum representing civil society (e.g. a National Council or Commission for Sustainable Development or its equivalent) to submit its own separate views on the strategy process (report B). Where no such formalised forum exists, or where it is not effective, then some other mechanism should be found to gather the views of civil society. This submission should be structured to cover the same five themes structure for consistency and to enable easy comparison by the partner countries and other participants.

In general, a dual report (report C = a synthesis of reports A + B) should then be completed and considered jointly by the partner countries and the focus country. Based on their agreement, this should then be developed further to incorporate any additional information agreed to be required jointly by the partner (peer) countries and the focus country (see sub-section (c) below) – leading to the production of a final consolidated background report (report D).

#### b) Initial meeting with partner countries

An initial meeting should be arranged for the key participants in the peer review/shared learning process (partner countries, government of the focus country and other national stakeholders). It has been suggested that such a meeting could be organised during a CSD, in order to limit the costs. The aim of this meeting would be to:

- discuss and agree the expectation of the focus country, the scope of the peer review process (within the available budget), and the approach to be followed, e.g. the options selected by the focus country (for gathering information, recording conclusions, etc);
- consider the first dual background report (report C) and agree the level of further information needed and how this will be gathered (see sub-section (c) below); and
- agree the participants to be involved in the review workshop and the main questions to be addressed and discussed.

#### c) Further information gathering

A number of options are available for gathering further required information (all subject to available budget):

- The government could engage an acceptable ‘neutral’ consultant or small team (with experience of NSDS) to gather further information, cross-reference information, fill in gaps, and harness different perspectives. This could involve reviewing documents relevant to the strategy, gathering information from key actors through a detailed questionnaire and structured interviews with those actors. The consultant would then produce a report for the participants attending the review workshop.

- The National Council/Commission for Sustainable Development (where existing and effectively functional) could be requested to gather and submit further information.
- Some of the partner country participants could be invited, in a twinning process, to undertake interviews with key strategy actors and present their findings to the review workshop.

Appendix 1 provides a broad list of suggested issues to guide and frame the process of gathering information. These are important issues in strategy development and implementation and arise from international experience of NSDS and related strategic planning approaches. This list could be sent to key actors after simplification and adaptation to the focus country, to sensitise them in preparation for subsequent interviews, or, alternatively, as a questionnaire to solicit information. The questions might be particularly helpful as a framework to guide those that might undertake a more thorough longer information-gathering process as a “research” activity.

They are drawn from the Resource Book on National Sustainable Development Strategies prepared by IIED for the OECD/UNDP<sup>2</sup> (2002). Experience suggests that not all actors will have been involved to the same extent or in all aspects of the strategy, and therefore may only be able to answer parts of the questionnaire and to differing depths of knowledge.

Appendix 2 provides a set of more open questions that can be more appropriate as a framework for structured interviews with key actors. These incorporate questions drawn from already internationally agreed key characteristics and elements of NSDSs, as set out in UN Guidance in Preparing a National Sustainable Development Strategy (UN DESA 2002)<sup>3</sup>. These, in turn, were built on a set of NSDS principles of good practice developed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC 2001).

Specific questions pertinent to the country being reviewed could be added.

The list of questions should be provided in advance to those interviewed so that they can prepare.

#### d) Final consolidated background report

Thus, the final consolidated background report (report D), incorporating the initial dual paper (report C) (see sub-section (a)) and supplementary information would describe various aspects of the NSDS:

- the *administrative, governance and decision-making structures/systems* in the country (supported by a diagram);
- the *processes* followed to prepare, develop and implement the strategy;
- the *content* of the strategy - structure, main themes, etc. (this should also include a discussion of the international context, ie the commitments of the focus country under multi-lateral agreements, regional undertakings, etc, and how far it has progressed against these);

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Program

<sup>3</sup> UN guidance on preparing a national sustainable development strategy features a range of recommended elements of an NSDS. These were finalised by a UN-organised international forum on NSDSs held in Ghana in November 2002 and presented formally in January 2002 to PrepCom2 for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The strategy elements are based mainly on the OECD DAC principles, drawing also from the experience of UNDP’s Capacity 21 programme, the Earth Council’s work with National Councils for Sustainable Development and discussions at the forum:

- the *outcomes* – what has happened as a result of the strategy and the policies/actions it contains; the quality of resulting plans, policies, regulations, incentives, etc. (it is recognized that this information will depend to a large extent on the stage reached in the strategy cycle)
- *monitoring* - steps taken to track the strategy process and impacts (indicators established/used), etc.;
- main *successes and challenges*;
- the *views of the main actors* (government, private sector, NGOs, etc) on these aspects.

