

UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2013

Annotated outline

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Note: This is a living document. Feedback welcome!

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Forewords

[Forewords by SG, USG, DSD, Heads of collaborating agencies (e.g., Executive Secretaries of Regional Commissions), eminent scientists, and assessment initiatives, including a representative of the young scientists collaborative group to this report, as appropriate.]

Executive Summary

[To be provided by Secretariat and peer-reviewed by all contributors]

I. Introduction

[The brief introduction will provide the context, mandate, methodology and outline of the report. It includes a guide for various readers and acknowledgements for contributions to the report, as well as a call for contributions to the next report. It will be provided by the Secretariat.]

II. Assessments for sustainable development

[The overall objective of this chapter is to map the universe of assessments related to sustainable development, in order to provide a quick one-stop entry point for policy makers trying to understand the scientific basis of their decisions.]

A. Mapping of SD assessments and related processes

[While the focus is on fairly recent scientific assessments, the difficulty in separating politics and science is acknowledged and described. The section will essentially be a summary of self-descriptions of SD assessments and related processes that will be sought by DESA. The focus is on global assessments, but salient regional and national assessments will be covered to the extent possible. The full text of descriptions will be made available as background documents and put up for public online feedback. Descriptions will follow a common format, covering the institutional set-up (incl. selection of experts and funding), important scientific findings, policy recommendations put forward, and ongoing internal and public debates on the assessment/process. Received descriptions will be edited and - if needed- supplemented with additional info.]

B. Science digests

[The purpose of this section is to put together concise digests of latest science on selected SD issues of major concern to policy makers, especially at the global level. This will be based on existing digests, such as those by PNAS and PIK, and supplemented by briefs commissioned from scientists. The focus will be in on cross-sectoral, cross-thematic issues of planetary importance only. In particular, the section will include digests of the latest findings on the existence and quantification of potential “tipping points” and Earth-System-relevant as well as socio-economic elements, with a view of informing the ongoing deliberations on global sustainable development goals.]

C. Emerging issues identified by science

[Based on the assessments and science-digests above, this section will provide a list of “emerging issues” as identified by science, with a view to inform policy making. Clearly such list is expected to differ from issues considered “emerging” by global politics. Such differences will be highlighted, but in a descriptive way. If time permits, the identified list of emerging issues will be put up for feedback by the global science community, e.g., through an online survey, with comments published in full. Again, such list might be important input both for planning the future deliberations of the High-level political forum]

III. Review of progress

[This chapter might become a standard element of all future editions of the Global SD Report, as it relates closely to a core function of the HLPF. The objective is to provide a comprehensive - yet brief - summary of SD progress from 1950 to 2013, with a specific focus on the past ten years. The chapter will provide a basis for future editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report which might focus on the most recent trends and progress.]

A. Sustainable development trends vs. goals suggested by science

[This section provides a summary of SD trends. Where appropriate, the trends will be compared with goals suggested by science. The focus will be on the global level, with

references to regions or countries where appropriate. It will cover the time period of 1950 to 2013, with a particular focus on the past ten years. The section will follow the approach by Kates and Parris (2003), which was based on NRC (1999)¹, provided an excellent, concise (6 pages) overview of global progress towards sustainable development from 1950-2000, in all its dimensions. Overall results will also be presented in the form of a table covering all six SD quadrants of Kates (2005). Naturally, the section will need to include an overview of SDGs suggested by science. A first draft will be commissioned and peer-reviewed.]

B. Trends in policy, institutions and implementation of commitments

[This sections sketches important trends in (a) policy making, (b) institutional change and the (c) progress in implementation of commitments. Inputs will be collected from policy assessments, including UN reports. The part on implementation of commitments will draw upon the ground work conducted in preparation for Rio+20 by the UN Secretariat (in particular the SD 21 study on progress and selected issue briefs. Again, the idea is to provide a concise overview of which direction we are heading to, leaving aside specific and sectoral details. The section will take a long-term perspective and review implementation with a focus on progress since 1992 and include selected references to the 1972-1992 time period. In contrast, future editions of this report might provide a scientific review of shorter-term trends and progress against the future SDGs/post-2015 development goals. Being scientific and expert-driven and with a larger scope, such a review would be different from potential future official reports on the official SDGs/post-2015 development goals.]

