

The International Resource Panel (IRP) held a [high-level event to launch its “Policy Coherence of the SDGs: A Natural Resource Perspective”](#) report, on Monday, 6 July. The event was chaired by Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel, who stressed that the SDGs represent the most serious transformative agenda that humankind has ever attempted to develop. The lead author of the report, Michael Obersteiner, Expert Member of the IRP, demonstrated how the implementation of the 17 proposed SDGs would imply competition for resources, and that there would be interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs among natural resource-related SDGs that decision-makers must take into account in formulating policies for implementing the SDGs.

The report from the IRP analyses different policy scenarios for attaining the SDGs, up to 2030, from a natural resource perspective. It concludes that if SDGs that rely on the same natural resources, including on access to energy, ecosystem conservation, food security, and climate change mitigation, were addressed by sectoral policies, there would be potential trade-offs in terms of progress. Dr. Obersteiner stressed that progress should be made on all SDGs together, as an integrated, coordinated package to mitigate trade-offs. Modelling carried out as a basis for the report demonstrated that the benefits of coordinated and composite actions were greater than the sum of benefits from the pursuit of individual goals. However, the achievement of many goals would only be feasible when combined with policies to support sustainable consumption and production, which would depressurize resource stress and thus competition for resources between the goals.

The panellists and audience alike thanked the IRP for its thought-provoking report. Panellist Lize McCourt, Chief Operating Officer, South African National Parks, agreed that progress towards the SDGs should not be measured by the success of specific goals and targets, but by how well the various dimensions of sustainable development are integrated. In this vein, South Africa's 2030 National Development Plan and related strategies integrated sustainability and natural resource management, rather than having these as separate plans. UN ASG and Director of UNEP NYO, Elliot Harris, stressed integration and universality as key concepts in the implementation of the SDGs and said that no country was yet well placed in respect to all the capacities needed and that very few countries worked with integrated policy planning. Commissioner Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, stressed that the goals would not be attained unless the natural resource base was adequately managed, and that the SDGs are specifically designed to bring together the three pillars of sustainable development in a complementary way. In this respect, progress towards achieving the goals should not be monitored through individual goals, but should be examined as a whole.

The Report is available at:

http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/50244/publications/Policy_Coherenceofthe_Sustainable_DevelopmentGoals.pdf