## 5.2 *Review workshop*

### a) Participants

This workshop is proposed as the main event over a 4-5 day period. It would involve participants from:

- invited *partner countries* (suggested between 2 and 4 countries, depending on funding available; and a mix of developed and developing countries).

Each partner country should provide two participants (one from government – someone with good knowledge of his/her country's NSDS; and one non-government person to provide an alternative perspective);

- the *focus country* – a mix of key NSDS actors from government and non-governmental bodies, and other stakeholders from civil society and the private sector. These should include actors who were/are involved in managing or coordinating strategy development, inputting to the strategy or in its implementation and monitoring. Plus other representatives who can provide a balancing perspective on awareness, impacts and outcomes of the strategy.

### b) Structure of workshop

A major aim of the workshop would be to provide for exchange of experience and lessons on the important dimensions of good practice in developing and implementing NSDSs, noting what worked well and what worked less well. To meet this aim, the workshop would be organised to address several key elements/themes in different sessions:

- The process,
- Strategy content
- Outcomes,
- Monitoring (including indicators).

There would be a fifth special session on key successes and challenges.

It is recognised that partner countries will not be able to, and should not aim to, assess each action planned in the strategy, nor judge if the selected priorities are the correct ones. But they can address some questions about the approach and structure of the NSDS content, such as: Does the strategy establish priorities? Is the content well balanced across the 3 pillars of SD? Is the cultural dimension addressed and how?

Facilitated discussions and debate on these elements would be structured according to a limited number of key questions (say three per session to provide sufficient time for in-depth debate).

These questions should be specifically designed to examine points in the background report in more detail and to reveal further information and aspects of the strategy. The session questions should be suggested by the partner countries following their analysis of the background paper and further information provided (including responses to questionnaires and interviews) in agreement with the focus country. If it proves problematic to secure agreement on what the key session questions will be, then the government of the focus country could set three questions and the partner countries three questions. The questions could repeat some of those in the interview questions (Appendix 2) so as to explore the particular issue further or, preferably, pose new or more specific and challenging questions.

Each session will need to be carefully structured so that the debate is efficient, effective and inclusive – perhaps by allocating specific time slots for particular participant groups. Based on experience during the French pilot peer review, it is suggested that, if possible, short written statements be prepared to the key session questions to improve efficiency. The peers could then pick up on these to examine aspects in more detail through supplementary questions and debate. Improving efficiency will help to reduce repetition of information in the background report and enable more ‘space’ for sharing experiences and lessons between participating countries. It will be important for the session Chairs to meet and agree how the sessions will run. Chairs will need to maintain tight management of sessions so as to ensure relatively concise responses from participants to the supplementary questions raised by the peers and also to ensure that peers themselves are invited to table their own country experiences on particular issues and challenges.

#### *Suggested generic format for review workshop*

*Days 1-3:* Main discussion sessions on four themes (process, content, outcomes, monitoring):

Each session to involve:

- Working through key questions, with facilitated debate (according to system selected by the focus country);
- Sharing experiences between peers;
- Conclusions, discussion of lessons learned, priority generic highlights for outcome report (from any of participating countries);
- Agree recommendations for focus country;

Special session on key successes and challenges.

*Day 4:* Prepare draft report on conclusions and synthesised recommendations by partner countries (only);

Brief meeting of partner countries and focus country to discuss results in the afternoon;

Final meeting of partner countries (only) to conclude

*Day 5 (am)* Present, discuss and adopt synthesised recommendations.

Evaluation of each participant on how well the peer review process worked.

#### Note:

A workshop secretariat will be needed to service the workshop and manage logistical matters.

The focus country would be the formal host of the event. It is suggested that one of the peer partners or another independent participant (ie not from the focus country) should act as the



permanent Chair with responsibility for managing and steering the workshop. Alternating pairs of partner country participants would act as chair and secretary (recording key conclusions and recommendations), respectively, for each of the working sessions where the four key elements are discussed. The session chairs and secretaries could be helped by a consultant or a neutral facilitator.

Dedicated time should be allowed for the partners (peers) to meet at the end of each day (say 2 hours) for discussion and for session chairmen and secretaries to prepare daily synthesis reports on their findings/conclusions (computer facilities will need to be provided).

The conclusions and agreed recommendations would be completed and agreed by the end of the workshop. The writing of a full final report would follow.