C. Making sense of the debate on sustainable development progress

[This section introduces the SD21 framework, in order to organize the ongoing debate on the extent and direction of sustainable development progress. The idea is not to provide an exhaustive account of the debate, but rather dissect the different levels of discussion, in order to systematically show where there is agreement and where not. Different perspectives will be made explicit, with their description based on the consultations and open review of sections A and B above. Note: The five-levels of the SD21 framework include: (i) ultimate goal (views on SD as the ultimate goal); (ii) visions (what to sustain and what to develop); (iii) goals and strategies (themes, goals, targets); (iv) policies, programmes and action plan (pathway characteristics); and (v) implementation (projects, actions, and investments).]

D. Geography of sustainable development progress

[This section will illustrate the geography of SD progress with the help of instructive maps. It will be based on produced in partnership with ongoing SD geography initiatives, such as that of Lund University. Inequality]

IV. Future pathways toward sustainable development

[The objective of this chapter is to provide semi-quantitative narratives of future, alternative pathways towards sustainable development (“pathways to a better world in 2050”) and to contrast them with what would happen, if we continued as we did in the past. The narratives will be fully based on the state-of-the-art of SDG scenario modelling, in particular the scenario work for Rio+20. The chapter’s focus will be on the global level, but it will selectively refer to regions, thematic groups of countries, and individual countries where appropriate. Narratives will be reviewed also through and open data, open assumptions process, including a call for modelling contributions.]

A. If we continue like in the past: a dynamics-as-usual scenario

[This sections provides a semi-quantitative narrative of the future pathway that the world would embark on, if it continues like in the past. It is a “dynamics-as-usual scenario” for 2010

¹ Prepared by the US Academy of Sciences as their informal contribution to Johannesburg.

to 2050, as it includes expected improvements and policy changes and not just “business as usual”. The narrative would be based on scenario model runs. It will focus on the global level, but selectively refer to regions and countries where appropriate. The feasibility of including sub-narratives on special country groups (e.g., LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs, etc.) will be explored. An important result is a description of the sustainable development performance of the world in 2020 and 2030.]

B. A better world we can achieve: a sustainable development scenario

[This section provides a semi-quantitative narrative of the future pathway towards sustainable development from 2010 to 2050. The narrative would be based on scenario model runs and a list of sustainable development goals used in these model runs. Hence, they are consistent descriptions of what would be possible. An important part of the section will be a description of the trade-offs and synergies that the world will face in its pursuit to simultaneously achieving multiple sustainable development goals. The feasibility of including sub-narratives on special country groups (e.g., LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs, etc.) will be explored. An important result is a description of the achievable sustainable development performance of the world in 2020 and 2030, compared to the dynamics-as-usual scenario.]

C. Note on global scenarios at the science-policy interface

[This section will provide policy makers with background information and a cautionary note on how to read outputs of global scenario models, what they can say and what not. It will illustrate in which ways scenarios can be used to support decision-making and to identify areas for further scientific research. Among others, the question will be addressed what the “most likely” world would be in 2050. Most importantly, the potential implications for the policy conclusions of issues and feedbacks not covered in the models will be discussed, in particular the issues of rare events and tipping points. This will include the peace and conflict dimension, including the role of security of natural resources supply.]

D. Lessons-learned and policy solutions

[This brief concluding section draws lessons and suggests solutions for policy makers that are derived from the above narratives and their underlying global scenario models. Among others, the section will provide an identification of feasible sets of SDGs, in the sense that we know how to achieve them. Other sets might be more desirable, but infeasible with currently known means, due to trade-offs, feedbacks or due to large scale.]

V. Making and measuring progress

[While chapter IV provides a picture of potential pathways towards sustainable development and feasible endpoints by mid-century, this chapter aims to outline contours of the inputs needed to achieve such desirable future and the potential ways of measuring and monitoring future progress.]

A. Input needs and market potentials

[The section will outline the minimum inputs in terms of “means of implementation” (such as science, technology, finance, trade, education and international institutions) that are needed in order to achieve the desirable future outlined in chapter IV. These needs could alternatively be seen as future market potentials.]

