



## Summary of eDiscussion on Achieving Sustainable Development

[April 17, 2008: Consolidated by Linda Ghanime, Bethany Donithorn, Cheryl Stafford, Hideko Hadzialic and Atif Khurshid]

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## Questions of eDiscussion

### Part I (4 - 22 February) – [Click here to see Launch Message Part I](#)

1. What are the main barriers for countries in integrating the objectives of sustainable development, i.e., economic growth, social development and environmental protection, in their development strategies and in the planning and implementation processes of these strategies?
2. How can various instruments for development planning and assistance frameworks such as National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) more effectively serve the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development at the national level?
3. How can our organizations and each of us most effectively support countries in learning from the practices of those countries that have made significant progress in pursuing the goal of sustainable development?

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### Part II (25 February - 14 March) – [Click here to see Launch Message Part II](#)

1. How can the international community ensure that more funding for advancing sustainable development is made available on a predictable basis? What steps by which actors can be taken to facilitate, on a concessional and preferential basis, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, especially to developing countries?

2. What specific initiatives can ECOSOC promote to be launched to facilitate realization of the goal of sustainable development? How can we foster human and institutional competencies to execute supportive policies?
3. How can we promote equity in the distribution of benefits from environmental resources? Is it advisable to promote payment for environmental services? If so, what is/are the most effective way(s) to do so?

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### **Please click here for**

- 1) [Background Note of eDiscussion](#)
- 2) [Pre-launch message from Mr. Sha Zhukang, Under-Secretary General, UN/DESA, and Mr. Kemal Dervis, Administrator, UNDP](#)
- 3) [Annual Ministerial Review \(home page\)](#)
- 4) [eDiscussion on Achieving Sustainable Development \(home page\)](#)
- 5) [Part I responses in FULL](#)
- 6) [Part II responses in FULL](#)
- 7) [Electronic version of summary of eDiscussion on Achieving Sustainable Development](#)

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### **Outline of Summary**

- [Introduction](#)
- [PART I: Overcoming challenges countries face in integrating the goals of economic growth, social development and environmental protection](#)

- Main barriers for countries in integrating the objectives of sustainable development
- Integrating the three pillars of sustainable development at the national level through instruments for development planning
- Supporting countries in learning from the practices of countries that have made significant progress in pursuing the goal of sustainable development
- Support from the international community to promote integrated sustainable development
- Action at the local level to support sustainable development
- PART II: Concrete policy initiatives that can help States to achieve sustainable development
  - Ensuring funding for advancing sustainable development on a predictable basis
  - Facilitating, on a concessional and preferential basis, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, especially to developing countries
  - Promoting equity in the distribution of benefits from environmental resources
  - Promoting payment for environmental services (PES)
  - Initiatives for ECOSOC to facilitate realization of the goal of sustainable development
- Resources shared on Sustainable Development during the eDiscussion

## Summary of eDiscussion on Sustainable Development (4 February – 14 March 2008)

### Introduction

#### *Overall context*

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a new function of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), mandated by the Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. The Review aims to assess progress made towards the MDGs and other goals agreed at the major UN conferences and summits since the 1990s, and to contribute to scaling-up and accelerating action to realize the UN development agenda.<sup>1</sup>

For the 2008 AMR, the Council selected the theme “implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development”. The six-week-long moderated eDiscussion hosted by MDGNet from 4 February to 14 March 2008 was a part of a process of global consultations preparing for the Review to be held in July in New York during the ECOSOC Substantive Session.

#### *eDiscussion*

The eDiscussion, organized jointly by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UNDP, took place around two broad themes: overcoming challenges countries face in integrating the goals of

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr.shtml>.

economic growth, social development and environmental protection; and concrete policy initiatives that can help States to achieve sustainable development.

Generating 110 responses from experts, practitioners and policy-makers from diverse regions and stakeholder groups, the eDiscussion presented a rich array of perspectives and some actionable recommendations for consideration by the Council and the larger international community.