### c) Tools to help debate and record conclusions of the discussions.

The focus country will select the mode of recording conclusions that best suits its needs – a menu of options is suggested below. This would be discussed during the initial meeting with partner countries (see section 5.1(b) above). A key ingredient of the workshop will be to reach consensus on recommendations.

#### *Options*

The review workshop would not be a straight technical assessment against the set criteria of the UN strategy elements. Rather it will involve constant sharing of experience amongst the participating countries on the set of questions posed under each theme, and discussion/debate to help the focus country come to conclusions (for itself) about the adequacy and performance of its NSDS. But how can the conclusions be handled or recorded?

It is assumed that different countries will undertake a peer review process to meet different needs which will influence the way in which they will prefer to orient the peer review process. Some will probably prefer a light, non-judgmental approach – based more on learning through sharing experience with peer countries. Others might have a preference for a stronger approach – so as to be challenged by judgements on performance. Others will need something in-between. Options to aid discussion and debate include, for example:

- Traffic lights system (see section 5.3);
- Placement on spectrums of change – to map state of play (see section 5.4);

But the key outcomes should be agreed recommendations and a record of discussion as text.

### **5.3 Traffic lights**

Some countries might find the ‘traffic lights’ approach useful to focus views. This provides a ‘snapshot’ of the situation at a point in time. To be useful, it needs to be repeated periodically to allow improvements to be accounted for, and so, it might be more adapted to specific SD indicators than to a strategy peer review.

Some countries might find this a helpful tool, particularly with respect to indicators. In the UK, for example, traffic lights are used in an SD context to show how Headline Indicators are changing. They show only the direction of travel, not necessarily whether progress is fast enough. But it needs to be borne in mind that there are time lags between action and movement of an indicator, so traffic light judgements are not necessarily a good gauge of a strategy’s effectiveness.

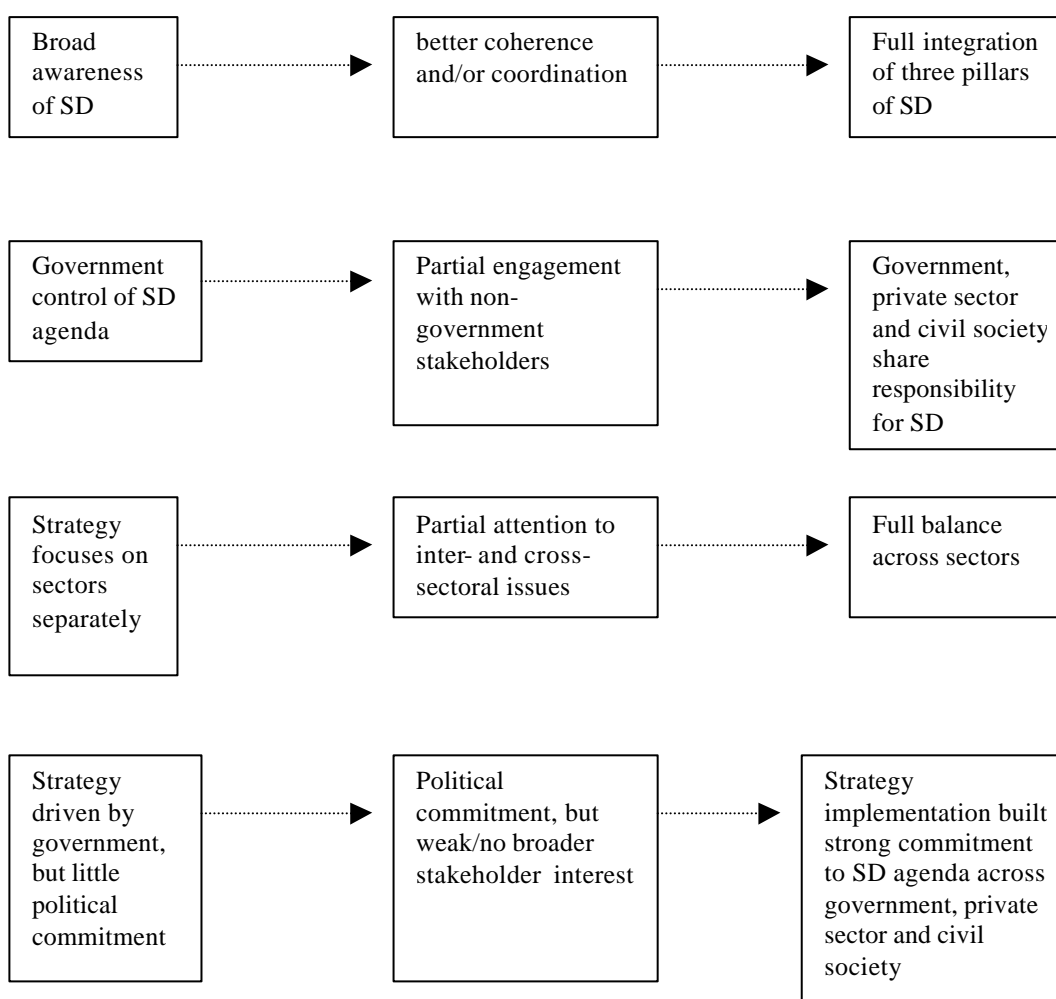
In the UK, traffic lights are also used to assess the progress on major Government targets, and the likelihood of successful delivery of major projects and programmes. In this context, the traffic light assessment is used not to make a judgement about the value of the project or target, but simply to assess whether it is likely to be successful. The emphasis is on improvement and avoidance of failed projects, and it focuses on aspects such as the quality of planning, capacity and resources, skills, governance, monitoring, etc.

