

Informal summary

Coordination Segment 2009 Economic and Social Council

Panel discussion on “*Effective sustainable development strategies: country level experience*” 14 July 2009, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

- Chair:** **H.E. Mr. Somduth Soborun**, Vice-President of ECOSOC
- Panelists:** **Mr. Ramadhani M. Khijjah**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, United Republic of Tanzania
H.E. Mr. Dana A. Kartakusuma, Minister’s Special Adviser for Technology and Sustainable Development, Indonesia
Mr. Tariq Banuri, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- Moderator:** **Dr. Laszlo Pinter**, Director, Measurement and Assessment Programme, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

The Chairperson, **H.E. Mr. Somduth Soborun**, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, introduced the issues surrounding the focus of this panel: challenges in implementation at the national level. He noted that countries all around the world have been struggling to achieve sustainable development for several years. One of the most important challenges lies in balancing competing priorities, which can only be found in comprehensive long-term development strategies. During the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the world leaders called upon all countries to take immediate steps to formulate and elaborate sustainable development strategies by 2005. Several countries have reported that they were implementing sustainable development strategies and innovative mechanisms have been developed. He noted that this panel discussion on “effective sustainable development strategies: country level experience” aimed at learning from experience of countries and providing opportunities to identify how the United Nations system can support these efforts.

Dr. Laszlo Pinter, as an introduction, commented on several key challenges on sustainable development strategies. These include: how to decide on the criteria on various policies, whether or not they meet the principles of sustainable development; how to successfully implement sustainable development strategies in a country level; and how can countries improve coordination and exchange lessons learned among each other.

Mr. Ramadhani M. Khijjah presented Tanzania’s experience on sustainable development. In Tanzania, the Sustainable Development agenda is embedded in the National Development Vision 2025 (DV 2025) and Zanzibar Development Vision 2020 (ZDV 2020), both aiming at achieving high quality livelihood; peace; stability and unity; good governance; a well educated and learning society; and a competitive economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits.

The economy of Tanzania derives its strength from agriculture, forestry, mining, fisheries, wildlife, tourism, water resources and other natural resources. The strength of the economy and the integrity of the environment are therefore related to the efficient use and management of the available natural resources.

To foster the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, the Tanzanian Government has formulated a number of policies and strategies, such as National Environmental Policy (1997), National Water Policy (2002), and the National Cleaner Technology Strategy (2006). These policies are aiming at providing guidance to stakeholders in the related sectors to ensure that their activities are not affecting the environment.

To ensure commitment to addressing environmental issues, the government enacted Environmental Management Act (EMA) in 2004. The EMA entrusts the Vice-President's Office with the overall authority to coordinate and manage environment. Furthermore, the Government has also established a National Environment Management Council (NEMC) to undertake enforcement, compliance, review and monitoring of environmental impacts assessments, research, facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making, raise environmental awareness and collect and disseminate environment related data.

From the assessment of the implementation of the national environmental policies and the management act, challenges still remain. These include the need to increase community-based programme for managing natural resources that impact on livelihoods and growth, reducing vulnerability to environmental risks, collecting data for poverty and environment indicators and producing environmental monitoring and evaluation reports.

One of the major challenges is to recognize the linkage between the economic management, social responsibility and environmental preservation. Decisions on economy are skewed in favour of short-term consideration at the cost of long term sustainability. Moreover effective sustainable development strategies are also inhibited by the existence of absolute poverty.

In 2007, the 1994 National Environmental Action plan was revised to address outstanding issues as well as to tackle the emerging challenges on environment and address the adverse impacts on climate change. The Action plan identifies the following priority to be implemented by the government in partnership with other stakeholders:

- i. Land degradation
- ii. Water shortage and water pollution
- iii. Deterioration of aquatic resources: marine and freshwater
- iv. Loss of terrestrial biodiversity (wildlife habitats)
- v. Deforestation
- vi. Urban pollution
- vii. Climate change

Climate change undermines Tanzanian national efforts to attain the MDGs and place poverty reduction efforts in jeopardy. The impacts of climate change have been the driving force for the preparation of the Tanzania National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA).

Mr. Khijjah welcomed the United Nations Conference on “the World Economic and Financial Crisis and its Impact on Development”, which took place from 24 – 26 June 2009 in New York. Tanzania welcomed the effort of the United Nations. He noted that Tanzania and many other developing countries are facing challenges emerging from world economic and financial crisis, which may constrain the efforts of the government to implement effectively the sustainable development strategy. Given the increased level of challenges, it will be difficult for individual countries to manage them and therefore will require global coordinated actions to resolve them.

H.E. Mr. Dana A. Kartakusuma presented Indonesia’s experience on promoting sustainable development. In terms of global processes, Indonesia participated in various international conferences on sustainable development, in particular the Stockholm Conference on Environment (1972), the Earth Summit (1992) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg (2002).

Indonesia produced several key documents on sustainable development, such as Indonesia’s Agenda 21 (2007), Paving the Way to Sustainable Development (2002) – as report to the WSSD, and National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2008). Overall the documentations are successful. However, the implementation still faces many challenges.

At the national level, Indonesia organized National Conference on Sustainable Development in 2004 and produced several documents, including Implementation Plan on Water, Energy, Health, Agricultural, and Biodiversity. The Government attempted to develop indicators for sustainable development. In addition, the Government produced annual MDGs reports by National Development Planning Agency.

State Ministry for Environment (MoE) has been promoting the integration of sustainable development principles into sectoral policies, such as development of environmental impact assessment; improvement of Clean City Program; capacity building and increasing awareness of local parliaments; continuation and improvement of criteria for Industrial Performance Assessment; and Green Energy Policy.