## **PART I: Overcoming challenges countries face in integrating the goals of economic growth, social development and environmental protection.**

Despite a consensus on the actual need for sustainable development, many countries have not been able to fully integrate the objectives of sustainable development in their development strategies and policies. E-Discussion participants were invited to provide illustrations of specific impediments and challenges governments face in this regard. Participants also discussed whether instruments such as national sustainable development strategies, poverty reduction strategies, UN development assistance frameworks and others instruments have succeeded in promoting the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development at the national level. Additionally, there was an exchange of some examples by countries making efforts to establish sustainable development policies. The responsibility of the international community to support the achievement of sustainable development was emphasized, as was the importance of action at the local level.

### **Main barriers for countries in integrating the objectives of sustainable development**

Contributors most frequently mentioned economic/financial, social and political barriers to integrating the goals of economic growth, social development and environmental protection -- the three “pillars” of sustainable development. Poor monitoring and evaluation systems were also identified as a challenge.

#### *Economic and financial barriers*

Discussants observed that the prevailing development model tends to focus on economic growth as a priority rather than people’s rights or welfare, and environmental processes and limits. A number of contributors supported economic growth coming first in developing countries, especially least-developed countries (LDCs), and said that investment in environmental protection should be left to a later stage of development, essentially accepting environmental degradation to meet immediate needs. Others strongly argued that future generation’s ability to enjoy an acceptable standard of living would be seriously jeopardized if due attention were not now paid to social and environmental aspects as well as economic. This requires shift in our worldview from treating the environment as part of the economy to treating the economy as part of the environment; strategically this means the economy should be adapted to ensure environmental services are maintained. Some contributors urged developed capitalist societies to act quickly to become more sustainable. Others underscored the imperative for developing countries *not* to follow the western models of unsustainable development.

Three major constraints to financing sustainable development (SD) emerged from the discussion: (1) competing priorities for limited resources, particularly in LDCs; (2) undelivered pledges made at international conferences to finance SD; and (3) externalities, such as increased oil prices, conflict, and natural disasters that alter the development priorities of many countries.

#### *Recommendations emerging from the discussions*

- To achieve economic growth without jeopardizing social development and environmental resources, new and different “vehicles” for growth must be tailored to different country situations.
- Governments should return responsibility for market-led problems to the market, with incentive for the private sector to become problem-solvers, not just polluters.
- Shift the incentive structure for farmers around the world. Policies should promote agricultural production that is based on significantly higher labor inputs per area and significantly more diverse production streams.

- Reform the way that economic growth is calculated; the removal of weapons-related cost from GDP would provide a strong indication of relative spending toward sustainable development to politicians.
- Abandon linear system of industrial production based on full exploitation of natural resources, overproduction, and waste generation in favor of a circular system of production using clean technologies and eliminate resource waste.

### *Social barriers*

Discussants agreed that population growth, paired with unsustainable consumption and production patterns among the wealthy, are the biggest social challenges to achieving sustainable development. Without a significant change in human behavior, sustainability will not be possible. Other social barriers mentioned were the marginalization of the poor and entrenched inequities; limited awareness about sustainable development and environmental issues among both politicians and the wider public; fragmented civil society and inadequate interaction between civil society and government; and insufficient incentives to for the private sector to pursue sustainable development.

### *Recommendations emerging from the discussions*

- Stronger policies to address income disparity and population growth.
- Programmes to raise awareness of and build capacity in the field of sustainable development among the general public can help lead to the change in behavior and lifestyle that is needed to achieve sustainability.
- Governments must foster their relationships with NGOs and other civil society organizations. Moreover, civil society must take on bigger role in policy making and implementation. Participation of civil society in social programmes and related decision making process would ensure accountability thus creating condition for receiving financial aid or UN assistance.
- Stronger partnership among national and local governments, the grassroots, private sector, civil society and development actors should be developed.