The traffic lights used in the UK are:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Red</i>         | <i>highly problematic</i> - urgent and decisive action is needed if the programme is to deliver; |
| <i>Amber/red</i>   | <i>problematic</i> - substantial attention with some aspects needing urgent action to deliver;   |
| <i>Amber/green</i> | <i>mixed</i> - aspects will require substantial attention, and some aspects are good;            |
| <i>Green</i>       | <i>good</i> - the programme requires refinement and systematic implementation to deliver.        |

#### **5.4 Spectrums of change**

To 'map' the state of play relating to particular issues or questions, one approach would be to seek consensus on its position on a number of key spectrums of change towards sustainable development. The following examples are in simple outline only to illustrate the idea. More examples could be developed for a range of issues/themes. The number of steps in different spectrum would vary, but most would be likely to be more than the three simple steps shown in the examples.



## References

OECD DAC (2001a) *The DAC Guidelines: Strategies for Sustainable Development: Guidance for Development Cooperation*, Development Cooperation Committee, OECD, Paris, available on <http://www.nssd.net/pdf/gsuse.pdf>

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IISD (2004): *National Strategies for Sustainable development – Challenges, Approaches and innovations in Strategic and Coordinated Action*, [http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2004/measure\\_nat\\_strategies\\_sd.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2004/measure_nat_strategies_sd.pdf)

## Appendix 1: Preliminary questionnaire used prior to structured interviews

*(Version used in case of French NSDS)*

NB: These questions focus on enabling conditions; quality of resulting plans, policies, regulations and incentives, and strategy process management. As such, they can also be useful in monitoring strategy implementation.

