

John Gilliland
Sustainable Development Commissioner for Northern Ireland

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Thank you Mr Chairman for this opportunity. My name is John Gilliland. I am the Sustainable Development Commissioner for Northern Ireland. I would like to inform the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, of the progress of Northern Ireland, as a region of the United Kingdom, to embed Sustainable Development. We believe that our experience can considerably add to the theme of this session, "Making a Difference." I have really appreciated and learnt from this session's interventions from the major stakeholder groups, here today.

As the Session delegates are well aware, over the last 35 years, N. Ireland has struggled to find a lasting peace with stability.

Next week we try again to form a local power sharing Assembly, where local politicians will be allowed to give leadership and embed peace and reconciliation.

In any lasting peace, the principles of Sustainable Development must be embedded within both Central and local Government.

To that end, two days ago, the N. Ireland Secretary of State, Peter Hain launched our first Sustainable Development Strategy.

At its core, is the agreement to move SD from the Department of Environment to the office of First and Deputy First Minister, so that it can be embedded as the leading cross cutting, local Government policy.

Secondly, a legal obligation will be put on all Government Departments and District Councils to implement their SD Action Plans, through the use of a Statutory Duty, with in our primary legislation.

Political Leadership will be given through the commitment that the Government Estate, the largest in N. Ireland, will have a Carbon Neutral Footprint by 2015.

Considerable finance has been made available through an Environment and Energy fund, to reduce N. Ireland's 97% dependence on imported fossil fuels which are used to provide our energy requirements. This fund will be used in Research & Development; Demonstration and the market acceleration of new innovative, environmental and renewable technologies.

Considerable progress has been made in key areas of SD, for example, water quality, air quality, energy diversification and energy security, through well developed relationships with our colleagues, in the Republic of Ireland.

In 2007, both Governments on the island of Ireland will launch the Single, Irish Electricity Market, a must for a sustainable Irish Energy Policy.

The construction of this Strategy, has been an excellent practical example, where it has been created through extensive stakeholder engagement, with all our major groups, similar to the groups participating here today. We believe that this is essential if we are to secure significant local buy in, from people on the ground.

We are confident that through this mix of Central Political Leadership and buy in from our major stakeholders, we will succeed in embedding SD Principles at the heart of any lasting peace and reconciliation in N. Ireland.

This will allow our People to leave behind our dark days of threats of intimidation and violence; and will replace it with a considerable improvement in our quality of life and wealth generation, while making great strides to reduce our environmental footprint at the same time.

Our vision, by 2015, will be that N. Ireland will be perceived by the International Community as an exemplar for peace and reconciliation, where violence will have been replaced by the dynamic use of the fundamental principals of Sustainable Development and through the use of innovative, environmental and renewable technologies; generating a vibrant society attracting people from across the World to come and see for themselves.

Mr Chairman, can I thank you for giving N. Ireland the time to make this intervention. We would be delighted to share our experience with others, who may be still struggling through a similar dynamic and inclusive process?

Thank you

John Gilliland OBE

N. Ireland Sustainable Development Commission

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