### *Political barriers*

Political barriers were those most frequently raised during the discussion. Many contributors believed that governments are stuck in the “old” development paradigm -- emphasizing economic growth -- and felt that industrial countries have made no significant effort to change their patterns in production and consumption, thereby endangering global resources. To meet sustainable development objectives requires genuine political and institutional will at all levels of government in all countries, developed and developing. Corruption, ineffective government and weak law enforcement were named as impediments to achieving genuine sustainability. Yet, more often, (a) the lack of information and relevant data available to and (b) the limited capacity of policy- and decision-makers were identified as reasons for the limited responsiveness of governments. What is needed is the translation of intentions to actions.

There was some discussion that, conceptually, sustainable development has not been able to evolve out of its “environmentalist” roots and that greater focus on climate change may be pulling the issue towards a “purer” environmentalist’s direction rather than the integrating sustainable development perspective. Indeed, one contributor warned that SD is being replaced by climate change on the political agenda, leaving the rest of the sustainable development agenda forgotten.

Contributors agreed that lack of coordination to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development is a major challenge at all levels. At the global level, the UN has failed to join together its efforts to promote a genuinely sustainable development. Campaigns for integrating many factors are themselves not harmonized, but try to meet different purposes at different times. It was noted that the sectoralized approach to the MDGs has dissolved the broader context of development, and MDG 7 on sustainable development has been largely neglected in favor of other goals rather than being a basis for achieving the rest of the MDGs. More consistent policies to support SD are needed at the international level, including within the UN system.

At the regional level, regional agreements on SD and mechanisms for their implementation are often lacking. There was consensus that, at national level, a multi-disciplinary approach to governance is needed rather than the prevailing tendency for different line ministries, departments and agencies to act without a clear framework for coordination across sectors. Sectoral systems of governance create and perpetuate silo thinking and behavior. It was observed that there is generally no effective national forum for strategic planning on pro-poor economic growth, social development, environment and climate change for a country's development. For example, in Central Asia, it was noted that few countries have policies linking environment, poverty, trade and social development; that few environmental policies target equity or poverty issues; and that health policies are still mainly formulated in isolation without linkages to related sectors. At an institutional level, responsibility for the implementation of sustainable development is generally assigned to the Ministry of Environment, Environmental Protection Agency or the equivalent, which traditionally receive little attention and a low budget. It was also observed that an environmental ministry or agency would find it difficult to take a balanced approach to economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Insufficient community involvement was noted as a final major political barrier to achieving sustainable development goals. A top-down approach by centralized authorities often imposes projects and programmes on local governments; in such cases policy making and implementation does not take into consideration the grassroots need or involve the lower levels of government. It was warned that many traditions in community management, which could support sustainable development, are being dismantled by governments just when they are needed.

#### Recommendations emerging from the discussions

- The sustainable development “toolkit” must be streamlined, but also applied with more rigour, pace and scale.
- Environmental institutions need to work more closely with other (non-environmental) institutions, and all ministries must work together to achieve an integrated sustainable development for their countries.
- Rigorous efforts should be directed at the entrenched structural problems that distort both developmental and environmental prospects by focusing on key injustices, notably in trade, environment and climate change.
- Analytical work on innovative financing for SD, and poverty and environment linkages must be undertaken to further integrate economic, social and environmental factors.
- Some basic elements like sensitization of political leaders, private sector involvement, and participation of local communities need to be well grounded in our development approach. Capacity-building is necessary across the board.
- Achieving sustainable development requires strong, innovation-driven science and technology policies. More research needs to be devoted to finding low-cost, human- and eco-friendly technologies. Incentives to encourage innovative efforts.

#### Poor monitoring and evaluation systems

A recurrent problem is the lack of specific targets (globally, nationally and at local level), measurement and data to track progress, resulting in a lack of information available to decision-makers. It is suggested for strengthening monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development strategies in order to establish a dynamic improvement process, with the aim of increasing their effectiveness. Another urged governments to delve deeper and assess the socio-economic *impacts* of development projects, rather than *outcomes* alone.