| TOPIC   | ISSUES TO BE EXPLORED   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Political and institutional enabling conditions</b></p> | <p><b>A. <u>Preparation and development of the strategy</u></b></p> <p><b>1. Priorities of governments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have been the priorities of present and past governments?</li> <li>• What key policies, strategies and initiatives have been put in place?</li> <li>• What are the historical, political and administrative contexts in which previous attempts at integrated strategies have originated and been developed and implemented?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Political commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there political commitment to the objectives, processes, plans of all strategic initiatives concerned with sustainable development? In what political fora?</li> <li>• Was there political commitment in budget terms?</li> <li>• Was the political commitment partisan or broad-church?</li> <li>• What were the sticking points?</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Responsibilities and resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it clear where responsibilities lie for building on existing strategies and their activities, for formulating new strategies where relevant, for implementing them, and for monitoring them?</li> <li>• Do the institutions concerned have sufficient rights, resources and effective relationships to undertake this? [The 4Rs].</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Co-ordination between institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there effective co-ordination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Between these institutions?</li> <li>○ Between strategic initiatives e.g. NCS, social action plans, etc.?</li> <li>○ Between these institutions and those central to planning and investment?</li> <li>○ Between institutions and donors?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>5. Links with other territorial levels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do regional (e.g. European), national and local strategies relate to each other and how do existing strategies link into the planning and decision-making systems?</li> <li>• What cross-boundary, regional and global issues have been considered? (e.g. conflict, free trade areas, legal agreements, cross-border groups, development aid and debt).</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Other context issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What key factors assisted the development of the strategy (e.g. a past strategy, public pressure, government commitment) and what were the key issues to resolve (e.g. land tenure, resource depletion, poverty)?</li> <li>• From what perspective has the process been driven (environmental, economic, interdisciplinary)?</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p><b>B. <u>Implementation of the strategy</u></b></p> <p>Same as questions 1 to 5</p>   |
| <p><b>Quality of analysis and diagnosis on each of the three dimensions of sustainable development</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the time of developing the strategy, was there adequate understanding of the state of resources, trends in their quality and quantity, and the pressures upon them?</li> <li>• Was there adequate analysis of the state of the main sectors and livelihood systems, their interactions with resources (as above), and consequent winners and losers? Was there adequate analysis of sustainability of production and consumption patterns?</li> <li>• Has full use been made of existing studies on poverty and environment, and the opportunity taken to strengthen the body of knowledge in concerned areas?</li> <li>• At what point have the three dimensions (environmental, social and economic) of sustainable development been approached in a global and comprehensive way?</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Quality of participation</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there continuing identification and participation of concerned stakeholders - including government, civil society and market players at different levels, and representatives of global environmental interests - in strategy preparation, planning, implementation, monitoring and review? Do the fora and mechanisms suit the stakeholders? Does representation meet acceptable criteria of identity-with-group and accountability-to-group?</li> <li>• Have pro-active mechanisms been used to engage marginalised stakeholders in the above processes?</li> <li>• What role did public awareness campaigns have in encouraging stakeholder involvement in the process and how has the process strengthened people's participation in, and influence over, the decision making process?</li> <li>• How were difficulties and problems addressed and consensus reached?</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Quality of policies and plans</b></p>  | <p><b>1. Strategy of integration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have clear policies, plans, principles, standards and/or targets been derived from the strategy, in forms which can best elicit positive responses from those various institutions (government, market and civil society) which are supposed to implement the strategy?</li> <li>• Have the directions of the strategy been picked up in other strategic or planning documents? In economic development policies?</li> <li>• Have the axis, aims, plans and indicators of international issues of NSDS been fixed by mutual agreement with partner countries?</li> <li>• Have opportunities for win-win activities supporting poverty alleviation, economic growth and environmental conservation been well defined with those institutions best placed to act on them? For example, have conservation and poverty alleviation strategies been brought together?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Procedural aspects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there systems for defining priorities in environmental, economic and social terms, so as to keep the number of strategy objectives (at any one time) manageable? And are these systems compatible with those for analysis and participation?</li> <li>• Are there systems for addressing the hard trade-offs - identifying them, debating them, planning action or compensating for the costs of inaction?</li> <li>• Has there been early and tactical implementation of promising initiatives which will both help build support for the strategy process and test its principles and ideas?</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Effectiveness of regulations and incentives</b></p>           | <p><b>1. Tools implemented in the strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any possible distinction in the strategy between regulatory tools (legislation) and market mechanisms (taxation, greenhouse gas emission exchange)?</li> <li>• What are the aims fixed to these tools (internalization of the external costs, deterrent effect, creation of financial resources for corrective actions)?</li> <li>• Do fiscal and regulatory frameworks internalise social and environmental costs in order to correct for market failure, and open doors to best-practice investment?</li> <li>• Were the voluntary tools (certification procedure and labelling system encouraging sustainable development) sufficiently promoted?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Assessment of implemented tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are these frameworks efficiently monitored and enforced, by government or private bodies as appropriate?</li> <li>• Have measures been included to ensure compliance with international environmental and human rights agreements?</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Sensitisation and education on sustainable development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are measures taken to increase public awareness of sustainable development and thus encourage the development of consumer- or civil society-driven incentives?</li> <li>• Are measures planned to widen the general public's education on sustainable development? By which methods?</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>NSDS process management and effectiveness of capacity</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What tools/methodologies were useful in enhancing understanding (e.g. poverty assessments, SEA)? How is progress being monitored?</li> <li>• Is capacity being efficiently and equitably utilised, and improved, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop strategies with strong local ownership?</li> <li>○ Co-ordinate existing sectoral or issues-based strategies to improve their coherence and efficiency in achieving SD?</li> <li>○ Encourage institutions to make their responses to relevant strategies?</li> <li>○ Implement strategy-related activities, in a way that is consistent with the broader strategy goals?</li> <li>○ Monitor the impact of strategic mechanisms and activities?</li> <li>○ Maintain the 'big picture' of strategy evolution?</li> <li>○ Review and continuous improvement of the strategy?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What areas do stakeholder believe are being influenced - positively or negatively - by the strategy, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ecological and climatic processes conserved?</li> <li>○ Biodiversity conserved?</li> <li>○ Resource quantity/productivity maintained?</li> <li>○ Economic efficiency improved?</li> <li>○ Poverty and inequity reduced?</li> <li>○ Pollution prevented?</li> <li>○ Human health improved?</li> <li>○ Culture conserved?</li> <li>○ Production and consumption patterns modified?</li> <li>○ Thinking patterns and governance improved?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>...</p>  |
| <p><b>Relations with international partners</b></p>                 | <p><b>(a) <u>developing countries:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has been the role of donors in these mechanisms and was their role useful?</li> <li>Is there effective co-ordination between government and donors?</li> </ul> <p><b>(b) <u>developed countries:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the strategy take sustainable development into account at</li> </ul>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>international level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kind of measures are included in the strategy to support sustainable development on an international scale (partnership, financial support, backstopping...)?</li><li>• What is the relationship between different stakeholders and actions defined in the strategies at european, national and local levels?</li><li>• What is the desired impact of the strategy on international policy (ODA, positions in international fora, national policies with international impact...)? What system (indicators...) is planned to check if international concerns of the strategy are taken into account?</li></ul> |
|--|---|