Constraints and challenges on sustainable development in Indonesia include the fact that decision making process is only sectoral, and not cross-sectoral. In addition, they do not make spatial consideration. Politicians tend to have short-term visions, which are normally only span for five years, while implementation of sustainable development requires long term vision. Furthermore, externalities from environmentally sound management policies are perceived as long term while exploitation of natural resources are considered as quick yields. For the pursuit of sustainable development, investment costs and costs of technologies are high and external assistance is much needed. Finally, there is a need to increase awareness of global warming and climate change as a promotion of sustainable development policies;

Mr. Kartakusuma underlined high cost of technology and need for capacity building. Other challenges include: overcoming sectoral ego; development of energy security and its conflict with food security especially on land; and the establishment of the National Council for Climate Change (NCCC), which could promote sound and cross-sectoral decision-making.

As a way forward, decision-making process needs to be improved by highest possible level of government. The Government should establish a national council for sustainable development. Economic ministries should increase awareness on mainstreaming sustainable development principles into national economic policies and implement a longer-term national policies and directions binding through the Parliament.

He emphasized that Indonesia needs to develop research and development in order to be able to acquire appropriate local technology that will be much less costly. The country will continue the development of green economic concept and its application. Participation of all stakeholders, including business sector, in promoting the implementation of sustainable development principles is very welcomed. And finally, in order to ensure food security, the Government will make sure that agricultural lands are not used for other purposes.

Mr. Tariq Banuri started his presentation with the background of sustainable development, then presented the assessment of how it evolved, including his experience in his country, and the way forward. He explained that sustainable development is an idea of synergies. At the heart of it, sustainable development is a bridge between environment, development and social equity; between North and South; between present and future generations; and between government, civil society and private sector. Today, it is a bridge between climate change and development; and between global, national and local-level processes.

He noted that it is a way to find common areas. He explained that efforts have been made over the 25 years since this idea was placed to find practical measures of how this synergy can be made. The idea that sustainable development is a bridge was introduced and developed by the United Nations. With a series of major conferences starting from the Stockholm Conference in 1972, the United Nations has put a lot of effort and tried to come up with practical ideas to bring sustainable development into reality.

He identified four ways in which progress can be observed in making this operative. First, Governments increasingly used the central idea of sustainable development strategies. It is now moving in the direction of making development strategies more sustainable. Second, more and more integrated sectoral strategies have been formulated. Governments naturally have sectoral strategies, but they have integrated the concerns regarding sustainability, social equity and environment. Third, a number of tools for analysis have been developed, such as environmental impact analysis, scenario analysis, evaluation of resources, market-based incentives based on polluters-pay-principle, and idea of green GDP. Fourth, significant actions have been taken in sustainability areas by different stakeholders.

Mr Banuri elaborated the actions taken by different actors. In the corporate sector, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) increasingly included environmental concerns. He explained that this included the idea of disclosure on environmental activities and impacts, green funds and green investment, which influence stockholders. In civil society, civic entrepreneurship is rapidly increasing and a significant number is working on pro-poor programmes. He pointed out that they were the first ones to take on sustainability concerns and addressed sustainable development. As for governments, they have increased investment in the

area of environment, which has been largely available from donor support. The investment in research and development is more limited, but also supported by donors. The use of market-based incentives, such as eco-taxation, is increasing, mainly in developed countries.

In the area of actions, he added that many new institutions have been developed, including governmental institutions. Compared to the past, now most countries in the world have established Ministry of Environment and the number of technical personnel in the Ministry has been trained. There is more investment in related-fields; increased funding from donors; and the use of market based incentives is more observable. The concern, however, is that there are many actions done but not so many in terms of outcomes.

Currently, 82 countries are implementing national sustainable development strategies while another 16 countries are in the stage of developing sustainable development strategies. Only 6 countries are not taking any action. From the available information, it can be inferred that some progress is being made in integrating sustainable development principle into national development strategies or PRSP, but this cannot be quantified. A movement on political ladder in governments concerning sustainable development has also changed from low-mid level to high level such as ministries or head of state. These imply a good sign in awareness and pave way for future implementation. The United Nations developed several guidelines for sustainable development indicators. However, most of them are action-based not outcome-based, and this problem needs to be fixed.

He then enumerated a number of actions to take:

- i. Strengthen the government role as well as local capacities and implement development strategies, incorporate sustainability concerns, and mobilize resources for them;
- ii. Implement the decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- iii. Scale up the success stories, with concerted support in the form of awareness raising, education, financing, institution building, monitoring and indicator development;
- iv. Strengthen the ability for science-based policy making. Investing in research and development infrastructure in developing countries is a very important priority. At the same time, there is a need for extension programmes, which assist bringing the scientific knowledge to the hands of people who can use it. This could be done at the global level to bring the knowledge of the North to be used by the South;
- v. Need for investment to bend the curve, with energy being the most urgent area;
- vi. Need for setting long-term targets;
- vii. Using equity as a mean of achieving sustainability.

During the pursuing discussion, it was highlighted that one potential advantage of sustainable development is that it could present a framework in which seemingly distant issues could be brought together for common solution. Efforts towards sustainable development and implementation of sustainable development strategies provide opportunities for exploring trade-offs and synergies. Despite great efforts, it was pointed out that there were still many implementation gaps. Indicators are also needed for measuring outcomes. There seem to be many small initiatives, but these need to be scaled up. The need for further mainstreaming sustainable development was also pointed out. In this regard, however, it was encouraging that there seem to be increased interest from ministries responsible for economic and social issues.

Sustainable development can also be described as forward-looking approach, offering opportunity for integrated planning, which countries are increasingly developing. Sustainable development also addresses equity, for example, between present and future and between “haves” and “have nots”. Investment and technological development are leading challenges to many countries, but the current financial and economic crisis is posing threat. In particular, investment in energy sector could be considered as key to achieving sustainable development.