#### Recommendations emerging from the discussions

- Country-specific knowledge-bases are needed to guide decision making, as is a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring the outcomes of interventions that feeds into subsequent planning processes.
- National research and development systems need to be strengthened, as well as south-south and south-north knowledge sharing and management.
- It is necessary to harmonize environmental information to bridge incomparable information (in terms of sectors, times and scales) residing within various institutions.

## **Integrating the three pillars of sustainable development at the national level through instruments for development planning**

After Rio, countries were encouraged to develop national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) to address need for integrated development approach. While many, if not most, sustainable development strategies have not been able to meet those goals. Many discussants agreed that the national development strategies (NDSs), and in some cases poverty reduction strategy papers (PSRPs) and other mechanisms have yet to prove themselves to be fully effective in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development. It was observed that PRSPs have primarily focused on poverty reduction without encompassing the broader sustainable development agenda; yet, it was emphasized that poverty reduction is crucial to achieving sustainable development. Few developing countries have NDSs with clearly set and prioritized objectives and realistic action plans. Where a national strategy has integrated the three aspects of sustainable development, it often lacks strategies for implementation, as in the Maldives. In cases where they are implementation plans, they can be uncoordinated or take a sectoral approach, as in an example from Nigeria.

Responding to the recognized deficiency in developing integrated NDSs, a joint UNDP-UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative seeks to provide financial and technical support to countries to build capacity for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into national development planning processes.

### *Recommendations emerging from the discussions*

- A single national strategy for sustainable development, such as NSDS, is needed in order to avoid covering the same issues/areas and setting possible conflicting priorities; the multiplicity of strategies and related documents diminishes commitment to each and leads to confusion on development priorities. At the very least, poverty reduction initiatives must be aligned with the goals of national sustainable development strategies.
- The instruments need to be made much more practical as opposed to be driven either by dogmatism/rhetoric or by unquestioned national priorities. To be practical, these instruments should lead to solutions to specific sustainable development problems by certain timelines, problems that are recognized by both the country and external agencies as priorities.
- At the international level, there needs to be more commitment to the multilateral systems and its framework to achieve sustainable development results. Concomitantly, the UN system must be fully accountable and measure its results.

## **Supporting countries in learning from the practices of countries that have made significant progress in pursuing the goal of sustainable development**

It was observed that learning activities related to sustainable development have two major shortcomings: (1) they tend to focus on particular aspects, rather than on the whole picture of sustainable development challenges, and (2) they lack a long-term strategy to cultivate a critical mass of SD leaders within countries.

Participants highlighted a variety of country examples which offered relevant lessons. In Australia, for example, every jurisdiction within its federalized legal system has taken a different approach to sustainable development. This has led to different interpretations, lack of a concerted education campaign to assist communities in understanding the changes, fragmentation of regulation of different natural resources -- preventing a clear and consistent framework for resource management. A good practice example came from the Netherlands, which has published an innovative "peer review" on the outcomes of its sustainable development strategy, conducted by several high-ranking national and international experts, who provided constructive recommendations. An example from Romania illustrates the necessity of information and awareness campaigns for the public at local level (municipality), as its data and information are either not available or incomplete and do not respond to needs of decision-makers, which prevents in-depth analysis, prioritization, and monitoring. Other country examples came from Germany, the Maldives and India.

### Recommendations emerging from the discussions

- The United Nation system could develop a capacity-building programme to produce a continuous stream of high-level leaders as champions for sustainable development.

### **Support from the international community to promote integrated sustainable development**

Participants agreed the role of international community to promote sustainable development is very significant, especially in countries where public sector investment is dependent on foreign assistance. There is an urgent need to fulfill the commitments made by the international community to achieve MDG8 and beyond, both in terms of financing and of sharing knowledge and technology. The international community can support countries towards sustainable developments through resources and benefits like funds, concessions and international awards of recognition so that they can get support in their developmental projects. Other actions that could be taken by the international community include supporting developing countries to participate fully in regional/global preparatory meetings and conferences; increasing official development assistance (ODA), providing market access; and adopting “accounting for sustainable development” in national accounts. Several contributors stressed that support and resources should be directed to the levels of government that have a direct impact on the development of communities – most often the local level.