Source: Modified from OECD/UNDP (2002)

## Appendix 2

### Interview Questions used for Review of French Strategy for Sustainable Development

**Notes:**

- a) *These issues listed below aim to provide a framework for discussion, and not a rigid questionnaire.*
- b) *Some interviewees will have been involved in only one or a few parts of the strategy process. Others may have been involved in more. So only selected would be asked to particular individuals.*
- c) *The questions are categorised in the four main themes of the background report and review workshop: process, content, outcomes, and monitoring.*

#### **Box 1: Process questions**

##### **A. Initiation**

1. In what capacity were you involved in the development or implementation of the strategy?
2. What previous strategy (or near equivalent) processes (a) had been undertaken, and (b) how did the current strategy build on or link/related to these?
3. What was the prime motivation/stimulus for it? (e.g. UNCED, Agenda 21, upcoming WSSD, WSSD target on NSDS, response to public pressure, etc.)
4. Was there a set (or even hidden) purpose or aim of the strategy?
5. Was an official mandate for the strategy set?
6. Was thought given to developing an iterative strategy (a rolling process with revision, building on feedback and results)?
7. Were there barriers / constraints to this type of approach?

##### **B. General**

8. When was the strategy initiated and by which institution(s)?
9. Who determined the strategy process and its duration? And were there any guidelines or restrictions, which fixed the approach taken to develop the strategy?
10. Were alternative approaches considered and, if so, which ones were excluded and why? If so, what effect did this have on the strategy?
11. Who was responsible for the strategy development process, e.g. which agency, institution(s)/individual(s), independent secretariat?
12. What structures and strategy management systems were established, e.g. committees, working groups, communication/information mechanisms?
13. What roles were played by different agencies?
14. Were there any terms of reference? What were these and who set them?
15. How long did the process take? (start – finish)



### **C. Ownership and commitment**

- 16. Was there strong political and stakeholder commitment?
- 17. Was there sound leadership of the strategy process and good governance;

### **D. Vision**

- 18. Was the strategy based on a shared strategic and pragmatic vision?

### **E. Strategy management**

- 19. Did a strong institution or group of institutions spearhead the process?
- 20. Was there continuity of the strategy process (or was it interrupted/delayed)?

### **F. Participation**

- 21. Who was involved and how (nationally, more locally, governments, NGOs, private sector, civil society, etc)? Did this amount to broad and inclusive participation?
- 22. To what extent was the process:
  - (a) consultative (e.g. who was asked to comment on draft documents or proposals – both organisations and individuals)?
  - (b) genuinely participative (e.g. organisations and individuals able to be directly involved in determine/influence the process itself and make inputs to the development/implementation of the strategy)?
- 23. Was the process transparent and was there accountability?
- 24. Was there trust between stakeholders and mutual respect?
- 25. Did the strategy develop or build on partnerships amongst government, civil society, private sector and external institutions?
- 26. How can the strategy better reflect the priorities / views of key stakeholder groups? (civil society organisations / developing countries, etc.)?

### **G. Information and communication**

- 27. Were there effective institutionalised channels for communication?
- 28. Was there access to information for all stakeholders and effective networking?
- 29. How was the process and the product (ie the strategy document) received by different stakeholders (e.g. national government. Local authorities, NGOs, private sector, media)?

### **H. What were the key factors, issues and problems?**

- 30. Were there any factors that particularly assisted the development of the strategy (e.g. a past strategy as a point of departure, existing public pressure and willingness to cooperate, genuine government commitment to pursue a route towards sustainable development)?
- 31. What were the key problems faced during the development of the strategy?
- 32. Were there any key issues that the strategy had to resolve (e.g. environmental degradation, land ownership, poverty) which determined the approach/process?

