

**Meeting for National Focal Points on
Improving Future National Reporting
to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)
13-14 September 2001, New York**

MALAYSIA

**Exchange of Country Experiences
in Preparing National Reports**

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is prepared for the meeting of the national focal points from various countries to share the actual experiences in preparing national reports (country profile) in their respective countries. The Country Profile, have been submitted by Governments to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in order to assist the CSD to monitor the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level. As a contribution to agenda item on `Exchange of Country Experiences in Preparing National Reports', Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations (UN) has requested a brief paper addressing the following issues:

II. EXCHANGE OF COUNTRY EXPERIENCES IN PREPARING NATIONAL REPORTS

a) the role of national focal points

- The task of coordinating the national reporting of the implementation of Agenda 21 in Malaysia has been assigned to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department. This is as a result of the Cabinet's decision in 1992 for EPU to be responsible, as a national focal point, in the coordination of the implementation of Agenda 21 at national level.
- For this purpose, EPU, as the central agencies for the government, must ensure that environmental and social considerations are not neglected in line with the philosophy of balanced development and that of sustainable development as envisaged in Agenda 21. Therefore, steps were taken to ensure that the results of the Rio process generally, and of Agenda 21 particularly, were incorporated and, where appropriate, integrated into the national development planning process.

b) inter-ministerial coordination in preparing national reports

- In Malaysia, the central agencies play an important role in coordinating planning and administration. Given the multi-levels of Government in Malaysia i.e. federal, state and local, and the multitude of ministries, departments and agencies, efficient coordination and consultation are imperative to ensure effective planning and the successful implementation of development policies and strategies. In this regard, the EPU, the premier development planning agency of the government, is responsible for long- and medium-term planning for the country. As for preparing the national report to the CSD, the EPU as the national secretariat is also responsible to coordinate efforts of various government ministries and departments in providing the necessary inputs into the preparation the national reports.
- There are a few levels of coordination or consultation within the Government of Malaysia machinery i.e. political, executive, and official levels. The highest level of coordination is at the political and executive levels. The political coordination is through the political channel, the ruling coalition. The coordination at the Government executive level rests with the Cabinet of Ministers. The inter-ministerial coordination at the official level in preparing

national reports is effected via the National Development Planning Committee (NDPC), the committee of officials under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary of the government. It comprises selected heads of government agencies, which have significant role in development planning.

c) reporting requirements to various UN system bodies including mandatory reporting for conventions

- More detailed consultation and coordination of work is instituted within the framework of the Inter Agency Planning Group (IAPG) and the Technical Working Group (TWG). With regard to the preparation of national reports to the international meetings or conventions, it also must go through the same process. It is coordinated through the Inter-Agency Planning Group (IAPG) that comprises of the relevant Ministries and agencies. The IAPG also meet regularly to assess achievements or formulate new policies and strategies as well as discussing critical issues (papers/reports).
- All reports prepared by ministries and departments must be submitted to the IAPG for endorsement before they are finally proposed to the Cabinet for approval and implementation. Only after approval from the Cabinet, the relevant Ministry or department can submit the report as national official report to international meetings or convention.

d) Capacity and resources issues in preparing national reports

- Awareness is being stressed to improve knowledge and capability of all relevant ministries or departments in order to help them prepare relevant inputs for national reports. In this regard, efforts were continuously taken to increase the awareness of how to improve the balance between economic growth and environmental considerations as well as that of sustainable development. Greater emphasis is also being given to incorporate environmental considerations into all aspects of planning and management so that it is in line with the philosophy of sustainable development as envisaged in Agenda 21. With this action, it is expected that the capacity, knowledge as well as interest to prepare relevant inputs for national reports can be increased.
- Financial resources needed for the above job is from normal department budget.

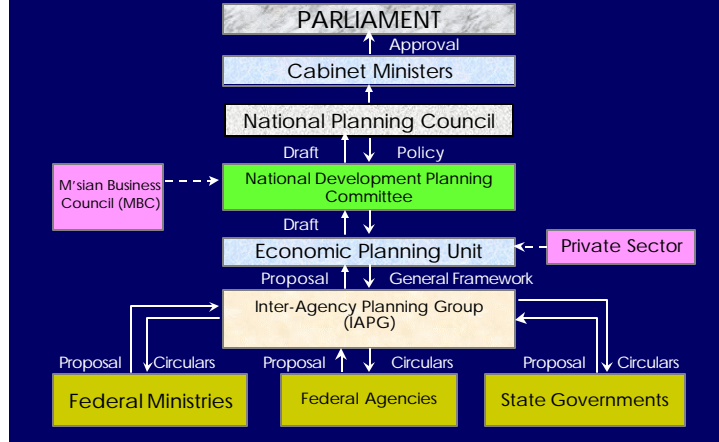
e) other issues including difficulties/obstacles encountered in national reporting

Among the difficulties faced by the national focal point in the preparation of the national report were as follows:

- *Low awareness* – Low awareness about national reports (country profile) as well as on Agenda 21, sometime resulted in low interest of reporting the status of the implementation of Agenda 21 to the national focal point.

- *Low knowledge of what to report* – Although brief guidelines is provided for the preparation of the Country Profile, some ministries or departments still facing difficulties to prepare essential inputs for the national report. Quite a number of the ministries or departments have low knowledge of what to report for the Country Profile, in particular for those chapter/issues that cross various sectors.
- *Lack of fund* – Most of the ministries or departments also lack financial allocation to train their manpower in term of the requirement of attaining knowledge about sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21 at their respective agency. The issue of lack of capability sometime affects the quality of the report submitted by them.
- *Late submission* – As a result of various constraints, information from relevant agencies often reaches the national secretariat well beyond the dateline of submission given to them. Usually, a deadline of **one month** is given by the national focal point to all the ministries or departments involved to prepare the inputs and submit to the national secretariat. Among main excuses given for this late reporting is that the Ministry has to compile inputs from many of its department, changes in person(s) responsible for those particular issues, etc. These constraints resulted in very late submission of the inputs by the ministries to the national focal point.

Development Planning Machinery



Planning Process