It is imperative to continue the exchange of experiences, both North-South and South-South, so that those who have made progress towards sustainable development can help those behind. International co-operation between countries -- especially neighboring countries where industrial activities in one adversely affect the life in the other -- also needs to be reviewed and set-up, especially amongst developing and underdeveloped countries. There is also need for development of more public education packages, info exchange, courses and portals. This can assist in fostering human and institutional competencies to execute supportive policies on sustainable development.

Some activities through which the UN system can support sustainable development included: transferring expertise through collaborative research programmes, workshops and seminars in developing nations; funding integrated rural development projects to support sustainable development; and directing assistance towards local communities and local governments.

### **Action at the local level to support sustainable development**

As noted above, local governments are key to creating and implementing sustainable development policies, but they need support from higher levels of government, including in the form of appropriate legislation and implementation funding. It is also necessary to strengthen the capacity of local authorities.

Sustainable development has to be a "grassroots" effort. All stakeholders, including the most vulnerable, should be included in the planning and decision-making process. Capacity-building of the local people in issues related to sustainable development is, therefore, necessary and also empowers them to fight corruption and take greater advantage of external assistance. In particular, marginalized voices need to be heard and their ideas reflected in sustainable development strategies; women, indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, youth, seniors, and others have a wealth of knowledge, expertise and ideas to share. One discussant stated that, without input and support from these groups, sustainable development is “a goal without a foundation upon which to build.”

Entrepreneurs as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) -- especially those with environmental components or pursuing engaged in social enterprise -- were seen as useful to promoting sustainable development at the community level. Examples of green business opportunities that would simultaneously mitigate climate change and create sustainable livelihoods for the poor include cultivating rubber trees, pursuing organic agriculture and managing sustainable fisheries and forests.

### Recommendations emerging from the discussions

- The operational linkages between national and local levels should be articulated to support sustainable development, such as establishing and empowering a strong system of governance from the national to the grassroots/local self-governing level. India was named as an example.
- Strong linkages also need to be developed between national programmes and think tanks/ institutes, where experienced university graduates could assist in capacity building for sustainable development, as is the case in Australia’s “Youth Ambassadors for Development”.
- Forums should be supported to bring together communities, individuals, governments and other actors to collaborate to address development challenges.
- Governments should assist the establishment of social enterprises.

## **PART II: Concrete policy initiatives that can help States to achieve sustainable development**

Most of developing countries do not have sufficient resources nor appropriate technologies needed to achieve sustainable development on their own. The eDiscussion examined how the international community might ensure that more funding for advancing sustainable development could be made available on a predictable basis. Recommendations on what steps could be taken by which actors to facilitate (on a preferential basis) the transfer of environmentally sound technologies were also sought. Participants discussed how to promote equity in the distribution of benefits from environmental resources, considering whether it is useful to specifically support payment for environmental services. The eDiscussion also generated some concrete initiatives – by ECOSOC, by governments, by the UN system, and by multi-stakeholder partnerships – that, if acted upon, could facilitate realization of the goal of sustainable development.

### **Ensuring funding for advancing sustainable development on a predictable basis**

The participants identified different forces for ensuring more funding for advancing sustainable development on a predictable basis: (1) political will; (2) new funding mechanisms; and (3) conditionalities.

#### *Political will*

Cooperation and commitment is required at key stakeholder levels: national leadership, elites (who must themselves embrace the core values of a sustainable planet within their countries) and donors; without their direction, sustainable development cannot be achieved. It was suggested that, to ensure more and regular funding for SD, the international community must agree on a development horizon [timeframe], recognize that sustainable development is not synonymous with economic loss, and find the moral desire to bring all citizens of the world to a basic standard of living. Rich countries must genuinely accept the necessity to provide financing and technology to developing countries in exchange for the global benefit of greener, smarter growth. The mechanisms mentioned in chapters 33 and 38 of Agenda 21 on financial resources and international institutional arrangements mentioned should be addressed through new, creative, sound, comprehensive and decisive policy initiatives to be adopted by all stakeholders of the international community, including through joint efforts at the Annual Ministerial Review, the Development Cooperation Forum and the Substantive Session of ECOSOC.