### **I. How were problems and conflicts solved?**

- 33. Were there any difficulties in defining or resolving different opinions about particular issues?

- How were such difficulties resolved?
- How were choices made and trade-offs negotiated, and what were the outcomes?
- What process was used to resolve conflicts/disputes: arbitrators, drafting sessions, round tables leading to compromise texts?

34. To what extent is there consensus about the process and content of the strategy (a) within the national government, (b) at regional and local levels, (c) amongst broader stakeholders?

#### **J. Capacity**

35. Did the strategy build capacity and build on existing knowledge and expertise?

#### **K. Successes and improving**

35. What were the good/successful aspects of the process, and what were the constraints?

35. What opportunities exist for improving it in the future?

### **Box 2: Content questions**

#### **L. Focus and integration**

36. What was the main focus of the strategy (e.g. conservation, physical planning, environmental action planning, more holistic and integrated planning for sustainable development, trade concerns)?

37. Were any major issues/areas not covered? Which ones and why?

36. Did the strategy integrate economic, social and environmental objectives? How?

37. Did it provide balance across (i) sectors, (ii) territories and (iii) generations?

- Linking local, national, regional and global priorities and actions?
- Linking the short-term to the medium- and long-term?
- Linking the national, regional and global levels?
- Linking different sectors?
- Providing coherence between budgets and strategy priorities?

#### **M. Linkages and coherence**

38. How did the SD strategy process link and relate to existing regional, national and local strategies and planning processes (e.g. environmental strategies/action plans, biodiversity strategies, strategies for particular resources or sectors, local Agenda 21 activities) and decision-making systems?

39. How does the strategy relate to the requirement of the Rio conventions to produce action plans, and does it address the requirements and obligations of those conventions (climate, biodiversity, desertification)?

40. Was there coherence between budget, capacity and strategy priorities?

41. Were realistic, flexible targets set?

42. Was the strategy linked to private sector investment?

43. Was it anchored in sound technical and economic analysis?

#### **N. Priorities and driving perspective**

45. What were the priority issues?

46. Was the strategy process and decision-making on recommended actions driven by a particular perspective (e.g. environmental) or a central discipline (e.g. economics), or was there an inter-disciplinary and crosscutting approach?

47. Does the strategy address external impact issue such as:

- (a) Ecological footprint on other regions or groups of countries?
- (b) 'Environmental space' (i.e. available per capita global carrying capacity for particular resources)?

### **Box 3: Output/outcome -related questions**

#### **O. Implementation**

48. Did the strategy focus on outcomes and the means of implementation?

49. What parts of the strategy are being implemented – and how?

50. What parts are not being implemented – and why?

#### **P. Parliamentary, public and media**

51. Has the strategy led to parliamentary and wider debate – at national and local levels?

52. Was there, or will there be, a parliamentary process concerning the strategy, e.g. a parliamentary committee or debate on the strategy and the issues it raises?

53. To what extent has the strategy facilitated a 'greening' of the political, business and consumer mainstreams, and of values, lifestyles and choices that underlie and shape them?

54. Did the strategy receive any regional/national press coverage? Was it extensive? Are copies available?

#### **Q. Innovation and change**

55. In what ways did the strategy lead to innovation and a step-change in delivering sustainable development? And what value did the strategy add to these outcomes, for example,

- Did it lead to new ways of government departments working together?. How has institutional behaviour changed?
- Did it result new ways of doing business?
- Did it lead to better communication pathways?
- How has it improved awareness of sustainable development issues?
- Have priorities been set, or is there merely continuing expansion into new areas and horizons?
- Is there clarity (within government and across society) on the goals of the strategy? Did it change anything, and did the assumptions and objectives of the strategy change?
- Did behaviours change, and whose?
- Is it making a difference at the level of local authorities?
- Is it making a difference in individual sectors?
- What is or has been the role of the private sector in delivering/implementing the strategy?
- Is the private sector investing in sustainable development activities?

55. What were the outcomes of any trade-off negotiations?

#### **Box 4: Monitoring and indicator questions**

##### **R. Reporting and monitoring**

56. What reporting and monitoring was envisaged as part of the strategy process?
57. Were precise targets and measures envisaged during the strategy development?
58. What opportunities exist for developing a system for monitoring and reporting on progress in implementation of the strategy?