B. Follow-up to Rio+20 on the “means of implementation”

[The section will provide an update on progress in terms of the “means of implementation”, whether they have matched actual “needs”, and in terms of expectations for the future. In particular, inputs will sought from leaders of the follow-up processes to Rio+20, in particular with respect to technology, finance and SDGs.]

C. Measuring and monitoring progress

[This section will provide a brief overview of the most useful comprehensive means and ways of measuring and monitoring progress toward sustainable development. Inputs will be sought from the World Bank and the UN Statistics Division, including on their work on “beyond GDP” and environmental accounts.]

VI. Special theme: The climate-land-energy-water-development nexus

[This chapter introduces the special theme for the first session of the High-level Political Forum. To date, no decision has been taken on a theme. However, various senior officials have expressed their interest in the climate-land-energy-water-development nexus.]

A. Rationale and nexus examples

[This introductory section explains the rationale for the “nexus” as a useful perspective for coherent policy and planning across sectors. The climate-land-energy-water-development nexus is used as an example, but other thematic clusters are discussed (in lesser detail), depending on inputs received.]

B. National case studies

[A number of national case studies are presented to highlight the usefulness of the Nexus perspective to implement sustainable development perspectives. Policy solutions identified are compared with alternative ones derived from sectoral or thematic planning approaches, as well as a green economy perspective. In particular, the series of national CLEWS case studies carried out recently will be featured.]

C. Regional case studies

[A number of regional case studies are presented to highlight the usefulness of the Nexus perspective. Policy solutions identified are compared with alternative ones derived from sectoral/thematic and national planning approaches.]

D. Global case study

[This section will attempt a mapping/compilation of policy recommendations from sectoral and thematic assessments (including the SD21 studies) and compare them with findings of cross-sectoral/thematic feedbacks. It will highlight trade-offs and synergies at the global level and compare them to national studies. The result is expected to be a call for caution, in that the challenges highlighted in global assessments might require greater efforts and different approaches than implied by global assessments.]

E. Towards coherent policy menus

[This section will be a modest, first attempt at identifying criteria for policy menus that are coherent across the climate-land-energy-water-development cluster.]

VII. Issues for consideration

[This concluding chapter will be normative, in contrast to the primarily descriptive main body of the report. The objective is to highlight a number of “big” issues that arise from the analysis presented in the preceding chapters. It will include policy issues or action items for consideration by policy makers and scientists alike, with a view to strengthen the science-policy interface in the follow-up to Rio+20. In line with the overall report, recommendations will not focus on individual sectors, but on broader thematic clusters and inter-linkages. Issues of intra- and inter-generational equity will be included. In addition to established issues that are currently on the global policy agenda and analyzed by scientific communities, an attempt will be made to also highlight issues that are: (a) rarely on the policy agenda but were

identified by scientists as important; and (b) issues on the policy agenda which are rarely subject of in-depth scientific research. Policy issues for consideration will be put forward in the form of options and menus to choose from. Similarly, issues in need of scientific analysis will be directed at an interdisciplinary, scientific audience. In particular, policy-relevant areas will be highlighted for which existing assessments lack an integrated, sustainable development perspective. Details and priorities will emerge upon completion of the aforementioned chapters.]

References

Annexes

A. Young scientists collaborative group

[List of young scientists included in the collaborative group.]

B. List of experts, reviewers and contributors

[List of experts and contributors, including affiliations.]

C. Briefs of assessments and related processes

[This comprises of a compilation of descriptions of assessments received and edited]

D. List of background reports

[This provides a list of all official background reports, including those of a regional, thematic and sectoral nature, to be made available on the GSDR Website. The objective of these reports is to highlight the commonalities and differences in sustainable development challenges and progress between regions and among groups of countries with special needs. In particular, all UN Regional Commissions (RCs) and selected UN Specialized Organizations and entities will be encouraged to provide their input. At the same time, it is acknowledged that it is unlikely that a comprehensive list would be received for the first edition. Yet, it will provide a more "bottom up" view of proposed policies and actions -- and some way of testing the level of ambition of policies and actions against what is needed to get us to a desirable state of the world.]

E. Data tables

[This will include a selection of data tables, providing time series data for both the past trends and the SD narrative.]

F. Web resources

[List of pointers and Web links, including to the online discussions conducted in preparation of the present report]