#### *New funding mechanisms*

Contributors emphasized that market and economic instruments can be effectively used to infuse a sustainable approach to development. It was argued that a sustainable market is good for business and the economy, and that governments had to oversee the transformation of the market to be more sustainable. There were several calls for the international community to develop other mechanisms to leverage resources to finance sustainable development. These included: (1) a commitment by nations to apply at least 1% of their annual budgets towards sustainable efforts; (2) incentives such as tax exemptions for spending their funds leading to sustainable development for private agencies and individuals in all nations; and (3) imposition of taxes, for example, on weapons manufacturing and use and on polluters in key sectors (e.g., aviation) based on the polluter pays

principle. It was suggested that a percentage of resources should be set apart as “Emergency funds for sustainable development” or national Sustainable Development Funds (SDFs).

### *Conditionalities*

Some participants provided examples to making funding or support contingent upon certain desirable behaviors. It was suggested that the international community should encourage actions that foster partnership; subsidiarity (decisions being made as locally as possible); and application and streamlining of sustainability appraisal, assessment, and indicator techniques. The United Nation system was urged to intensify its focus on environmental issues whenever engaged in supporting national programmes, to explicitly integrate environmental concerns in all regional initiatives on water, energy and transport and to always involve national experts in order to strengthen national capacities. Another contributor proposed that global assistance should be extended only to developing nations that are strict on undertaking environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in their development activities. It should also be ensured that any aid programme to a nation needs to account for its local limits to growth and respect them, as opposed to finding ways for the countries to develop which requires them to live in debt and use another state’s resources.

### **Facilitating, on a concessional and preferential basis, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, especially to developing countries**

Making available better, affordable, environmentally friendly technologies is important for all countries. Through the platform of United Nations, the international community and partner countries could focus on research and development, provision of technical support to pilot innovative ideas, and development of alternative strategies (in partnership with developing countries). Several other actions were enumerated, including improving links between universities and business within and across countries; encouraging creation and development of SMEs; encouraging inward investment; and identifying opportunities for moving up the value chain (e.g., exporting processed rather than raw materials). A participant suggested a programme that could identify needs by region and sub-region the likely technologies required (e.g. mobile phones for Africa or bio-fuels for South America) with the required green specifications and forecasts for uptake and carbon reduction as well as a specified budget.

While referring to past experience it was mentioned that aid programmes have often operated on the basis of a direct “drag-and-drop” of technologies and deployment methods suitable for the developed world into the developing world, which did not fulfill the people’s needs. Instead, it was urged that the transfer of environmentally sound technologies must come within the constraints of what is determined to be sustainable development by each state, requiring extensive dialogue with local officials and recognition of local limits to growth.

Funding mechanisms for the transfer of technology were proposed. One participant suggested that developed nations should pool a new “global fund for sustainable developmental research” for assisting developing nations either in developing indigenous technologies themselves or in transferring advanced technologies. Another supported an international tax system for oil to fund sustainable development initiatives with a focus on agriculture through renewable energy projects.

### **Promoting equity in the distribution of benefits from environmental resources**

A participant pointed out that we must live on ecological revenue, not capital, and therefore it is imperative not just to slow the rapid loss of nature but to halt and reverse it. True equity in the distribution of benefits means that access is granted to all citizens, at a (not-necessarily financial) cost which all nationals can afford. Promoting equity in the distribution of environmental resources requires the local governments to acknowledge their environmental services as local treasures and meet their local needs first. A contributor reiterated that rich nations cannot enjoy environmental safety without caring for poverty and other pressing problems in poor nations.

It was suggested that an effective way to protect ecological capital while promoting equity would be for all land, sea and non-renewable resource ownership title to be interpreted by international treaty as a title of stewardship of the ecological capital on behalf of future generations. The remedy under international law for failure to safeguard ecological capital would be access to the resource being transferred to a community-based trust, creating an economic incentive for resource owners to protect ecological capital, and a legal basis for communities to gain access to resources while expanding ecological capital and services.

