



Bridging Knowledge and Capacity Gaps for Sustainability Transition: A Framework for Action

1. We, representatives and experts of countries, the United Nations system, advocacy networks, civil society, and academic and policy institutions, participated in the “*Expert Consultation on Knowledge and Capacity Needs for Sustainable Development in Post Rio+20 Era*” organized by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) together with its partners in Incheon, Republic of Korea from March 6 to 8, 2013 (see participant list in Annex 1).
2. We took stock of existing knowledge and capacity building models, platforms and initiatives contributing towards sustainability transition; examined how Member States and other stakeholders could make best use of available resources and platforms to meet their knowledge and capacity needs; assessed success stories, trends, needs, and gaps in knowledge and capacity for advancing sustainable development in a post-Rio+20 context; and examined ways to facilitate communication and collaboration between knowledge providers and users.
3. We considered the impressive quantity and quality of knowledge already developed, shared, and applied to policy innovation and implementation, and how such knowledge is evaluated for further improvement in a continuous cycle of development, exchange and use. A number of new knowledge sharing initiatives have emerged in the post-Rio+20 context.
4. We noted with concern the persistent gaps in certain areas of knowledge development, exchange and application, particularly with respect to: the transformation of knowledge management from treating knowledge as a stock to managing knowledge flows; use of knowledge in sustainability governance; integrated planning methods; sustainability measurement, monitoring and evaluation; and the lack of knowledge development, exchange and use specific to sustainability transition policy processes, notably on stakeholder engagement strategies and options for mobilising them towards accelerated transitions towards more sustainable lifestyles and carbon footprints.
5. We recognized the urgent need for transitioning towards sustainability, especially in the post Rio+20 era, because our path to progress is threatened with growing obstacles, including exceeding several planetary boundaries – most prominent among them being climate change. We are of the view that transition towards sustainability requires efforts on several fronts, but knowledge sharing and capacity building should be the fundamental platform for these efforts.
6. Accordingly, during this meeting, we discussed how to build further on existing knowledge and contributed to defining future needs with regard to the mapping of sustainability research and capacity building organisations; preparation for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; and facilitation of greater exchange through tailored dissemination, training, mentoring, peer assistance, and other forms of capacity building.
7. Against this background and the mandate that Member States have explicitly given the UN System in paragraph 66 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document, *The Future we Want*,

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which calls for identifying and matching knowledge sources and providers to the various needs of Member States, we propose the following “*Framework for Action*”. We consider this *Framework for Action* to be an essential step towards consolidating, aligning and strengthening global efforts to advance knowledge and capacity building for sustainable development.

8. This *Framework for Action* identifies a number of “Priority Action Areas” based on our assessment of needs relative to knowledge sharing and capacity building for sustainable development. We believe that these Priority Action Areas are of the utmost importance if the pace of transition towards sustainability is to be accelerated. These actions are:

Priority Action Areas

- a. Ensure inclusion of sustainable development knowledge and capacity building in formal planning processes, such as National Sustainable Development Strategies, for effective planning and implementation at the national, regional, and local levels.
- b. Spread the understanding that knowledge and capacity building for sustainable development needs to be fully integrated from national to local levels, and broadly across all relevant sectors of society
- c. Focus capacity building efforts not on individuals, but on the long-term development of organizations and institutions, to ensure continuity and long-lasting impact
- d. Create an enabling environment for knowledge sharing and capacity building by: (i) integrating sustainability principles into legislative frameworks and actions, (ii) revitalizing national sustainable development councils and roundtables, and (iii) facilitating peer learning, whether between countries at similar levels of development, cities, rural communities, or individual farmers
- e. Maintain a continuously updated map of initiatives and programs, and facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and partnership among them
- f. Catalogue the most successful working models, and spread them, acknowledging that all such models need to be tailored and adapted to national and local conditions, including the areas where peace building and conflict resolution efforts are underway
- g. Develop a concrete and practical language to communicate about knowledge sharing and capacity building across different cultures, disciplines, and institutions
- h. Emphasize an integrated approach to addressing the core sustainability challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, water management, food security, and sustainable energy in anticipation of the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Implementation of these recommendations should be pursued by practitioners and organizations at all levels, including regional and sub-regional levels, through their own modeling of these practices as well as in the development of partnerships among them, to accelerate the spread of these principles to others. Moreover, implementation of these recommendations should be backed by strengthened international resolve and cooperation.



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10. The UNOSD, together with other interested partners, can serve as a point of meeting and collaboration to support the mapping of initiatives and to help spread these principles further, as well as by providing access to a wide variety of knowledge and capacity building tools and services that will advance the implementation of these principles globally.

11. The above *Framework for Action* represents a shared consensus among the participants of this Consultation. Therefore, we recommend that all relevant ministries, agencies, departments, organizations, and other institutional stakeholders engaged in the pursuit of sustainable development consider this Framework when devising their own work programs and agendas for action. We further recommend that UNOSD should collaborate with other knowledge providers, and both promote and facilitate the linking and sharing of data and knowledge through open networks, avoiding the duplication of existing initiatives.

12. We call upon the UNOSD to disseminate this *Framework for Action* to all governments, United Nations agencies, multi-lateral organizations, and other institutions and stakeholders and to propose that they embrace it as an agenda for the advancement of knowledge and capacity building for sustainable development. The UNOSD should also submit this *Framework for Action* to the high-level political forum on sustainable development upon its establishment, as well as to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy, and other appropriate fora.

Incheon, Republic of Korea
March 8, 2013