##### **S. Mechanisms**

59. What mechanisms/systems have been established to track and monitor:

*(a) strategy development processes?* (these could be based on the key elements suggested by the questions in Box 1) and

*(b) strategy implementation – overall, and individual commitments/activities (eg impact assessments)?*

- What indicators have been included in the strategy to measure progress in respect of (a) and (b)?
- How effective were these? Are they meaningful, adequate, efficient?
- Is their available/adequate data to support the selected indicators?
- What improvements could be introduced?

##### **T. Reporting on progress**

60. How is progress being reported; and to who?
61. Did the strategy establish the means to assess priority issues?
62. Were integrated mechanisms for assessment, follow up, evaluation and feedback established?

**Q. What lessons do you draw from the experience of developing the strategy?**

### Appendix 3: Governance structures in flux

(Source: OECD/UNDP, 2002).

#### Trends in governance

The term governance refers to the process or method by which society is governed, or the “condition of ordered rule. It reflects the structures and processes of regionalization and decentralization which have tended to build on previously informal interactions between government and other actors.

In this regard, the position of sub-national governments is changing. For example, elected local authorities find themselves ‘sharing the turf’ with a whole range of bodies also exercising governmental powers at the local level. Local governance, barely discernible a decade ago, has become a reality. It is now the active inclusion of a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector actors in carrying out policy on the ground.

For many sub-national governments, the innovative nature of many of their partnerships and mobilization efforts is a direct response to the attempts to control the policy process by the national government. The challenge has been described as “*achieving collective action in the realm of public affairs, in conditions where it is not possible to rest on recourse to the authority of the state*”.

Thus, paying too much attention to formal governmental structures ignores the policy capacity that now exists for a range of actors – governmental and non-governmental – in developing sustainable development strategies.

**Typology:** Countries can be classified relatively simply according to the nature of their national and regional governance (Table A3.1).

**Table A3.1: Classification of national and regional government authorities**

| Nation-state form        | Regional level characteristics  | Examples   |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Federal                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide ranging powers;</li> <li>• Elected parliament;</li> <li>• Budgetary powers;</li> <li>• Legislative rights;</li> <li>• Right to levy taxes.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany: Länder</li> <li>• Canada: Provinces</li> <li>• Belgium: Provinces</li> </ul>       |
| Regionalized states      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced powers (political regionalization);</li> <li>• Elected parliament;</li> <li>• Limited budgetary powers;</li> <li>• Limited right to levy taxes.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spain: Autonomous communities</li> <li>• India: States</li> <li>• Italy: Regions</li> </ul> |
| Devolving unitary states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited powers (regional decentralization);</li> <li>• Elected parliament;</li> <li>• Limited budgetary powers</li> <li>• Substantial financial transfers from central government;</li> <li>• Limited right to levy taxes.</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mexico: States</li> <li>• France: Regions</li> <li>• Netherlands: Provinces</li> </ul>      |
| Classic unitary states   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No powers (regionalizing without creating a Regional level);</li> <li>• No elected parliament;</li> <li>• No budgetary powers;</li> <li>• All financial resources transferred from central government;</li> <li>• No right to levy taxes.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK: Local authorities</li> <li>• Sweden: Counties</li> </ul>                                |

Authorities at a more local level exhibit a much wider degree of variety than at the regional level, and the meaning of terms differs. For example, the French *commune* is a self-administering community of local inhabitants rather than an organization controlled by elected representatives, and is thus similar to the

German *Gemeinde*. Examples of basic and intermediate-level local authorities are shown in Table A3.2. However, the powers and status of each of these levels can only be understood within their specific contexts.

**Table A3.2: Sub-national/local government authorities**

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Basic level</b>   | <b>Intermediate level</b>   | <b>State or region</b>               |
|----------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Australia      | Local Councils   |   | States                               |
| Brazil         | Municipalities   |   | State                                |
| Canada         | Towns/Cities   | Metropolitan and Regional Municipalities, Counties and Regional Districts | Provinces                            |
| France         | Communes   | Departements  | Regions                              |
| Germany        | Gemeinden  | Kreise/Kreisfreie Städte  | Länder                               |
| India          | Panchayats   |   | States                               |
| Spain          | Municipios   | Provincias  | Comunidad Autonomas                  |
| Switzerland    | Communes   |   | Cantons                              |
| UK             | Non-Metropolitan Districts/Unitary Authorities/Metropolitan Councils | Non-Metropolitan Counties/Greater London Authority                        | Devolved States (Wales and Scotland) |
| USA            | Municipalities/Towns   | Counties/City Councils  | States                               |