### **Promoting payment for environmental services (PES)**

A participant emphasized that payments for environmental services is the only viable approach to a strong sustainability model, because it is the only one that successfully captures the problem of runaway development, unsustainable practices and the rampant social inequities that result from those forces. PES should be applied, but in a *human-rights-based approach* to access to environmental services, i.e., ‘no payment’ from the poor up to the minimum amounts to which all have a right (e.g. to safe drinking water, nutrition, shelter, etc.), and then incremental increases depending on how much more is used or utilized. Once a government has portioned its national, natural resources so that each citizen has his fair share, if there is a remainder, then that can be priced. Or, in the case of well-managed environmental services, the interest on the natural capital may be sold once local needs are met. The key is not to price the capital stock, and not to sell a national treasure to the highest bidder to secure short-term benefits.

The application of practicable economic valuation methodologies/tools for ecosystem services is needed, along with an evaluation of the direct as well as indirect economic benefits associated with ecosystem management. In this regard, a contribution presented the Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), a pioneering policy instrument -- the first example of international guidance on PES in IWRM, at the local, national and trans-boundary levels.

Polluter’s pay, excess tax on excessive consumption of resources, and incentives such as subsidies and tax exemptions to environment-friendly technologies and development activities are all effective PES measures to protect the interest of the human race, but at the national level only. These may not be effective at the global level because countries are affected by what happens in other territories. One contributor specifically suggested levying an "excise" or "green tax" against oil to promote the distribution of benefits from environmental resources.

### **Initiatives for ECOSOC to facilitate realization of the goal of sustainable development**

As the charter body mandated to coordinate the economic and social activities of its subsidiary machinery and the specialized agencies, the Economic and Social Council has the potential to significantly influence the attainment of truly sustainable development. Among the key proposals put forth in the e-Discussion, it was suggested that ECOSOC should:

- Facilitate formulation of sound policies to promote SD, including through developing global networks of environmental and development experts to develop concrete guidelines to support SD activities at global and national levels, and ensuring the inclusion of diverse views, including those of the marginalized (J.G. Ray, St. Berchman’s College, India).
- Use its convening power to bring together all stakeholders to build capacity, and support training schemes in the field. (Mary Ennis, Executive Director, Disabled Peoples' International)
- Lead the way in participatory research and decision-models in all regions that aim toward measuring sustainability across region-specific economic, environmental and social dimensions (Kathleen O’Halloran, Northwestern Oklahoma State University).
- Promote programmes and initiatives that articulate and disseminate young people’s views, in Africa and the rest of the world (Henry Ekwuruke, Executive Director, Development Generation Africa International, Nigeria).

- Lead in establishing programmes that require inclusion of disenfranchised populations, that set legitimizing benchmarks of institutional competency and that fold in mechanisms for equity in the distribution of benefits from environmental resources (Kathleen O'Halleran, Northwestern Oklahoma State University).
- Create awareness among key players in the private sector and governments to the benefits and synergies of public-private partnerships (Robson Mello, Chairman International Renewable Energy Organization, New York).
- Establish a functional unit to localize sustainable development (Ronming Wu, Senior Policy Research for the Fujian Provincial Government, China).

Other proposals called for:

