

# The UN Sustainability Framework

*- do no harm and do good*

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Sustainable Development in the UN system  
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# Overview of presentation

- I. Background and context
- II. The Sustainability Framework
- III. Ensuring wider uptake of the SF in the UN system: The Interim Guide and the Options Paper
- IV. Considerations for the future

Part I

# **BACKGROUND**

# Substantive context

- **UN norms and conventions** setting standards for *Member States* since .....
- **The UN Global Compact (2000)** inviting the *private sector* to align themselves with 10 principles (human rights, labour, environment, anti-corruption)
- **A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System (2011)** - looking inwards, inviting *UN entities* to 'taste their own medicine'

# Process context

- **UN Summit on System-wide Coherence (2005)** – strengthen linkages between normative and operational work of the UN
- **EMG SOM (2009)** decides to ‘explore options for a common UN system approach for environmental and social safeguards’ leading to the development of the **UN Sustainability Framework (2011)**
- **GEF Council (2011-)** agrees on GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards and requests GEF Agencies to ensure that M&E systems for environmental and socioeconomic impact are in place
- **Rio+20 (2012)** asks for system-wide coherence in support of SD, including operational activities and management of facilities (para 93-96)

# Internal UN process

- **EMG consultative process** (2010-) co-chaired by UNDP and UNEP provided guidance to smaller working group (UNDP, UNEP, WFP, WHO) who drafted the SF report supported by a consultant based i.a. on mapping exercise
- SF report presented to **HLCP and CEB** (spring 2012)
- The SF included as key building block in **SG's report on mainstreaming SD in the UN system** (2013)
- **Interim Guide** to support entities in implementation of the SF (EMG draft 2013)
- **Options paper** (EMG 2013) to further wider uptake of the SF in all its dimensions through UN inter-agency mechanisms

Part II

# **THE SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK**

# From Safeguards Approach to Sustainability Framework (SF)

- Safeguards approach found to be too narrow for the UN system
- The SF encompasses the normative, operational (safeguards) and management and aims at:
  - Balancing flexibility and accountability
  - Adding value to existing procedures and policies
  - Applying to all types of UN activities
  - Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and transparency
  - Advancing internal systemic approaches (not mainstreaming of one issue or the other, or new strategies)



# “The SF is an empty shell”

... with three shelves to be filled by entities adapted to their specific circumstances:

## **1. Planning/policy**

- Strategic Plans, UNDAFs etc.

## **2. Programmes/projects**

- Quality assurance, safeguards

## **3. Facilities/operations (“management”)**

- GHG emissions, procurement, buildings etc.

# Environmental and social sustainability

## Examples of ES include:

- Impacts on and management of ecosystems including
    - Air and atmosphere including climate
    - Biodiversity
    - Forests
    - Land and soil
    - Water
  - Impacts on and management of non-renewable resources
- (cont.)

## Examples of SS include:

- Access and equity in delivery of benefits
  - Access to basic health, clean water, water resources, energy, education, housing, employment, land rights and other rights (such as political association, information and justice)
  - Exposure to pollution of air, land, and water and to consequences of climate change
- (cont.)

# Environmental and social sustainability (cont.)

## **Examples of ES include:**

- Management of hazardous waste (including production, storage, transport, treatment and disposal)
- Management of chemicals (including use and disposal)

## **Examples of SS include:**

- Absence of involuntary displacement of individuals, groups or communities and disruption of livelihoods
- Access to safe and decent working conditions
- Absence of use of forced or child labour

# Economic sustainability?

- Why is economic sustainability not part of the framework?
- Could this third dimension be added in a meaningful way?
- What is the difference between sustainability and sustainable development?

# The Interim Guide (draft) targetting individual entities

## I. Getting started:

- Identify **drivers of action** on environmental and social sustainability, both internal and external, to help effect sustainability changes.
- Perform a **self-assessment** to determine the status of sustainability and identify opportunities for adopting sustainability measures
- Develop an **action plan** for effecting environmental and social sustainability changes

## II. Identify and assemble the building blocks

Part III

# **ENSURING WIDER UPTAKE OF THE SF IN THE UN SYSTEM**

# The Options Paper

- Targets IA-mechanisms (CEB, HLCP, HLCCM, UNDG, ECESA+, EMG), evaluation (UNEG) and inspection, (JIU) suggesting potential roles for their consideration
- Invites discussion about the affiliation of a future 'hub' for the SF to better reflect its full scope (environmental and social sustainability)
- Invites discussion about future reporting on the SF to Member States

# The Options Paper (cont.)

Examples:

**UNDG** could decide that it will take the Sustainability Framework into account in the following contexts:

- When revising its **Guidance on Joint Programming** (whose safeguards will apply when and where?)
- If revising the **UNDAF guidelines** (how to enhance the environmental and social sustainability of UNDAFs)
- In the context of **Delivering as One**
- With regard to the **use of country systems**, particularly impact assessments and supporting capacity building

**UNEG** could be invited to play a role with regard to **monitoring and evaluation** of the progress made for individual agencies or the system as a whole.



Part IV

# **CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

# What next?

- Take the Options Paper through the planned consultations
- Continue and upscale efforts in individual entities
- Develop common principles and indicators for the SF
- Include the SF in roadmap for accelerating the integration of the three dimensions of SD in the UN
- Include the SF in considerations about making the UN 'fit for purpose' to support an integrated post-2015 and SDG development framework