

CUBA



Exchange
of Country
Experiences in
preparing National
Reports

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National Focal Points Meeting, New York 13-14 September 2001

Environmental Policy Directorate
Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment

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CUBAN EXPERIENCES

a) The role of national focal point in your country;

The national focal point in our country is the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) with its Environmental Policy Direction.

This Agency (Ministry) coordinates the efforts aimed to achieve sustainable development in a close link with other agencies and bodies, local governments and social organizations. The country highest level of direction and coordination for sustainable development issues is the Council of Ministers.

After each CSD Session, CITMA analyzes all the decisions adopted and ensure their integration to the strategies, programs and action plans already established at the national and provincial levels. Local governments and CITMA Offices in the provinces coordinate the implementation of the decisions. This work is done based on the respective Environmental Strategies of the Provinces and Sectors that set tasks at the short, medium and long terms in the road to sustainable development.

Financial shortages are among the most severe restrictions for the fulfillment of the targets and decisions adopted by the CSD, because the necessary resources are not available and the CSD itself is not able to guarantee any support for to carry out what is stated in them.

b) Inter-ministerial coordination in preparing national reports;

Since its establishment in 1994, CITMA has worked in close coordination with the other Ministries involved in each case in the elaboration of the National Report to the CSD. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is all the time involved in this process.

The questionnaires addressing different chapters of Agenda 21 are given to the specific Ministries or Agencies in charge of the activity at the country level, e.g. Tourism, Transport, Energy, etc. Once these questionnaires are answered by the respective entities, CITMA, as the rector of the environmental activity in the country, integrates the contents and sends the Report to the Secretariat of the CSD. For the last two CDS sessions, CITMA has been able to coordinate the participation in New York meetings of representatives from the other Ministries involved in each case.

CITMA is also in charge of the coordination and integration of major groups in the elaboration of National Reports.

c) How your country has reconciled reporting requirements from different UN system bodies including mandatory reporting for conventions;

This issue requires a huge amount of work in the country, mainly because much of the information that must be rendered to the different UN System bodies is repeated in the diverse questionnaires and guidelines for the reports. As different Ministries and organizations are responsible for the elaboration of the reports, depending on the issue or convention, the same information is searched and processed by a number of professionals from different institutions.

In regard to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the situation is not so bad, because CITMA is the focal point for most of them, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the other agencies involved, e.g. Fisheries and Transport among others.

d) What capacity and resource issues do you have in preparing your national report;

CITMA counts with the Direction of Environmental Policy, the Environmental Agency and the Provincial Offices. The Center for Inspection and Control, directly subordinated to the Minister, grants updated information resulting from environmental inspections and EIAs.

In every of the other Ministries there are structures addressing environmental issues with which work is coordinated for the elaboration of the reports.

National Information and Environmental Monitoring Systems are already established in Cuba. Those systems, together with reports on the state of the environment, are also the source of inputs for national reports to CSD.

Nevertheless financial support from CSD or DESA/DSD for the achievement of this work will be of great value.

e) Other issues including difficulties/obstacles encountered in national reporting.

- It is necessary to develop synergy among the National Reports to CSD and the reports to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, given the urgent necessity to combine international efforts to achieve the rational and integrated use of the scarce financial resources available, and to this end, agree to seek, inter alia, the standardization and harmonization of reporting requirements and the support for effective implementation. With this, we are avoiding the report duplications and the load over the countries in financial and human resources sense.
- The questions are repeated many times, for example, the role of main groups is repeated in all chapters of each reporting questionnaire and so forth. In this case may be only one question for all chapters, or one questionnaire devoted to the role of major in the implementation of the relevant chapters.
- The questionnaire doesn't offer many options to the countries to express their own initiatives, taking into account their particular characteristics.

- The extension (volume) of the report isn't clear: you can find in the WEB page reports with small quantity of pages and others very long, so there is a **lack of uniformity** in the information gathered by the UN System.
- The guidelines and/or questionnaires aren't very clear with regard to what DESA/DSD pursues with the national reports. Sometimes they are questionnaires stuffing of questions, which in many cases are irrelevant. These situations go against the quality of the information really needed to assess Agenda 21 implementation at the national level.
- The questionnaire validation before it is send to the countries is necessary so it can be adapted to their reality and necessities. It may be convenient in each CSD session to deliver the questionnaires of the next session, in order to allow the countries to make their revision and give their criteria, in order to improve them.
- CSD decisions neither are legally binding nor with obligatory character in difference with the decisions of the COPs of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The fulfillment of these CSD decisions is not checked in each next meeting.