- Assisting developing countries in analyzing prospects for sustainable development projects and programmes, and in finding financing solutions for those deemed worthwhile (Nurjemal Jalilova, UNDP Turkmenistan).
- Promoting studies in traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) with indigenous people, incorporating both TEK and western science with an aim to increase sustainable development globally (Sarah Atkinson, Macquarie University, Australia).
- Creating a Global Environmental Organization (GEO) to work on normalization of environmental issues and lay the basis for environmental governance (Theresa Flores, Environmentalist, Bolivia; Iyad Abumoghil, SURF-UNDP, Lebanon).
- Creating a World Sustainable Development Forum patterned after the World Economic Forum. (Iyad Abumoghil, SURF-UNDP, Lebanon; Edgar Goell, Social Scientist and Researcher)
- Replace the ECOSOC with a Sustainable Development Council. (Iyad Abumoghil, UNDP Lebanon)
- Creating a Global Early Warning System funded by developed countries, managed by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and accessible free of charge to all countries. (Iyad Abumoghil, SURF-UNDP, Lebanon)
- An international treaty adopting the primacy of “circular economics” to reinforce the polluter pays principle and ensure that markets accept their share of responsibility for sustainable development and ensure against the risk of their product becoming waste, as under traditional linear economics (James Greyson, Sustainability Analyst, BlindSpot, UK).
- Establishing an internationally recognized ranking of sustainability indicators for companies or projects. (Graham L. Twaddell, Environmental & Sustainability Manager, Envirosure Solutions, LLC)

### Resources shared on Sustainable Development during the eDiscussion

1. Short movie on Yesterday's linear economics (waste-making) and tomorrow's circular economics (resource-making) <http://www.storyofstuff.com>.
2. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
3. ‘User Guide’ to Effective Approaches to Environmental Mainstreaming: [www.environmental-mainstreaming.org](http://www.environmental-mainstreaming.org)
4. Synthesis and analysis of obstacles to implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans” <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/wgri/wgri-02/official/wgri-02-02-add1-en.doc>
5. Strengthen the linkages between poverty and environment in national development plans and processes can be found at [www.unpei.org](http://www.unpei.org), a joint UNDP/UNEP initiative that seeks to provide financial and technical support to countries to build capacity for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into national development planning processes, such as PRSP’s and MDG Achievement Strategies.

6. Enhancing Integrated Water Resources Management. For more information, see: <http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2006/wat/ece.mp.wat.2006.5.e.pdf>
7. “Green Economics”: Turning Mainstream Thinking on Its Head“ – February 15, 2008, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5623>]
8. Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 can be seen at <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/capacity-building.html>
9. The full document of “the Global Evaluation of Capacity 21 1993 – 2001” is available at <http://www.capacity.undp.org/indexAction.cfm?module=Library&action=GetFile&DocumentAttachmentID=603>
10. ‘Evidence Based Policy Development: (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/evidence.htm>).
11. Incentive measures: An analysis of existing and new instruments that provide positive incentives: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-11/information/sbstta-11-inf-11-en.doc>
12. Incentive measures: proposals on the application of positive incentive measures and their integration into relevant programmes, policies or strategies: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-11/official/sbstta-11-08-en.doc>
13. Chapter 33 and Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 with the titles as “Financial Resource and Mechanism” <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter33.htm>
14. Chapter 33 and Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 with the titles as "International Institutions Arrangements” <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter38.htm>
15. Section 47 of Chapter V of JPOI [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD\\_POI\\_PD/English/POIChapter5.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POIChapter5.htm)
16. “From Doha to Johannesburg by way of Monterrey for MDGs” <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/GlobalizationReport%202007.FINAL.website.pdf>
17. Localizing SD <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter28.htm> and <http://www.iclei.org/>
18. China’s upgrading international cooperation for achieving SD. See: website: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/05/content\\_7719556.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/05/content_7719556.htm)
19. China Agenda 21 <http://www.acca21.org.cn/ca21pa.html>)
20. Program of Action for Sustainable Development in China in the Early 21st Century [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/t20070205\\_115702.htm](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/t20070205_115702.htm)
21. China National Climate Change Program > <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/P020070604561191006823.pdf>).

### **Additional Resources:**

1. UNDP, 2006. Making Progress on environmental sustainability. Lessons and recommendations from a review of over 150 MDG country experiences ([www.undp.org/fssd/report](http://www.undp.org/fssd/report))
2. UNDP/OECD, 2002. Sustainable Development Strategies: A resource book ([www.nssd.net](http://www.nssd.net))

3. OECD, 2001. Strategies for Sustainable Development. (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/10/2669958.pdf>)